

Scotland's Third Land Use Strategy 2021-2026



Getting the best from our land

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under Section 57 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

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Ministerial Foreword



Ten years on from the publication of Scotland's first Land Use Strategy, considerations as to how we own, use and manage our land have never been as urgent and relevant as they are now.

Much has happened since the publication of the last Land Use Strategy in 2016, including of course the current COVID-19 pandemic that is impacting on our lives in so many ways. But the twin global climate and biodiversity crises are as pressing as ever, and the Scottish Government remains determined and committed to playing its full part in combatting these issues.

That is why the focus of our recovery from COVID-19 is a 'green' one. One that seizes on the opportunities for creating sustainable jobs, promotes nature-based solutions and a circular economy. It encourages an increase in green finance, creates opportunities to attract global investment into Scotland as well as innovation and learning. It has a place-

based focus and puts the people of Scotland at the heart of what we do.

The Scottish economy has much to gain in leading the transition to a low carbon society, and our land will play a key role in this. Our land can help support a low carbon economy that drives the development of new industries, services, skilled jobs, alongside new export and investment opportunities. It is imperative that the green recovery is part of a [just transition](#) to net-zero, a transition that leaves no one behind. That is why as a government we are investing £100 million to help businesses create new, green jobs via the Green Jobs Fund which includes:

- £50 million to support our enterprise agencies to help businesses which provide sustainable and/or low carbon products and services to develop, grow and create jobs; and
- £50 million to support businesses and supply chains across sectors to take advantage of public and private investment in low carbon infrastructure.

We are committed to a further £60 million to support the Youth Guarantee, including increased opportunities for 'green' apprenticeships across public sector bodies and in addition £25 million to the National Transition Training Fund, including a focus on provision of green skills.

We are investing an additional £500 million in our natural economy, including £150 million for woodland creation and

£250 million for peatland restoration. We are launching a £180 million Emerging Energy Technologies Fund. We are investing £500 million in active travel, £275 million to support community-led regeneration and town-centre revitalisation and £50 million to create Active Freeways, providing a sustainable link between our towns, cities and some of our most beloved national landmarks.

The evidence that human activity has been a major driver of our changing climate over the past century is overwhelming. In 2019 we saw a wave of public activity demanding that governments take more action to tackle climate change, with young people in particular standing up and challenging us all to do better. Here in Scotland the First Minister recognised the global climate emergency in April 2019.

We have already made good progress in reducing our emissions compared to the 1990 baseline year, but we recognise that much more work remains to be done. That is why Scotland has introduced one of the most stringent statutory frameworks for climate change action in the world. In order to set us on the pathway to achieving our highly ambitious targets, the Scottish Government published an update to our 2018 Climate Change Plan in December 2020. This [Climate Change Plan update](#) sets out bold actions, which together chart our journey to our new emissions reduction targets out to 2032.

Reducing emissions to net-zero is vital to tackling climate change, but we must also prepare ourselves to deal with the climate impacts which are already affecting us and are locked in to the future. Our [Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme \(SCCAP\) 2019-2024](#) and the actions that it brings forward are just as important as our mitigation efforts. The Adaptation

Programme sets out our policies and proposals to increase the capacity of Scotland's people, communities, and landscape to adapt to climate change.

2019 also saw the publication of the biggest ever health check of the state of global nature by the [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#) (IPBES), followed closely by the [State of Nature for Scotland report](#). Both provided stark evidence of the crisis in our natural world. The health of the planet's ecosystems, on which we and all other species depend, is deteriorating faster than at any time in human history, and there are an unprecedented number of species at risk of extinction.

It is clear that the climate and nature crises are intrinsically linked. Climate change is a key driver of biodiversity loss. Conversely, healthy natural habitats play a vital role in removing carbon from the atmosphere. Both crises arise from stretching the Earth's systems beyond their sustainable limits, as is set out very clearly in the recent [Dasgupta review](#) on the economics of biodiversity published in February 2021.

That is why in February 2020, we published the vision and outcomes of Scotland's new [Environment Strategy](#), which creates an overarching framework for our strategies and plans concerning the environment and climate change. Its '*One Earth. One home. One shared future*' vision describes our long-term ambitions for Scotland's natural environment and our role in tackling the global climate change and nature crises. It also describes the wider benefits that restoring nature and tackling climate change will create for the wellbeing of people and communities

across Scotland, our economy and our global citizenship.

Scotland's land is a precious resource and fundamental to our economy, our environment and our wellbeing as a nation. The way it is owned and used are inextricably linked. It is vital that when we consider our land, we think not just about how it is used, but also about who benefits from its use. That is why we have an ongoing and unwavering commitment to land reform, and our [Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement](#) should be at the heart of land use decision making.

Our land can provide the vital platform to help us realise our many ambitions. In this, our third Land Use Strategy, we provide an overview of Scottish Government actions that are currently being taken and look to set out the kind of changes that will be required to achieve sustainable land use. If we are to leave a legacy of sustainability for future generations these changes must engage beyond the land itself to all of us that call Scotland home.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Cunningham', written over a horizontal line.

Roseanna Cunningham
Cabinet Secretary for Environment,
Climate Change & Land Reform

Introduction

What is the Land Use Strategy?

The Land Use Strategy sets out our long term vision for sustainable land use in Scotland, our objectives and key policies for delivery. Scottish Ministers are required by law to produce a Land Use Strategy every five years and the first Strategy was published in 2011.

Why is land use important?

The way we own, use and manage our land is fundamental to how we live in Scotland. It is a platform on which we can deliver on many of Scotland's national outcomes as set out in the [National Performance Framework](#). These outcomes reflect the values and aspirations of the people of Scotland and are aligned with the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#). A table demonstrating the wider policy context of the Land Use Strategy is provided at Annex A.

Our land produces much of the food we eat, supports the renewable power we use to heat our homes, and the timber and land to build our houses and communities. It is the basis for the ecosystems that we rely on for the air we breathe and the water we drink. It is a vital part of our natural capital, an asset that underpins our entire economy and in particular the nature-based 'green' economy that will employ more and more people in years to come.

Our land also supports the habitats and living creatures that make up Scotland's unique and precious biodiversity, and our awe-inspiring landscapes that are

recognised and loved by both the people of Scotland and beyond. It is where we go for exercise, recreation, and to connect with our environment and our history.

Our land use in the future

We ask a lot of our land, and the demands we make of it are growing. The climate and nature emergencies that are the most urgent challenge of our generation cannot be addressed without changes to the way we use, manage and live on our land.

We have set ambitious targets to reach net-zero by 2045, and the government's independent advisers on Climate Change, the UK Committee on Climate Change, have highlighted Scotland's land assets as one of the main reasons we are in a position to achieve net-zero five years earlier than the UK as a whole. In their report '[Net Zero: the UK's contribution to stopping global warming](#)' they cite: *"the excellent opportunities to remove CO₂ from the atmosphere through afforestation and carbon capture and storage in Scotland"*. In realising these opportunities, we must identify opportunities for nature-based solutions as they can be pivotal in mitigating and adapting to climate change whilst restoring nature. We must also look at new approaches to financing this work to ensure we can maximise its potential such as optimising the impact of both public and private investment.

If we are to achieve a just transition to a sustainable future that addresses the climate and biodiversity crises, it is essential that we understand where the costs and benefits from the way we own and use our land lie. As set out in the Climate Change Plan update published December 2020, our landscape will look very different in the future, with

significantly more afforestation and peatland restoration. We will need to produce our food in the most efficient and environmentally friendly way possible, and we will have to restore and enhance important habitats.

Balancing these actions alongside the myriad of other demands we put on land will require negotiation and compromise from all, and a shift in the way we think about land. Land use choices both benefit and impact us all and we all need to engage in the tough choices to tackle the tensions and trade-offs between competing demands if we are to achieve a just transition.

Moving forward, transparency of land ownership will be a critical enabler. Scotland has a long tradition of recording and registration of information about land ownership. In order to really understand who makes land use decisions in Scotland, however, communities and the public at large need improved transparency in information about land ownership. In February 2021 the Scottish Parliament unanimously passed regulations to introduce a public register of controlled interests in land. This marks a significant step towards delivering greater transparency of land ownership in Scotland. The register will become operational on 1 April 2022 and it will enable the public to look behind land ownership and identify those who control decision making around land use.

