

Scottish Government response to the report of the Independent Commission for the Land-based Learning Review – Implementation Plan

January 2025

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Introduction

The Commission for the Review of Land-based Learning's remit was to provide Ministers with evidence-based recommendations to attract and equip more people, particularly women and young people, with the skills and knowledge needed to work in the land-based and aquaculture sectors by improving learning pathways. Their [report](#) was submitted to Scottish Ministers on 18 January 2023.

The Scottish Government published its [response](#) to the Review on 30 April 2024, which gave a commitment to publish an Implementation Plan to action the 21 recommendations which were all either accepted or accepted in principle (Recommendation 6 has been completed). This Implementation Plan sets the main Outputs, Implementing Actions, Timescales and Milestones for delivering the response to the recommendations. Delivery of these recommendations involves Scottish Government policy teams working with stakeholder organisations, which is fundamental to, and supports existing work priorities and commitments.

The recommendations, and so our response to them, vary in their scope and scale; ranging from specific, practical changes to being part of broader policy and delivery. For this Implementation Plan, we have set out outputs, actions and timescales as far as possible at this time. In some cases, further exploratory or other policy development work is required, particularly in a changing policy context.

The Actions, Timescales and Milestones in this Implementation Plan will provide the basis for monitoring progress and enable us to meet Recommendation 15 by undertaking an annual review of progress, with the first progress report to be published in spring 2025.

We will monitor the impacts on actions there may be from the budget-related decisions taken in the extremely challenging financial position.

The response to the Land-based Learning Review and Implementation Plan is aligned towards achieving Scotland's National outcomes. Economic growth requires addressing the opportunities and challenges relating to labour and skills shortages across Scotland. The actions in this plan aim to support skilling and upskilling to deliver green solutions in the agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and environmental sectors. This will be important in building prosperous rural areas and a Just Transition to Net Zero, contributing to the First Minister's priorities on Boosting the Economy and Tackling Climate Change.

Context - Post-school Education Reform

We continue to recognise that the Scottish Government's response to the Land-based Learning Review will be progressed in a context where there is an ongoing programme of work to reform the post-school education and skills system.

As part of that reform programme, the Scottish Government has committed to taking responsibility for skills planning at the national level, while strengthening regional approaches. A Scottish Government led skills planning approach will help develop a better understanding of skills needs at the national level and how we can better address them, particularly where solutions lie within the education and skills system.

This skills planning work will be critical in ensuring that the system is more responsive and in a better position to meet our economic, environmental and social needs and ambitions.

The wider change of this cannot be fully anticipated now, but developing the education and skills system, could impact the actions and timescales in the Implementation Plan and these may need to be revised.

Implementation Plan

Introduction

This section sets out the process and activities involved in delivering the Scottish Government's response to the Land-based Learning Review's recommendations. For each recommendation it provides Outputs, Implementing Actions and, for the majority, Timescales and Milestones. **Annex A** contains the detail of the Scottish Government's response to the Land-based Learning Review recommendations. The first annual update report on progress will be published in Spring 2025.

Recommendation 1:

Work towards the reframing of the land-based sectors as nature-based.

Recommendation Accepted in Principle

Output

A Scottish Government decision on whether to work towards adopting the term 'nature-based' to refer to the land-based and aquaculture sectors collectively.

Implementing Actions

We will undertake research and engagement to inform a decision on adopting the term "nature-based" and have already commenced work to develop this with Lantra. Timescales are still to be established. The findings from the research and engagement will be used to understand key relevant groups' views, i.e. young people, and potential career changers, on using the term and the potential to contribute to attracting more people to work in the sector.

Timescale

Initial development and potential research 2024/2025.

Analysis and engagement 2025.

Advice to Ministers for decision 2025.

Milestones

Research completed 2025.

Stakeholder consultation and workshops held 2025.

Recommendation 1.1:

Develop an effective communications strategy to support the reframing of the Sector.

Recommendation Accepted in Principle

Output

Delivery of a communications strategy to support reframing to nature-based in the first quarter of 2025 (subject to decision on Recommendation 1).

Implementing Actions

We will develop a communications strategy with stakeholders to support a wider understanding and use of the term 'nature-based.' This will be progressed by Scottish Government staff working with stakeholders and via their networks.

Timescale

Deliver a communications strategy 2025/26.

Milestones

Communication plan developed with stakeholders 2025.

Communications strategy implemented from 2025.

Recommendation 2:

Establish clear progressive experiences for nature-based learning and climate literacy across all levels of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).

Recommendation Accepted

Output

Work by Education Scotland, Keep Scotland Beautiful, other public bodies and stakeholders to facilitate experiences for nature-based learning and climate literacy across CfE.

Implementing Actions

Education Scotland has developed a dedicated Learning for Sustainability (LfS) themed webpage that will provide examples of LfS in practice, including content on nature-based activities. Keep Scotland Beautiful (KSB) continues to deliver their Climate Actions Schools programme which includes content on nature and climate literacy. LfS is one of the core competencies that is being looked at as part of the curriculum improvement cycle.

Milestones

Embed this activity into the Learning for Sustainability refreshed Action Plan actions and milestones.

Commencement of Curriculum Improvement Cycle from December 2023.

Education Scotland to launch LfS online portal Autumn 2024.

Recommendation 2.1:

Identify ways to support an increase in Sector school/college partnership learning pathways, offered and undertaken by schools.

Recommendation Accepted in Principle

Output

Desk-based research, mapping out the current land-based and aquaculture learning pathways.

A workshop with stakeholders to identify good practice and barriers.

A paper, collating evidence and identifying ways to support an increase in sector school/college and other partnerships.

Education Scotland engagement on key lessons learned with schools and colleges on land-based and aquaculture learning pathways.

Implementing Actions

Preliminary research, reaching out to key partners, to map the land-based and aquaculture learning pathways which currently exist across Scotland.

Present research to Education Scotland's Learner Pathways co-design group and undertake discussion on what's working well – why is it working well? What barriers are being faced in other areas?

Production of paper to support improvement.

Education Scotland to engage schools/colleges nationally on the issue.

