

Scotland's Third Land Use Strategy 2021-2026

Consultation and Draft Strategy

December 2020



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

How this document is structured

To make this consultation more accessible, we have combined the consultation paper and the draft Strategy into one document instead of publishing two separate papers. The introductory section of this document explains what the Land Use Strategy is and summarises how this draft Strategy is different from previous Strategies. The sections that then follow each contain key elements that make up the draft Strategy and the questions we would like to ask you. At the end there is a section dedicated to equality and inclusivity, and we encourage everyone to take the time to look at this section and provide views on areas that are of interest to you.

Introduction	P. 3
Section 1 – Does a changing context need a changing vision?	P. 6
<i>Section 1 Questions</i>	P. 7
Section 2 – Achieving the objectives: getting the best from our	P. 9
<i>Section 2 Questions</i>	P. 10
Section 3 – Using landscapes to talk about land use	P. 11
Urban	P. 13
Peri-urban	P. 15
Fertile Land	P. 17
Marginal Land	P. 19
Uplands	P. 21
Semi-natural Land	P. 24
Rivers and water bodies	P. 26
Coastal	P. 28
Islands	P. 31
Offshore	P. 34
<i>Section 3 Questions</i>	P. 35
Section 4 – Equality: Call for Evidence	P. 36
Responding to this consultation	P. 38
Respondent information form	P. 40

Introduction

What is the Land Use Strategy?

The Land Use Strategy is a strategic document that sets out our vision for sustainable land use in Scotland, and the objectives, policies and actions that will help deliver it. The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 requires Scottish Ministers by law to produce a Land Use Strategy every five years. The first Strategy was published in 2011, the second in 2016, and the third one is now due in March 2021.

Why is it important?

The way we use and manage our land provides the foundation to many aspects of our lives here in Scotland. Alongside our water, seas and air it provides the natural capital which underpins our economy. This has been the case throughout our history and will continue to be the case in our future. Our land supports rural communities and economies; food production to feed the nation; diverse habitats and abundant biodiversity; forests and woodlands; the generation of electricity to warm our homes and power our businesses; and it provides inspiring landscapes and leisure space for us all.

Scotland's land assets have been highlighted by the government's independent advisers on Climate Change, the UK Committee on Climate Change. In their [2019 report](#) they have made it clear that one of the main reasons Scotland can achieve a 2045 net-zero target is because of **“the excellent opportunities to remove CO₂ from the atmosphere through afforestation and carbon capture and storage in Scotland”**.

If we are to achieve the sustainable future that we aspire to, how we choose to use our land in response to the twin threats of the climate emergency and biodiversity decline will be crucial. This Land Use Strategy will set out our ambition and vision, while recognising that these are decisions for us all and that government cannot do this alone. The Strategy will also set out examples of how we can work with, support and encourage our land-based sectors throughout our Green Recovery from the global COVID-19 pandemic as we look to make a **just transition** to a sustainable future.

What's new?

There have been two Land Use Strategies since the Climate Change Act came into force in 2009. The first one, covering 2011 to 2016, brought in a new framework for land use which introduced our vision for sustainable land use, objectives, and a set of principles to guide future decision-making around land use.

The second Land Use Strategy, published in 2016, maintained this framework and in addition set out 9 policies and 5 proposals across areas such as agriculture, forestry, natural capital and land reform. The second Strategy was swiftly followed by the Land Rights and Responsibility Statement. This landmark document sets out the key principles that underpin the Scottish Government's vision for a stronger relationship between the people of Scotland and our land.

The third Land Use Strategy is due for publication in March 2021, and is the topic of this consultation. While the overarching purpose of the Strategy will remain the same - demonstrating our ambition for sustainable land use - the new Land Use Strategy will be different from previous ones in two key ways.

First, the layout and language of the new Strategy has been redesigned to make it more accessible to everyone, beyond those with a specific interest in land use. Our land has such an important role to play in Scotland's sustainable future both environmentally and economically that it is vital we engage as widely as possible so that - whether you own, work, use or simply appreciate Scotland's land - we all understand its importance and what we need it to deliver.

Second, and unlike the previous two Strategies, the third Strategy will not contain new policy proposals developed specifically for its publication. Instead it brings together for the first time key strands of Scottish Government policy that affect land use, and sets out how these various policy areas fit together on the ground. Setting out this strategic picture highlights how crucial land and land use is to our lives, and how we will need to make changes to secure a sustainable future.

A two-phased approach

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic rightly continues to be the Government's priority: it also brings additional uncertainty to the future. Scottish Ministers have therefore chosen to take a two stage approach to the delivery of the Strategy. Stage one, including this consultation, will result in an overarching strategic document being laid in the Scottish Parliament next March. Stage two will see the development and consultation of a more detailed delivery plan to be published in the next Parliamentary session. This plan will contain further information on the policies and action that the Scottish Government is taking to deliver on our sustainable land use objectives.

Aligning with ongoing policy development

There is a wealth of policy being developed at the same time as the new Land Use Strategy. Any new land use related policy brought forward prior to the publication of this Strategy (for example through the updated Climate Change Plan, due for publication late in 2020) will be reflected in the final Strategy.

Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs)

The Scottish Land Commission has published its advice to the Scottish Government on the establishment of Regional Land Use Partnerships. We are now working to develop pilot areas and will shortly announce where these areas are. It is imperative that each pilot is structured in a way that balances the interests of national and local government, land based sectors and local communities. The purpose of RLUPs will be to lead, at a landscape level, on identifying opportunities for land use change where appropriate, and to ensure that all land use and management activities are conducted in a way that supports meeting climate change objectives.

What to expect in the next three sections

In each of the sections below, we have set out the key elements that make up the draft Strategy, alongside questions where your responses will help shape our approach to the final document. Some of these relate to elements of previous Land

Use Strategies, asking if they require updating, while others introduce a new approach to make the Strategy more accessible to those with a wider general interest in land. The final section is dedicated to questions around equality and inclusivity, and we encourage anyone who has relevant information to contribute to our call for evidence.

Section 1 – Does a changing context need a changing vision?

Much has happened since the publication of the last Land Use Strategy including the current COVID-19 pandemic that is impacting on our lives in so many ways. But the twin crises of the global climate emergency and decline in biodiversity are as pressing as ever, and the Scottish Government remains determined and committed to play its full part in combatting these issues. That is why the focus of our recovery from COVID-19 is a green one that seizes on the opportunities for creating sustainable jobs. It is imperative that the Green Recovery is part of our just transition to net-zero that leaves no one behind.

Knowledge and evidence that human activity has been a major driver of our changing climate since the [mid-20th Century](#) is longstanding and overwhelming. Last year saw a wave of public action demanding that governments take more action to tackle climate change, with young people in particular standing up and challenging us all to do better. Here in Scotland the First Minister recognised the global climate emergency in April 2019 and Scotland introduced one of the most stringent statutory frameworks for climate change action in the world. We have already made good progress in reducing our emissions compared to the 1990 baseline year, though much more work remains to be done to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045.

Last year also saw the publication of the biggest ever [health check](#) of the state of life on earth by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. It provided stark evidence of the crisis in our natural world, with 1 million species now at risk of extinction. It found that the health of the planet's ecosystems, on which we and all other species depend, is deteriorating faster than at any time in human history. It is clear that the climate and nature crises are intrinsically linked. Climate change is a key driver of biodiversity loss. Conversely, healthy natural habitats play a vital role in removing carbon from the atmosphere. Both crises arise from stretching the Earth's systems beyond their sustainable limits.