This third Land Use Strategy is intended to help stimulate and inform the growing national, regional and local conversations on the future of our land, who it benefits and how it is used, managed and owned. It recognises that determining our national, regional and local priorities and delivering change at the scale required is, and will

continue to be, grounded in social processes that will involve discussions by people with differing views and interests.

What's new?

There have been two Land Use Strategies since the Climate Change (Scotland) Act came into force in 2009. The first one brought in a new framework for land use which introduced our vision for sustainable land use, our objectives, and a set of principles to guide future decision-making around land use.

The second Land Use Strategy maintained this framework and in addition set out 9 policies and 5 proposals across a range of areas such as agriculture, forestry, natural capital and land reform. The second Strategy was swiftly followed by the Land Rights and Responsibility Statement (LRRS). Taking a human rights-based approach, this landmark document sets out the key principles that underpin the Scottish Government's vision for a stronger relationship between the people of Scotland and our land, and is the first of its kind anywhere in the World. An overview of the statement and its principles are available at Annex B.

The LRRS contains six principles that should underpin every decision about land, including: greater collaboration and engagement between those making decisions about land and those affected by such decisions; increased transparency about land; and, for those who have land rights, the responsible exercise of those rights.

Many landowners recognise the benefits of working with local communities, but good practice is not yet uniform across Scotland. To further promote the LRRS the Scottish Land Commission have [published](#)

[guidance](#) on engaging communities in decisions relating to land. The guidance is intended to support more positive and constructive engagement between land owners and communities and applies to all those with control over land, including private and public land owners, NGOs, charities and community owners.

The overarching purpose of the third Land Use Strategy remains the same: demonstrating our ambition for sustainable land use. This new Strategy, however, comes at a time when both the urgency and scale of change needed is unprecedented. As a result this Strategy is different in scope and tone from its predecessors.

The approach to the third Land Use Strategy

Many new and ambitious policies have recently been introduced or are being developed: through our Environment Strategy, Climate Change Plan update, the upcoming Biodiversity Strategy, the new National Planning Framework and many others. Therefore the third Strategy does not set out new policies. Instead it seeks to make land use more understandable and accessible to everyone, in support of a shift in the way we think about land, towards more inclusive conversations around how we use land and who should be involved in those decisions.

It moves away from a sector by sector approach towards an overarching holistic picture of what sustainable land use in Scotland could look like. It looks beyond its formal five year duration to our 2032 and 2045 targets and efforts to tackle the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. It also highlights the actions we are taking right now across Scotland.

It is anticipated that the third Strategy will be followed by a delivery plan, that will contain more details on the policies and actions that will be taken over the course of this Strategy's five year span and beyond.

Shifting the debate to build more inclusive and effective platforms for change

Land use has often been viewed through the lens of the various individual land-based sectors that contribute to our economy, like agriculture and forestry. But our land delivers so much more to us as a society, including nature and the biodiversity upon which all our ecosystems rely. As such we need to take a holistic systems approach to our use and management of land, to enable us to balance the many demands that are placed on our land in a way that protects and enhances the health of our land and landscapes. This approach broadens the range of interests to engage and requires a wider understanding on how we take forward a meaningful debate about meeting our often competing priorities in land use.

Landscape and ecosystems approach

Through this new Strategy we have sought to highlight how the benefits and impacts of land use reach all of us, across every part of Scotland. To do so, we have adopted a landscape approach, creating a series of illustrative landscapes to represent different types of land in Scotland. These showcase some of the actions and policies that are currently underway right across Scotland. They demonstrate how different uses of land

interact with each other and how they must be integrated to support our ecosystems, our society, our economy and our wellbeing if we are to achieve a sustainable future.

Our land has a fundamental role to play in Scotland's sustainable future, environmentally, socially and economically. Achieving our many objectives will only be possible if we take this holistic systems approach and consider land use and land use choices in their full sense, not sector by sector or issue by issue. The use of an [ecosystems approach](#) as highlighted in Scotland's second Land Use Strategy 2016 - 2021 recognises that all aspects of the environment, including humans, are interrelated and should not be viewed in isolation. This is a helpful means to better understand our environment and factor it into decisions.

Such an approach will require us all to work together, drawing on robust evidence and an appreciation that the impacts and benefits of land use affect us all. Whether you own, work, use or simply appreciate Scotland's land, we hope this Strategy demonstrates how important land is to us all and supports a wider understanding of what we need to do to manage it sustainably to deliver for us all.

How the rest of this document is structured

The sections that follow have been set out to showcase our journey towards sustainable land use.

Within the first section, [Achieving Sustainable Land Use](#), we set out the role of natural capital and ecosystem services, present our vision and objectives and highlight the need to balance the demands we place on our land including a visual representation of sustainable land use.

Within the second section, [Platforms for change](#), we focus on the opportunities presented by the on-going development of the National Planning Framework and Regional Land Use Partnerships.

And in the final section, [Using landscapes to understand land use](#), we highlight key policy actions and showcase how land use can be viewed and considered in a more integrated and holistic way.

Achieving sustainable land use

As a government we are committed to putting the environment at the heart of what we do. Scotland's nature is unique, with awe-inspiring landscapes and habitats found in few other places on Earth: from our diverse marine life and spectacular coastal machair to ancient Scots pine forests, peatlands and heather-covered mountains. Our natural environment is our greatest national asset and we aspire to be one of the greenest countries in the world, where we maintain and enhance the environment for both current and future generations.

Scotland's natural capital is our stock of natural assets: our geology, our soils, our seas and freshwater, our air, our habitats and greenspaces and all the living things that these support. These natural assets underpin many of the ecosystem services that our economy relies on such as provision of fresh water, food and timber, healthy soils, forestry and peatlands for carbon storage, wildlife and landscapes for tourism.

The Office of National Statistics estimates that even when considering just a limited number of ecosystem services, our natural capital had an overall asset value in 2016 of £196 billion¹, and supported nearly 200,000 jobs. The Scottish Government has recognised the critical role of our natural capital by adopting a "[four](#)

What is natural capital and ecosystem services?

Natural capital is a term used to describe the habitats and resources of the natural world that combine to provide social, economic and environmental benefits to people. This includes the water, air, soil, plants and wildlife on which we depend. Scotland's natural capital assets are the basis of our quality of life and underpin our economy. It is crucial that they are protected and enhanced so that they can continue to sustain the people of Scotland now and in the generations to come.

Our natural capital asset base provides a flow of ecosystem services, which are typically grouped into four broad categories:

- **Provisioning services** – physical things we can take from the environment such as food, water and timber.
- **Regulating services** – ensuring we have an environment fit to live in through services like natural flood protection and air filtration.
- **Cultural services** – the benefits we get from the environment that are perceived by us, such as aesthetic beauty and recreational benefits.
- **Supporting services** – the processes that ensure that ecosystems are healthy and can continue to supply the benefits above in the long term, for example pollination of crops and wild plants or the creation of healthy soil.

¹ The 'overall asset value' is the total lifetime value of natural capital assets summed and discounted

into the future: [Scottish natural capital accounts: 2020 - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

[capitals](#)” approach to future economic development in Scotland. This means that natural capital is considered on an equal footing to people, social and economic capital as the four pillars which we should invest in to underpin our economy.

Our land use vision and objectives

Scotland’s first Land Use Strategy established the original vision, objectives and principles for sustainable land use in Scotland. Our consultation highlighted the need for the vision and objectives to evolve with changing circumstance and a variety of suggestions for change or amendment were put forward. As there was no consensus on the specific wording we have published this Strategy with the original vision and objectives but recognise the importance of on-going consideration.

2050 Vision:

A Scotland where we fully recognise, understand and value the importance of our land resources, and where our plans and decisions about land use will deliver improved and enduring benefits, enhancing the wellbeing of our nation.

