

Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Post-2020:

A Statement of Intent

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE

This high level Statement of Intent:

- signals our ambitions for Scotland, in tackling the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss;
- signals our action in the international arena and our desire to continue working with friends across Europe and the world;
- sets out how we will translate those ambitions into Scotland's post-2020 biodiversity strategy and delivery plan;
- confirms continuity, and enhancement where possible, of delivery under our existing biodiversity strategy until it is replaced; and
- signals some of our priorities, including announcing that:
 - We will endorse the *Leaders' Pledge for Nature*, which was launched at the United Nations General Assembly in September.
 - We will publish a new, high-level, policy-focused strategy within a year of CoP15 which will take account of the new global biodiversity framework, goals and targets and also the emerging EU biodiversity strategy.
 - The principles and associated projects in the 2020 Challenge and its route map will continue and be enhanced where appropriate, until they are replaced by a new Strategy and Delivery Plan.
 - We will work closely with stakeholders, and devise innovative solutions and partnerships which bring new voices to the debate, in developing our new strategy.
 - Our new strategy will highlight the need to facilitate the creation of new, locally driven projects – such as Cairngorms Connect – which aim to improve ecological connectivity across Scotland.
- We will extend the area protected for nature in Scotland to at least 30% of our land area by 2030, and are commissioning advice on whether we could go even further than this given that we have already achieved 37% protection of Scotland's marine environment.
- We will develop ambitious new proposals to secure positive effects for biodiversity through development, through our work on National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4).

WHY SCOTLAND'S NATURE IS SPECIAL

Scotland has a long history of love for, and fascination with, our natural heritage. This has provided us with world-renowned information about the changing fortunes of all types of nature. As the birthplace of the science of geology, our rocks, soils and landforms create our unique landscapes and habitats, and sustain a variety of ecosystems.

Scotland sits on the western edge of Europe, where continental and Atlantic climates meet the warm Gulf Stream – giving us the cool, wet and windy ‘oceanic’ climate so characteristic of our country. It is this relationship between landform and climate that has largely created the nature we have today. We have more than 125,000 km of rivers and streams (enough to straddle the earth three times), more than 30,000 freshwater lochs, a 220 km canal network, a highly intricate coastline 18,000 km long, extensive mountain ranges and over 900 islands. Scotland’s seas make up an area six times the size of the land area and together they support around 90,000 species. The Scottish network of marine protected areas now safeguards 37% of our seas. Indeed, our seas are incredibly rich in natural capital, alongside Norway forming the richest fishing grounds, and having one of the largest kelp forests, in Europe.

Scotland is home to 45% of Europe’s breeding seabirds and the Bass Rock is the largest colony of northern gannets in the world. Large populations of wintering waders and wildfowl and 37% of the world population of grey seals are in Scotland. We also hold much of the world’s population of freshwater pearl mussels, and significant populations of powan and vendace.

We hold 13% of the world’s blanket bog and the Flow Country is the best peatland of its type in the world. We have over 30,000 hectares of ‘Atlantic rainforest’ – oaks and hazel wood supporting huge numbers of mosses, liverworts, ferns and lichens. Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve was recently



©Lorne Gill/NatureScot

declared the first genetic reserve in the UK to help ensure we maintain the distinctiveness of our Scots pine and other species.

The moorland landscape is distinctive in character and extent, and we have recently announced significant proposals for improving its sustainable management.

Much of our special biodiversity is found in statutory protected areas, with 23% of terrestrial and inland water areas (including our two National Parks) and 37% of marine areas brought under site protection, and almost 80% of designated features in favourable or recovering condition.

These are among the ‘jewels in the crown’ – rare, sometimes endangered, and globally significant – and it is important they are not held in isolation from the rest of the countryside. Indeed, the biodiversity supported outwith protected areas can be equally important and critical to sustaining the special nature of Scotland.

THE EVIDENCE – NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL BIODIVERSITY REPORTS

Understanding all of the causes of biodiversity loss is vital to providing us with both the information and the tools we need to address the issue.

