

Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045

Tackling the Nature Emergency in Scotland

Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment

November 2024

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Title of Strategy: Biodiversity Strategy to 2045: Tackling the nature emergency

Summary of aims and expected outcomes of strategy, proposal, programme or policy

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045: tackling the nature emergency sets out the compelling evidence of long-standing global and Scottish biodiversity loss and our high-level goals for biodiversity: to be Nature Positive, halting biodiversity loss by 2030 and to have restored and regenerated biodiversity across the country by 2045.

This is embodied in the Strategic Vision:

By 2045, Scotland will have restored and regenerated biodiversity across our land, freshwater and seas. Our natural environment, our habitats, ecosystems and species, will be diverse, thriving, resilient and adapting to climate change.

Regenerated biodiversity will drive a sustainable economy and support thriving communities, and people.

The strategy is supported by a series of 6 year rolling delivery plans with over 100 actions brigaded under 6 key objectives:

1. Accelerate restoration and regeneration;
2. Protect nature on land and at sea, across and beyond protected areas;
3. Embed nature positive farming, fishing and forestry;
4. Protect and support the recovery of vulnerable and important species and habitats;
5. Invest in Nature; and,
6. Take action on the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss.

A new Natural Environment Bill to be introduced in year 4 of this Parliament will set out a framework for new statutory nature restoration targets helping to drive action.

The Strategy sets out the opportunities that reversing the loss of biodiversity will generate. Restoring nature will lead to a Greener, Fairer and more prosperous Scotland for all. A just transition lies at the heart of how we will tackle the crisis - our approach will generate opportunities for business, stimulate public and private investment and support thriving rural, urban and island communities.

The actions we take to improve biodiversity will create new green jobs and economic opportunities to supporting thriving communities.

Summary of evidence

This Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment has been developed drawing on a range of primary and other source documents, including responses to the public consultation on the draft strategy in September 2022. The consultation received 1,289 responses (including 1,010 in response to two campaigns by the RSPB and the Woodland Trust). It was published in draft to ensure that the outcomes of COP15 could be incorporated into a final strategy. An updated version was included in the strategic framework consultation to provide a link from strategy to delivery plan but did not seek any further views.

Evidence was also gathered from internal workshops with relevant policy areas including housing, agriculture, just transition, climate change and skills and development. Evidence identified as part of the FSDA for the Scottish National Adaptation Plan 2024- 2029 was also considered.

The evidence suggested the potential for both positive and negative impacts on socio-economically disadvantaged groups, in relation to the Biodiversity strategy: These include

- Access to affordable housing
- Creation of green jobs
- Access to green space (health benefits)

Access to affordable housing

A key strategy outcome, in line with Biodiversity Global targets, is to increase the area of protected land in Scotland by 30% by 2030. Increasing protected areas has the potential to result in planning restrictions including affordable housing developments. Evidence¹ suggests restrictions on land for housing could impact on the availability for affordable housing for tenure/rent and that the location of households across Scotland can influence the level of social housing available.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that housing costs have a direct impact on poverty and material deprivation, and that increasing affordable social housing will help tackle poverty in Scotland.

In addition people on low incomes or who are unemployed and seeking work are more likely to live in the social rented sector. According to the 2019 Scottish Household Survey, 21% of households in the social rented sector did not manage well financially. This was significantly higher than among owner occupier households

¹ [Social housing net zero standard consultation: Fairer Scotland duty assessment - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/social-housing-net-zero-standard-consultation/fairer-scotland-duty-assessment/pages/12.aspx)
[Housing to 2040 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-to-2040/pages/12.aspx)

(3%) and households in the private rented sector (14%). While not all people living in deprived areas will be on low incomes, they are more likely to be.

Differences in housing costs between areas can limit the neighbourhoods that people on lower incomes can live in. For example, the Scottish Household Survey 2019 found that 47% of socially rented households were in the most deprived areas compared to 17% of privately rented households and 12% of owner-occupied households. This has been increasing since 2013.

Areas with high biodiversity value are seen as more desirable to live in, which increases house prices and private rents. The Cairngorms National Partnership Plan (2022-2027)² has identified that median house prices are around six times higher than median household incomes within the Park.

The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Housing Market Pressures Report (2022)³ found evidence which indicates that there are considerable housing pressures across LLTNP including affordability and limited housing choice for a significant proportion of households living and working in the park area. Some respondents to the consultation also raised concerns that that extra planning restrictions would drive up house prices.

“As with the cairngorm national park, there are extra restrictions on house building which drives up house prices.”

“Will make it harder to deliver affordable housing in rural areas”.