Land Use Objectives

Land based businesses working with nature to contribute more to Scotland's prosperity

Responsible stewardship of Scotland's natural resources delivering more benefits to Scotland's people

Urban and rural communities better connected to the land, with more people enjoying the land and positively influencing land use

Balancing the demands we make of our land

Land in Scotland, as elsewhere, is a finite and valuable resource that is under pressure like never before. So many of our needs are provided by land that our land use choices affect almost every aspect of life, for all of us. We need land for many purposes including:

- Ecosystems -habitats and species
- Crops & livestock
- Trees to absorb our carbon
- Peatbogs to store carbon and water
- Our children to play, learn and laugh
- Onshore wind energy
- Bioenergy feedstock
- Sustainable housing
- Industry, roads and infrastructure
- Processing our waste
- Our health and wellbeing
- Our heritage and scenic landscapes

All of these demands and how they interact must be understood and considered together to inform how we as a nation make decisions about land use and land use change. These decisions will affect us all and will require difficult choices and trade-offs if we are to achieve a just transition to sustainable land use.

In seeking to support the optimal use of our land, the Scottish Government has been clear that the climate and nature crises are the greatest long term threats we face and that the way we use and manage our land will be fundamental to staying within the limits of what our planet can sustain.

As Scotland moves towards being a net-zero economy there will need to be significant land use change from current uses to forestry and peatland restoration.

This needs to happen alongside ensuring space for other essential activities such as food production and onshore wind generation, and the protection and enhancement of habitats and biodiversity.

To some extent, these choices may be partly determined by what use any specific area of land is best suited to. But much of our land is suitable for a number of different uses and we will need to balance national, regional and local priorities. Determining these balances will by necessity be a social process involving compromise between people with different interests and objectives. The support and buy-in from land managers, land owners and local communities will be particularly critical in achieving this.

The choices we face will go to the heart of who we want to be as a nation and what we most value. Our decisions will shape the lives and opportunities of future generations. We need to act swiftly and at scale to secure a prosperous future for Scotland and its people.

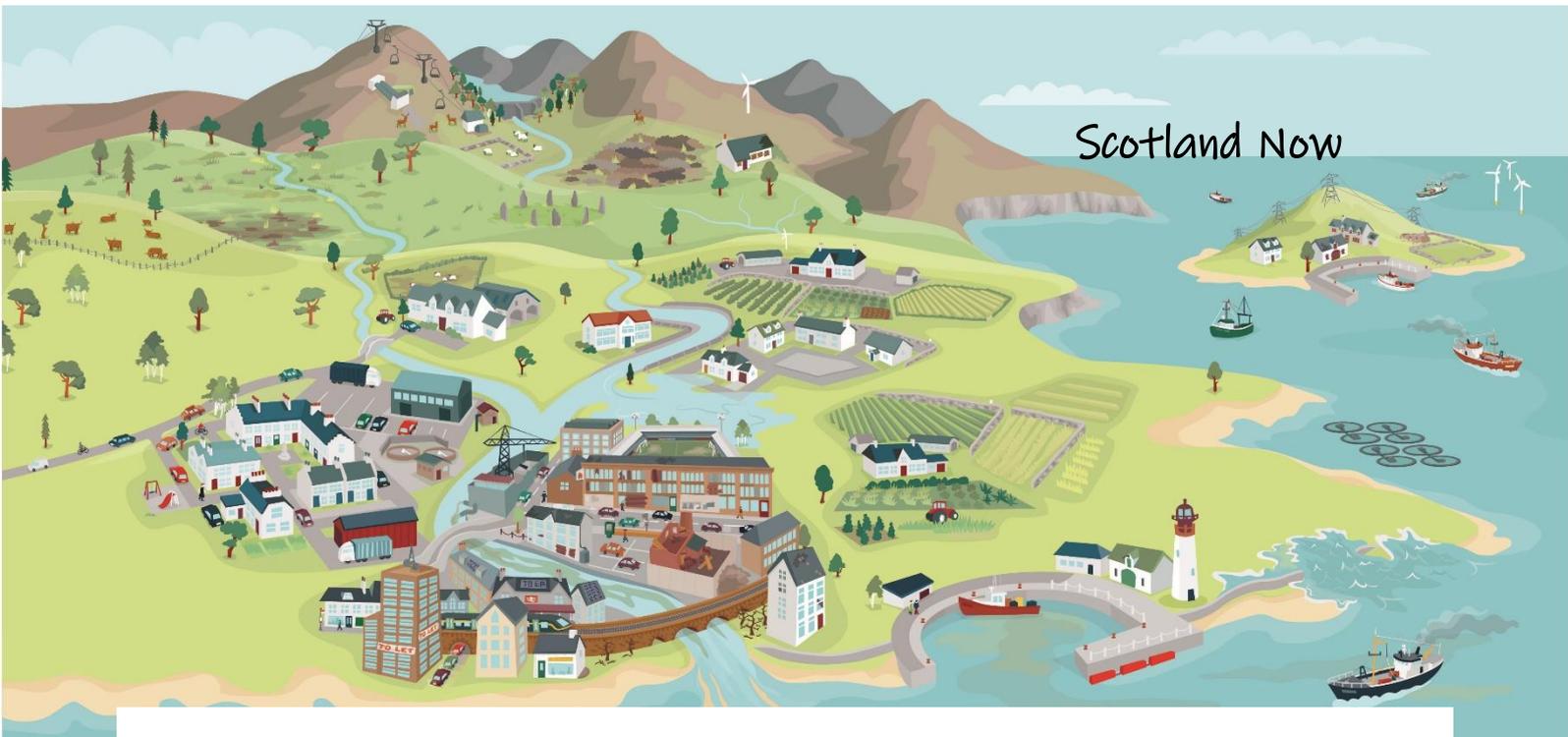
Imagining what sustainable land use looks like

Sustainable land use means that our land will be fully contributing to the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss, benefiting the wider natural environment, supporting our communities socially and economically, and underpinning the health and wellbeing of the population. Despite many uncertainties, we know enough about what needs to happen in the coming years to start imagining what sustainable land use in Scotland could look like.

Throughout the lifetime of this Strategy (2021 – 2026), Scotland’s tree planting rates need to increase to 18,000 hectares per year by 2024-25. Peatland restoration will need to increase dramatically to achieve 250,000 hectares by 2030. Emissions from other land uses such as agriculture will also need to fall significantly over the next 5 years, alongside ensuring that our farmers and crofters can continue to produce high quality food to be enjoyed both here and around the world. In parallel, we need to deliver environmental goals and balance other demands that will be made of our land.

Examples of changes we expect to see over the course of this Strategy and beyond are an increase in urban woodlands, rooftop and rain gardens to green our cities and towns and help protect against flooding during increased rainfall. More of our land will be forested and this will become increasingly integrated with agriculture. We may also see an increase in bioenergy feedstock production. There will be more space for natural habitats, with more of them restored, connected and enhanced. Our enclosed farmland and semi-natural land will contain more better quality peatland habitats, and a wider range of wildlife thriving in wild areas.

These changes will not always be easy to achieve, but will result in a better quality of life, and better quality environments in Scotland. Shaping and achieving this change will involve tough choices for us all. It is not something the Scottish Government can do alone, nor do we do hold all the answers. It will need input, collaboration and action from people all across Scotland.



Scotland Now

Bringing the vision to life

Throughout this strategy we have drawn on the work of Adaptation Scotland and created illustrative examples of what sustainable land use in Scotland could look like.

Here are two versions of our land: the one above shows land as we use it now, and the one below a future where sustainable land use has been embraced.



Scotland Future

Platforms for change

There are a number of platforms already available to take forward deeper conversations about sustainable land use. We highlight here two in particular: the ongoing development of the new National Planning Framework; and the Regional Land Use Partnership pilots. Through these, there is an opportunity to explore some of the issues and trade-offs outlined above, respectively on a national and regional scale, and seek solutions to them.

Development of the next National Planning Framework

Scotland's next National Planning Framework (NPF4) will be a long term spatial plan for Scotland that sets out where development and infrastructure is needed to support sustainable and inclusive growth out to 2050.

Meeting our ambitious targets for addressing climate change needs a fresh approach including the need to rebalance the planning system to ensure that climate change is a guiding principle for all plans and decisions. We have recently published our [Position Statement](#) on the new Framework, which sets out some of the core elements that will feature in NPF4. [The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Post-2020: A Statement of Intent](#), published in December 2020, also signalled our plans to develop ambitious new proposals through NPF4 to secure positive effects for biodiversity through development.

While the NPF4 position statement highlights the direction of travel, work will continue to shape and refine the thinking before the full draft NPF4 is set out for further consultation. It is expected that this will take place this autumn (2021) and will provide a platform for wider scale discussions around land use and its impacts on all of our lives in Scotland.

