



Scotland's Land Use Strategy

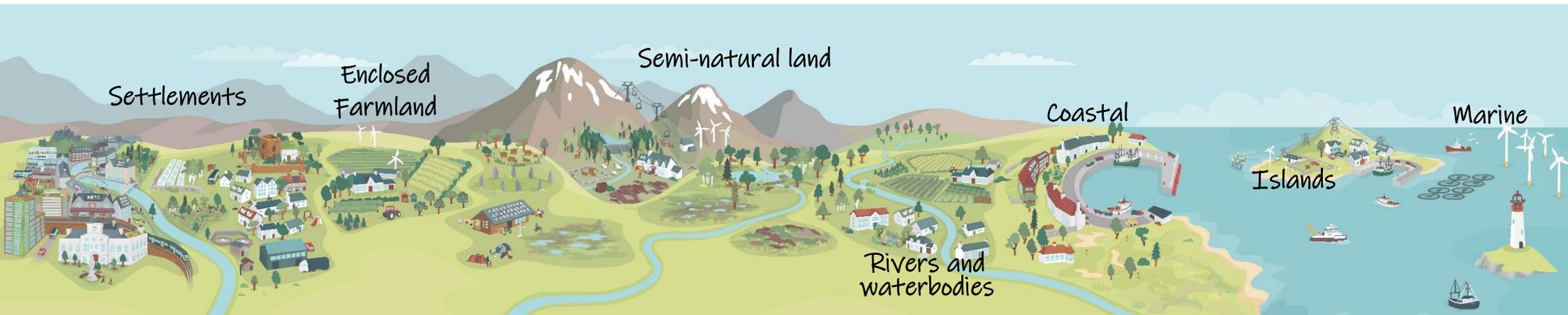
Annual Progress Report – 2021/2022

Laid before the Scottish Parliament by the Scottish Ministers under section 37A of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009

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Introduction

The way we own, use and manage our land is fundamental to how we live in Scotland and it plays an integral part in delivering outcomes across our [National Performance Framework](#) such as the Environment, Economy, Communities and Health. Through the Land Use Strategy we have set out our long term vision for sustainable land use, and we compile annual progress reports documenting Scotland's journey towards realising this vision.

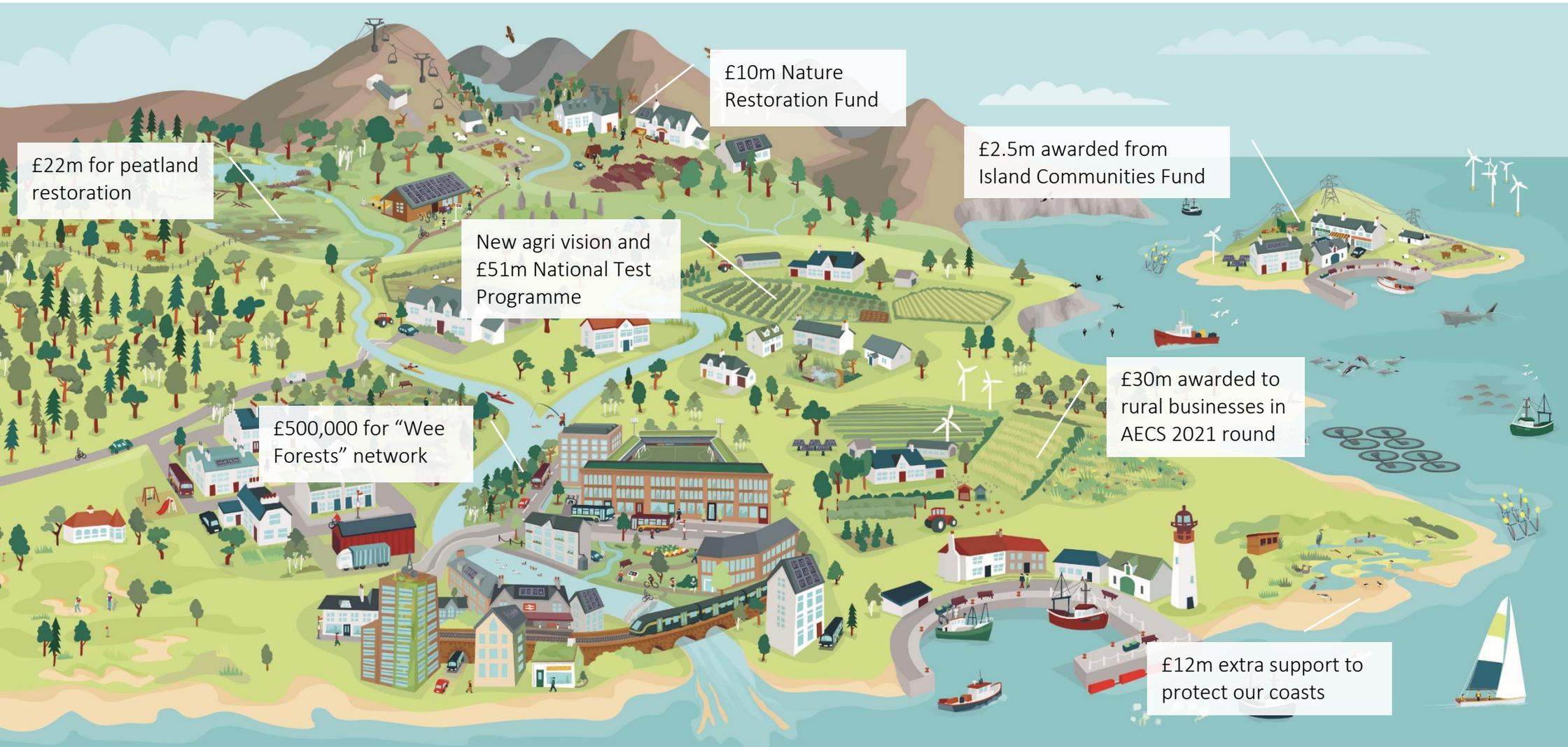
This report summarises the actions taken or announced in 2021-2022 that contribute towards sustainable land use. We have used the Future Scotland graphic from the Third Land Use Strategy (LUS3) overleaf to illustrate what some of these actions might look like in practice. Also included for the first time is a series of case studies from across Scotland to showcase how land use can deliver benefits for nature, communities and our economy.