Milestones

Research and discussions with key stakeholders to understand what learner pathways are already available for land-based learning, July – October 2024.

Education Scotland to convene the meeting of the Learner Pathways Co-Design Group to present findings of preliminary research and undertake a fuller discussion of the barriers and opportunities that currently exist in relation to sector specific pathways.

Production of a paper following workshop discussions including actions to support an increase in sector specific school/college partnerships where this is in line with regional economic needs and the college's strategic planning.

Education Scotland to take forward the suggestions in the paper.

Recommendation 2.2:

Provide ongoing Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) support for school-based staff and volunteers across all education authorities, supported by education providers to improve their knowledge and understanding of the opportunities within the Sector. Include practical training in supporting learning in the natural environment.

Recommendation Accepted in Principle

Output

Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) support provided to staff and volunteers in education authorities. This will include practical training in supporting learning in the natural environment.

Implementing Actions

Education Scotland has established the Learning for Sustainability(LfS) Peer Mentor Network with 25+ mentors recruited from a range of sectors, backgrounds and local authorities. In the 6 week pilot period, over 97 engagements were undertaken reaching some 600+ practitioners across 20 local authorities. The next phase of the programme for Financial Year 2024/25 has commenced.

Education Scotland has developed a dedicated online LfS themed webpage that will provide examples of LfS in practice, including signposting educators to professional learning opportunities.

Milestones

Embed this activity into the Learning for Sustainability refreshed Action Plan actions and milestones.

Next phase of LfS Mentor programme underway in 2024/25.

Education Scotland to launch LfS themed webpage Autumn 2024.

Recommendation 3:

Ensure that the Learning for Sustainability (LfS) Action Plan refresh encompasses strong progressive learning experiences relating to nature-based learning.

Recommendation Accepted

Output

LfS Action Plan includes progressive learning experiences for nature-based learning.

Implementing Actions

The LfS themed webpage will provide content on this. LfS is one of the core competencies that is being looked at as part of the curriculum improvement cycle.

Timescale

2024-2025 and beyond.

Milestones

Embed this activity into the LfS refreshed Action Plan's actions and milestones
Commencement of Curriculum Improvement Cycle from December 2023.
Education Scotland to launch LfS themed webpage Autumn 2024.

Recommendation 3.1:

Establish a robust approach to monitoring quality of the curriculum delivery of Learning for Sustainability (LfS), including the quantity and quality of nature-based and outdoor learning.

Recommendation Accepted in Principle

Output

A refreshed version of Education Scotland's self-evaluation tool for LfS.

Implementing Actions

The Scottish Government will run a series of workshops with a group of stakeholders to collaboratively develop an approach to Measuring Success and Driving Improvement. Children and young people's groups are being consulted on this work.

Timescale

2024-2025.

Milestones

Embed this activity into the LfS refreshed Action Plan actions and milestones.
Establish LfS working group to lead development of approach Summer 2024.

Recommendation 3.2:

Promote the delivery of more outdoor learning by supporting local authorities and colleges to undertake a review of their estate, to identify the potential for carbon reduction, climate change mitigation and the creation of accessible nature spaces.

Recommendation Accepted in Principle

Outputs

Creation of Discovery Trail and The Howff (sheltered outdoor learning space) on the Queen Margaret University (QMU) Campus, development of digital resources and the Masters Module. These resources are aimed at teachers, student teachers and local authorities etc.

The Climate Ready School Grounds (CRSG) project provides resources, case studies, School Grounds Climate survey, lesson plans and guidance for teachers and local authorities.

Guidance on developing interventions in school grounds to help support schools in creating more inspirational outdoor settings, including guidance to help create spaces that mitigate against climate based issues. This will be aimed at schools and local authorities etc.

The Co-designing Sustainable Learning Settings project is about supporting the delivery of the Learning for Sustainability policy in our places and communities. This will be tested through delivering pilot projects which co-design sustainable learning settings in varied school contexts such as urban, rural and town settings.

The College Infrastructure Investment plan being developed in 2025 will identify net zero projects and evaluation guidance is likely to consider issues such as climate mitigation, carbon reduction and biodiversity.

Implementing Actions

Making Places for Outdoor Learning module and digital resources, which are aimed at e.g. teachers, student teachers and local authorities.

School workshops to test ideas and develop action plans and case studies based on pilot projects.

Resources with design ideas, guidance, tools and risk assessments, aimed at e.g. schools and local authorities.

Place-based workshops, case studies and guidance.

Timescale and Milestones

Outdoor Learning Hub at QMU was officially launched by the Minister for Higher and Further Education in March 2024.

CRSG project was launched in September 2023.

Outdoor spaces toolkit is due to be published in 2024/25.

Co-designing Sustainable Learning Settings project starts in 2024/25.

Recommendation 4:

Ensure funding to support core and innovative nature-based education and training programmes, to ensure sustainable provision to allow for fluctuating uptake.

Recommendation Accepted in Principle

Implementing Actions

In this challenging funding environment, the Scottish Government and Scottish Funding Council (SFC) continue to take a considered approach to college and university funding with the focus on sustainability and the delivery of high-quality provision to meet the needs of learners, employers, communities and regional economies. Institutions are responsible for their own sustainability and operational decisions, including course provision, and are best placed to respond flexibly to emerging trends at local and regional level.

Timescale

The funding process for colleges and universities follows an annual cycle, through the SFC's allocation process. SFC work closely with the sectors to identify the best split of the available resources, taking into account Government priorities and the sectors' needs. The allocations enable colleges and universities to move forward with their planning for the forthcoming Academic Year and offering student places.

Milestone(s)

Publication of Scottish Funding Council's annual funding allocations for colleges and universities.

Recommendation 5:

Ensure that accreditation bodies (at all curriculum levels) have sufficient capacity to respond timeously to review existing awards and develop new awards, guaranteeing the skills and knowledge requirements of the Sector are met.

Recommendation Accepted in Principle

Output

Identify options for a change in scope with a view to providing advice to Ministers.