Highlights from the Position Statement

NPF4 will embed the UN Sustainable Development Goals, align with the outcomes in the National Performance Framework and incorporate Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). It will also guide spatial development, set out our national policies, designate national developments and reflect regional spatial priorities. For example emerging **Regional Spatial Strategies** and their proposals for strategic development will be brought together to help reduce emissions and align with emerging thinking on wider regional land use.

The spatial strategies and policies will reflect the needs and aspirations of people living throughout Scotland by building quality places that work for everyone. This includes exploring options for 20 minute neighbourhoods, and how a new emphasis on living locally could work in different parts of Scotland.

National Planning policies will work to develop a vision for the future use of vacant and derelict land so that regional strategies and local development plans can work collectively to unlock the potential of land within our existing settlements to provide multiple benefits.

Importantly, NPF4 will consider how peatland can be protected from further

development, given its role in carbon sequestration.

Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs)

We are committed to enabling Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs) to emerge locally in 2021, and to develop Regional Land Use Frameworks by 2023. The Scottish Land Commission were asked to provide advice on the establishment of RLUPs and published their advice in November 2020. Their recommendations are ambitious and high level. To support our evaluation of their advice, the Scottish Government will be testing approaches and practicalities (in particular around governance and local engagement) by supporting the establishment this year of a set of pilot RLUPs. In line with the Scottish Land Commission advice on aligning RLUPs with the groupings of planning authorities developing Regional Spatial Strategies, the five pilot RLUPs are also Regional Spatial Strategy areas:

- Cairngorms National Park;
- Highland Council Region;
- Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park;
- North East Region (Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Councils); and
- South of Scotland (Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Borders Councils).

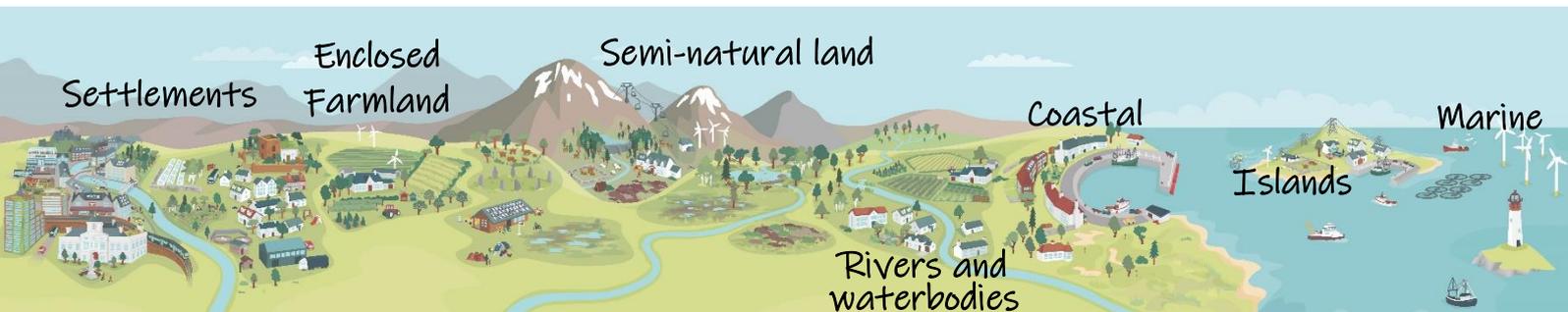
These regions responded to our request for volunteers, and represent a good diversity of land types: cities and towns, farmland, semi-natural land including forests and peatland, and coastal. We recognise that the diversity of Scotland's landscapes and communities mean that 'one size does not fit all' and we will be encouraging each pilot to adopt a structure that meets regional

requirements and engages collaboratively with local communities and stakeholders in their regions. The aim of the pilots is to test governance options and partnership working on a regional scale to understand how best to work collaboratively; develop a framework to identify potential land use changes; and to facilitate and signpost funding opportunities for land owners, managers and community groups.

These pilots will build on the earlier, smaller regional land use pilots completed in Aberdeenshire and the Scottish Borders in 2013-2015, learning lessons from those and from the evaluation, which concluded that working collaboratively and regionally can achieve local objectives but that considerably more development of the concept was needed. These five pilots will test and develop approaches at scale, in support of our green recovery and tackling the climate and biodiversity crises.

RLUPs will help national and local government, communities, land owners and stakeholders work together to find ways to optimise sustainable land use in a fair and inclusive way - meeting local and national objectives and helping achieve Scotland's climate change targets through land use change and good land management that supports a sustainable future.

Once their structure is established, each pilot will focus on developing its own Regional Land Use Framework by 2023. Frameworks will take a natural capital/ecosystem approach to identify at a landscape level potential land use changes with positive climate and environmental impacts. They will set out regional land use and environmental objectives and link these to wider regional goals (such as, for example, those in Regional Spatial Strategies).



Using landscapes to understand land use

We need to consider land use in a more integrated way by taking a holistic systems view. To support this shift, in this section we have taken a landscape, rather than sectoral, approach to setting out key Scottish Government policies and initiatives that are contributing to our three overarching land use objectives. A table showing which land use objectives that the policy actions are working to deliver is provided at Annex C.

The seven illustrative landscapes have been chosen to represent broadly different aspects of our land in Scotland. Within each illustrative landscape we have highlighted the policies most relevant to that landscape. This means that some policy actions are mentioned only under one illustrative landscape even though they are applicable nationally and may play some role in other landscapes. A table

showing this cross landscape nature of national policy action is provided at Annex D.

These landscapes, and the images² of what sustainable land use could look like in the future, are illustrative only and are not map-based or intended to be geographically specific. They are deliberately not mutually exclusive: real landscapes do not fall strictly into categories. Many areas in Scotland will identify with more than one of these illustrative landscapes: for example many of our big urban centres are located in coastal areas.

² Based on illustrations developed through Adaptation Scotland - www.adaptationscotland.org.uk



Settlements

While most of Scotland's land mass is rural in nature, the majority of people live within our cities, towns, villages and hamlets. Using and managing land within our settlements well brings many benefits, to health and wellbeing, equality, environmental quality, cultural identity, flood reduction, jobs and housing as well as climate resilience and biodiversity.

How we are delivering sustainable land use

Evolving Planning

Through innovative and careful design, planning and transformation our cities, towns, villages and hamlets can deliver to a multitude of uses in the same area. Urban forestry, renewable energy generation and natural flood risk management can exist hand in hand with greener housing, enhanced historic environment, active travel, improved infrastructure for recreation and initiatives to enhance biodiversity. Planning has, and will continue to have, a key role to play in

transforming our settlements now and for future generations.

Scotland's next National Planning Framework (NPF4) will be informed by work to develop new **Regional Spatial Strategies**. These Strategies will be produced by local planning authorities, individually or in partnership groups, and are intended to set a long-term guide for the strategic development of an area, encapsulating all of its landscapes. This new approach will strengthen planning's contribution to our national objectives and better align priorities and opportunities at a regional scale. This work recognises that Scotland is a diverse country and that a tailored approach is best suited to consider and reflect local and regional circumstances. We have set out our current thinking in a recently published Position Statement, ahead of extensive consultation on a draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) in Autumn 2021.

We continue to work with planning authorities and other stakeholders to bring forward the secondary legislation to support the new duty, in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, for authorities to produce an **Open Space Strategy**. The purpose of an Open Space Strategy is to

set out a strategic framework of the planning authority's policies and proposals for the development, maintenance and use of green infrastructure in their district, including open spaces and green networks. Work is on-going with NatureScot, Architecture & Design Scotland and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and pilot project partners to support pathfinder pilots. These will explore how green infrastructure can be mainstreamed within social housing developments, and how this can help address climate change mitigation, through features like green roofs and integrating rain gardens into the design of housing developments using a placemaking approach.

The integration of trees

Urban forestry can play a key role in maintaining and **expanding green networks** throughout our towns and cities helping to make them more attractive places for people to live and work in. Through the [Scottish Forestry Strategy 2019 – 2029](#), we have set out our ambition to encourage an increase in tree canopy cover in our cities and towns. Taking this ambition forward, Scottish Forestry will review the evidence on the contribution of urban forestry to the quality of urban environments, and its potential role in helping towns and cities adapt to a changing climate. This work complements a new requirement brought through the new Planning Act for planning authorities to prepare Forestry and Woodland Strategies, including policies to protect and enhance woodlands.