“The costs of living in the countryside are only going to increase and that will make it harder for the lower paid to continue to live in the countryside.”

Creation of green jobs

A key strategy outcome is the creation of new green jobs and economic opportunities to supporting thriving communities. Evidence suggests that poorer skills attainment associated with socio-economic disadvantage may influence people’s ability to gain secure and well-paid employment. These groups of people may be more likely to miss out on job opportunities created through the actions needed to deliver the ambition set out in the biodiversity strategy.⁴

Often this can be attributed to circumstances – those living in poverty are more likely to have caring responsibilities, be one parent households or have limited or no access to a car. People from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to have access to networks and opportunities for placement experience to boost chances in jobs markets compared to those from higher incomes.

² [Priority 7: Housing - Cairngorms National Park Authority](#)

³ [2022 Housing Market Research - Here. Now. All of us. - Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park \(lochlomond-trossachs.org\)](#)

⁴ [Green Jobs in Scotland – skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk](#)

The report 'Green Jobs in Scotland: An inclusive approach to definition, measurement and analysis' (2022)⁵ found that green jobs are better paid, with median advertised wages higher than those of non-green jobs.

Professional and skilled trades occupations make up the highest proportion of green jobs, with new and emerging green jobs dominated by engineering occupations. Based on the size of its labour market, Scotland has the highest concentration of green jobs in the UK. In 2022, 3.3% of all job adverts in Scotland were for jobs that have a positive impact on the environment, up from 1.7% in 2021. This helped Scotland retain first place among 12 nations and regions of the UK in the Green Jobs Barometer developed by the consultancy PWC.

Evidence suggests that those in the agriculture sector have concerns that the net-zero transition will see people lose their livelihoods and fundamentally change their way of life. Compared with other sectors, relatively low proportions of those working in agriculture have formal qualifications or engage in regular Continuing Professional Development and there will be a need to work with farmers and land managers in order to develop new skills.⁶

Access to green space

An outcome of the strategy is the creation of nature rich environments in towns and cities close to all communities contributing to nature networks and measurable increases in urban biodiversity. Evidence suggests that people who experience socio-economic disadvantage may be more restricted in their access to green space.

In the most recent years access to green/blue space was lowest in the most deprived quintile of areas (62% in SIMD 1 compared with 73% in SIMD 4). Also in 2018, people in SIMD 1 were least likely to make visits to the outdoors (43%), while those in SIMD 5 were most likely (66%.) The Scottish Household Survey Key Findings (2020) found that adults living most deprived areas were more likely not to have not made any visits to the outdoors in the past 12 months compared to those in least deprived areas.

The Scottish Household Survey 2021 reported that most adults (70%) living within a five-minute walk of their nearest area of green or blue space in 2021, was around the same proportion as 2020 (68%). This proportion was lower for adults in the 20% most deprived areas (62%) compared to other areas (all 70% or above)

However, those who lived closer to their nearest green or blue space were more likely to use it more frequently: 59% of those living within five minutes' walk visited every day or several times a week compared to 17% of the smaller proportion living more than ten minutes' walk away. Furthermore, the proportion of people who lived more than ten minutes' walk from their nearest green or blue space and who did not

⁵ [Green Jobs in Scotland – skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk](https://skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk)

⁶ [Just Transition Commission: A National Mission for a fairer, greener Scotland \(gov.scot\)](https://gov.scot)

use it at all (27%) was more than double the corresponding proportion of people who lived within five minutes' walk (11%).

This evidence suggests that living in close proximity to green space increases visits to the outdoors, which will consequently improve the health and wellbeing of those communities. People living in areas of multiple deprivation are more likely to suffer ill-health and it is well documented that time spent outdoors in nature has multiple benefits for physical and mental health.

Summary of assessment findings

The Biodiversity Strategy is not directly aimed at any particular socio-economic group. We all depend on biodiversity - the biodiversity crisis affects everyone. It provides our food, helps prevent flooding and soil erosion, purifies our water and contributes to our wellbeing, by providing recreation and a sense of place. It is anticipated that in the long-term the Strategy will impact positively on all sectors of society through the provision of thriving and resilient ecosystems, access to green jobs and green spaces.

Inequality of outcome: access to affordable housing

Scotland in line with the Global Framework for Biodiversity is committed to ensuring we are on track to protect 30% of land in Scotland for nature by 2030. Designated protected areas currently account for around 18% of Scotland's land, so a 12% increase is required. The designation of protected areas however does not necessarily mean restrictions to development and specifically on housing – the strategy recognises that in order to achieve the ambition it is dependent on thriving communities in urban and rural areas and access to affordable housing is essential. Nature and climate lie at the heart of the NPF4 and it is clear that both are considered as part of the planning process including requirements to ensure positive outcomes for biodiversity in any new developments.