In February 2020, we published the vision and outcomes of Scotland's new Environment Strategy, which creates an overarching framework for our Strategies and plans on the environment and climate change. Its '*One Earth. One home. One shared future*' vision describes our long-term ambitions for Scotland's natural environment and our role in tackling the global climate change and nature crises. It also describes the wider benefits that restoring nature and tackling climate change will create for the wellbeing of people and communities across Scotland, our economy and our global citizenship. The Land Use Strategy brings together policies that will help us realise these ambitions.

We know that the way in which we manage and use our land needs to change radically if we are to deliver our climate and environment goals and achieve positive outcomes for ourselves and the natural systems on which our way of life depend. In making a transition on this scale, the vision we set ourselves for the future is a key way to navigate our steps forward. The third Land Use Strategy provides an opportunity for us to revisit the vision of the previous two Strategies.

Vision

“A Scotland where we fully recognise, understand and value the importance of our land resources, and where our plans and decisions about land use will deliver improved and enduring benefits, enhancing the wellbeing of our nation.”

Q1: Do you think that this vision still reflects the outcomes we need to achieve?

- A) Yes
- B) No
- C) I don't know
- D) I do not have enough information

Q2: If not, what key changes would you like to see for a new Land Use vision?

Comments:

We propose re-wording the vision slightly to bring it in line with our times: “A Scotland where we fully recognise, understand and value the importance of our land resources, and where every plan and decision about land use will make a positive contribution to our national response to the climate emergency and biodiversity decline.”

Objectives

Closely linked to the vision are the objectives we set to help achieve it. We would like to know if you think the objectives set out in previous strategies will continue to support and deliver the changes that are required, or if they need updating.

Objectives

- **Land based businesses working with nature to contribute more to Scotland's prosperity**
- **Responsible stewardship of Scotland's natural resources delivering more benefits to Scotland's people**
- **Urban and rural communities better connected to the land, with more people enjoying the land and positively influencing land use**

Q3: Do you think any of the above objectives need updating? If so, please indicate which you think needs changes. You can tick all that apply.

A) I think they are good as they are, no changes needed

B) “Land based businesses working with nature to contribute more to Scotland's prosperity” should be changed

C) “Responsible stewardship of Scotland's natural resources delivering more benefits to Scotland's people” should be changed

D) “Urban and rural communities better connected to the land, with more people enjoying the land and positively influencing land use” should be changed

Q4: If you consider that one or more objectives need updating, please explain what changes you would like to see in the objective(s). Please make sure you state clearly which objective each suggestion relates to.

Comments:

We think all three objectives can be updated to reflect the urgency of the climate and biodiversity emergencies, recognising that changes in land use are a vital part of a national response to these emergencies.

We suggest the three objectives can be slightly reworded as follows:

- Land based businesses working with nature and communities to respond to climate emergency and biodiversity loss.
- Responsible stewardship of Scotland's natural resources by landowners, businesses and land managers delivering health and community benefits to Scotland's people.
- Urban and rural communities better connected to the land, with more people enjoying the land and positively influencing land use for biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

Section 2 – Achieving the objectives: getting the best from our land

Our land and the natural capital it supports and provides has a critical role in providing solutions to both the climate and biodiversity crises, but doing so will require major changes in the way we use and manage land.

In order to achieve net-zero emissions, we know we need to greatly increase both tree cover and the area of restored peatland across Scotland. Our lives and livelihoods, however, also depend on healthy ecosystems, and land will be needed to deliver targeted action to protect, restore and enhance species and habitats to halt the loss of biodiversity in Scotland.

Similarly, land is needed to provide the foundations to nature based solutions to issues such as flood risk management, good water quality and supply, air quality and preventing soil erosion. Our wild landscapes and stunning scenery are also the basis for much of Scotland's tourism industry and support our health and wellbeing (the benefits of access to green spaces has been highlighted during this pandemic).

Land will continue to be required for agriculture, underpinning sustainable and high quality food production in Scotland, both for domestic consumption and export, and non-food crops such as biofuels. Land is also essential for renewable energy generation (for example through onshore wind farms), national infrastructure (such as for sustainable travel) and low-carbon affordable housing.

This is not an exhaustive list. There are many more benefits and ways we rely on Scotland's land. But it makes clear the multiple demands we make on a finite resource and the pressure this puts on our land.

Balancing these demands requires action and tough choices from us all: it is not something the Scottish Government can do alone, nor do we do hold all the answers. In order to deliver a sustainable future we will need input, collaboration and action from people all across Scotland.

Q5: Before reading this document were you aware of the pressures on our land?

- A) Strongly aware of all pressures on our land
- B) Aware of many of the pressures on our land
- C) Knew land was needed for some things
- D) Not aware of the extent we need our land
- E) Completely unaware of the importance of our land

Q6: Are you aware of ways people can get involved in land use matters within your local area?

- A) Yes
- B) No

Section 3 – Using landscapes to talk about land use

As we set out in the introduction, we want to improve the accessibility and relevance of the third Land Use Strategy to:

- 1) reach a wide audience and demonstrate the relevance of land use both now and in the future to everyone in Scotland
- 2) show how different strands of Scottish Government policy come together to deliver on our strategic sustainable land use vision and objectives.

To do this, we are proposing a different approach to presenting the policy content within this Strategy. In the last Strategy policies and proposals were listed based on policy areas such as agriculture, forestry and natural capital. While this may suit readers with specific interests in a land-based sector, it may not work for those with a general interest wanting to understand what the Land Use Strategy means for them. We are therefore proposing to structure the new Strategy around a series of conceptual landscapes to illustrate the effect of policies on the ground.

These landscapes and the images¹ that we have chosen to demonstrate them are used to represent the types of landscapes found across Scotland. They are illustrative only and are not map-based or intended to be geographically specific to parts of Scotland or serve as a physical classification of the land. Many areas in Scotland will identify with more than one landscape, for example many of our big urban centres are also in coastal areas.

The policies, actions and initiatives presented in this section have been drawn from other Scottish Government Strategies and Plans. Within each illustrative landscape we have highlighted the policies most relevant to that landscape, but these policies are applicable nationally even if only highlighted in a single landscape. This does mean that some policies are mentioned only under one illustrative landscape even though they may play a role in others as well.

Policy content that has been drawn from established Scottish Government Strategies and Plans has already been consulted on when it was developed and set out as part of their publication process. We are therefore not focusing our consultation on asking questions on any individual policy, action or initiative highlighted here. Instead we are interested in hearing what you think of the overall direction that the Scottish Government is taking for land use, and whether you think our landscape approach works well in explaining what we are trying to do. A short summary of the questions for this section is listed below for reference, with the landscapes beginning on the next page, however, please respond to the questions at the end of this section.

- Are the landscapes an effective way to communicate policy?
- Are Climate Change, Biodiversity and Communities the right crosscutting themes?
- Does this demonstrate that the Scottish Government is taking steps to help deliver sustainable land use?

¹ Based on illustrations developed through Adaptation Scotland - www.adaptationscotland.org.uk

Urban



Image from Adaptation Scotland – for illustrative purposes only

While most of Scotland's land mass is rural in nature, the majority of our people live in urban areas. How we use the land in and around our cities and towns is crucial for many issues such as health and wellbeing, equality, environmental quality, managing drainage and flooding, jobs and housing as well as climate resilience and biodiversity.

How we are delivering sustainable land use

Urban planning

Through innovative and careful design and planning our urban areas can deliver to a multitude of uses in the same area. Urban forestry, renewable energy generation and natural flood risk management can exist hand in hand with greener housing, active travel, improved infrastructure for recreation and initiatives to enhance biodiversity. Planning has, and will continue to have, a key role to play in transforming our cities. Our [Programme for Government](#), recognises the important role that our National Planning Framework can have in redesigning our communities to best respond to national challenges. We have set out our current thinking in recently published [Position Statement](#), ahead of extensive consultation on a draft National Planning Framework 4 in Autumn 2021.