Although some of our indicators demonstrate we have made some significant improvements, overall the evidence of decline in biodiversity, both locally and globally, continues to mount. In Scotland, sources of evidence include Scotland's [Biodiversity Strategy Indicators](#); Scotland's Marine Assessment 2020 which will be published shortly (a statutory assessment which underpins marine planning under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, and builds on [Scotland's Marine Atlas](#) published in 2011); the 6-yearly assessment of progress towards Good Environmental Status under the [UK Marine Strategy](#) (which was last updated in 2019); and periodic assessments undertaken by The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic ([the 'OSPAR Convention'](#)). The publication in 2019 of the first ever collaborative [State of Nature](#) report, produced in partnership with the State of Nature coalition of environmental NGOs and public bodies, provided important additional evidence.

Internationally, the UN's Global Biodiversity Outlook (September 2020) and the IPBES Global Assessment of Biodiversity (May 2019) describe the pressures on nature. The latter identified five direct drivers of biodiversity loss globally:

- Changing use of the land and sea especially for agriculture, forestry and coastal infrastructure;
- Direct exploitation of organisms via harvesting, logging, hunting and fishing;
- Climate change;
- Pollution; and
- Invasive non-native species.

In addition, we must understand the societal values and behaviours underpinning the root causes of nature decline – the indirect drivers. These operate more diffusely by affecting one or more of the direct drivers. They include climate change, which is both a direct and an indirect driver, increasing human populations and over-consumption, the negative impacts of some technological innovations, global trade and issues of governance and accountability.

“A pattern that emerges is one of global interconnectivity ... with resource extraction and production often occurring in one part of the world to satisfy the needs of distant consumers in other regions.”

Professor Eduardo S. Brondizio, co-chair of the IPBES Global Assessment

Our new biodiversity strategy will have a clear process for reporting on progress in improving the state of nature on land and in our seas.

Building on the expertise and excellent partnership approach to producing the 2019 *State of Nature Scotland* report, we shall continue to assess the state of nature in Scotland and devise actions to tackle problems. Through state of nature reporting, and detailed analysis of the direct and indirect IPBES causes of change, we will focus on what needs to be done to restore nature. Our new biodiversity strategy will have targets for addressing these drivers in order that, working in concert with the public, private and third sectors and also supporting community action, we can fundamentally improve the state of nature.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

As we enter the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, we will continue to develop and deliver the best options for nature in Scotland. We will seek to maintain the highest performance against international frameworks and standards.

2020 was to have been a year of high profile, global events and negotiations about the environment and an especially important year for Scotland, with the Climate Change Conference of Parties (CoP26) taking place in Glasgow. Those crucial events now shift into 2021 with the development by the Convention on Biological Diversity of a new global biodiversity framework at CoP15 rescheduled for May 2021 in China, and CoP26 in Glasgow in November. In recognition of the linkages between the biodiversity and climate crises we will build on our work at CoP15 to help ensure that CoP26 delivers positive results for nature and biodiversity.

Alongside our efforts to manage the global pandemic, work has continued to develop the new biodiversity framework, goals and targets to 2030 (as part of the CBD's long-term 2050 vision *to live in harmony with nature*). The Scottish Government is proud to be participating actively in this work and to have shown international leadership in developing and delivering an international online workshop, developing 'The Edinburgh Process' and agreeing *The Edinburgh Declaration*. This leadership makes clear that the Scottish Government stands together with governments at all levels (including those with devolved responsibilities for biodiversity policy), cities and local authorities across the world, ready to meet the opportunities and challenges of the new global biodiversity framework, and to continue to deliver strongly through domestic implementation.

We will also, as has been the case for a number of years, continue to work collaboratively with the UK Government, the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland

Assembly on cross-border biodiversity matters where that is appropriate. Joint work on arrangements to address Invasive Non-Native Species is a good example.

The OSPAR Convention is the mechanism by which Governments of the region together with the EU cooperate to protect the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic. It is currently developing a new North East Atlantic Environment Strategy covering the next decade, which is expected to be adopted at a Ministerial meeting in June 2021. OSPAR will continue to be our main platform for regional cooperation to assess the status of the marine environment and protect the ecosystems and biological diversity of Scotland's seas. We will continue to take a leadership role in international discussions where the opportunity arises, such as through OSPAR and within the sub-national government grouping (including at CoP15), and to contribute to the development of the UK CoP15 negotiating position.

We endorse the [Leaders' Pledge for Nature](#) which was launched at the United Nations General Assembly in September.

This is an important precursor to the new global biodiversity framework to be agreed at CoP15 and is a commitment to urgent and transformational actions to address biodiversity loss, safeguard our planetary safety net and ensure we build forward better towards net positive outcomes for nature, climate and sustainable development.