Vacant and derelict land

Vacant and derelict land is often seen as detrimental to local communities and neighbourhoods. However, it can also present an opportunity to **invest in our local blue and green infrastructure** to deliver sustainable inclusive growth and mitigate climate change as part of our Green Recovery. In September of 2020 the Vacant and Derelict Land Taskforce submitted its recommendations to the Scottish Government. These recommendations have been welcomed, and we will work with the Scottish Land Commission and other stakeholders to develop detailed proposals to help deliver a culture change in Scotland's approach to vacant and derelict land. In December 2020 we announced a new £50 million programme over the next five years to transform Scotland's vacant and derelict land as part of our green recovery that supports all communities and a just transition where no one is left behind.

Helping our land support...

... Climate Change mitigation and adaptation

Our cities, towns, villages and hamlets are already impacted by severe weather³, in particular flooding and storms but increasingly also from overheating. Disruption (for example the collapse of a bridge or road) often has consequences far beyond the local area. We know that we must strengthen our climate resilience, in addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in our cities and towns. For example through our commitment to the development of a network of **Climate Action Towns**. This initiative will be targeted at small towns with little

³ Adaptation Scotland – [Climate trends and projections](#)



historical involvement in climate action and will support them to reduce what they use, recycle more, cut their emissions to become carbon neutral, and adapt to an already changing climate, such as by improving flood management.

We have been reviewing how blue and green infrastructure can help us create water resilient places and in February 2021 we published the [Water Resilient Places policy framework](#). This framework is intended to help support our long term approach and to help Scottish Water deliver actions to manage surface water away from homes and businesses.

Increasing active travel, improving domestic energy efficiency through retrofitting and in new buildings, and using greener construction alternatives such as wood products can help reduce urban greenhouse gas emissions. By increasing our tree planting we can also look to meet more of our future construction needs sustainably. That is why throughout the Climate Change Plan 2018-2032, the update published in December 2020 and Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019–2029 we have set out our long term approach and ambitions to do this.

... Scotland's Nature

Incorporating and increasing green infrastructure such as green roofs and rain gardens and the support and management of flower-rich gardens and amenity areas can bring a wealth of benefits. [The 2017-2027 Pollinator Strategy](#) sets out key ways in which urban areas can act to improve and then benefit from enhanced biodiversity. We have also committed to pilot Miyawaki forests, or 'wee forests' around Scotland, with their potential to support engagement with nature and citizen science, as well as carbon sequestration and increased biodiversity.

In 2019 the Scottish Government published an [independent review](#) of the clean air Strategy: '[Cleaner Air for Scotland – The Road to a Healthier Future](#)' (CAFS). The review made it clear that the scope of the Strategy must be widened and work is now underway on the development of Scotland's next air quality Strategy. Key to this new approach will be the embedding of placemaking principles, with a strong focus on nature-based solutions across policy areas to guide our way to a cleaner, healthier and more attractive environment. The new Strategy will be published during 2021.

Throughout 2020 the importance of high quality outdoor areas and natural environment to our health and wellbeing has been more evident than ever. We are committed to improving green space in our cities and towns, and this is a key priority in our Green Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the [Green Infrastructure Fund](#) and [Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund](#) we will continue to support projects in some of our most deprived areas to improve and invest in local green infrastructure and deliver benefits from nature to the local community.

Forestry's **Forest Kindergarten** initiative has delivered several 'Training the Trainer' courses. These improve teacher's skills for using the outdoors with early years children. Scottish Forestry are also working with the Care Inspectorate to evaluate the quality of outdoor learning and play, and are currently working in partnership with the Forest Therapy Institute to produce 15 professionally qualified forest therapy guides for adults.

... Our Communities

Looking forward past the development of the fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) and into its delivery, local planning authorities will have to ensure that communities have a platform through which to influence decisions in their area. Communities will have the opportunity to prepare **Local Place Plans**. These community-led plans will set out local people's proposals for the development or use of land in the places they stay. Planning authorities will take these into account when preparing or updating their local development plans.

In addition to increasing urban woodland, we want to provide more opportunities for urban communities to influence the decisions affecting their nearby local forests and woodlands and benefit directly from their use, management and ownership. That is why we have supported the Community Woodlands Association to deliver targeted advice to communities involved in using, owning and managing woodland. We also want to create more opportunities for children to play and learn in forests and woodlands, and increase the use of forests and woodlands to improve people's health and well-being. Scottish



Enclosed Farmland

This landscape is primarily made up of arable fields producing the high-quality produce that Scotland is renowned for such as cereals, fruits and vegetables. It is also home to improved grassland, livestock and a range of environmentally beneficial habitats.

How we are delivering sustainable land use

Food production

Scotland's agricultural activity is governed by a combination of legislation and regulation that our farmers, crofters and land managers must adhere to. This framework is designed to minimise the environmental impact of food production and encourage best practice across Scotland. For example *Cross Compliance* is a set of rules made up of 'Statutory Management Requirements' (SMRs) and 'Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions' (GAECs) stipulations. These

relate to areas such as environment, climate change, good agricultural condition of land and public health. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) are responsible for oversight and enforcement of environmental protection regulations covering activities such as fertiliser spreading, cultivation and pesticide application, along with the design, location, construction and maintenance of silage and slurry facilities on farms.

Promoting sustainable practices

Complementing the regulatory framework, the Scottish Government has established and continues to develop initiatives to encourage good practice, through the likes of the Farm Advisory Service, Farming For a Better Climate, and organisations such as NatureScot. This guidance and advice promotes low carbon and environmentally sustainable farming. This approach is set out in more detail in the agriculture chapter of the 2018 - 2032 Climate Change Plan and its subsequent update published December 2020, and the range of Sector Plans that have been developed by SEPA to demonstrate the additional benefits that environmental good practice can deliver.

Ambition 2030 – a growth strategy for farming, fishing, food and drink

The food and drink industry is one of the big success stories of Scotland's economy, with exports worth a record £6.7 billion in 2019. Across the country, particularly in many of our rural areas, the sector creates well-paid and highly skilled jobs. We are determined to ensure that Scotland continues to build a prosperous and sustainable food and drink sector.

Established through the Scotland Food and Drink Partnership, [Ambition 2030](#) is an industry-led Strategy that looks to drive profitable, responsible growth across the industry, doubling its size to £30 billion in turnover by 2030 while also delivering on its vision that by 2030:

“farming, fishing, food and drink is Scotland's most valuable industry, recognised at home and abroad as a model of collaboration and a world leader in responsible, profitable growth.”

In November 2020 and as part of our ongoing support to the Scotland Food & Drink Partnership in delivering Ambition 2030 we announced £5 million to help our food and drink sector recovery from coronavirus (COVID-19) and mitigate the impact of Brexit. This funding commitment will enable Scotland Food & Drink and industry partners to come together to work on fairer, greener and sustainable solutions to the challenges that lie ahead

On-farm woodland and agroforestry

The Scottish Government is committed to the expansion of forest and woodland cover, but we recognise that this must be taken forward in the context of wider land-use objectives. That is why through Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019–2029 we have set a clear ambition to ensure that an integrated approach to land use is taken, seeking to maximise synergies and

reduce potential conflicts between different land uses. The Climate Change Plan update sets out our ambition to explore with the farming and forestry industries how best to increase the role of agroforestry in the planting of trees and hedgerows for carbon sequestration. We are working together with relevant stakeholders to take forward support for advisory visits to identify opportunities for farm woodlands and agroforestry.

Bioenergy

The use of Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS) has the potential to form a substantial part of a negative emissions technology sector in Scotland. As part of BECCS, land would be required to produce feedstock to supply the industry. We will publish a Bioenergy Update in 2021, setting out our current position and understanding of the role of bioenergy and BECCS in the energy system and providing more detail on how we will move forward. We will also establish a Bioenergy Expert Working Group in 2021, to help us understand how engineered solutions and the production of bioenergy from feedstock grown in Scotland can complement natural solutions for removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Helping our land support...