We are also continuing to work with Planning Authorities and other stakeholders to bring forward the secondary legislation to support the new duties, in the Planning Act, for authorities to produce an **Open Space Strategy**. The purpose of the Open Space Strategy is to set out a strategic framework of the planning authority's policies and proposals as to the development, maintenance and use of green infrastructure in their district, including open spaces and green networks.

Urban forestry

Urban forestry can play a key role in maintaining and **expanding green networks** across Scotland's city regions and make urban communities more attractive places for people to live and work in. Through the Scottish Forestry Strategy 2019 - 2029 we have set out our ambition to encourage an increase in tree canopy cover in urban areas. Taking this ambition forward Scottish Forestry will review the evidence of the contribution of urban forestry to the quality of urban environments, and its potential role in helping towns and cities adapt to a changing climate.

Community woodland ownership

In addition to increasing urban woodland, we want to provide more opportunities for urban communities to influence the decisions affecting their local forests and woodlands, including through increased community ownership. That is why we have committed to providing continued support in 2021-2022 to the Community

Woodlands Association to deliver **targeted advice to communities involved in using, owning and managing woodland.**

Vacant and derelict land

Vacant and derelict land is detrimental to local communities and neighbourhoods. More positively, it presents an opportunity to **invest in our local blue and green infrastructure** to deliver sustainable inclusive growth and mitigate climate change as part of our Green Recovery. In September 2020 the Vacant and Derelict Land Taskforce submitted its recommendations to the Scottish Government. These recommendations have been welcomed by the Scottish Government and moving forward, we will work with the Scottish Land Commission and other stakeholders to discuss and develop detailed proposals to help deliver a culture change in Scotland's approach to vacant and derelict land.

Helping our land support...

... Climate Change mitigation & adaptation

Our urban areas are already impacted by severe weather, in particular flooding and storms but increasingly also from overheating. Disruption (for example the collapse of a bridge or road) often has consequences far beyond the local area. We know that we must strengthen our climate resilience, improving flood management within our urban landscapes. As such we are reviewing how blue and green infrastructure can help us create water resilient places and will bring forward proposals by the end of 2020. We are also supporting Scottish Water in their actions to manage surface water away from homes and businesses through increased use of blue and green and natural infrastructure.

In addition to building resilience and adaptation we need to **reduce greenhouse gas emissions** in our cities and towns. For example, by increasing active travel, improving domestic energy efficiency through retrofitting and in new buildings, and using greener construction alternatives such as wood products.

... Scotland's biodiversity and habitats

Incorporating and increasing green infrastructure such as green roofs and rain gardens and the support and management of flower-rich gardens and amenity areas can bring a wealth of benefits. Through the *2017-2027 Pollinator Strategy* we have worked with NatureScot to set out key ways in which urban areas can act to improve and then benefit from enhanced biodiversity. We are also committed to piloting mini forests, known as 'Miyawaki', to trial this innovative approach from Japan. These have the potential to improve urban biodiversity and green space for local communities.

... Our Communities

Throughout 2020 the importance of high quality outdoor areas and natural environment to our health and wellbeing has been more evident than ever. We are committed to improving green space in our cities and towns, and this is a key priority in our Green Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Through **our Green Infrastructure Fund and Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund** we have and will continue to support projects in some of our most deprived areas to improve and invest in local green infrastructure and deliver benefits from nature to the local community.

Peri-urban



Image from Adaptation Scotland – for illustrative purposes only

Many areas in Scotland bring together both rural and urban facets. These landscapes have an important role to play in balancing development, climate change, biodiversity and the rural economy.

How we are delivering sustainable land use

Evolving planning

Scotland's next National Planning Framework will be informed by new **Regional Spatial Strategies**. These Strategies will be produced by Local Authorities and are intended to be a long-term guide for the strategic development of an area, encapsulating all of its landscapes. This new approach will strengthen planning's contribution to objectives and better align it with priorities and opportunities at a regional scale. It recognises that Scotland is a diverse country and will allow the development of a tailored approach that best reflects local and regional circumstances.

Local engagement

Looking forward past the development of the National Planning Framework 4 and into its delivery, Local Authorities will need to ensure that communities have a platform through which to influence decisions in their area. Communities will have the opportunity to prepare **Local Place Plans**. These community-led plans will set out local people's proposals for the development or use of land in the places they stay. Planning authorities will take these into account when preparing or updating their local development plans.

Cleaner air

In 2019 the Scottish Government published an independent review of the Clean Air Strategy: '*Cleaner Air for Scotland – The Road to a Healthier Future*' (CAFS). The review made it clear that the scope of this Strategy must be widened and work is now underway on the development of Scotland's next Air Quality Strategy. Key to this new approach will be the embedding of **place making principles**, with a strong focus on nature based solutions across policy areas to guide our way to a cleaner, healthier and more attractive environment. The new Strategy will be published in the first part of 2021.

More trees

Planting more trees and integrating woodland across all of Scotland is not only vital to become a net-zero society by 2045, it can also help us adapt to the impact of an already changing climate. Through increased tree planting we can also look to meet more of our future construction needs sustainably. That is why throughout the Climate Change Plan 2018-2032 and *Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019–2029* we

have set out our long term approach and ambitions to do this. But planting trees for timber and carbon sequestration is only one part of the story: using land for woods also brings wider benefits to our communities.

For example, we want to create more opportunities for children to play and learn in forests and woodlands, and increase the use of forests and woodlands to improve people's health and well-being. Scottish Forestry's initiative **the Forest Kindergarten** has delivered several *Training the Trainer* courses. These improve teacher's skills for using the outdoors with early years children/pupils. Scottish Forestry are also working with the Care Inspectorate to evaluate the quality of outdoor learning and play, and are currently working in partnership with the Forest Therapy Institute to produce 15 professionally qualified forest therapy guides for adults.

Helping our land support...

... Climate Change mitigation & adaptation

As part of our aim to ensure that Scotland's response to the global climate emergency is a truly national endeavour, we have set out a new commitment to the development of a network of **Climate Action Towns**. This initiative will be targeted at small towns with little historical involvement in climate action and will support them to reduce what they use, recycle more, and cut their emissions to become carbon neutral and adapt to an already changing climate.

... Scotland's biodiversity and habitats

The incorporation of **green infrastructure** and the wider benefits that this can bring for example through increased employment in nature based solutions across all our landscapes is a key priority in our Green Recovery. Through our Green Infrastructure Fund and Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund we are supporting projects in some of our most deprived areas to improve and invest in local green infrastructure and deliver benefits from nature to the local community.

... Our Communities

Peri-urban areas are an important landscape and the new National Planning Framework 4 will have a key role in ensuring that local communities have access both to high-quality amenities and high-quality environments. Particularly in deprived areas, there are barriers to accessing local nature areas despite being surrounded by countryside. **Improving access and availability** of for example woodland and recreational greenspace will have clear benefits for people's health and wellbeing.

Fertile land



Image from Adaptation Scotland – for illustrative purposes only

Our fertile land landscape marks the transition from peri-urban to more sparsely populated areas. We move into land that is primarily made up of agricultural fields bordered by trees and scattered woodland. This land produces a lot of the high-quality crops and produce that Scotland is renowned for.