It is expected that the majority of land to increase protected areas to 30% by 2030 will be using a mechanism known as Other effective conservation measures (OECMs.) These are areas of land which are not protected areas, but are in long term management for biodiversity, and will contribute to a wider nature network. OECMs will not necessarily restrict any housing development, and OECMs may be created as a result of housing development through the requirement in National Planning Framework 4 to achieve positive effects for biodiversity. It is expected that the national policy on OECMs will sit alongside local guidance regarding the consideration of OECMs in any planning applications.

Inequality of outcome: access to green jobs

The SBS includes a priority action to provide direction on, and investment in green skills and local economic opportunities supporting nature-based education, skills and volunteering.

The Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan (CESAP) published in 2020 provides an important springboard for net zero skills planning and good progress has been made since its publication. The [CESAP Pathfinder](#) publication highlights that investment in net zero is progressing, with nearly £90 billion in green investments currently underway or planned in the next three years. The Pathfinder also provides a strong evidential underpinning across apprenticeships, further education, and higher education that will inform next steps. These are recognised as key opportunities for upskilling for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

It is important that our education and skills landscape is flexible, adaptable, and easier to navigate for employers, learners, and training providers. The Scottish Government intend to fully align green skills policy and planning behind wider Net Zero and Nature Positive priorities with the next phase focusing on integrating green skills into the Just Transition Plans, Green Industrial Strategy and Rural Delivery Plan, rather than through a separate CESAP update. The CESAP Implementation Steering Group, will continue to play a critical role in informing the net zero transition, sending strong signals to the education and skills system on the need for urgent action to tackle net zero, and supporting the development of relevant strategies, including the Just Transition Plans, Green Industrial Strategy and Rural Delivery Plan.

The Biodiversity Investment Plan which will support the delivery of outcomes in the SBS will focus on how we address the Finance Gap for nature, and to establish a values-led, high-integrity market for responsible private investment in natural capital, supported by a national project pipeline for nature-based solutions. These actions will bring investment and create jobs in the communities where the projects are established.

There is evidence identifying ways to make opportunities created inclusive through support towards employment & progression:

- recruitment & selection to help disadvantaged people into jobs
- paid, work-based initiatives & educational partnerships
- flexible pathways to training for local economic needs
- help with transport & childcare, flexible working
- in-work advancement service / business support service

Inequality of outcome: Access to green space

Key outcomes of the Strategy are that, by 2030, protected areas will be larger, better connected and in good condition, and that, by 2045, towns and cities will include nature-rich environments close to all communities, contributing to Nature Networks and measurable increases in urban biodiversity. These outcomes serve to bring nature closer to people through increasing and improving access to quality green space. Increasing access to green and blue space in areas of multiple deprivation is likely to increase visits to the outdoors. Funding has been provided through the

Nature Restoration Fund to every local authority in Scotland to support the development of Nature Networks. These will enhance ecological connectivity by providing wildlife sites, corridors and stepping stones, landscape features, watercourses, green and blue spaces that together form an integrated network. Bringing nature closer to people in this way provides multiple co-benefits including active travel networks, flood risk mitigation, cleaner waterways, cleaner air and sustainable local food production.

Assessment and Improvement

Overall the Strategy is relevant to everyone and will provide positive outcomes for the people of Scotland. Biodiversity has enormous value in its own right but is also central to our survival as a species. The strategy articulates a vision for a future where Scotland's natural environment is restored and is supporting thriving communities. It includes outcomes and objectives to set us on the path to delivering the vision. We recognise that people from disadvantaged socio-economic may be impacted by the actions needed to deliver the vision. Potential negative impacts specifically around access to affordable housing are taken into account in terms of the mechanisms deployed to increase protected areas (i.e. OECMs) as well as safeguarded through NPF4 which ensures developments will demonstrate net positive effects for biodiversity, resulting in more natural areas in and around new housing developments as well as affordable housing, to the benefit of people's physical and mental health. Access to green space will be further enhanced through our commitment to increase protected areas and to develop a nature network within each local authority increasing opportunities to benefit from visiting the outdoors. Our commitment to ensuring a just transition as we move to a net zero nature positive future includes the creation of green jobs – this requires continued working across government (i.e. CESAP) to provide opportunities for upskilling those from disadvantaged socio- economic backgrounds to take advantage of the creation of green jobs to deliver on both our climate and nature ambitions.

Sign off

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Date: 12 November 2024



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

ISBN: 978-1-83691-037-4 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, November 2024

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS1530570 (11/24)

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