... Climate Change mitigation and adaptation

Healthy soils store carbon and are more resilient to climate change: they are also essential for the long term sustainability of our land and securing a sustainable source of food for generations to come. The [‘Valuing Your Soils’](#) project, developed in partnerships with both industry and environmental experts, has provided hints, tips and examples of practices that protect and improve farm soils. Building on this

project, the Scottish Government established the [Soil Regenerative Agriculture Group](#). This has brought together five forward thinking farmers to share information on supporting, enhancing and protecting their farm soils, by looking at improving production, tailoring inputs and maximising profitability whilst achieving healthy and resilient soils that support biodiversity and help to lock up carbon on the farm.

... Scotland's nature

Pollinators are a vital part of our natural environment. Our wild and managed pollinators help to support our economy by contributing to our food and farming industries. Honey bees, wild bees, flies, and a variety of other insects pollinate crops like oilseed rape, strawberries, raspberries, currants, apples and beans, all of which are important crops for Scotland's economy. The Scottish Government recognises the importance of the use and development of pollinator-friendly pest control and has provided a free-to-use online tool that helps our farmers and crofters develop an [integrated pest management plan](#).

The Pollinator Strategy for Scotland 2017 – 2027 and its accompanying Implementation Plan, set out how we can make Scotland as a whole a place where a diverse range of wild pollinators, as well as domesticated bees, can thrive.

... Our Communities

In addition to contributing to climate and environment goals, the actions taken in this landscape can help improve air and water quality, health and wellbeing and contribute to the wider economy by enhancing our stocks of natural capital and supporting employment opportunities and the social fabric of our rural communities: farming is a key part of our cultural

heritage. There is more we can do to encourage local purchase of fresh, healthy Scottish produce. This is why we will also work with our food and drink sector to launch a new **Local Food Strategy** for Scotland to increase the proportion of locally bought and consumed food.



Semi-natural land

This wide-ranging landscape category includes mixed farmland, forests, hills, mountains and moors. It is the predominant landscape in Scotland and encompasses much of our most quintessential scenery as well as our National Parks and the world-renowned Flow Country. This landscape is central to delivering many of our national priorities.

How we are delivering sustainable land use

Farming and crofting

Agricultural activity, in particular livestock grazing, is a prominent feature of this landscape. We are determined to ensure that Scotland continues to produce high quality sustainable food while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions. As such, we have established five sector-specific farmer-led groups to develop advice and proposals to allow the Scottish Government to effect rapid, transformative change to meet our climate change and biodiversity goals. The Groups

will provide advice on what key farming sectors can do to shift to low carbon farming and land management and use. The Suckler Beef Climate Group has already published recommendations and a separate Programme Board has now been set up to take these forward. The other Groups are in the early stages of developing their recommendations and will report to the Scottish Government in the Spring of 2021.

This landscape is also particularly important for Scotland's crofting community. A significant part of crofting activity is associated with low-intensity farming systems of High Nature Value. Crofters have a critical role to play in meeting our climate and environment goals. In 2021 we will publish the **Crofting National Development Plan**. The overarching aim of this Plan will be to facilitate crofters to develop and diversify crofting activity in order to secure productive crofting systems and thriving crofting communities. It will also aim to remove and minimise barriers to entry so that crofting offers opportunities to a new generation of folk in rural communities. It will take forward development priorities such as encouraging diversification through engaging with common grazing

committees to encourage appropriate use of the grazings, including peatland restoration and tree planting. It will also include a standalone environmental commitment to ensure that environmental issues are considered for each investment made through the [Crofting Agricultural Grant Scheme](#) moving forwards.

We have also committed to extend the work of the [Scottish Land Matching Service](#) to encourage uptake of vacant and/or underutilised crofts by new entrants. Bringing these crofts into use will provide opportunities for jobs, housing, and economic growth in those communities and give young people a chance to build their lives in the places they love.

Restoring peatland

Scotland's peatland habitats and the biodiversity they support are some of the most unique and important on earth. The Flow Country is a vast expanse of blanket bog across Caithness and Sutherland that is considered to be the best habitat of its type anywhere in the world. That is why the Peatland Partnership is preparing a bid for the Flow Country to be named as a Unesco World Heritage site in 2023.

Our peatland habitats across Scotland are vitally important for storing and sequestering carbon and absorbing rainfall. Unfortunately only peatland that is in a good environmental state can deliver these benefits. Degraded peat is in contrast a significant source of emissions so restoring degraded peatlands is an essential part of our efforts to reduce emissions to combat climate change and to improve flood management. Scotland is a very peat-rich nation, and much of our marginal land sits on peaty soils and habitats.

Through the [National Peatland Action Plan](#) we have worked with NatureScot to set out the key priorities for peatland restoration in Scotland. This includes the Peatland Action Fund. This fund will invest £250 million across ten years to restore 250,000 hectares by 2030, demonstrating our commitment to continued support for peatland restoration across Scotland.

Increasing woodland

Increased tree planting is essential for Scotland in order to deliver net-zero and we need to rapidly increase the pace of woodland and forest creation. We have committed an **additional £100 million to Scottish Forestry** to increase new planting and forestry land as well as an additional £20 million to further increase nursery stocks, investing in new facilities to support higher production.

Tree planting not only provides carbon sequestration, but also wider environmental benefits and public health gains. It is also a source of employment, and increasing the contribution of forests and woodlands to Scotland's sustainable and inclusive economic growth is a key objective of Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019-2029.

We have been clear that we must not let actions to tackle the climate emergency be detrimental to other environmental priorities or local communities. Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019 – 2029 accordingly includes action to ensure forests and woodlands are created and managed sustainably. This activity should meet the requirements of the UK Forestry Standards (UKFS), which sets out the requirements



for sustainable forestry practices and aims to increase the positive impacts of forests and woodlands on air, water, soils, biodiversity and landscapes. We also continue to support the management of forests and woodlands to provide natural flood management and shelter for livestock, as well as to provide health and wellbeing benefits to people in Scotland.

Through the **Woodland Carbon Capture Investment Programme**, we will attract increased private sector investment into forestry, providing strategic and technical support, and working with investors and market intermediaries to expand the woodland carbon market by at least 50% by 2025. Individuals and businesses considering whether to invest in the enhancement of our natural capital need objective assurances about what their investment is likely to achieve. The well-established [Woodland Carbon Code](#) is a robust voluntary code that encourages a consistent approach to woodland carbon projects, and offers clarity and transparency to those who want to invest in tree planting.

This approach is now being built upon through the [Peatland Carbon Code](#) which is working side by side with our

commitment to a multi-annual investment of more than £250 million over the next 10 years to restore peatland across Scotland.

Restoring native ecology

Beyond peatland, our ancient pine forest and native broadleaved woodlands support a wide range of iconic native and protected species, including rare and elusive species such as the Scottish Wildcat. Forest edge shrubland provides important habitat for woodland birds. We are protecting and enhancing our wider native ecology through support for projects such as Trees for Life's rewilding centre at Dundreggan which has received more than £2 million from the [Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund](#).

Living landscapes

While many of our semi-natural areas have very low population levels today, they were historically often more highly populated. Many of their features are the result of human intervention over the centuries, producing landscapes that we often think of as wild nature, despite ongoing management, and value in part at least for the absence of modern infrastructure. These areas are also local to

many rural communities, and are a key attraction for visitors to our country.

Making sure rural communities can thrive and offer opportunities to young people and future generations will be a key priority for not only the new National Planning Framework 4 but is also central to our Green Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Helping our land support...

... Climate Change mitigation and adaptation

Our land contributes to climate change mitigation in many ways. Scotland has a long and positive history of harnessing renewable energy and our capacity to generate it will need to be increased to meet our net-zero targets. Our energy will continue to be provided by a wide and diverse range of renewable technologies, including onshore wind. We will need to continue to develop wind farms, in the right places, and also look to the extension and replacement of existing sites. As set out in our [Onshore Wind Policy Statement](#), in order to achieve this developers and communities will need to work together to ensure that projects strike the right balance between environmental impacts, local support, benefit, and – where possible – economic benefits for communities, for example through community ownership or other means.

Restoration of our carbon rich habitats such as peatland is an important part of our drive to reach net-zero. Although peatland restoration is often associated with Highland and Island landscapes, peatland restoration currently takes place across several of our illustrative landscapes. Peatland is sometimes also considered for woodland creation, but it is

important to ensure action taken delivers the best carbon savings. Scottish Forestry do not approve (and therefore fund or plant) new woodland creation on deep peat (>50cm), as these deep peats lock up large amounts of carbon as peatland habitats.