Scottish Ministers have committed through our Environment Strategy Vision and Outcomes, and in legislation through the Continuity Bill, to maintaining or exceeding EU environmental standards. In preparing our new Scottish biodiversity strategy, we will take close account of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, once finalised, and the new global biodiversity framework, goals and targets to be agreed at CoP15.

BIODIVERSITY IN SCOTLAND

Professor Dieter Helm stated in his evidence to the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee's Green Recovery Inquiry:

*'We cannot go on treating the environment like a luxury good...
'I struggle to think of anywhere in the world where natural capital is more important to the economy than it is in Scotland The scope and opportunities here are massive.'*

We are determined to realise these opportunities.

Scotland's rich natural resources and biodiversity are at the heart of our economy as well as being central to our environmental and social wellbeing. A new national mission to help create green jobs, a commitment to dedicate £100m over the next five years to a green jobs fund, and a restatement of our



©Lorne Gill/NatureScot.

unwavering commitment to addressing the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change are a central plank of our Programme for Government.

Image: Diggers working at a borrow pit at a Peatland Action site at Glenfeshie Estate in the Cairngorms National Park.

Scotland's Advisory Group on Economic Recovery emphasised the need to invest in nature and green jobs. Currently, 7.5% of our national workforce is directly employed in nature-based jobs. Our Green New Deal sends a clear signal that we can do more to realise economic opportunities and at the same time address the climate emergency and protect biodiversity.

A New Strategy

Biodiversity is a priority for the government in Scotland. Since 2004, Scottish Ministers have had a statutory duty to designate one or more strategies as Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy. Scotland published its first [Biodiversity Strategy](#) in 2004, an [update and supplement](#) in 2013 and a [delivery plan](#) in 2015, to take account of the global biodiversity framework, goals and targets agreed at CoP10 held in 2010 in the Aichi Prefecture in Nagoya Province, Japan.

It is not unusual for Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to take a couple of years to develop their national strategies to respond when a new 10-year global framework is agreed. However, we are aware of the calls from international partner bodies and others not to delay implementation of the new framework to be agreed at CoP15 and to accelerate the preparation of new national strategies and plans.

We are now announcing our intention to publish a new, high-level, policy-focused Scottish Biodiversity Strategy no later than 12 months after CoP15.

The new strategy will stand alone, replacing both the 2004 strategy and the 2020 Challenge, emphasising and responding to our new understanding of the increased urgency for action to tackle

biodiversity loss. This also will enable us to build on the 2004 'Vision to 2030' set out in 2004 to reflect the 2030 goals to be agreed at CoP15 and the CBD's 2050 vision of *living in harmony with nature*.

Notwithstanding our intention to publish a new strategy more quickly than we prepared the 2020 Challenge after CoP10, it also remains essential to maintain a focus on continuing to deliver, and enhance wherever possible, biodiversity improvements under the auspices of our current strategy and Route Map and using the contribution made by partners across the public, private and third sectors. This work will use delivery mechanisms which continue to be in place through 2021 and in some cases beyond.

Until replaced by a new strategy and delivery plan, key projects in the 2020 Challenge and its Route Map will continue to be delivered where appropriate and we will strengthen and amplify our efforts wherever possible.

Our commitment to substantial additional investment in peatland restoration and tree

planting as nature-based solutions to climate change, which benefit biodiversity and deliver other co-benefits, is a key part of this commitment.

The direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss set out in the IPBES Global Assessment demonstrate the importance of 'mainstreaming' action to conserve and restore nature. This aligns strongly with the principles and approach of our Environment Strategy Vision and Outcomes, which outlines a whole-of-society (holistic) approach to climate change, biodiversity loss, sustainable agriculture, future land use, circular economy, waste, and sustainable consumption.

In developing a new biodiversity strategy to reflect the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, we will work closely with our stakeholders. We will devise innovative solutions and partnerships which bring new voices into the debate, enabling us to drive delivery further.

Case Study

Species on the Edge

An outstanding example of transformative action for nature recovery in Scotland is the multi-partner Species on the Edge Programme, led by NatureScot. It has nine species action projects delivering necessary action for 40 vulnerable species across seven programme areas.