How we are delivering sustainable land use

Impacts from food production

Scotland's agricultural activity is governed by a combination of legislation and regulation that our farmers, crofters and land managers must adhere to. This framework is designed to **minimise the environmental impact of food production** and encourage best practice across Scotland. For example *Cross Compliance* is a set of rules made up of 'Statutory Management Requirements' (SMRs) and 'Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions' (GAECs) stipulations. These relate to areas such as environment, climate change, good agricultural condition of land and public health. Further to this, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency are tasked with the delivery of regulations regarding activities such as fertiliser spreading, cultivation and pesticide application, along with the design, location, construction and maintenance of silage and slurry facilities on farms.

Promoting sustainable practices

In order to complement this framework, the Scottish Government through the likes of the Farm Advisory Service, Farming For a Better Climate, and organisations such as NatureScot, have established and continue to develop a suite of advice and initiatives to encourage good practice. This guidance and advice promotes low carbon and environmental sustainable farming. This approach is continued through the policies and proposals of the agriculture chapter of the **2018 - 2032 Climate Change Plan**, due to be updated later this year, and the range of Sector Plans that have been made available by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) to demonstrate the additional benefits that this approach can deliver.

We want Scotland to be a **world-class producer of high quality food**: sustainable, profitable and efficient in environmental and economic terms using Low Carbon Farming methods for generations to come. That is why in 2019 the Farming and Food Production – Future Policy Group (FFP-FPG) was established. This independent group was tasked to develop and recommend future principles based around six key themes of sustainability, simplicity, profitability, innovation, inclusion and productivity and a vision for 2050. The Group will determine when it is ready to publish its Report, however we anticipate that the Report will be published by the end of 2020.

On-farm woodland and agroforestry

The Scottish Government is committed to the significant expansion of the area of forests and woodlands, but we recognise that this must be taken forward alongside wider land-use objectives. That is why through Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019–2029 we have made clear the ambition to ensure an **integrated approach to land use** is taken, seeking to maximise synergies and reduce potential conflicts between different land uses. In order to achieve this this we are working together with relevant stakeholders to take forward support for advisory visits to identify opportunities for farm woodlands and agroforestry.

Helping our land support...

... Climate Change mitigation & adaptation

Through the adoption of good practice there is an opportunity for our most fertile land to contribute to greenhouse gas emissions reduction and carbon sequestration whilst building resilience in adapting to an already changing climate and securing a sustainable source of food for generations to come. For example the Valuing Our Soils project which was developed in partnerships with both industry and environmental experts has provided hints, tips and examples of practices that protect and improve farm soils. Building on existing knowledge such as the Valuing our soils project, the Scottish Government established the **Soil Regenerative Agriculture Group**. This group has brought together five forward thinking farmers to share information on supporting, enhancing and protecting their farm soils, by looking at improving production, tailoring inputs and maximising profitability whilst achieving healthy and resilient soils that support biodiversity and help to lock up carbon on the farm.

... Scotland's biodiversity and habitats

Pollinators are a vital part of our biodiversity and wider environment. Our wild and managed pollinators help to support our economy by contributing to our food and farming industries. For example honey bees, wild bees, flies, and a variety of other insects support insect-pollinated crops like oilseed rape, strawberries, raspberries, currants, apples and beans, all of which are important crops for Scotland's economy. Actions on how we manage and use our land such as the use and development of pollinator-friendly pest control such as integrated pest management will be key moving forward. In recognising this the Scottish Government has provided a free to use online tool that helps our farmers and crofters develop an integrated pest management plan. Furthermore **The Pollinator Strategy for Scotland 2017 – 2027**, and its accompanying Implementation Plan, set out how we can make Scotland as a whole a place where our pollinators can thrive.

... Our Communities

In addition to contributing to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and increasing carbon sequestration, the actions taken in this landscape can help improve air and water quality, health and wellbeing and contribute to the wider economy by developing natural capital and supporting employment opportunities. We also recognise that farming is more than just a business or a land use, and is a key part of our cultural heritage which has and will continue to shape our rural communities.

Marginal land



Image from Adaptation Scotland – for illustrative purposes only

We use the term marginal land to describe a landscape that is less productive for crops and is more often used for grassland and rearing livestock, alongside recreational areas. That is not to say this landscape is not important, on the contrary, it is central to delivering many of our national priorities. It can be thought of, but is not exclusively, the areas of land that straddle the move from lowland to upland.

How we are delivering sustainable land use

Restoring peatland

Scotland's peatland habitats are some of the most unique and important around the world. Our Flow Country, for example, is a vast expanse of blanket bog that forms the heart of Caithness and Sutherland in the North of Scotland. It is considered to be the best habitat of its type anywhere in the world. That is why the Peatland Partnership is preparing a bid for the Flow Country to be named as a Unesco World Heritage site in 2023. Our peatland habitats across Scotland are vitally important for storing and locking carbon and absorbing rainfall. Unfortunately only peatland that is in a good environmental state can deliver these benefits, so restoring degraded peatlands is an essential part of our efforts to combat climate change and improve flood management. Scotland is a very peat-rich nation, and much of our marginal land sits on peaty soils and habitats.

Through the **National Peatland Action Plan** we have worked with NatureScot to set out the key priorities for peatland restoration in Scotland. This includes the Peatland Action Fund. This fund will invest £250 million across ten years to restore 250,000 hectares by 2030, demonstrating our commitment to continued support for peatland restoration across Scotland.

Farming and crofting

Agricultural activity, in particular livestock grazing, is a prominent feature of this landscape. We are determined to ensure that Scotland continues to have a sustainable food production sector for future generations. This commitment can be seen through the range of actions and support we offer, for example the Beef Efficiency Scheme. This scheme has been established to increase efficiency and reduce the emissions that come from our beef production. This can also improve overall herd profitability therefore making it more sustainable both economically and environmentally. We have also committed to co-develop new ways of working with our farming and crofting communities through farmer-led groups supported by scientific and economic expertise from Scotland's Rural College (SRUC). This will build upon the work of the Beef Suckler Climate Group for sustainable beef farming and include groups such as arable, dairy and hill farming.

Increasing woodland

Larger scale woodland and forestry will increasingly become a feature of marginal land landscapes. Increased tree planting is essential for Scotland in order to deliver net-zero and we need to rapidly increase the pace of woodland and forest creation.

We cannot let actions to tackle the climate emergency be detrimental to other environmental priorities or local communities. That is why through *Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019 – 2029* we are committed to take forward action, in accordance with UK Forestry standards (UKFS), aimed at making sure the design and management of forests and woodlands increase their positive impacts on air, water, soils, biodiversity and landscapes. We also continue to support the management of forests and woodlands to provide natural flood management and shelter for livestock, and their health and wellbeing benefits to people in Scotland.

Helping our land support...

... Climate Change mitigation & adaptation

Our woodlands have the potential to not only soak up carbon dioxide but to provide a range of wider environmental and societal benefits. That is why many individuals and businesses wish to contribute to tree planting. But before investing in such projects people want to know that schemes will actually deliver the carbon savings that they claim. The **Woodland Carbon Code** is a well-established and robust voluntary code that encourages a consistent approach to woodland carbon projects, and offers clarity and transparency to those who want to invest in tree planting.

... Scotland's biodiversity and habitats

In 2019 we established the **Biodiversity Challenge Fund** to support action on priority habitats and species and accelerate our efforts to preserve and enhance our biodiversity. Our dedication to support Scotland's biodiversity is unwavering and we have made available a further £3 million to the Fund.