... Scotland's nature

Our current [Biodiversity Strategy](#) commits us to working to maintain and enhance the health of our ecosystems and protecting and restoring biodiversity and native habitats. Through our 'Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Post-2020: A Statement of Intent', we have signalled our intention to publish a new, high-level, policy-focused biodiversity Strategy within a year of the Convention on Biological Diversity Conference of the Parties 15 in 2021.

The traditional extensive management practices used by our hill farming and crofting communities continue to support a range of species and habitats and contribute to the management of Scotland's renowned natural environment. Actions such as overgrazing, however, place pressures on the environment. Both domestic livestock and game such as deer and grouse can have a detrimental impact on our landscape and habitats, in particular native woodland.

The importance of effective deer management in tackling the challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change is well understood and recognised. In response to the Werritty report, we are taking action to reduce the impacts of grouse moor management, including introducing requirements for grouse shooting businesses and muirburn to be licenced. We are also committed to publishing our response to the Independent Working Group report on deer management



In 2019 we established the **Biodiversity Challenge Fund** and in 2020 a further £3 million was made available to the Fund. It provides direct support to projects aimed at action on priority habitats and species, accelerating efforts that will help Scotland meet international biodiversity commitments. The additional funding that the Scottish Government has made available will ensure that these actions continue to complement the low-input agriculture practices of our farmers and crofters.

We have also introduced legislation to protect mountain hares, one of our iconic species native to the Scottish Highlands, and make their unlicensed culling illegal. We have also funded initiatives to reintroduce other native species to our natural environment.

... Our Communities

We recognise that depopulation is a challenge faced by some of our rural and island communities and this was highlighted as a top priority by respondents to the National Islands Plan consultation. That is why we have committed to develop an action plan to support repopulation of our rural and island communities. In March 2020 a

workshop was held with key rural and island stakeholders to explore the depopulation challenge, and identify potential pilot interventions. This highlighted the essential role of the local community in developing population interventions, the importance of having access to digitally connected workspaces and affordable homes, the need for improved service delivery and the enabling role that access to land provides. In early 2021 two pilots were initiated: looking at an extension of the woodland croft initiative and capturing the learning from projects exploring the potential for small-scale mixed housing and business unit developments. We will continue to develop these small-scale pilot proposals in 2021-22 and the short, medium and long-term evaluation of such pilots will provide crucial learning in developing our repopulation action plan.

As access to high quality housing across all tenures is critical to repopulation, new permitted development rights for the conversion of agricultural buildings to residential and commercial uses will be introduced on 1 April 2021. This will help to encourage agricultural diversification and the provision of new homes in rural areas, including in support of farm

succession. In addition, the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduced new duties for planning to help to increase the population of rural areas of Scotland, particularly in depopulated areas. In developing NPF4 we will ensure that our policies for rural Scotland recognise the need for new development to support the sustainability and growth of rural communities.

For many of our communities – particularly those in our more rural landscapes – tourism is a vital aspect of livelihoods and the way in which land is managed and used. Through our tourism Strategy [Scotland Outlook 2030](#), we will work with VisitScotland and other partners such as Historic Environment Scotland to develop an appropriate pandemic recovery marketing Strategy, to identify short, medium and longer term market opportunities including nature-based tourism to support and increase visitors. We also recognise the negative impacts increased visitor numbers can have on rural infrastructure and the environment. We will build on the work of **the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund** to help tourist attractions and their communities deal with the impact of increased visitor numbers on our most vulnerable scenic locations.

We have also committed to the continued funding of the [Scottish Land Fund](#). This fund provides **£10 million per year** to help communities purchase assets, including land, and forms part of our ongoing support for land reform to enable communities to take part in land use decisions in their area.

National Parks are required to produce management plans based around three sustainable core activities: Conservation, Visitor Experience and Rural Development.

As part of these plans, the National Park Authorities aim to increase the opportunities for communities to play a greater role in shaping their places and improving their quality of life, and in building community capacity and empowerment through **Community Action Plans**.



Rivers and water bodies

Scotland is renowned worldwide for the quality of its rivers, wetlands and lochs. They are some of our greatest natural assets: contributing to the health and well-being of our people; supporting a rich diversity of wildlife; and providing the basis for sustainable economic activity such as tourism.

How we are delivering sustainable land use

Healthy water, healthy land

Rivers, lochs and wetlands are essential and much-loved parts of the landscape of Scotland. They provide us with the many benefits of a healthy water environment, which can be impacted by land use practices. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) is tasked with the role of protecting and enhancing our water environment, including through regulating to manage the impact of

activities that pose risks to our water environment.

SEPA's Framework for Water sets out how we can achieve 'One Planet Prosperity' within our water resources in Scotland, through managing our consumption of water, the way we use land near water, and upstream and downstream environmental impacts. All of these actions combined will enable us to achieve our target for 87% of Scotland's water bodies to reach 'good' status by 2027.

SEPA also produces a [River Basin Management Plan](#) (RBMP) every six years. This plan is Scotland's route map for protecting and improving the entire water environment in the Scotland river basin. It sets out what the Scottish Government, SEPA, responsible authorities and all Scotland's other public bodies will do to tackle pressures on the water environment.

Flood risk management

We are already seeing the effects of climate change in Scotland. We are experiencing more extreme weather events and rising sea levels and we must adapt to these changes. That is why we have committed to investing **an extra £150**

million in flood risk management, over a five-year period from 2021/22. This substantial investment complements the £42 million provided annually to Local Authorities to support investment in risk management measures throughout the country. The Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 ensures that we take a coordinated and plan-led approach to managing flood risk focusing on solutions across the catchment.

Helping our land support...

... Climate Change mitigation and adaptation

A resilient water environment can help Scotland adapt to our already-changing climate, for example by helping to limit damage caused by floods and erosion and sustaining water supplies. Restoring peatland, a crucial wetland habitat, reduces emissions and increases our long term capacity to store carbon in the future. Peatland also acts as a sponge to absorb rain and slow the flow of water that could potentially flood downstream. So peatland in good health increases our climate resilience as well as delivering climate mitigation. Likewise, increasing riparian tree cover can improve water management in upstream areas and reduce flooding and soil erosion further downstream.

... Scotland's nature

Careful management of our land including of our soils, nutrients and organic matter can help to reduce waste and protect the water environment and the benefits it provides to the wider environment. An overload of nutrients in the water, for example from agricultural or industrial run-off, can suffocate aquatic life and damage water quality. Our vision for a healthy water environment encompasses

ways of using our land to minimise these impacts, and working with farmers and wider industry to optimise best use of inputs: reduced fertiliser use not only protects the environment but also saves money.

Much of our water environment is in good condition. However, there are still significant issues in some places affecting water quantity, quality, physical condition, water flows and levels, and the migration of wild fish. These issues are often related to land use, and to the already-changing climate. The River Basin Management Plan sets out a range of actions to address these impacts. To further support this work, SEPA's Water Environment Fund supports projects that deliver the greatest benefit to Scotland's rivers and neighbouring communities.

... Our Communities

A healthy water environment supports the health and wellbeing of local communities, providing drinking water, irrigation, opportunities for recreation and active travel as well as storing and slowing floodwaters. Our water bodies provide a strong physical connection linking rural and urban in all parts of Scotland. Tree planting can help keep downstream communities safer from flooding by absorbing rainfall and preventing soil erosion. Recognising these interlinkages, and the ways in which our natural capital supports us as a society is a key component of our drive to promote an Ecosystem Approach across land use and planning in Scotland.



Coastal

Scotland's coasts, from rugged cliffs to pearly sand beaches, are among our most coveted landscapes. Nowhere is more than 40-50 miles away from the sea in Scotland, and our coastal communities are woven deep into the cultural fabric of our nation.

How we are delivering sustainable land use

Where the land meets the sea

Coastal planning is essential to ensuring our coast is managed sustainably in an integrated way from both the terrestrial and marine side. Terrestrial planning authorities are required to give consideration to marine plans when developing strategic and Local Development Plans.

Local Authorities will lead the [Marine Planning Partnerships](#) and will also be represented within Marine Planning Partnerships in other areas, to help to promote further alignment of marine and terrestrial planning policy.

Strengthening natural defences

Reaching net-zero emissions is at the heart of Scotland's approach to tackling climate change, but we must also prepare for the impacts of global climate change which are locked in to the future from past and ongoing emissions. We are already seeing the impact of warming in Scotland, as well as more extreme weather events and rising sea levels.