Implementing Actions

Flexible qualifications and the reform of the post-school education and skills system were highlighted in our response to the review. As part of this work, a Short Life working group on the scope of accreditation has been established with three of its four planned meetings having taken place. A series of stakeholder events have also taken place. Ministers will be asked to consider options for change early in 2025.

Timescale

Spring 2025.

Milestones

Stakeholder engagement meetings carried out Autumn 2024 – Complete.

Short life working group meeting notes and action taken - Early 2025.

Submission of advice to Ministers - Spring 2025.

Recommendation 6:

Contribute to the Skills delivery landscape independent review, ensuring that the complex needs of the sector are understood and addressed.

Completed

Recommendation 7:

Contribute to the Skills delivery landscape independent review, ensuring that the 16+ Data Hub captures the wide range of job roles undertaken across the Sector to allow for effective monitoring and impact.

Recommendation Accepted

Output

The issue of capturing job titles in the sector was raised by the Land-based Learning Review's Co-Chair as part of their evidence to the Skills Delivery Landscape Review. We will develop an understanding of the job titles and data sets used by the 16+ Data Hub to identify practicable opportunities for improvement to better reflect the range of careers in the sector.

Implementing Actions

Work with stakeholders, including Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and Data Hub users to understand and identify opportunities for improvement.

Share the issues raised in the Land-based Learning Review regarding data sets and job titles with data collectors.

Work with users of data e.g. SDS, Lantra, careers advisors, local authorities to explore how jobs in the sector can be better captured.

Timescale

2024 - 2025.

Milestone(s)

Scope a project working with industry skills groups to provide an understanding of which job titles are priorities for change by spring 2025.

Recommendation 8:

Support the retention of critical Higher Education (HE) provision in areas such as forestry and aquaculture by developing innovative ways to extend the reach of their delivery.

Recommendation Accepted in Principle

Output

A Scottish Government led skills planning approach will help develop a better understanding of skills needs at the national level and how we can better address them, particularly where solutions lie within the education and skills system.

This work will be critical in ensuring that the system is more responsive and in a better position to meet our economic, environmental and social needs and ambitions. However, universities and colleges are responsible for their curriculum and course choices responding to local, regional, national and in some cases international economic need and learner demands.

Implementing Actions

Relevant Scottish Government policy areas to support and feed into the skills planning work led by the Scottish Government's Lifelong Learning and Skills Directorate.

Timescale

Cross-government work and external engagement on skills planning is well under way and will inform the design of new skills planning approaches in 2025.

Milestones

Guidelines for developing a strengthened approach to regional skills planning – September 2024.

Options identified for future skills planning models in spring 2025 and announcement of chosen option in late 2025.

Recommendation 9:

For the new Agriculture Scotland Bill, as part of Tiers 3 and 4, to include provisions to enable support to fund upskilling/Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training for farmers and employees to support priority, quality non-legislative training towards a just transition to a green economy.

Recommendation Accepted

Outputs

The Agriculture and Rural Communities Act 2024 has now been brought into force and this includes provision to introduce CPD as part of an Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) by way of regulations. The Act also makes provision for support being provided for other knowledge exchange and transfer activities. The need for secondary legislation and further engagement with stakeholders is currently under consideration.

Preliminary analyses, following informal stakeholder consultation and research is now complete. The next stage is to refine and prioritise options.

We have also finalised and implemented a research fellowship from SEFARI (Scottish Environment, Food and Agriculture Research Institutions) that is due to report around November 2024.

Implementing Actions

Powers in Agriculture and Rural Communities (Scotland) Act.

Consultation on secondary legislation for CPD regime.

CPD regime procurement and coming into operation.

Continuing to make progress with AKIS preparations following enactment of Agriculture and Rural Communities (Scotland) Act, to be introduced from 2027 under Tier 4 of ARP.

Timescale

2024 - 2027.

Milestones

Agriculture and Rural Communities (Scotland) Act introduced in July 2024.

Consultation on secondary legislation for CPD 2025.

Procurement of CPD 2026.

Recommendation 10:

Strongly recommend that Scottish Government incentivise uptake of structured Education and Training programmes to support the Agricultural sector.

Recommendation Accepted in Principle

Whilst Scottish Government does not propose to develop and implement a structured programme for education and training for agriculture, work will be undertaken as part of the Agricultural Reform Programme to develop a Continued Professional Development system to enable farmers, crofters and land managers to record personal and professional development activities. This initiative aligns with recommendation 9 and will form part of an Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) to be introduced from 2027.

Recommendation 11:

Amend the annual compulsory Agriculture Census to include specific Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) questions, which can be used by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and others to inform the Sector's skills needs more accurately.

Recommendation Accepted in Principle

Output

Scottish Government Agriculture census will be amended to include specific LMI questions to inform the sector's skills needs.

Implementing Actions

Once the Agriculture Census Survey is completed and results published in October, new questions can be considered for 2025.

Timescale

2024 - 2025.

Milestones

New LMI questions considered for the Scottish Government Agriculture census; agreed questions added to 2025 census 2024-25.

Recommendation 11.1:

Identify opportunities to add LMI questions to other Sector surveys sent out by the Scottish Government or related agencies.

Recommendation Accepted

Output

The Scottish Government will seek opportunities to add LMI questions to other relevant sector surveys.

Implementing Actions

We will engage with survey managers across Scottish Government to assess where there are opportunities to add LMI questions to surveys in alignment with those added to the Agricultural Census.

Timescale

October 2024 to March 2025.

Milestones

New LMI questions considered for relevant sector surveys.

Recommendation 12:

Undertake research which identifies key transferable skills required across different job roles within the Sector.

Recommendation Accepted

Output

Final report and summary paper of key transferable skills required across different job roles within the land-based and aquaculture sectors in rural Scotland.

Implementing Actions

Desk-based evidence review of key transferable skills required across different job roles within the land-based and aquaculture sectors in rural Scotland.

Stakeholder engagement and primary research, e.g. workshops or interviews.

Research questions and methods to be agreed.

Timescale

Begin in early 2025.

Milestones

Final report and summary paper 2025.

Recommendation 13:

Ensure learning from interventions such as the Women in Agriculture Taskforce and Women in Scottish Aquaculture is used to inform actions to attract more women into sectors where there is a gender imbalance.