... Our Communities

To many of our communities – particularly those in our rural landscapes – tourism is a vital aspect of livelihoods and the way in which land is managed and used. Through a **new tourism strategy**, we will work with VisitScotland to develop an appropriate recovery marketing strategy, to identify short, medium and longer term market opportunities including nature based tourism to support and increase visitors. We also recognise the negative impacts increased visitor numbers can have on rural infrastructure. We will build on the work of the **Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund** to help tourist attractions and their communities deal with the impact of increased visitor numbers on our most vulnerable scenic locations.

Uplands



Image from Adaptation Scotland – for illustrative purposes only

Scotland's uplands are very diverse, including the rolling Southern Uplands, the hills of the Central Belt and the mountains and moors of the Highlands & Islands, where land of upland character can extend almost to sea level. Together, the uplands provide a wide range of social, economic and environmental benefits for those who manage the land, local communities and the nation as a whole.

How we are delivering sustainable land use

High nature value

Much of this landscape is land with a high nature value. Traditional extensive management practices used by our hill farming and crofting communities have and will continue to support a range of species and habitats, and contribute to the management of Scotland's renowned natural environment. Large areas of our uplands are also used for recreational purposes such as game shooting with the management, benefits and impacts of these activities being subject to debate. **The Biodiversity Challenge Fund** provides direct support to projects aimed at action on priority habitats and species, accelerating efforts that will help Scotland meet international biodiversity commitments. The additional funding that the Scottish Government has made available will ensure that these actions continue.

Growing our woodland economy

Woodland creation is important within this landscape and as part of our drive to combat climate change we will be looking for this to increase. We have committed an **additional £130 million to Scottish Forestry** to increase new planting and forestry land as well as an additional £20 million to further increase nursery stocks, investing in new facilities to support higher production.

An increase in tree planting not only provides carbon sequestration, wider environmental benefits and public health gains, it is also a source of employment and sustainable economic growth across all our landscapes and communities. That is why increasing the contribution of forests and woodlands to Scotland's sustainable and inclusive economic growth is a key objective of the Scottish Forestry Strategy 2019-2029.

We aim to support businesses of different types and scales to develop and grow markets for value-added wood products; increase forest tourism and recreation opportunities; and to attract new and more diverse talent to the forestry sector as well as improving the capacity, capabilities and safety of the existing workforce. To do this we have committed to increasing the annual volume of Scottish timber going into construction from 2.2 million cubic metres (2018) to 2.6 million cubic metres in

2021/2022 and to taking forward work with Scottish Forestry and Forestry and Land Scotland to double the existing number of opportunities for young people to 50.

The right tree, or bog, in the right place

Restoration of our carbon rich habitats such as peatland is an important part of our drive to reach net-zero. While most will rightly associate peatland restoration with Highland and Island landscapes, peatland restoration currently takes place across several of our conceptual landscapes. Peatland is often also considered for woodland creation, so it is important to ensure action taken delivers the best carbon savings. For this reason, Scottish Forestry does not plant woodland on soils with over 50 centimetres of peat, as these deep peats lock in more carbon as peatland habitats than they could as woodlands.

In addition to our multi-annual investment of more than £250 million over the next 10 years, the **Peatland Carbon Code** has been developed in partnership with NatureScot's Peatland Action programme, the Tweed Forum and Forest Carbon. This Code provides a voluntary certification for Peatland projects regarding the climate benefits of peatland restoration. In a similar vein to the Woodland Carbon Code this provides assurance about the carbon savings that investments made by individuals and business in peatland will realistically achieve.

Helping our land support...

... Climate Change mitigation & adaptation

Our land can and does contribute to climate change mitigation in several ways. Scotland has a long and positive association with renewable energy and our capacity to generate it will need to be increased to meet our net-zero targets. Our energy will continue to be provided by a wide and diverse range of renewable technologies, including onshore wind, therefore we must continue to develop wind farms in the right places and also look to the extension and re-placement of existing sites. As set out in our **Onshore Wind Policy Statement**, in order to achieve this developers and communities will need to work together to ensure that projects strike the right balance between environmental impacts, local support, benefit, and – where possible – economic benefits for communities, for example through community ownership or other means.

... Scotland's biodiversity and habitats

Our Biodiversity Strategy commits us to working to maintain and enhance the health of our ecosystems and protecting and restoring the biodiversity and native habitats of our uplands. Through the Biodiversity Challenge Fund support has been given to the re-establishment of rare montane scrub which supports a range of plant species and is an important foraging area for birds and mammals. Actions like this can then be complemented throughout the uplands by our farmers and crofters who traditionally manage their land in a low-input manner that can help to support biodiversity. Furthermore the Scottish Forestry's Woodland Grant Scheme has aided planting of native woodland species which will help restore areas of uplands to their natural vegetation. That is why, as part of our tree planting targets, we are committed to the creation of **3000-5000 hectares of native woodland each year**.

But for biodiversity to thrive we need to consider the impact we as humans have on the environment. This is in part driven by the consequences of the animals we keep and manage for food and sport. Both domestic livestock and wild animals can have a detrimental impact on our landscape and habitats, in particular native woodland, through overgrazing. The importance of effective deer management in contributing to addressing the challenges of both biodiversity loss and climate change is well understood and recognised. As such we have committed to publishing our response to the Werritty report on grouse moor management, to be followed later by our response to the Independent Working Group report on deer management.

... Our Communities

Scotland's land and landscapes are not only beautiful, inspiring places, they are working, living places that support the livelihoods of our communities. Scotland's food and drink industry has been one of our strongest economic performers, particularly for our rural economy and communities. We will work with the sector to launch our joint recovery plan including a new **Local Food Strategy** for Scotland and work to transform Scotland's convenience store sector to maximise local promotion and purchase of fresh, healthy Scottish produce.

Particularly in remote and rural areas, a successful crofting sector can help our rural communities to thrive, and it can be at the forefront of developing new and innovative practices to support our progress to net-zero. We will extend the work of the **Scottish Land Matching Service** to encourage uptake of vacant and/or underutilised crofts by new entrants. Bringing these crofts into use will provide opportunities for jobs, housing, and economic growth in those communities and give young people a chance to build their lives in the places they love.

We have also committed to the continued funding of the **Scottish Land Fund**. This fund provides **£10 million per year** to help communities purchase assets, and forms part of our ongoing support for communities to be engaged with and be able to influence land use decisions in their area.

National Parks are also required to produce management plans based around three sustainable core activities: Conservation, Visitor Experience and Rural Development. As part of their management plans, the National Park Authorities aim to increase the opportunities for communities to play a greater role in shaping their places and improving their quality of life, and building community capacity and empowerment through **Community Action Plans**.

Semi-natural land



Image from Adaptation Scotland – for illustrative purposes only

This landscape is characterised by areas of land that show minimal signs of present-day human influence. This landscape may include mountains and moorland, undeveloped coastline or peat bog.

How we are delivering sustainable land use

Protecting our semi-natural land

Our semi-natural lands are a big part of our national identity. They are also increasingly important havens for Scotland's wildlife, they attract visitors and tourists, provide significant economic benefits and can offer people multiple health benefits. We are committed to continuing to promote, protect and enhance the multiple benefits that can be gained through international, national and locally designated areas. Through the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 Scottish Ministers are required to ensure that securing positive effects for biodiversity will be one of the six key outcomes of the next National Planning Framework.

Living landscapes

While many of our semi-natural areas may show little sign of human activity today, they are not 'empty land', and were historically often more populated and actively managed. Many of their features are the result of human intervention over the centuries, producing landscapes that we often think of as wild nature, and value in part at least for the absence of modern infrastructure. These areas are also local to many rural communities, and are a key attraction for visitors to our country. Making sure rural communities can thrive and offer opportunities to young people and future generations will be a key priority for not only the new National Planning Framework 4 but is also central to our Green Recovery from this pandemic.