Each has a lead partner organisation overseeing activities and coordinating joint work programmes using shared resources. Most projects require action in more than one area and partners will share resources and lessons-learned to underpin a new model of collaboration. The species projects are:

Coastal Treasures of the Eastern

Solway: amphibians, primarily natterjack toads;

Bees on the Edge: great yellow bumblebee, moss carder bee, northern colletes mining bee;

Invertebrates on the Edge: tadpole shrimp, medicinal leech, narrow-mouthed whorl snail, bordered brown lacewing, short-necked oil beetle, plantain leaf beetle;

Jewels of the north: Scottish primrose, purple oxytropis, Irish lady's tresses, eyebrights, curved sedge, oysterplant, autumn gentian;

Rockin' the blues: small blue and northern brown argus

Protecting Scotland's island wonders: common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared bat and Daubenton's bat;

Farming horizons: Greenland white-fronted goose, red-billed chough, lapwing, curlew, dunlin, red-necked phalarope, twite and corncrake;

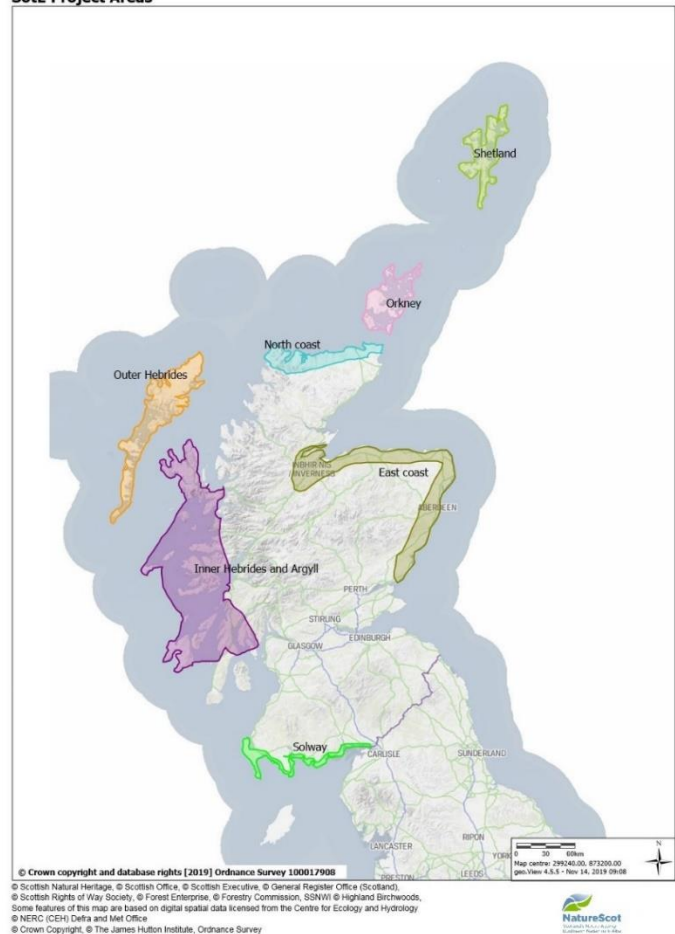
Terning the tide: arctic tern, sandwich tern and little tern; and

A brighter future for herb-rich pastures: marsh fritillary, new forest burnet moth, slender scotch burnet moth, transparent burnet moth and talisker burnet moth.

This is a five and a half year programme of work. Stage One development began in July 2020. A Stage Two bid will be made to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in November 2021. If funding applications are successful, the four and a half year delivery phase will begin in June 2022 and run until December 2026. The overall cost is £6.3 million.

Partners: Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Bat Conservation Trust, Buglife Scotland, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Butterfly Conservation Scotland, Plantlife and RSPB Scotland, working with NatureScot.

SotE Project Areas



Local Action on Biodiversity

We have a distinctively strong connection between people, place and nature which makes Scotland special in terms of landscape and access. Our access legislation is world acclaimed, and our various landscapes are revered in culture and society. Our National Parks are important for biodiversity as well as for supporting their local communities,



©Lorne Gill/NatureScot.

economy and visitors. Our National Nature Reserves and other nature reserves managed by partners help to connect people and nature, improve people's understanding of the importance of biodiversity, and enable the demonstration of best practice and training opportunities.

All landowners and managers have an important role to play in helping to improve the state of nature. This includes Scottish Ministers (for example on their forests and land managed by Forestry and Land Scotland), NatureScot, Scottish Water, environmental NGOs such as RSPB Scotland, National Trust for Scotland, Scottish Wildlife Trust and John Muir Trust, private sector landowners and land managers, and community partnerships.