Recommendation Accepted

Recommendation 13.1:

Ensure learning from interventions support other groups which are under-represented in the Sector.

Recommendation Accepted

Outputs:

Examples of good practice and evidence of barriers and challenges gathered from desk-based research and shared with relevant sectors.

Implementing Actions:

Gather examples of good practice from Women in Agriculture, Women in Scottish Aquaculture, Scottish Government Practical Training Funds (PTFs), stakeholder organisations, Industry Leadership Groups and skills groups.

Gather information on barriers from Women in Agriculture, Women in Scottish Aquaculture, Scottish Government Practical Training Funds, sector groups and delivery organisations.

Gather information from Women in Agriculture Programme Outcomes Mapping.

Quarterly meeting between Women in Agriculture and Women in Business team.

Work with Scottish Government policy teams and organisations that comprise of and work with under-represented groups.

Gather any relevant information from the development of the Gender Strategy for Agriculture that can be used by other sectors with a gender imbalance.

Timescale

August 2024 to April 2035.

Milestones

Desk-based research, including using data from the Scottish Government Practical Training Funds' reports on uptake and interest.

Bank of good practice examples that can be shared with stakeholders, funders and training providers.

Recommendation 14:

Sector 'Industry Leadership Groups' (or equivalent) to establish what help or interventions would enable their industries to meet fair work requirements.

Recommendation Accepted

Outputs

Desk-based research to establish a baseline on barriers, opportunities and current good practice on Fair Work in the Sector.

For example, data will be gathered on Fair Work practices in the Sector. Lantra Scotland will continue to work with Forestry Industry Leadership Groups to ensure progress on Fair Work First. The aim will be to identify good practice from this that can be shared with the sectors through the Industry Leadership Groups and skills groups.

Work to raise awareness with Industry Leadership Groups and skills groups to identify what help or interventions that employers in the sector require.

Implementing Actions

Recipients of Scottish Government funding must meet Fair Work First Conditionality.

Lantra will support Fair Work practices with Skills Hub training providers that may then be developed and extended to more providers and stakeholders.

Establish links with Industry Leadership Groups and skills groups for each part of the Sector e.g. aquaculture, horticulture, agriculture.

Timescale

2024/2025.

Milestones

Lantra pilot research complete in December 2024.

Recommendation 15:

Annually review recommendation progress, whilst sharing best practice and lessons learned.

Recommendation Accepted

Outputs

A meeting to review progress and share good practice involving former Commission members and stakeholders 12 months after publication of Scottish Government response.

Progress update report published.

Implementing Actions

Scottish Government policy teams will monitor actions to progress the response to the recommendations.

Scottish Government will host a meeting with former Commission members in Autumn 2024.

Timescales

End 2024 – Spring 2025.

Milestones

Implementation Plan published - complete.

First annual reporting on progress published spring 2025.

Annual review event held spring 2025.

Annex A

Please note that Annex A contains the Scottish Government response to the Independent Commission for the Land-Based Learning Review which was published on 30 April 2024. Information contained within Annex A therefore reflects the policy position at the time of publication, which may differ from the position on the date of publication of the Implementation Plan.

Scottish Government Response to Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Scottish Government Response – Accepted in Principle

The Scottish Government agrees with the Commission’s views that promoting the land-based and aquaculture sectors is required to attract more people to work in these sectors in rural and urban areas. This includes improving awareness and knowledge of the sector, the range of job roles, types of employment and the opportunities to meet personal, social and environmental values whilst contributing to a green, growing economy. The aim in promoting the sector is that people will have sufficient knowledge of land-based and aquaculture sectors to be able to make an informed choice as a possible career. The Scottish Government, along with industry, education and skills bodies, already supports activity promoting and educating people on opportunities in these sectors.

The Commission recommends working towards adopting the term, “Nature-Based Sector,” to refer to the land-based and aquaculture sectors collectively. They conclude that a wider collaborative, innovative and co-ordinated cross sector approach is effective in informing people about the sector and encouraging more to choose to work in them. They propose that reframing the sector under “nature-based” would support making connections between sectors, whilst each sector retains their separate identities and name. We agree with the Commission’s rationale in proposing the potential benefits of an umbrella term to communicate about these sectors.

The Scottish Government accepts this recommendation in principle but agrees with the Commission's view that further research and engagement with the range of sectors is required to inform a final decision. The research and engagement could be used to understand stakeholders' and the wider public's views on such a change and the potential impact in contributing to attracting more people to work in the sector, including the "cost -benefits" of change and unintended consequences.

We recognise that reframing to nature-based is a significant shift in how the sectors promote themselves and are viewed. Therefore, in seeking clarity and understanding to inform any decision, our approach will be to lead and facilitate engagement and deliberation in collaboration with external stakeholders.

Recommendation 1.1

Scottish Government Response – Accepted in Principle

This recommendation is dependent on the outcome of Recommendation 1. Where it is agreed that there should be reframing of the Sector as nature-based, we accept a communications strategy should support achievement of this aim. The most effective approach for a communications strategy will draw on the existing partnership working with organisations, networks and beyond. Much can be achieved through using established communication channels with messages amplified with relatively small, strategic investment. We will also consider investment in communications targeted at specific groups, for example young people with no knowledge of the sector or groups with protected characteristics under-represented in employment in the sector.

Recommendation 2

Scottish Government Response – Accepted

The LfS Plan is framed around the Target 2030 vision, "To build an inspiring movement for change so every 3-18 place of education becomes a Sustainable Learning Setting by 2030." There are 5 key themes in the plan:

Leadership and Collaborative Partnership: Actions to create collective leadership to meet the "Target 2030" vision for LfS, ensuring relevant individuals and organisations recognise their specific contribution and work together to embed LfS.

Curriculum, Learning, Teaching and Assessment: Actions in this theme are about the experiences for learners and the support to educators to provide inspirational, relevant and impactful learning related to sustainability. One of the key actions is to create new LfS related qualifications and awards for learners.