Legislative background

Land use has long been recognised as playing a vital role in tackling the climate and environment crises and adapting to inevitable climate change. Section 37A of The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 places a legal duty on Scottish Ministers to produce annual progress reports on the Land Use Strategy.

This document is the third of such reports and covers the period of March 2021 to March 2022. It is the first edition to report for *Scotland's Third Land Use Strategy 2021 -2026*, published March 2021.

Examples of actions towards sustainable land use in 2021



£22m for peatland restoration

£10m Nature Restoration Fund

£2.5m awarded from Island Communities Fund

New agri vision and £51m National Test Programme

£500,000 for “Wee Forests” network

£30m awarded to rural businesses in AECS 2021 round

£12m extra support to protect our coasts

Actions taken towards sustainable land use between April 2021 and March 2022

£22 million for peatland restoration

In 2021-22, five delivery partners including NatureScot and Scottish Water were awarded a share of [£22 million to deliver a range of new and existing restoration projects](#) across Scotland. This funding represents part of our multi-year spending package of £250 million over ten years. Since 2012, [NatureScot's Peatland ACTION](#) initiative has already put more than 25,000 hectares of peatland on the road to recovery, meaning that 75% of the peatland that has been restored in Scotland has funded through the project.

Degraded peatlands emit substantially more carbon than they remove, and are a net source of greenhouse gases. Restoring peatlands reduces these emissions, supports habitats and species, improves water quality, helps manage flood risk and enables the peat to sequester carbon in the long term. 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.

Supports: Enclosed Farmland, Semi-natural Land and Islands

AECS 2021 Round

More than 600 rural businesses were awarded £30 million from the latest round of the [Agri-Environment Climate Scheme \(AECS\) 2021](#), implementing projects that protect the environment and mitigate the impact of climate change. Launched in 2015 to promote land management practices which protect and enhance Scotland's natural heritage, improve water quality, manage flood risk and mitigate and adapt to climate change. AECS has committed £243 million to support almost 3000 businesses since it launched. This funding for the sector has helped us restore and enhance nature through increased biodiversity, improved soils and contributions to mitigating climate change at the same time providing high quality, locally produced food.

In October 2021, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands announced the extension of the scheme up to 2024 with a new round opening in each new calendar year. Agri-environment investment will continue as part of an overall £36 million budget, funding a suite of measures aimed at promoting low carbon farming and protecting the environment.

The AECS budget will also support development and delivery of the [National Test Programme](#) and the work with NatureScot on the Natural Capital Pilot Programme.