Restoring native ecology

Our semi-natural areas feature many peat-rich habitats and support a range of species unique to these landscapes. 25,480 hectares of peatland have undergone restoration in Scotland since 2012, and an **estimated 90,000 hectares are now under restoration** management at a cost of £31.4 million. Looking ahead we are committed to significantly increasing the rate of peatland restoration as one of the transformative changes needed to meet the targets set out in the Climate Change Plan and to protect and enhance Scotland's biodiversity.

Beyond peatland, our wider native ecology is being protected and enhanced through projects such as Trees for Life's rewilding centre at Dundreggan on the Glenmoriston estate near Loch Ness. The centre's aim is to protect and expand the globally important fragments of Scotland's ancient Caledonian Pine Forest. This has received more than £2 million of support from the **Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund**. Our ancient pine forest support a wide range of iconic native and protected species. Our

native broadleaved woodlands and forest edge shrubland provide habitat for the rare and elusive Scottish Wildcat.

Responsible tourism

Tourism is a vital lifeline for many rural communities, and continues to be heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. We have committed to producing a **new tourism strategy: Scotland Outlook 2030**. Through this we will work with VisitScotland to develop an appropriate recovery marketing strategy. This will support the recovery of local tourism and hospitality and also address issues such as 'dirty camping' to ensure that increased visitor numbers are managed well.

Helping our land support...

... Climate Change mitigation & adaptation

Our areas of semi-natural land may look rugged and robust, but like all natural habitats they are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. We must take care not to compromise the ability of natural systems to adapt to a changing climate.

Restoring peatland habitats to good environmental status will be a key part in ensuring they do not degrade further, maintain their function as a carbon sink, and can cope with the effects of a changing climate.

... Scotland's biodiversity and habitats

As mentioned above, protecting our native ecology from human impacts is key to ensuring Scotland's ecosystems can thrive. We have introduced legislation to protect mountain hares, one of our iconic species native to the Scottish Highlands, and make their unlicensed culling illegal. We have also funded initiatives to reintroduce other native species to our natural environment. In addition to direct conservation efforts, supporting our natural environments benefits a wide range of native plants and animals, some unique to Scotland and found nowhere else.

... Our Communities

Protecting our semi-natural areas is a combined effort and depends on making sure local communities and businesses can thrive alongside nature. The new National Planning Framework will be key in balancing the need for development and addressing rural depopulation with safeguarding the natural environments on which many remote communities depend.

Rivers and water bodies



Image from Adaptation Scotland – for illustrative purposes only

Scotland is renowned worldwide for the quality of its rivers, wetlands and lochs. They are some of the country's greatest natural assets; attracting visitors, contributing to the health and well-being of its people, supporting a rich diversity of wildlife and providing for the sustainable growth of its economy.

How we are delivering sustainable land use

Healthy water, healthy land

Rivers, lochs and wetlands are essential and much-loved parts of the landscape of Scotland. They provide us with the many benefits of a healthy water environment, which can be impacted by land use practices. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) are tasked with the role of protecting and enhancing our water environment, including through regulating to manage the impact of activities that pose risks to our water environment

In their **Framework for Water** SEPA have set out how we can achieve One Planet Prosperity within our water resources in Scotland, through consumption of water, the way we use land near water, and how we manage upstream and downstream environmental impacts. All of these actions combine to make sure we achieve our target for 87% of Scotland's water bodies to reach 'good' status by 2027.

SEPA also produce a **River Basin Management Plan (RBMP)** every six years. The plan is Scotland's route map for protecting and improving the water environment of the Scotland river basin district. It sets out what the Scottish Government, SEPA, responsible authorities and all Scotland's other public bodies will do to tackle pressures on the water environment.

Flood risk management

We are already seeing the effects of climate change in Scotland. We are experiencing more extreme weather events and rising sea levels and we must adapt to these changes. That is why we have committed to investing **an extra £150 million in flood risk management**, over a five-year period from 2021/22. This substantial investment complements the £42 million provided annually to Local Authorities to support investment in risk management measures throughout the country. The Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 ensures that we take a coordinated and planned approach to managing flood risk focusing on solutions across the catchment.

Helping our land support...

... Climate Change mitigation & adaptation

A resilient water environment can help Scotland adapt to an already changing climate, for example by helping to limit damage caused by floods and erosion and sustaining water supplies. Restoring peatland, a crucial wetland habitat, reduces our

emissions and increases our capacity to store carbon in the future. It also acts as a sponge to absorb rain and slow the flow of water that could potentially flood downstream. So peatland in good health increases our climate resilience as well.

... Scotland's biodiversity and habitats

Careful management of our land including of our soils, nutrients and organic matter can help to reduce waste and protect the water environment and the benefits it provides to the wider environment. An overload of nutrients in the water, for example from agricultural or industrial run-off, can suffocate aquatic life and damage water quality. Our vision for a healthy water environment encompasses ways of using our land to minimise these impacts, and working with farmers and wider industry to optimise best use of inputs; for example reduced fertiliser use not only protects the environment but saves money also.

Much of our water environment is in good condition. However, there are still significant issues affecting water quantity, quality, physical condition, water flows and levels, and the migration of wild fish. These are often related to land use, and to the already-changing climate. The River Basin Management Plan noted above sets out a range of actions to address these impacts. In order to further support this work SEPA's **Water Environment fund** targets projects that deliver the greatest benefit to Scotland's rivers and neighbouring communities.

... Our Communities

A healthy water environment supports the health and wellbeing of local communities, providing drinking water, irrigation, opportunities for recreation and active travel as well as storing and slowing floodwaters. Our water bodies provide a strong physical link between rural and urban landscapes, connecting uphill landscapes to lowland and coastal areas. Tree planting in upstream areas for example, can help keep downstream communities safer from flooding by absorbing rainfall and preventing soil erosion. Recognising these interlinkages, and the ways in which our natural capital supports us as a society is a key component of our drive to promote an **Ecosystem Approach** across land use and planning in Scotland.

Coastal



Image from Adaptation Scotland – for illustrative purposes only

Scotland's coasts, from rugged cliffs to pearly sandy beaches, are among our most cherished landscapes. You are never more than 40-50 miles away from the sea in Scotland, and our coastal communities are woven deep into the cultural fabric of our nation.

How we are delivering sustainable land use

Where the land meets the sea

Coastal planning is essential to making sure our coast is managed sustainably from both the terrestrial and marine side. Terrestrial planning authorities are required to give consideration to marine plans when developing strategic and Local Development Plans. Local Authorities will lead the Marine Planning Partnerships and will also be represented within Marine Planning Partnerships in other areas, to help to promote further alignment of marine and terrestrial planning policy.

Strengthening natural defences

Whilst reaching net-zero emissions is at the heart of Scotland's approach to tackling climate change, we must also prepare for the impacts of global change which are already locked in. We are already seeing the impact of warming in Scotland, as well as more extreme weather events and rising sea levels. Along our coasts natural defences, such as sand dunes and salt marshes, are protecting an estimated £13 billion of assets. With an increase in the rate of coastal erosion and sea level rises of up to 0.9 m predicted by the end of the century these natural defences must be conserved. The consequences of these changes can be tragic and as a nation we must adapt to these changes. That is why we're **investing £12 million to help adapt to the threat of sea level rises** and protect natural coastal defences from erosion.

Coastal and marine industries

We will develop a **Blue Economy Action Plan** to launch a programme of collaborative projects across the public sector, Scotland's science base, marine industries and the marine environmental sector. We will set out clear actions to strengthen the resilience of our marine industries - from renewable energy to fisheries - and the marine science, research and innovation which underpin them and to support coastal communities, recognising the vital importance to our marine economy of the abundant natural capital in Scotland's seas and rivers.