With around 80% of our population living in urban areas we have been proud to support the delivery of Europe's largest

urban nature fund (Green Infrastructure Fund). This is devoted to devising multi-functional sites improving biodiversity value, environmental quality and flood mitigation, health and wellbeing, and tackling inequality and social inclusion. For many years, we have also provided core funding in support of the Central Scotland Green Network, which is Europe's largest urban greenspace project and is managed by the Green Action Trust.

Our work developing the Edinburgh Process and agreeing *The Edinburgh Declaration* has emphasised the importance of local authorities and cities in delivering positive outcomes for biodiversity. This has always been a key part of our approach in Scotland.

Local authorities play a key and central role in supporting positive biodiversity action through their leadership at the local level and engagement with communities. Local Biodiversity Action Plans have been highly successful and we look to build on the impetus behind these. They are also key decision makers in local planning, transport, land use and the delivery of green infrastructure, including statutory annual reporting on emissions reductions; they care directly for nature through the management of land in public ownership; and they connect people and nature through the provision of paths, parks, reserves and open spaces. They also provide ranger services and support learning about nature in schools and through outdoor learning.

Many Planning Authorities, through their Local Development Plans (LDPs), already encourage biodiversity enhancements, and several authorities are now bringing forward LDP policies requiring positive effects for biodiversity from new development. Also under the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, open space



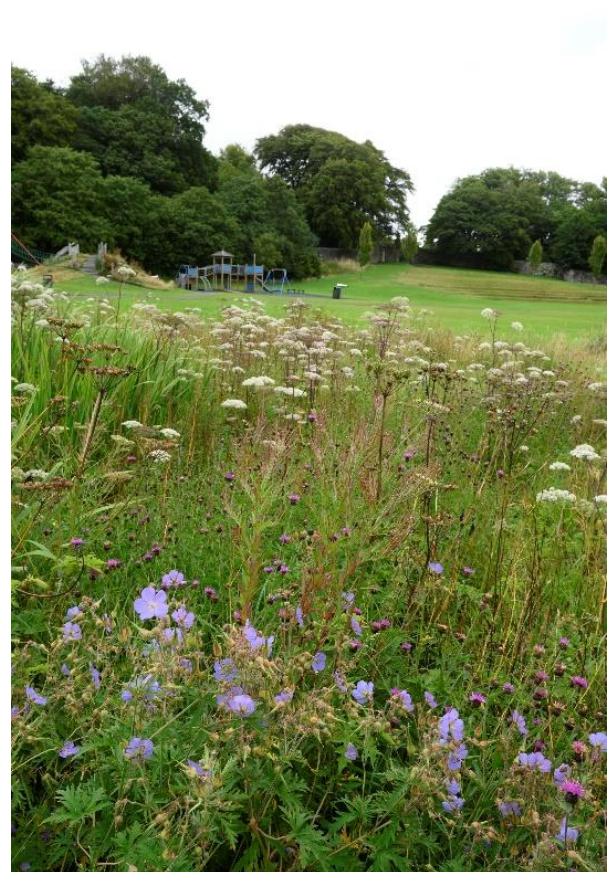
©Lorne Gill/NatureScot

strategies will be a statutory requirement. These will set out a strategic framework for the planning authorities' policies and proposals as to the development, maintenance and use of green infrastructure in their district, including open spaces and green networks benefitting pollinators, birds, mammals, amphibians and much more.

Green infrastructure supports high quality habitats for scarce wildlife, offering nature a new home in our cities, allowing town-dwellers the chance to enjoy nature close to home and improving ecological connectivity. With 54% of urban Scotland comprising greenspace, our towns and cities are already more green than grey with significant potential to do more for nature. We recognise the contribution that nature-based solutions can make as part of the green recovery and fair transition to a net zero Scotland. We are

committed to realising the potential of “wee forests” in Scotland, building on the principles developed by Akira Miyawaki. We also want to see how “pocket” parks and other greenspaces can help improve access to nature as part of the 20 minute neighbourhood approach being developed through NPF4.

We welcome the progress already made in parks for biodiversity through ‘relaxed mowing regimes’ for areas of grass and verges, widespread establishment of wildflower meadows demonstrating good management practice, and delivery of the Pollinator Strategy for Scotland through creation of pollinator friendly planting and corridors. All of this brings wildlife closer to where people live and work.