NatureScot is leading [the Natural Capital Pilot Programme \(NCAPP\)](#) which will help inform the development of future support mechanisms for land-based businesses. The first phases of the proposals, which largely involved scoping and initial research, are now complete. Several projects have moved on to active phases where NatureScot are looking to integrate the projects onto farms, which will impact on the wider policy agenda. We are working closely with NatureScot colleagues to ensure that evidence gathered from NCAPP is feeding into Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) replacement work on an iterative basis, so that any relevant findings are incorporated into our planning for the future.

Supports: Enclosed Farmland and Semi-natural Land

Wee Forests

Launched in 2021, communities and schools are benefitting from a new network of “Wee Forests” in towns and cities across Scotland, backed by £500,000 Scottish Government funding. Led by NatureScot, the programme aims to give people the opportunity to help tackle the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss by creating and caring for their own forest in their own neighbourhood.

Twenty forests were planted in the 21/22 season in partnership with a range of accredited environmental organisations that were trained in the Wee Forest planting method and ecological monitoring protocols. To create each forest, around 600 native trees are planted by “Wee Foresters” in an area the size of a tennis court. Volunteer keeper teams will look after the forests over the long term and schools will use the forests for outdoor learning.

Supports: Settlements



A [Wee Forest](#) is a dense, native woodland that helps deal with the effects of climate change, supports urban wildlife and provides a place where you can experience nature. Edinburgh's first Wee Forest was planted in West Pilton Park on 14 October 2021 by local residents, volunteers, and pupils from Forthside, St Davids RC and Pirniehall Primary schools (photo above). The planting day was coordinated by Edinburgh & the Lothians Greenspace Trust and Earthwatch Europe in collaboration with the City of Edinburgh Council who provided the land.

To find out more about wee forests, visit:
www.earthwatch.org.uk/tinyforests

Creating opportunities for women in agriculture

More women and girls working in Scottish agriculture have been able to access [extra funding for courses](#) this year, including in Environmental and Sustainability themed practical training. The Agriculture Development Programme is [a series of training courses](#), designed to support and build confidence, enhance skills, and develop leadership abilities.

Due to the success of the pilot and the positive feedback from those who have taken part, further funding of £300,000 per year until 2024/25 has been committed. Another series of *Be Your Best Self* courses were delivered in October 2021 and January 2022 by the People Portfolio, and these will continue at regular intervals.

Supports: Enclosed Farmland, Semi-natural Land and Islands

Regional Land Use Partnerships

Scotland's five Regional Land Use Partnership (RLUP) pilot areas have been focused on the formulation of their structures and governance. This initial step is vital as the pilots look to engage across the spectrum of regional interests. This inclusive approach is at the heart of ambitions for RLUPs and will be fundamental to the development of representative Regional Land Use Frameworks by the end of 2023. Publication of structures and governance is expected during the first half of 2022/23, falling outside of the timings of this report.

Supports: All landscapes

Vacant and derelict land

The £50 million low carbon [Vacant and Derelict Land Investment Programme \(VDLIP\)](#) was opened to applications for funding in 2022/23. This capital funding will support place based approaches to tackling persistent vacant and derelict land, delivering regeneration and sustainable inclusive growth as part of the green recovery. It will help promote equality, health and wellbeing across Scotland, especially in more disadvantaged areas where persistent vacant and derelict land tends to be most concentrated. The fund is open to all 32 Scottish local authorities and the Clyde Gateway Urban Regeneration Company.

Supports: Settlements

Woodland planting targets 2021/2022

Scottish Forestry has helped ministers to promote sustainable Forest Management [through the Forestry Grant Scheme](#), which supports woodland creation, improvement of existing forests and sustainable management of native woodlands and our [Atlantic rainforests](#). For the 2021/22 woodland creation target, we expect to lead the way again by achieving in excess of 85% of all new woodland creation across the four UK nations, helping to deliver targets set out in the Climate Change Plan update. Of this year's target, more than 35% will be new native woodland and more than half the applications for grants are coming from small land owners, mainly farmers, on land areas of 20 Ha or less.

Supports: Settlements, Enclosed Farmland, Semi-natural Land, Rivers and Watercourses, Coastal

Organics

Published on the first of September 2021 the Scottish Government and Scottish Green Party - Shared Policy Programme set out commitments to support the growth of the organic farming sector through the establishment of a new Organic Food and Farming Action Plan with ambitious targets for at least the doubling of the area of land under organic management by the end of this parliamentary session. Through the AECS 2021 Round Scottish farmers and crofters are able to apply for support for conversion to and maintenance of organic land. Approvals from the 2021 round have seen the area of organic land receiving support increase by a fifth from the previous year, and over the life of the Scheme the Scottish government has supported the conversion of 35,000 Ha of land to organic standards and the total area under organic management in 2022 is 87,412 Ha.