Learning Environment and Resources: Outdoor Learning is a crucial aspect of this theme and connections to nature are a key element of outdoor learning. The Children's Parliament research which helped to inform the plan, asked that "All children should have the chance to learn outdoors throughout the school year," and, "Outdoor learning should be part of every school subject." Actions in this theme are around the learning environment, the buildings, grounds, wider community spaces and connections to nature and resources.

Learner Voice, Choice and Action: LfS is about supporting learners to make informed choices relating to their learning, helping them to develop and flourish and to be empowered. Recognising the fundamental relationship between rights and the concept of LfS, actions are around building a culture where rights are embedded across practice and support learners to take action and effect change as local and global citizens.

Meaning and Understanding: A key finding from the research which informed the plan was the need to ensure that all relevant stakeholders have a shared understanding of LfS, together with its values and scope. This theme is about providing a clearer definition and criteria for LfS to make the concept more accessible to educators, leaders in schools, early learning and childcare, community learning settings, local authorities and education organisations. The actions taken forward under Theme 2 in the LfS Action plan will help to support Recommendation 2 in this Review.

Recommendation 2.1

Scottish Government Response – Accepted in Principle

In giving the rationale for this recommendation, the Commission proposed “There is a need to enable some funding to be re-directed to support the development of more nature-based school-college partnerships and wider uptake of current and new learning pathways”.

The Scottish Government supports the Commission’s intention of more college and school engagement and learner pathway opportunities for pupils in the senior phase, to increase the uptake of land-based learning at school and progression on to further opportunities.

There is already a positive picture on school/college partnerships across all subject areas. In 2021/22, 30,565 senior phase pupils enrolled on a college course, 47% more than in 2012/13 when 20,824 students enrolled. There continues to be work which aims to develop the role of school-college partnerships in young people's learning journeys and support best practice following on from a College Development Network (CDN) report in 2021: *Co-creating the Learner Journey: School-College Partnerships and Effective Skills Pathways*¹. Colleges Scotland chaired a short-life subgroup of the Scottish Education Council (SEC) which brought together representatives from schools and colleges to consider what stakeholders can do to facilitate closer working relationships. The Group reported to SEC late in 2023 and is working with partners to take forward actions.

Scottish Government will continue to engage with the education sector on best practice and the ongoing development of school-college partnerships, including in land-based subjects, and consider the forthcoming findings of the Colleges Scotland subgroup.

¹ [Co-Creating the Learner Journey: School-College Partnerships and Effective Skills Pathways](#)

However, statutory responsibility for the delivery of education sits with local authorities, as set out under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. This is a longstanding feature of our education system that provides local authorities and schools with the flexibility to tailor provision to best meet local needs and circumstances. Therefore, whilst the Scottish Government provides the overall education policy framework for settings, schools are expected to plan provision, with partners including colleges, which meets the needs of the economy, the local context and the needs and choice of their young people.

Recommendation 2.2

Scottish Government Response – Accepted in Principle

Responsibility for providing the context for CLPL for the education workforce, for providing CLPL and for delivering progressive learning experiences related to nature-based learning, rests across a wide variety of national and regional bodies, including the General Teaching Council for Scotland, Education Scotland and local authorities. It is therefore for those bodies to consider how they support CLPL related to land based education. There is already a strong focus on supporting practitioners in Scotland to deliver outdoor learning and on helping embed learning for sustainability within their practice.

Education Scotland currently provides a range of outdoor learning resources for practitioners² including support for professional development in outdoor learning and resources which enable teachers to identify, plan and apply learning in the outdoor context.

Learning for Sustainability has also been embedded within the suite of GTCS Professional Standards to support teachers in actively embracing and promoting principles and practices of sustainability in all aspects of their work.³

² [Education Scotland Outdoor Learning Resources for practitioners](#)

³ [GTC Scotland - Professional Standards - Learning for Sustainability Cross Cutting Theme](#)

Recommendation 3

Scottish Government Response – Accepted

Throughout the refreshed LfS Action Plan there are a number of actions to ensure learners are provided with nature-based experiences and that these are a meaningful part of their daily learning experiences and the learner journey as a whole. There are also specific actions in the Curriculum, Learning, Teaching and Assessment theme that relate to the creation of new LfS related qualifications and awards for learners. Within the Learning Environment and Resources theme there is a commitment to set an outdoor learning workstream to ensure that all children receive entitlements to outdoor learning. Even though there are not specific actions on nature-based learning, contact with the environment and natural world is a key part of outdoor education experiences. For example, the LfS Action Plan's commitment to develop a Nature Discovery Map Scotland supports education settings to engage with nature networks and use their local greenspaces.

Recommendation 3.1

Scottish Government Response – Accepted in Principle

There are Actions in the refreshed LfS plan to embed it better into inspection frameworks, both in schools and Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings. This includes an action on the development of key LfS Indicators within the Leadership and Collaborative Partnership theme in order to monitor, evaluate and demonstrate the progress made against actions contained within the refreshed Action Plan. There are also a number of actions around outdoor learning, including the creation of a national policy workstream on Outdoor Learning to ensure that all children receive entitlements to outdoor learning in all its forms. It is through those actions that we will work with key partners to develop an appropriate means to capture progress against our aspirations to improve access to nature-based and outdoor learning.

Recommendation 3.2

Scottish Government Response – Accepted in Principle

The Scottish Government accepts this recommendation in principle and has a number of initiatives underway to support local authorities and colleges in this area.

However, the statutory responsibility for the delivery of education sits with local authorities, and whilst the Scottish Government provides the overall education policy framework for settings, colleges and schools will be expected to plan provision, as set out in the response to Recommendation 2.1.

For example, the Learning Estate Strategy underpins the £2 billion Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP) and sets out the strategic approach for managing Scotland's learning estate. This makes clear that the use of outdoor learning environments should be maximised and they should be greener and more sustainable. The energy efficiency target for schools replaced/upgraded through the LEIP is an ambitious 67 kWh, per square-metre, per year, for core hours.