©Lorne Gill/NatureScot

Image: Lochgilphead High School pupils participating in Snapberry 2016 at Taynish National Nature Reserve.
 Image: Meadow cranesbill (*Geranium pratense*) growing on an area of unmown grassland left for pollinators at Kirkgate Park by Loch Leven National Nature Reserve, Kinross.

In recognition of their role, we encourage local authorities to lead on action needed for biodiversity at the local level.

We will work with them in the development of our new biodiversity strategy and action plan and look for new opportunities for local delivery, building on the important work of Local Biodiversity Action Partnerships.

HOW WE USE OUR LAND

Scotland's land delivers multiple benefits to people, providing homes and water supplies, producing food, timber and space for leisure, as well as supporting biodiversity. Our Climate Change Plan update will reflect the importance of land use, land use change, peatland restoration and forestry as key elements of our approach to tackling climate change.

Through Peatland ACTION – a NatureScot programme funded by the Scottish Government and involving our national parks and Forestry and Land Scotland as delivery partners – around 26,000 hectares of damaged peatland have been put on the road to recovery since 2012, with another 200,000 hectares being considered for restoration. Over that period, the Scottish Government has provided over £50 million for peatland restoration, a fantastic example of how nature can help us address the climate emergency, support biodiversity, improve water quality and contribute to flood regulation. Earlier this year we committed £250 million over 10 years for transformative peatland restoration.

We are now using ground-breaking new mapping technology to gain a better understanding of our diverse upland habitats, helping us to target restoration work efficiently. These improved peatlands will not only reduce carbon emissions and help preserve peatland as a carbon sink but they will be an essential boost for struggling upland birds and in particular waders such as curlew and golden plover.

Habitat fragmentation is one of the most significant drivers of biodiversity loss, creating disconnected 'islands' of habitat where species can become stranded and lose resilience in the face of challenges

such as climate change and constraints on multiple habitat needs. Making space



©NatureScot

for nature through developing partnerships around our suite of protected areas and taking action at large scale will massively benefit nature.

NatureScot and others including our national parks are taking action to tackle this decline through bold and ambitious partnership projects involving a range of conservation organisations and with support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. NatureScot-led projects such as Species on the Edge and Working for Waders are combining expertise and resources. Funding awarded through our Biodiversity Challenge Fund supports ambitious landscape scale habitat restoration work tackling climate change, reducing fragmentation of habitats, benefiting vulnerable species, raising awareness and halting the decline of populations – especially through extending suitable breeding areas and reducing predation risk.

We are working with partners including the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and with land managers to conserve plants in the wild. A new plant strategy will recognise that plant conservation is about more than the species themselves; it includes habitats, genetic diversity, our many benefits from plants, and of course their economic value.

Globally, there is growing recognition of the importance of protecting and enhancing the soils resource. In Scotland the James Hutton Institute and other international research groups can work with us to lead by example in sustaining our soils. Not all of our land can be a nature reserve but making space for nature, with well-connected landscapes in good ecological condition, is key to creating the resilience that our species and habitats need to survive and thrive, and with it, us too.

In our response to Professor Werritty's Grouse Moor Management Group's recommendations, we have committed to bring forward proposals for licensing grouse shooting businesses to help tackle raptor persecution; for muirburn to be permitted only under licence, in order to protect wildlife and habitats; and a statutory ban on burning on peatland, except under licence for strictly limited purposes. **These measures are a first for the UK.** We have committed to engage and consult with all stakeholders with an interest in upland management when developing the measures set out in our response.

Next year we will respond to the recommendations of the Deer Working Group, originally chaired by the late Simon Pepper. The report made wide-ranging recommendations on changes to ensure effective deer management in Scotland that safeguards public interests and promotes the sustainable management of wild deer.

Together with the response to Professor Werritty's Group, we envisage transformational changes in upland and woodland stewardship, and enhancements in habitat quality and the richness of nature, while also continuing to support the rural economy.

Our new Biodiversity Strategy will highlight the need to facilitate the creation of new, locally driven projects – such as Cairngorms Connect – which aim to improve ecological connectivity across Scotland.

This offers exciting opportunities to work with delivery partners to agree priorities and identify projects for action.