Supports: Enclosed Farmland and Semi-natural Land

Nature Restoration Fund

Projects that restore nature, safeguard wildlife and tackle the causes of biodiversity loss and climate change have received funding from a new £10 million Scottish Government fund in 2021. [The Nature Restoration Fund](#) supports a mix of urban and rural-focused projects, such as improving greenspace for outdoor learning, green active travel routes, planting of wildlife corridors and natural flood management. Half of the funding for 2021 went to local authorities to develop new or existing projects which help address the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change, but which also aim to promote the health and wellbeing of local communities and reduce inequalities.

The remaining £5 million included a competitive small project fund as well as directly funding established nature restoration projects across Scotland, including native-tree planting, nature restoration in rivers, lochs and coasts, and improving and connecting habitats. A further £12.5 million will be made available for 2022-23 and over this parliament we will invest at least £65 million through this annual fund.

Supports: All landscapes

Agriculture Reform Implementation Oversight Board

Individuals representing land based businesses covering a range of farming, geographical and environmental interests were appointed to a new [Agriculture Reform Implementation Oversight Board \(ARIOB\)](#), co-chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands and National Farmers Union Scotland (NFUS) President Martin Kennedy. The new Board is helping to develop new proposals for sustainable farming support by considering the Climate Change Plan Update and the Farmer-led Groups recommendations, alongside industry reports. The ARIOB places farmers and crofters at the heart of rural support frameworks and will help Scottish agriculture become more economically and environmentally sustainable. Its early focus has been on livestock emissions and in particular driving forwards the detailed work of the Suckler Beef Group. The group is being supported by an expanded Scottish Government Academic Advisory panel that draws on the best available science, knowledge and expertise and supports the growth of the evidence base.

Supports: Enclosed Farmland and Semi-natural Land

Island Communities Fund

People living in Scotland's island-based communities have benefitted from new funding for projects designed to support employment, community resilience and health and wellbeing.

Through a £2.5 million investment, [the Island Communities Fund](#) has supported 35 successful community groups and businesses across 55 islands that have been awarded grants of up to £150,000 each. Projects focus on developing sustainable economic activities on islands with the majority of projects having a net zero theme, while also supporting the delivery of the Scottish Government's National Islands Plan (2019). The Fund is managed by Inspiring Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government and funded from the £9.5 million committed to the Islands Programme for 2021/22.

Projects include the installation of a range of spinning mills to allow full processing of fleece into yarn on Foula, which will use electricity from Foula's off grid renewable network, as well as a project to expand a community garden on Lewis to improve mental health opportunities, and the expansion of the Iolaire Point and Sandwick Coastal Community Path (in box). The Island Communities Fund builds on the success of the [Islands Green Recovery Programme](#) 2020/2021 ([case study](#) available on page 10).

Supports: Islands

National Test Programme and new vision for Agriculture

A National Test Programme was announced and will begin in spring 2022, with [up to £51 million of investment](#) over the following three



Healthy Islands Fund

A new coastal path to connect the community:

Iolaire Section of Coastal Path

Image shows: Alasdair Nicholson, Cllr Angus McCormack (Trustee) Nicola MacSween (Trustee) Tony Robson (Engineer)

[Healthy Island Funding](#) has been awarded to a critical section of coastal path to connect communities on Lewis. In January 2022 work began creating a link between Sandwick, on the outskirts of Stornoway, and the Iolaire monument. This project is helping local communities improve access for walkers and users to use and enjoy the natural environment and marine margins. The wider aims of the funding include promoting health and wellbeing, recreation and enjoying the historic environment, and supporting rural development by combating poverty and ill health.

years. The Programme will support and encourage farmers and crofters to learn about how their work impacts on climate and nature, including offering financial support to carry out carbon audits and nutrient management plans.

This will establish a clear baseline and options for action for all who participate. By working with a focus group of farmers and crofters, the Programme will also help understanding of how sustainable farming can be supported and rewarded in future.

The Programme establishes a twin track approach:

- In the first track, every farm in Scotland will be supported and encouraged to undertake baseline measures over the next few years starting with a Carbon Audit or Nutrient Management Plan, including soil testing, for their individual farm business. Further options, such as Biodiversity Assessments and Animal Health and Welfare plans are likely to be added to the programme as it develops.
- The second track will work with a focused group of farmers and crofters from across Scottish agriculture to design and test how we will measure and reward sustainable farming practice in the future.