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills announced the successful LEIP Phase 3 projects on 30th October 2023. Through Phase 3, and in partnership with local authorities, we will invest in net zero schools, encompassing high efficiency standards, zero emissions heating, electric vehicle charging points and ambitious embodied carbon targets. These schools are also expected to have outdoor covered spaces of 1m² per pupil.

On LEIP projects, Architecture & Design Scotland (funded by Scottish Government) will provide local authorities with:

- Support through carbon conscious placemaking and design approaches, that can mitigate the impacts of climate change;
- Support for the effective use of new and existing outdoor learning spaces, to enhance learning and teaching environments;
- Continuing their work in relation to the climate ready school grounds project which will support local authorities to develop the learning estate grounds to do more, to adapt to the anticipated local impacts of climate change, increase biodiversity and encourage community engagement and participation in climate action.

In October 2023 we published a new chapter of our popular Out to Play series of national guidance for the ELC workforce, “Caring for our Outdoor Spaces”.⁴ This will set out sustainable ways to explore, develop and care for outdoor spaces.

Whilst it doesn’t specifically reference outdoor learning, the Scottish Funding Council’s (SFC) College Infrastructure Strategy: The Approach to Delivering Scotland’s College Infrastructure Plan, was published in November 2022, and supports the college sector’s ambitions for net zero with the planned production of an Infrastructure Investment Plan for the college sector by autumn 2024.

The strategy recognises that investment in college infrastructure is needed and presents a significant opportunity for colleges to play their part in tackling the climate emergency. SFC will support colleges to progress their net zero ambitions that are integral to any future infrastructure investment. Colleges will need to prioritise;

- investment into their digital infrastructure;
- response to the climate emergency;
- size of their estate in response to future demographic and learning trends;
- collaboration opportunities.

We are separately aware that this year may see the introduction of a Private Member’s Bill to ensure that young people, in particular those in their first four years of secondary school, have the opportunity to experience residential outdoor education to an approved educational standard. As with any draft legislation that is proposed, we will give it our full consideration but will reserve our final position until any draft Bill comes forwards. Our position will be based on the alignment or otherwise of any proposed legislation with our policy on outdoor learning, based on the financial cost of any proposals – which is increasingly important in the current context – and based on a careful consideration of all stakeholder perspectives.

⁴ [Caring for Outdoor Spaces](#)

Whilst residential experiences are an important aspect of outdoor learning, it is important that all forms of learning in the outdoors are supported and that one particular experience does not reduce flexibility and choice over other forms of school trip and other outdoor learning experiences (for example, day-to-day use of greener education settings including school playgrounds). Our Learning for Sustainability (LfS) Action Plan is relevant here, as in response to recommendations 2, 2.2, 3 and 3.1. The LfS, which has benefited from input from Nature Scot, includes a commitment to set up a new dedicated national policy work-stream on outdoor learning. The work-stream will be supported by a working group, which will report to Ministers with recommendations to ensure pupils have access to a much wider range of opportunities to learn in the outdoors.

Recommendation 4

Scottish Government Response – Accepted in Principle

The reforms of the post-school education and skills system that have been signalled in the Purpose and Principles for Post-School Education, Research and Skills⁵, could deliver significant change and efficiencies in the way that money flows through the system and how it meets learner and economic needs.

We have committed to take responsibility for skills planning and to develop new, needs based (rather than demand led) approaches to planning at a national level that are driven by clear prioritisation. Underpinning this will be a regional approach to skills planning that builds on existing regional economic partnerships and has employers and local providers, in particular colleges, at the centre. Such processes should offer autonomy to regional partners to work together to plan and align investment to provision that meets the needs of their local economies.

Besides developing a new Scottish Government-led approach to skills planning at the national level, we are continuing work on the development of new funding models for post-school learning and training provision, including apprenticeships.

⁵ [Purpose and Principles for Post-School Education, Research and Skills](#)

We currently invest over £2 billion in post-school education and skills annually and a redesigned funding model will be able to more clearly ensure that funding is driven towards priorities and offers best value for investment. Alongside this, we are exploring options to simplify funding arrangements, including bringing learner support funding together and bringing funding for provision, including apprenticeship provision, into one place.

Reform of this nature will not happen overnight and in the meantime, we will be focused on how we can maintain existing services as we transition to continue supporting learners and employers to get what they need out of the system.

Recommendation 5

Scottish Government Response – Accepted in Principle

It is critical that our qualifications are flexible, relevant and deliver the best outcomes for learners, as well as meeting the needs of employers and the economy.

The reforms of the post-school education and skills system, including the work on a new qualification body, are significant and will take time. We are focused on how we can maintain existing services as we transition to continue supporting learners and employers to get what they need out of the system.

As stated above, we are continuing work on the development of new funding models for post-school learning and training provision, including apprenticeships. We currently invest over £2 billion in post-school education and skills annually and a redesigned funding model will be able to more clearly ensure that funding is driven towards priorities and offers best value for investment.

Recommendation 6

Scottish Government response – Complete

One of the Commission's Co-chairs met James Withers to discuss land-based skills and a copy of the Review report was provided to inform the Skills Delivery Landscape Review.

In the Skills Delivery Landscape Review the needs of the land-based sector are explicitly recognised and its recommendations are consistent with those of the Land-Based Review:

“the reforms I’ve proposed to skills planning, and to agency responsibilities and structures, I believe will help to deliver the ambitions in the Commission for the Land-based Learning Review which recommends the adoption of nature-based learning in schools and colleges as well as changes to the development of apprenticeships. Their contention that “you can’t be what you can’t see” struck a particular chord with my emphasis on embedding work integrated learning and careers experiences across curricula from early years onwards and the creation of a body with a singular focus on careers advice and education (Recommendation 11) should help to achieve this. The recognition that some of us learn better in nature-based, practical environments is also entirely consistent with parity of esteem for different pathways.”⁶

As stated in the Introduction, Ministers have accepted the basis of the Skills Delivery Landscape Review recommendations through the Initial Priorities paper that will support delivery of the Purpose and Principles for Post-school Education, Research and Skills⁷. The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring the needs and benefits of the land-based and aquaculture sectors are recognised and addressed in the process and delivery of the new skills landscape.