We are also announcing now that we will extend the area protected for nature in Scotland to at least 30% of our land area by 2030, and that we are commissioning advice from NatureScot on how best to achieve this – and on whether we can go even further, given that we have already achieved 37% protection of Scotland's marine environment – including through identification of Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs).

Planning

Our approach to planning will support our response to the twin global crises of biodiversity loss and climate change by strengthening policies to protect and restore Scotland's biodiversity and natural assets and improving their long-term resilience to the impacts of our changing climate. Our national planning policies already reflect the hierarchy of natural heritage designations, from international networks to locally important landscapes and nature conservation sites.

Through our work on National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), we will develop ambitious new proposals

which will deliver positive effects for biodiversity from development, without the need for overly complex metrics, and we will consider how they can support wider approaches to natural infrastructure.

We will ensure that our approach to planning supports Scotland's role in responding to the twin global crises of biodiversity loss and climate change, strengthening policies designed to protect and restore Scotland's biodiversity and natural assets and to improve their long term resilience to the impacts of our changing climate.

We will aim to reflect the fundamental role of our natural environment and biodiversity in providing essential natural services and benefits for our economy, health and wellbeing.

Working with Agriculture

In May this year, the European Commission published its draft *Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: Bringing Nature Back into Our Lives* alongside its *Farm to Fork* strategy as part of its European Green Deal, the roadmap for making the EU's economy sustainable.

The role of farmers, crofters and land managers in Scotland will be crucial in our efforts to tackle the twin crises of biodiversity loss and the climate emergency. Agricultural support has, for decades, been delivered through the EU Common Agricultural Policy. The UK Government's decision to take the UK out of the EU means a loss of certainty on future multi-annual funding and the potential to inform future EU policy. There is clearly a strong desire in Scotland to be a full and active member of the European family of nations. The Scottish Government shares that desire.

Image: Scottish Primrose (*Primula scotica*) Yesnaby, Orkney, May 2007.

Despite the loss of certainty caused by EU exit, we must continue to build a sustainable food production sector for future generations, allowing households access to fresh and affordable local Scottish produce whilst also reducing greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to carbon sequestration, and helping improve biodiversity, and air and water quality. We are already working in partnership to develop new rural support measures that result in transition to a sustainable sector that more directly and explicitly supports our climate and environmental ambitions. Scotland's farmers and food producers will play a key role in reversing ecological decline and climate change.

Piloting an Outcome Based Approach in Scotland (POBAS) is a NatureScot-led project working with 40 farmers and crofters in four clusters across Scotland



©Lorne Gill/NatureScot

to test innovative approaches to delivering environmental outcomes on farms and crofts. The project aims to demonstrate and test how a results based approach can work best in different regions across different farm types.

We are also working on a longer-term rural policy which will build on this – in the future farmers and land managers should be rewarded for positive land stewardship that enhances and maintains the natural capital that well-managed land provides in Scotland. We have committed to developing a new rural support policy to enable, encourage and, where appropriate, require the shift to low carbon, sustainable farming through emissions reduction, sustainable food production, improving biodiversity, planting biomass crops, and appropriate land use change developed in line with Just Transition principles.

The multi-dimensional nature of farming, crofting and land use means that this is complex and challenging but can make a substantial contribution to our objectives. We will work to support farmers, crofters and land managers through this transition.

MARINE BIODIVERSITY

In recent years we have made good progress in protecting the marine environment, particularly through the development of the Scottish Marine Protected Area (MPA) network. Earlier this year we designated Europe's Largest Marine Protected Area, of international significance, off the West Coast of Scotland. The further addition of four MPAs for mobile species, such as basking shark and minke whale, along with 12 sites for seabirds, in December 2020, has addressed some of the remaining gaps in our network, which now covers 37% of our waters. This is already above the proposed new global target being negotiated at the UN CBD for 2030, and contributes to the wider OSPAR network in the North East Atlantic.

We will continue to be a strong and influential partner on the international stage, and through OSPAR, our regional



© Ben James/NatureScot.

seas convention, we will work to protect and conserve the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic. In 2021, we will contribute to development and adoption of the new North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy. After adoption, we will play our role in implementing the actions to achieve a clean, healthy and biologically diverse North-East Atlantic

Ocean, which is productive, and used sustainably.