Aquaculture

With one foot in the sea and one foot on the land, aquaculture is an important but environmentally impactful industry in Scotland. The Blue Economy Action Plan will

include supporting the sustainable growth of aquaculture - which provides jobs in the most remote locations and island communities - by **improved regulatory processes**. These will be based on the application of available evidence and continued enhancements in the scientific base, with the aim of providing more benefit to the communities where aquaculture is based. Aquaculture activity in Scotland is regulated by SEPA, who publish the Finfish Aquaculture Sector Plan which covers all aspects of fish farming, including: supply chain; feed; hatcheries; freshwater fish pens; marine pen fish farms and processing facilities, with the aim of minimising environmental harm.

Helping our land support...

... Climate Change mitigation & adaptation

Rising sea levels, coastal erosion and flooding have caused substantial damage to our coastlines and communities and the pace of erosion is increasing. Shoreline Management and Flood Risk Management plans seek to reduce the impacts of flooding and sea level rises. However, our coastal communities will continue to be at risk from the devastating impact from flooding and sea level rises. **Natural shoreline habitats** and beaches and dunes play a vital role to combat the effects of climate change. This ecosystems approach can be used to support adaptation to a changing climate by, for example, moving coastal flood defences back to let shifting sand dunes replenish areas of shoreline and allow new areas of coastal habitat to develop, which can absorb wave energy.

The [Dynamic Coast project](#) has been investigating the resilience of Scotland's natural coastal defences (e.g. identifying where low dunes may breach) and estimating how erosion of our soft coast might be exacerbated by higher sea levels in the future. The evidence gained through this work is being used to support more sustainable coastal and terrestrial planning decisions, and is expected to herald more adaptive coastal management approaches that are 'sea level wise'.

... Scotland's biodiversity and habitats

Along much of Scotland's coastal areas, saltmarshes and sand dunes provide important habitats for a wide range of wildlife. They also absorb wave energy and the land behind saltmarshes is less likely to be eroded or flooded. **Saltmarsh and sand dune habitat restoration projects** such as those carried out at St Andrews and in the Dornoch Firth are demonstrating how we can use nature based approaches to both provide important habitats and improve the flood and erosion protection provided by these key habitats.

... Our Communities

Many of our coastal communities have become increasingly concerned with the impact of climate change on their way of life, with some declaring a climate emergency. The Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership has been set up to develop actions to safeguard their communities, businesses and assets in the light of climate change. These local and regional partnerships are important in translating national-level science and policy into on-the-ground action and in doing so are ensuring their communities and businesses' future is planned by design, not by

disaster. We understand that investing in our coastal communities is vital to support a green recovery and a just transition. The **Crown Estate Scotland's sustainable communities fund** is one example of this, and has been created to support local regeneration and sustainable development initiatives. Community Capacity Grants aim to provide early stage financial support for local community enterprise projects which contribute to the regeneration of places or create self-sustaining development through local economic, social or environmental benefits.

Islands



Image from Adaptation Scotland – for illustrative purposes only

Our islands have an abundance of outstanding natural resources, from unique ecosystems such as machair – which is one of the rarest habitats in Europe – to powerful winds and tides.

How we are delivering sustainable land use

Land amidst the seas

Scotland's first **National Island Plan** was published in 2019. It sets out 13 Strategic Objectives answering key areas such as increasing population levels, enhancing biosecurity, promoting sustainable economic development and environmental wellbeing. Many of the intentions put forward through the Plan showcase the alignment between the objectives for sustainable land use and the practical actions that can be taken to help improve the quality of life for our island communities. We have highlighted some of the key initiatives from the Plan below.

Protecting native species

Invasive species can irreparably damage delicate ecosystems, particularly on our islands. Over the next five years we will work with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy's **Non-Native Species Action Group** to increase public information around minimising particularly high-risk invasive species movements on islands.

Sustainable land use

With our island partners we will design **nature based solutions** to climate change that provide benefits including, for example the protection and restoration of peatlands and salt marshes. We will also work with our island communities, crofters, farmers and landowners to expand forests and woodlands on the islands, recognising our wider land-use objectives. As well as looking to ensure that sustainable land use including agriculture, crofting and forestry continues to provide jobs and opportunities to our island communities.

Prosperous island economies

We will work to promote a **thriving business environment** that allows individuals to pursue a wide range of economic opportunities on islands. This will include looking to build **on Scotland's National Marine Plan** and the upcoming Blue Economy Plan to ensure that fishing and other economic activities stemming from the sea provide increased sustainable opportunities for island communities.

Local engagement

We will also work closely with key stakeholders to ensure that **the voices of islanders are fully heard** as Scotland follows a just transition to a net-zero green and sustainable economy and that islands benefit from the many opportunities associated with this. We will also work to ensure that the National Islands Plan and relevant regional perspectives are reflected in the review of the current National

Planning Framework and Scottish Planning Policy throughout the preparation of National Planning Framework 4.

Low carbon pioneers

Our islands have been instrumental in our world-leading role in combating climate change. To continue and support this we have committed to a **£2 million fund for low carbon projects** on our islands. This Fund will help deliver on the **Rural and Islands Economic Recovery Plan**, and a number of low-carbon commitments in the National Islands Plan. It includes specific ring-fenced funding for capital projects on islands relating to net-zero and green recovery objectives, creating high-quality, skilled, green jobs in some of our most remote and vulnerable communities.

Helping our land support...

... Climate Change mitigation & adaptation

Our islands are playing a trailblazing role in innovation to support renewable energy. An example of this is *Surf 'n' Turf: Orkney's – Community Energy Scotland*. This project converts surplus electricity from Orkney's tidal and onshore wind sources into hydrogen. The hydrogen is stored and transported by road and sea to be used in Orkney when it is needed. Through our **Local Energy Challenge Fund (LECF)**, which is part of the Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) we continue to support innovative actions like these to find new ways to make the most of Scotland's renewable resources and reach our net-zero targets.

... Scotland's biodiversity and habitats

Machair is one of the rarest unique habitats in Europe, occurring only on the exposed North West coasts of Scotland and Ireland, including many of our North Western islands. Its low lying flat sandy landscape is largely made up of calcium rich crushed shells regularly blown ashore by Atlantic gales. Traditionally machair is one of Scotland's most remarkable living landscapes where the land is managed using traditional crofting practices such as light cattle grazing, hay cutting and low intensity rotational arable cultivation. This supports the formation of fertile high nature value grassland habitats of wildflowers, insects and bird life. Due to its low lying nature, and high winter water levels, machair is particularly vulnerable to climate change and rising sea levels.

... Our Communities

The implementation of the Islands Plan provides an opportunity to build on the **Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015**, which empowers communities to shape their individual and collective futures, regardless of where they live. The Act also makes it easier for communities to take on public sector land and buildings and it provides a mechanism for community bodies to seek dialogue with public service providers to help improve outcomes.

Benbecula, Eigg, Eriskay, Gigha, Great Bernera, Rum, South Uist and Ulva, along with parts of North Harris and the Isle of Lewis are all examples of trailblazing island communities who have come together to purchase their island from private landlords. Using a mix of community funding, donations, and grants from the Scottish Land Fund, these islands communities have demonstrated the art of the possible for community buy-outs. Now run and managed by community trusts, these islands are

developing as thriving communities with increasing populations and investment in infrastructure including housing and renewable energies.