Recommendation 7

Scottish Government Response: Accepted

As noted above, the Co-chair from the Land-Based Learning Review contributed to the Skills Delivery Landscape Review⁸.

⁶ [Fit for the Future: developing a post-school learning system to fuel economic transformation: Skills Delivery Landscape Review - Final Report](#)

⁷ [Purpose and Principles for Post-school Education, Research and Skills](#)

⁸ [Fit for the Future: developing a post-school learning system to fuel economic transformation: Skills Delivery Landscape Review - Final Report](#)

The essential requirement for data and intelligence is highlighted in both Reviews, with the Skills Delivery Landscape Review final report noting it is “to support and inform decision-making and enable measurement of impact” (4.19). We will continue to work with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and through wider partnerships to further enhance the 16+ Data Hub, including exploring if jobs in the sector can be captured.

Recommendation 8

Scottish Government Response – Accepted in Principle

The report from the Land-Based Learning Review reported that: no Higher National progression routes are available to any general Aquaculture related degrees; that there is only one specialist forestry degree in Scotland; and that both industries support the need for flexible higher-level qualifications and would like to see Technical and Graduate apprenticeships. In addition, the report states that a loss of specialist training facilities remains a concern.

Apprenticeships in Scotland are demand-led and our apprenticeship system aims to be as responsive to industry demand as it can be. In response to industry demand, an Aquaculture Management Technical Apprenticeship was developed to enable individuals to gain a qualification in Aquaculture Management at SCQF level 9, supporting their progression within the sector.

We support articulation, where a student gains entry into second year of a degree with a Higher National Certificate (HNC) gained at college, or into third year with a Higher National Diploma (HND) gained at college. This is a useful route to widening access to university across a variety of subject areas. A number of colleges work in partnership with universities to create clear progression routes to higher levels of study, from traditional articulation models to integrated learner journeys.

The lack of clear, coherent pathways was also a finding of the Skills Delivery Landscape Review⁹.

⁹ [Fit for the Future: developing a post-school learning system to fuel economic transformation: Skills Delivery Landscape Review - Final Report](#)

It recommended that a single agency – the new qualifications body – should have oversight of all publicly funded post-school qualifications (except degrees), and that an audit should be carried out of post-school qualifications to look at ways to rationalise and refine existing pathways using the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

The Skills Delivery Landscape Review also argued that we need to break down the division between vocational and academic qualifications and build our understanding of the professions and roles where specific, technical skills are required as opposed to those which can be carried out based on transferable meta-skills¹⁰.

As noted earlier, through the Purpose and Principles for Post-School Education, Research and Skills¹¹ we have accepted the basis of the Skills Delivery Landscape Review recommendations on pathways reform.

We will now work to build a comprehensive understanding of the post-school qualifications landscape including leading work to inform our future approach to apprenticeship development and delivery. This should lead to more transparent processes for identifying, developing, approving and assuring qualifications including apprenticeship frameworks.

Approaches to qualifications and pathways development will be complemented by the work, detailed above, on the development of new, needs-based skills planning processes and the redesign of a funding model for post-school provision. Together, these reforms should mean that Scotland's colleges and universities are better able to plan their provision to respond to changing economic needs.

¹⁰ [Skills Development Scotland meta-skills progression framework](#)

¹¹ [Purpose and Principles for Post-school Education, Research and Skills](#)

Additionally, and specifically through our Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture,¹² we will work to connect businesses with educators and communities to raise the profile of aquaculture careers and equip more people with the skills needed to work in the modern sector. This Vision seeks to enable knowledge exchange and promote collaboration to support the development of crucial research, development and innovation capacity. Agreed and developing City Deals provide support to Higher Education providers and other infrastructure agencies active in aquaculture, notably the establishment of the National Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Hub. The Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture recognises the importance of innovation to the future success of the sector.

There is already action on forestry provision, with the sector meeting with the HE providers of forestry courses in Scotland. The main actions were to work on a model of a shared placement year, consider a block release structure and the case for a Graduate Apprenticeship for forestry and convene an annual meeting.

Recommendation 9

Scottish Government Response: Accepted

The Scottish Government agrees with the aim of this recommendation that the agriculture sector's farmers and employees' skills and learning are supported to build a more highly qualified, trained, diverse and flexible workforce that is also necessary to meet net zero commitments. Our Vision for Agriculture, published in March 2022, outlines the long term vision to transform how farming and food production is supported for Scotland to become a global leader in sustainable and regenerative agriculture. The main vehicle of delivery of this Vision is the Agriculture and Rural Communities (Scotland) Bill which was introduced into the Scottish Parliament on 28 September 2023.

The Bill provides a framework to support and work with farmers and crofters and includes a four Tier support package. Tier 4, complementary support, is concerned with people development and will include new skills, knowledge training and CPD, advisory services and business support.

¹² [Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture](#)

Tier 3 deals with the elective payments rather than specifically skills support, although skills support will need to underpin activities in this and the other tiers. The responses to the consultation on the Agriculture Bill of August 2022 were fully supportive of support for knowledge transfer, innovation and skills development.

The Scottish Government policy to provide a support system in knowledge, innovation, education and training, including continuing professional development (CPD) activities, in agriculture and land use or related sectors, is included in the Agriculture and Rural Communities (Scotland) Bill.

Recommendation 10

Scottish Government Response – Accepted in Principle

The Scottish Government is proceeding with a view to introduce, as per Recommendation 9 above, and aligned to the Vision for Agriculture, a new continued professional development system for agriculture in Scotland.

This will form part and parcel of the Agriculture and Rural Communities (Scotland) Bill process which is currently underway, and will, in due course, look to introduce support mechanisms to incentivise uptake of appropriate training and professional development for farmers, crofters and land managers.

Recommendation 11

Scottish Government Response – Accepted in Principle

Scottish Government accepts that there is currently a data gap around Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) in the agriculture sector. We have an opportunity now to address this data gap, of which one possible solution could be through the annual Agricultural Census. Consideration can now be given to whether the data needs identified are best met by using the Agricultural Census, for example, through the modular question approach used in the Census. Any new questions and topics would need to be considered as part of an overall feasibility study and meet an acceptance criteria threshold as part of the annual business processes for delivering the Agricultural Census.