In addition to these efforts, in March 2022 we published our [new vision for Scottish Agriculture](#), which sets out our commitment to transform how we support farming and food production in Scotland to become a global leader in sustainable and regenerative agriculture. This vision will sit at the heart of a robust and coherent framework to underpin Scotland's future agriculture support regime from 2025 onwards.

It is our ambition that Scotland will have a support framework that delivers high quality food production, climate mitigation and adaptation, and nature restoration. High quality, nutritious food that is locally and sustainably produced is key to our wellbeing – in economic, environmental, social and health terms.

Supports: Enclosed Farmland and Semi-natural Land

Funding new ideas in rural communities

The Rural Communities [“Ideas into Action”](#) Fund was launched on 13th September 2021 and is supported by £1.8 million of Scottish Government funding delivered in partnership with Inspiring Scotland. It is supporting 120 not-for-profit community groups to take forward ideas to address local challenges. The successful projects will test new approaches to community led local development under a broad range of themes including mental health and wellbeing, net zero and climate action ambitions, and community collaboration.

The projects funded are as diverse as Scotland's rural communities, and include new approaches to affordable housing, local food production and delivery, facilities for sustainable tourism and youth skills development. The learning from these projects will inform future policy and delivery of £11.6 million funding in 2022-23 to further support community led development in rural and island communities across Scotland.

Supports: Islands, Enclosed Farmland and Semi-natural Land



Islands Green Recovery Programme 2020-2021: Woodside Arran.

Woodside Arran was established in 2017 and works to increase access to fresh, affordable, sustainable produce, whilst educating about the importance of local food resilience, healthy nutrition and sustainable agriculture on the Isle of Arran. The funding has enabled Woodside Arran to install a fresh food vending machine, in Brodick, which will be filled daily with locally grown fresh produce. The grant will also enable the purchase of an additional 13 acres of land to expand the business and plant both trees and additional crops. This project supports agricultural practices that actively sequester carbon with agroforestry crops and holistic grazing management which has enabled the investment to deliver many of the ambitions within the [Islands Green Recovery Programme](#).

Carbon Neutral Islands

The [Carbon Neutral Islands project](#) will embrace the opportunity for island communities to lead the way in realising Scotland's climate change ambitions. Directly supporting 6 islands in their journey towards carbon neutrality by 2040, this will not only benefit the environment but support local economies, facilities and general wellbeing through investment in communities.

The project is intended to benefit all Scottish islands, not only those included directly as part of the project. This will be achieved through knowledge exchange and sharing of good practices stemming from the implementation phase of the project. By summer 2022, we will publish a report setting out the steps we will take to support the islands included in the project, as well as how this work will benefit all other Scottish islands.

Supports: Islands

Support to protect Scotland's coastlines

As part of the [Dynamic Coast](#) project, funded by the Scottish Government through the Centre of Expertise for Waters (CREW), the University of Glasgow has developed new maps to serve as a coastal change adaptation planning tool for government, agencies, local authorities as well as communities and businesses. The government is encouraging local authorities to prepare coastal adaptation plans using evidence from the maps, [supported by an additional £12 million of investment](#). Dynamic Coast forms part of a wider national programme to build resilience against the increasing climate-related risk in Scotland.

Supports: Coastal and Islands

Improving slurry regulations

[Slurry and digestate controls](#) were consolidated into the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 through the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021. These include controls on the storage facilities for slurry and digestate to maintain their integrity and reduce the risk of pollution incidents, along with a move to more precise spreading to maximise the nutrient benefit, protect the water environment and reduce emissions.

Agriculture is the largest contributor to ammonia emissions and a key element of the regulations is the phasing out of broadcast spreading of slurries by splash plates and the introduction of low-emission, precision spreading equipment. While slurry and digestate are important nutrients for use on our farms, they can also be damaging to our natural environment if not used properly, causing harmful emissions into our air and water.

By using low emission, precision equipment, we can reduce the ammonia emissions by up to 70%, protecting our vital water environment and reducing the agricultural impact on climate change. This will also make an important contribution to the commitments on reducing air pollutant emissions from agricultural activity, which are set out in our new air quality strategy which was published in July 2021.

Supports: Rivers and Waterbodies, all landscapes



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

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Edinburgh
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