

# ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ENVIRONMENT

## Past drivers

- No simple relationship between attitudes, engagement and behaviour change.
- Evidence suggests that institutional trust, place attachment, environmental values, and idea of what is “right and normal” influence the formation of attitudes to ecosystems, landscape and species change.

## Where are we now?

- In 2018 two-thirds of adults perceived a value in action which helps the environment, a similar proportion to 2008.
- Around 83% of people in Scotland in 2017 believed Scotland's areas of wild land should be protected and 84% believe Scotland's landscapes make an important contribution to the economy.
- 95% of survey respondents in 2017 believed that there was at least one benefit from forestry worth supporting with public money.
- 57% of adults in Scotland rated their local landscape positively in 2017, with older people, people living in rural areas, and those living in least deprived areas more likely to rate their local landscape positively.
- Half the people in Scotland believed their local landscape had not changed at all in the few years prior to 2017; 26% and 19% reported that their local landscape had got worse and better respectively.
- In 2015 around three quarters of Scottish businesses believed there is an expectation that they should be environmentally responsible. Half of businesses said that there is a clear business case for investing company resources in community, social and environmental issues.

## Where do we want to be?

- We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our natural environment.<sup>1</sup>

## Current initiatives

- Natural Capital Asset Index: Scotland was the first country in the world to develop detailed accounts which monitor annual changes in natural capital.
- Natural Capital Protocol: Will help the process of engaging businesses in valuing and protecting the environment.
- Greener Scotland campaign.
- Branching Out – Positive Mental Health Through Nature: Branching Out is an innovative referral programme of woodland activities for people using mental health services.

## Future drivers

- Indications that the upcoming generation of business leaders may have deeper appreciation of their social and environmental responsibilities than previous generations.
- Scotland's Public Health Review and Scotland's Mental Health Strategy.

## Key evidence gaps

- Limited research on attitudes to actual and prospective changes to ecosystems, landscapes and species.
- Initiatives which raise public awareness of natural capital and ecosystem services.

<sup>1</sup> National Performance Framework

### A Introduction

1. The attitudes that people hold towards environmental issues can influence their behaviour with regards to the environment. In turn, the way in which a person interacts with their environment can have a positive effect on that individual and the environment itself. For example, increasing outdoor activity may improve the health of the individual and lead them to support environmental measures.
2. Changes in attitudes can be encouraged through public initiatives, and the conversion of positive attitudes to positive behaviour can be aided by ensuring that provision of appropriate resources are available to the public.

### B Recent trends

3. In 2018 two-thirds of adults (67%) perceived a value in doing things to help the environment, a similar proportion to 2008 (68%).<sup>i</sup>
4. The vast majority of people in Scotland in 2017 believed the country's areas of wild land should be protected (83%); allied to this is a widely held belief that Scotland's landscapes make an important contribution to the economy (84% agree). Most people believe that Scotland's finest landscapes are being well looked after (59%), although this has declined from over 70% in previous years.<sup>ii</sup>
5. Around 70% of adults in Scotland in 2017 agreed that more effort is needed to improve urban landscapes. Public opinion is divided, however, on whether or not new developments in the countryside are impacting positively on rural landscapes (33% agree and 23% disagree).<sup>iii</sup>
6. For forestry, 95% of survey respondents in 2017 believed that there was at least one benefit of forestry worth supporting with public money.<sup>iv</sup>
7. In terms of people's perceptions of the future for Scotland's landscapes, opinion is divided on whether or not things are changing for the better. Half the people in Scotland believe their local landscape had not changed at all in the few years prior to 2017, with 26% and 19% reporting that their local landscape had got worse and better respectively.<sup>v</sup>
8. There are a large number of organisations in Scotland actively seeking to promote biodiversity and help raise the awareness of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. People throughout Scotland take part in a range of environmental activities, from large scale citizen science projects to focused species specific research. Figures from Scottish Environment LINK show that around 565,000 people were involved in these types of projects in 2015,<sup>vi</sup> around 10% of the population.
9. Research from 2008<sup>vii</sup> found that overall only 12% of respondents considered the environment or environmental issues (such as global warming or climate change) as one of the most important issues facing Scotland, with only 4% saying that the environment is the single most important issue. Respondents were more likely to mention issues relating to the economy and the 'credit crunch' (38%), crime, law and order and anti-social behaviour (32%), and the Scottish constitution (17%).