Recommendation 11.1

Scottish Government Response – Accepted

Scottish Government agree that seeking opportunities and using existing Scottish Government surveys to gather LMI data on the sector is a practical and effective way to proceed. The Scottish Government Office of the Chief Statistician has carried out a review of surveys led or sponsored by Scottish Government.

We will use this to engage with survey managers to assess whether there are opportunities to add LMI questions to surveys.

Recommendation 12

Scottish Government Response: Accepted

We accept this recommendation and agree that research which identifies key skills that are transferable for different roles in the sector will improve understanding of what these skills are, improve their use and support more people to have better employment by deploying their skills in different job roles.

Scottish Government analysts and policy officials, working with internal and external stakeholders will scope the project, existing evidence and analysis and draw on this to produce a research output.

Recommendations 13 and 13.1

Scottish Government Response: Accepted

The Scottish Government accepts these recommendations and will continue to work with the land-based and aquaculture sectors with our commitment to the widening access agenda.

The Women in Agriculture, Women in Aquaculture, Women in Rural Economy and New Entrants activity demonstrates that targeted positive actions can achieve step change and increased equality across land-based sectors.

We will continue to deliver the recommendations of the Women in Agriculture Taskforce and support increased gender equality in agriculture. Already in 2023/24 we have committed £500,000 to supporting the delivery of practical solutions to support women to increase the resilience of business and increase their skills to contribute to our economy.

We are already applying elsewhere the lessons learnt from the successful Women in Agriculture programme. One example is Scottish Forestry funding for the new Women in Forestry training fund in collaboration with the Scottish Forest and Timber Technologies Industry Leadership Group. The aim is to support the growth of a more diverse workforce and ensure there is no gap in provision for upskilling women with technical knowledge and practical training experience.

We remain committed to supporting increased gender equality in the aquaculture sector and continue to support Women in Scottish Aquaculture which takes forward initiatives to enable women to pursue and develop rewarding careers. We will use the learning from these, and identify other interventions, where they will encourage people from other underrepresented groups to the sector. More broadly we will work with our refreshed Fair Work Action Plan: Becoming a Fair Work Nation by 2025. This incorporates actions from the previous Gender Pay Gap, Fair Work and Disabled People's Employment Action Plans and was published with the new Anti-Racist Employment Strategy.

We have also committed to promoting existing and new advice and guidance on the benefits of flexible working to employers across Scotland. This will support the creation of good quality, well paid flexible jobs which will allow workers to progress in the workplace and help low-income workers, especially women and disabled people, raise their income levels alongside addressing pay and employment gaps.

Recommendation 14

Scottish Government Response: Accepted

Fair Work is a key driver for achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth and our ambition for a wellbeing economy.

Our vision is for Scotland to be a leading Fair Work Nation by 2025, where fair work drives success, wellbeing and prosperity for individuals, businesses, organisations and society. It is a model for innovation and success, with many employers in Scotland already implementing fair work practices.

It is our belief that public sector funding should lever in wider societal benefits, such as the promotion of Fair Work, in order to support the development of a sustainable and a successful wellbeing economy over the long term that is fair, green and growing. Our Fair Work First approach levers change through applying principles to public sector spend, driving fair work practices across the labour market.

In line with the Bute House Agreement, we have strengthened our approach, by introducing a requirement on public sector grants recipients to pay at least the real Living Wage to all employees and to provide appropriate channels for effective workers' voice, such as trade union recognition. The requirement applies to public sector grants awarded on or after 1 July 2023 and eligible agriculture grants awarded on or after 1 April 2024. Fair Work First has been applied to some £4 billion of public sector funding since 2019.

As they are the large land-based workforces, specific issues for in agriculture, forestry and aquaculture are outlined. Specifically for agriculture, the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board (SAWB) is an autonomous body under the Agricultural Wages (Scotland) Act 1949 and is empowered to set minimum rates, holiday entitlement and certain other conditions of service for agricultural workers in Scotland. The Board comprises of 17 members: 6 representing the interests of employers nominated by NFU Scotland and the Scottish Land & Estates; 6 representing the interests of workers nominated by Unite the Union; and 5 independent members appointed by Scottish Ministers, one of whom is designated Chair.

In order for the SAWB to set the minimum Agricultural Wage at Real Living Wage the Board has to agree this during the annual negotiations. This has been raised at the last two annual negotiation meetings, however agreement has failed to be reached.

The forestry sector operates with a mix of companies ranging from large multinationals to individual contractors. In general, the commercial sector not only complies with the UK Forestry Standards but also with certification bodies (Forest Stewardship Council and/or Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification through the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS)). Certification requires set standards for workers' rights that cover requirements for the living wage, equality and the right to unionise and engage in collective bargaining. These should meet or exceed the Scottish Government's fair work practices. The forestry Industry Leadership Group will work with Lantra to ensure that these are being met.

The aquaculture sector is characterised by a small number of large internationally owned finfish businesses alongside smaller SMEs which are often family owned. The sector typically pays wages at above local averages and larger employers routinely operate sophisticated employee reward schemes and codes of conduct which exceed Scottish Government's fair work standards. Globally recognised certification schemes require producers to operate in a socially responsible manner and care for their employees in line with the core principles of the International Labour Organisation, including providing safe and equitable working environments where employees earn a decent wage and have regulated working hours.

Already under its workplan for 2023/24, funded by the Scottish Government, Lantra Scotland is showcasing fair work employers to help to change the perception of the sector as poorly paid with limited options, and working with the Industry Leadership Groups and Skills groups, to help employers within the land-based and aquaculture sector to offer Fair Work.

Recommendation 15

Scottish Government Response – Accepted

Although, the work of the Commission has ended, its members agreed that there was a need to regularly review progress against the accepted recommendations to ensure the effective implementation of the resulting actions and to share good practice across the sector.

We accept this recommendation and will work with previous Commission members and involve many others to review progress and share good practice. This will probably be at an annual in person or hybrid event, hosted by the Scottish Government.



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