NatureScot's **Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund** supports new opportunities to promote the outstanding scenery, wildlife and culture of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland in ways which support inclusive and sustainable economic growth. It will help to retain jobs and sustain populations and services in rural communities

Offshore



Image from Adaptation Scotland – for illustrative purposes only

As with rivers and coasts, it may seem counter-intuitive to talk about the offshore marine environment in a Land Use Strategy. However, the land and sea form an integrated ecosystem. The way we manage and use our land plays a key role in protecting our water bodies, increasing biodiversity, and minimising flood risk, which in turn can all affect our marine environment. The same can be said in reverse, as most development and use which takes place offshore also has onshore components and impacts.

How we are delivering sustainable land use

Aligning terrestrial and marine policy

The **Scottish National Marine Plan** is the key document for our territorial waters and puts forward our vision of clean, healthy, safe, productive and diverse seas; managed to meet the long term needs of nature and people. The Plan recognises the need for consistency when it comes to policy guidance, plans and decisions that affect both the marine and land based environment. This is especially true for the River Basin Management Plans and the current National Planning Framework and Scottish Planning Policy.

In order to achieve this the National Marine Plan provides a comprehensive overarching framework for all marine activity in our waters. It enables sustainable development and use of our marine area in a way which will **protect and enhance the marine environment whilst promoting both existing and emerging industries**. Through the delivery of the plan's strategic objectives we seek to integrate both the ecosystem approach and the guiding principles of sustainable development to deliver a robust approach to managing human impact on Scotland's seas.

Helping our seas support...

... Climate Change mitigation & adaptation

The National Marine Plan addresses both mitigation and adaptation. Technologies such as offshore wind will have a key role to play in reaching net-zero, while potential impacts of global heating include sea level rise, flooding, sea warming and declines in marine biodiversity. We are committed to the publication of both an **Offshore Wind Policy Statement** and the **Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind** in the autumn of 2020.

... Scotland's biodiversity and habitats

The National Marine Plan promotes an ecosystem approach, putting **the marine environment at the heart of the planning process** to promote ecosystem health, resilience to human induced change and the ability to support sustainable development and use. This Plan also adopts the guiding principles of sustainable

development, to ensure that any individual policy, plan or activity is carried out within environmental limits

... Our Communities

Sustainable development and use of the marine environment can provide multiple economic benefits at a community and national level, including **economic growth, skills development, employment, maintaining or increasing population levels and opportunities for investment and trade**. Particular consideration should be given to opportunities that aim to provide benefit to communities, including local job creation and local training either directly or through supply chain projects. Social benefits include those directly associated with economic growth such as increased wealth, improved quality of life and community regeneration. However, benefits of an intrinsic nature such as health and wellbeing associated with the natural and historic environment, a choice of location and lifestyle, sport and recreation are also important. Social benefits apply not only to coastal communities but also to those who travel to and use the marine and coastal environment for employment or leisure.

Q7: Do you think the landscapes are an effective way to communicate Scottish Government policy?

- A) Yes
- B) No
- C) I don't know
- D) I do not have enough information

Comments:

Please see Scottish Environment LINK's response in answer to this question.

Q8: Under each landscape we have identified three sub headings: *Climate Change, Biodiversity* and *Communities*. Do you think that these capture the crosscutting themes that are important to all of Scotland?

- A) Yes
- B) No
- C) I don't know
- D) I do not have enough information

Comments:

Health is also a cross-cutting theme. How land in Scotland is used directly and indirectly impacts the health of people in Scotland. See position statements published by the Scottish Landscape Alliance for evidence-based approaches to relevance and importance of managing landscapes for the health and wellbeing of people in Scotland.

Q9: Does the content of the Land Use Strategy and the manner in which it has been presented, demonstrate that the Scottish Government is taking steps to help deliver sustainable land use?

- A) Yes
- B) No
- C) I don't know
- D) I do not have enough information

Comments:

Please see Scottish Environment LINK's response in answer to this question.

Section 4 – Equality: Call for Evidence

Documented or academic evidence on the impact of land use on equality, in particular the protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010 is not widespread.

We have some data showing for example that there is a higher percentage of older people living in rural areas, and that older or disabled people have fewer opportunities to access the outdoors, but it is not a large evidence base.

We want to make sure we are not overlooking any potential impacts of the Land Use Strategy, which is why we are issuing a call for evidence:

Q10: If you have lived experience or have studied the impacts of land use, land use change, or access to the outdoors on age, disability, sex, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, please provide us with details about this in the box below.

You also have the option to upload documents via the consultation portal.

In addition to the protected characteristics enshrined in law, we are also interested in any potential impacts of the Land Use Strategy on island communities and young people.

Q11: Are you aware of any examples of how the Land Use Strategy might impact, positively or negatively, island communities in a way that is different from its impact on mainland areas?

Q12: Are there any particular current or future impacts you can think of on young people, (children, pupils, and young adults up to the age of 26) of land use, land use change, or any other aspect of the Land Use Strategy, positively or negatively. Please provide examples or evidence:

Responding to this Consultation

We are inviting responses to this consultation by 17 January 2021.

Please respond to this consultation using the Scottish Government's consultation hub, Citizen Space (<http://consult.gov.scot>). Access and respond to this consultation online at <https://consult.gov.scot/agriculture-and-rural-economy/consultation-scotlands-third-land-use-strategy>. You can save and return to your responses while the consultation is still open. Please ensure that consultation responses are submitted before the closing date of 17th of January 2021.

If you are unable to respond using our consultation hub, please complete the Respondent Information Form to:

Land Use Strategy Team
Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

Handling your response

If you respond using the consultation hub, you will be directed to the About You page before submitting your response. Please indicate how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are content for your response to be published. If you ask for your response not to be published, we will regard it as confidential, and we will treat it accordingly.

All respondents should be aware that the Scottish Government is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would therefore have to consider any request made to it under the Act for information relating to responses made to this consultation exercise.

If you are unable to respond via Citizen Space, please complete and return the Respondent Information Form included in this document.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy: <https://www.gov.scot/privacy/>

Next steps in the process

Where respondents have given permission for their response to be made public, and after we have checked that they contain no potentially defamatory material, responses will be made available to the public at <http://consult.gov.scot>. If you use the consultation hub to respond, you will receive a copy of your response via email.

Following the closing date, all responses will be analysed and considered along with any other available evidence to help us. Responses will be published where we have been given permission to do so. An analysis report will also be made available.

Comments and complaints

If you have any comments about how this consultation exercise has been conducted, please send them to the contact address above or at LandUseStrategy@gov.scot.

Scottish Government consultation process

Consultation is an essential part of the policymaking process. It gives us the opportunity to consider your opinion and expertise on a proposed area of work.

You can find all our consultations online: <http://consult.gov.scot>. Each consultation details the issues under consideration, as well as a way for you to give us your views, either online, by email or by post.

Responses will be analysed and used as part of the decision making process, along with a range of other available information and evidence. We will publish a report of this analysis for every consultation. Depending on the nature of the consultation exercise the responses received may:

- indicate the need for policy development or review
- inform the development of a particular policy
- help decisions to be made between alternative policy proposals
- be used to finalise legislation before it is implemented

While details of particular circumstances described in a response to a consultation exercise may usefully inform the policy process, consultation exercises cannot address individual concerns and comments, which should be directed to the relevant public body.

Consultation on Scotland's Third Land Use Strategy



RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy:
<https://www.gov.scot/privacy/>

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

Phone number

Address

Postcode

Email

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name
 Publish response only (without name)
 Do not publish response

Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

No



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

© Crown copyright 2020

OGL

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3 or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at www.gov.scot

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-80004-380-0 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, December 2020

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS785866 (12/20)

W W W . g o v . s c o t