10. However, when respondents were asked what were the most important issues facing the world, around a third of respondents (35%) mentioned the environment. When asked about environmental issues specifically, climate change/global warming was mentioned more than any other issue (41%). The second most commonly mentioned issue was weather patterns/freak weather (19%).<sup>viii</sup>
11. Specifically, research<sup>ix</sup> has examined the public's views and values of peatland restoration in Scotland with the vast majority of respondents choosing restoration rather than business as usual even if it involves a financial sacrifice. The average monetary value that people attach to the benefits associated with peatland restoration (in terms of carbon storage, water quality and wildlife habitat) range from £127 to £414 per hectare a year, depending on the degree of improvement and where restoration takes place.
12. In terms of the attitude of businesses in Scotland to our environment, a 2015 survey<sup>x</sup> revealed that 89% regard their company as socially and environmentally responsible, with three-quarters of companies citing the expectation that they should be 'environmentally responsible'.
13. Indeed, 52% of businesses say there is a clear business case for investing company resources in community, social and environmental issues. The business case, however, still appears to be unproven among a large minority of Scotland's companies (particularly small and medium companies). This reflects the ongoing difficulty in establishing a positive correlation between corporate responsibility and commercial performance.
14. In 2015 a survey of 300 senior business decision makers in central Scotland found that over six in ten businesses reported that Scotland's natural capital was important to them and should be protected and enhanced. Over 70% considered that action to protect and enhance natural capital was urgent or extremely urgent.<sup>xi</sup>

## C Past drivers of change

15. There is no simple relationship between attitudes, engagement and behaviour change. A wide range of contextual factors influence attitudes and constrain behaviour; habit and routine are also important. If engagement is undertaken for the purpose of changing attitudes and/or encouraging behaviour change, then these wider factors will also need to be addressed.
16. The existing research literature suggests that place attachment, environmental values and ideas of what is 'right and normal' are closely involved in the formation of attitudes to ecosystem, landscape and species change.
17. Institutional trust is likely to be an important influence on opinions of environmental change, whether that change is directly engineered or managed.<sup>xii</sup>
18. It is generally the ability of companies to act that constrains progress on environmental issues rather than the interest, commitment or knowledge of business leaders. This is particularly the case for small businesses.

## D Future drivers

19. Companies have reported two main obstacles to doing more to support the environment: the ability to meet the costs of discretionary activities and the lack of staff capacity to get involved.
20. 62% of companies expect community, social and environmental issues to increase in relevance over the next 3 years.
21. The upcoming generation of business leaders is reported to have a deeper appreciation of their social and environmental responsibilities than previous generations of business founders and managers.

## E Current initiatives

22. The Natural Capital Asset Index: Is a change indicator used to track the potential of Scotland's environment to provide benefits to Scottish citizens. It is composed in a way which reflects the relative contribution of ecosystem services to human wellbeing and is used as an indicator of sustainable development in the National Performance Framework.
23. Participation in the Scottish Forum on Natural Capital and supporting the use of the Natural Capital Protocol: The Protocol gives a framework to allow decision makers to identify, measure, and value both the impacts and the dependencies on natural capital and is a key aim of the Scottish Forum on Natural Capital. Work is being taken forward in Scotland by Crown Estate, Scottish Land and Estates, SNH, SEPA and others to trial the application of the natural capital protocol in land-based businesses in Scotland.
24. Branching Out – Positive Mental Health Through Nature: Branching Out is an innovative referral programme of woodland activities for people using mental health services. It is a group only referral programme, which can be either community or hospital based mental health services.
25. Greener Scotland: Is the one-stop website for greener living.

## Endnotes

- i Scottish Household Survey 2018, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-people-annual-report-results-2018-scottish-household-survey/>
- ii Scottish Nature Omnibus Survey, SNH, 2018, <https://www.nature.scot/scottish-nature-omnibus-summaries-perception-landscape-scotland-august-2017>
- iii Scottish Nature Omnibus Survey, SNH, 2018, <https://www.nature.scot/scottish-nature-omnibus-summaries-perception-landscape-scotland-august-2017>
- iv Public Opinion of Forestry 2017, Scotland <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/statistics/statistics-by-topic/public-opinion-of-forestry/>
- v Scottish Nature Omnibus Survey, SNH, 2018, <https://www.nature.scot/scottish-nature-omnibus-summaries-perception-landscape-scotland-august-2017>
- vi Aichi Interim Report, SNH, 2018 <https://www.nature.scot/aichi-targets-interim-report-2017>
- vii Scottish environmental attitudes and behaviours survey (2008) <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/263040/0078663.pdf>
- viii Scottish environmental attitudes and behaviours survey (2008) <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/263040/0078663.pdf>
- ix [Martin-Ortega, J., Glenk, K., Byg, A., Okumah, M. \(2017\). Public's views and values on peatland restoration in Scotland: results from a quantitative study. The James Hutton Institute, Scotland's Rural College and The University of Leeds joint report. https://www.see.leeds.ac.uk/fileadmin/Documents/research/sri/peatlands/Views\\_and\\_values\\_peatland\\_restoration\\_Scotland.pdf](https://www.see.leeds.ac.uk/fileadmin/Documents/research/sri/peatlands/Views_and_values_peatland_restoration_Scotland.pdf)
- x "Better business, better Scotland", Social Value Lab 2015 <http://www.socialvaluelab.org.uk/betterbusiness/>
- xi <http://www.centuralscotlandgreennetwork.org/news-and-events/news/1082-business-benefits-from-investing-in-green-infrastructure>
- xii Sutherland, L.-A., Mills, J., Ingram, J., Burton, R.J.F., Dwyer, J. and Blackstock, K. (2013) Considering the source: Commercialisation and trust in agri-environmental information and advisory services in England. *Journal of Environmental Management* 118: 96–105.