The UK Marine Strategy helps implementation of the OSPAR Convention and EU marine environmental obligations. The UK Marine Strategy provides a comprehensive and collaborative framework for assessing, monitoring and taking action across our seas to achieve the UK's shared vision for clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse seas. In 2021 we will consult on a new Programme of Measures to help progress towards good environmental status, addressing biodiversity concerns.

Scotland's National Marine Plan continues to provide a framework for sustainable development in Scotland's Seas. The second review of the plan will be undertaken in 2021. Regional marine planning allows for national planning policies, including those for biodiversity, to be adapted to reflect local circumstances and issues. To date, three Regional Marine Planning Partnerships have been established – Shetland, Clyde and Orkney, and these partnerships are working to develop their first regional plans. The Scottish Government will continue to support these partnerships, and progress work to establish further partnerships in other regions.

The vision set out in our National Marine Plan takes a holistic Blue Economy approach. The Blue Economy Action Plan referenced in this year's Programme for Government will contribute to economic recovery through sustainable growth based on effective shared stewardship of our rich marine natural capital, helping Scotland to "build back better" from the Covid pandemic. Early thinking on the Action Plan has identified four emerging key outcomes: inclusive Blue Economy growth; creation of resilient places;

contributing to a just transition to net zero; and improving marine biodiversity and the environment. The National Marine Plan, and the regional plans that flow from it, are key long-term delivery mechanisms for realising these outcomes, and next year's review of the National Marine Plan will consider what changes might be necessary to best deliver our aspirations for the Blue Economy.

We believe that supporting biodiversity in our seas is vitally important, alongside taking account of the wider ecosystem when developing and delivering policies and in our decision-making processes. The fishing industry has much to offer,



©George Stoye NatureScot.

and we want to ensure it can grow sustainably and make a positive contribution to our economy and our communities. But we also understand the importance of balancing fishing activities against ensuring that the right protections are in place for the marine environment. We will address these issues as part of our Future Fisheries Management Strategy which will set out our approach to managing Scotland's fisheries in a responsible and sustainable way.

Image: Dead man's fingers, *Alcyonium digitatum* on infralittoral bedrock and boulders with jewel anemones and red algae just below the kelp zone, Madadh Beag, Loch nam Madadh. North Uist.

We will complete the delivery of our commitment to create a coherent network of MPAs including developing proposals for appropriate fisheries management measures and our approach to monitoring. The work on vulnerable PMFs will support the Scottish MPA network through providing connectivity between habitats (and is equivalent to work on ecological connectivity on land).

We will help provide a mechanism for taking forward project work on recovery and enhancement of Scotland's seas through development of the Scottish Marine Environmental Enhancement Fund. The Fund will enable users

benefiting from Scotland's rich natural marine resource to voluntarily re-invest in the health and biodiversity of our seas, thereby safeguarding and enhancing that natural resource to support the sustainable growth of those industries into the future, and in turn helping to build a wellbeing economy for Scotland's coastal communities.

In 2021, we will also consult on conservation strategies for dolphins, porpoises, minke whale and seabirds. This strategic approach will for the first time bring together actions to optimise the conservation prospects for these iconic species.

All this work will be underpinned by Scotland's Marine Assessment 2020, to be published shortly, which will provide a comprehensive and rigorous evidence base on the state of Scotland's seas for informing future policies and actions on marine biodiversity.

Wild Atlantic salmon is an iconic species for Scotland, and our world-renowned salmon fisheries symbolise the close link between biodiversity, the rural economy and mental health and wellbeing. The decline in salmon returning to Scotland's rivers is of great concern, which is why we are developing a Wild Salmon Strategy to protect and enhance wild salmon stocks.

MONITORING AND REPORTING

An expert advisory group chaired by the Scottish Government's Chief Scientific Adviser for Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture will oversee the evidence base. This group will devise a programme of monitoring, assessment and reporting to support implementation of the new biodiversity strategy. Building on existing initiatives, and aiming to streamline future reporting, this will ensure the best science and evidence is deployed to improve the state of nature.

We have recently published the Scottish Marine Science Strategy and the Scottish Government is currently consulting on its Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture Draft Research Strategy for 2022-27. The latter includes a proposal to establish a Biodiversity Centre of Expertise.



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

© Crown copyright 2020

OGL

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

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

This publication is available at www.gov.scot

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

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

ISBN: 978-1-80004-470-8 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, December 2020

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS827786 (02/21)

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