Along our coasts, natural defences such as sand dunes and salt marshes, are protecting an estimated £13 billion of assets. With an increase in the rate of coastal erosion and sea level rises of up to 0.9 m predicted by the end of the century, the consequences of not adapting to these changes could be tragic. That is why we're **investing £12 million to help adapt to the threat of sea level rises** and protect natural coastal defences from erosion.

Blue Economy

We will develop a [Blue Economy Action Plan](#) to launch a programme of collaborative projects across the public sector, Scotland's science base, marine industries and the marine environmental sector. We will set out clear actions to strengthen the resilience of our marine industries ranging from renewable energy

to fisheries - and the marine science, research and innovation which underpin them - and to support coastal communities, recognising the vital importance to our marine economy of the abundant natural capital in Scotland's seas and rivers.

Aquaculture

With one foot in the sea and one foot on the land, aquaculture is an important but environmentally impactful industry in Scotland. The Blue Economy Action Plan will include supporting the sustainable growth of aquaculture, which provides jobs in the most remote locations and island communities, by improved regulatory processes. These will be based on the application of available evidence and continued enhancements in the scientific base, to provide more benefit to the communities where aquaculture is based. Aquaculture activity in Scotland is regulated by SEPA, who publish the Finfish Aquaculture Sector Plan which covers all aspects of fish farming, including: supply chain; feed; hatcheries; freshwater fish pens; marine pen fish farms and processing facilities, with the aim of minimising environmental harm.

Helping our land support...

... Climate Change mitigation and adaptation

Rising sea levels, coastal erosion and flooding have caused substantial damage to our coastlines and communities and the pace of erosion is increasing. Shoreline Management and Flood Risk Management plans seek to reduce the impacts of flooding and sea level rises.

Our coastal communities will, however, continue to be at risk from the devastating impacts of flooding and sea level rises.

Natural shoreline habitats and beaches and dunes play a vital role to combat the effects of climate change. This nature-based solution approach can be used to support adaptation to a changing climate by, for example, moving coastal flood defences back to let shifting sand dunes replenish areas of shoreline and allow new areas of coastal habitat to develop to absorb wave energy.

The [Dynamic Coast](#) project has been investigating the resilience of Scotland's natural coastal defences (e.g. identifying where low dunes may breach) and estimating how erosion of our soft coasts might be exacerbated by higher sea levels in the future. The evidence gained through this work is being used to support more sustainable coastal and terrestrial decision making, and is expected to herald more adaptive coastal management approaches that are 'future sea level wise'.

... Scotland's nature

Along much of Scotland's coastal areas, saltmarshes and sand dunes provide important habitats for a wide range of wildlife. They also absorb wave energy and the land behind saltmarshes is less likely to be eroded or flooded. Saltmarsh and sand dune habitat restoration projects such as those carried out at St Andrews and in the Dornoch Firth are demonstrating how we can use nature based approaches to both provide important habitats and improve the flood and erosion protection provided by these key habitats.

... Our Communities

Many of our coastal communities have become increasingly concerned with the impact of climate change on their way of life, with some declaring a climate emergency. The Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership has been set up to develop actions to safeguard their communities, businesses and assets

in the light of climate change. These local and regional partnerships are important in translating national-level science and policy into on-the-ground action. In doing so they are ensuring their communities and businesses' future is planned by design, not by disaster.

We understand that investing in our coastal communities is vital to support a green recovery and a just transition. [The Crown Estate Scotland's sustainable communities fund](#) is one example of this, and has been created to support local regeneration and sustainable development initiatives. Community Capacity Grants aim to provide early stage financial support for local community enterprise projects which contribute to the regeneration of places or create self-sustaining development through local economic, social or environmental benefits.



Islands

Our islands have a range of outstanding natural resources, from unique ecosystems such as machair, one of the rarest habitats in Europe, to powerful winds and tides.

How we are delivering sustainable land use

Land amidst the sea

Scotland's first [National Island Plan](#) was published in 2019. It sets out 13 Strategic Objectives answering key areas such as increasing population levels, enhancing biosecurity, promoting sustainable economic development and environmental wellbeing.

Many of the intentions put forward through the Plan showcase the alignment between the objectives for sustainable land use and the practical actions that can be taken to help improve the quality of life for island communities. We have highlighted some of the key initiatives from the Plan below.

Protecting native biodiversity

Invasive species can irreparably damage delicate ecosystems, particularly on our islands. Over the next five years we will work with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy's Non-Native Species Action Group to increase public information around minimising particularly high-risk invasive species movements onto and around our islands.

Sustainable land use

With our island partners we will design **nature based solutions** to climate change that provide benefits including, for example the protection and restoration of peatlands and salt marshes. We will work with our island communities, crofters, farmers and landowners to expand forests and woodlands, where appropriate, on islands. We will seek to ensure that sustainable land use - including agriculture, crofting, forestry, peatland and habitat restoration and nature-based tourism - enables island communities to make a living from the land.

Prosperous island economies

We will work to promote a thriving business environment that allows individuals to pursue a wide range of

economic opportunities on islands. This will include looking to build on Scotland's National Marine Plan and the upcoming Blue Economy Plan to ensure that fishing and other economic activities stemming from the sea provide increased sustainable opportunities for island communities.

Local engagement

We will work closely with key stakeholders to ensure that the voices of islanders are fully heard as Scotland follows a just transition to a net-zero green and sustainable economy and that islands benefit from the many opportunities associated with this. We will also work to ensure that the National Islands Plan and relevant regional perspectives are reflected in the review of the current National Planning Framework and Scottish Planning Policy throughout the preparation of National Planning Framework 4.

Low carbon pioneers

Our islands have been instrumental in addressing our world-leading climate change goals. **£2 million** in support was given to a **fund for low carbon projects** in 2020-2021. This Fund helped deliver on the **Rural and Islands Economic Recovery Plan**, and a number of low-carbon commitments in the National Islands Plan. It included specific ring-fenced funding for capital projects on islands relating to net-zero and green recovery objectives, creating high-quality, skilled, green jobs in some of our most remote and vulnerable communities.

Helping our land support...

... Climate Change mitigation and adaptation

Our islands are playing a trailblazing role in innovation to support renewable energy.

An example of this is Surf 'n' Turf: Orkney's Community Energy Scotland. This project converts surplus electricity from Orkney's tidal and onshore wind sources into hydrogen. The hydrogen is stored and transported by road and sea to be used in Orkney when it is needed. Through the [Community and Renewable Energy Scheme \(CARES\)](#) we continue to support innovative actions like these to find new ways to make the most of Scotland's renewable resources and reach our net-zero targets.

Adaptation Scotland in the Outer Hebrides is using a Community Planning Partnership approach to climate change adaptation. The project aims to improve understanding of climate change in the Outer Hebrides, build collaboration across organisations and communities, and develop adaptation actions for inclusion in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

... Scotland's nature

Machair is one of the rarest and most unique habitats in Europe, occurring only on the exposed North West coasts of Scotland and Ireland, including many of our North Western islands. Its low-lying flat sandy landscape is largely made up of calcium-rich crushed shells blown ashore by Atlantic gales.

Machair is one of Scotland's most remarkable landscapes, which has been shaped by traditional crofting land management practices such as light cattle grazing, hay cutting and low intensity rotational arable cultivation. This supports the formation of fertile high nature value grassland habitats of wildflowers, insects and bird life. Due to its low lying nature, and high winter water levels, machair is particularly vulnerable to climate change and rising sea levels.

... Our Communities

The implementation of the Islands Plan provides an opportunity to build on the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (“the 2015 Act”), which empowers communities to shape their individual and collective futures, regardless of where they live. The 2015 Act also makes it easier for communities to take on public sector land and buildings and it provides a mechanism for community bodies to seek dialogue with public service providers to help improve outcomes. The 2015 Act built on the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, and with the addition of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016, there are now a number of legislative options available to communities who wish to pursue obtaining a community right to buy.

Benbecula, Eigg, Eriskay, Gigha, Great Bernera, Rum, South Uist and Ulva, along with parts of North Harris and the Isle of Lewis are all examples of trailblazing island communities who have come together to purchase part of or all of their island from private landlords. Using a mix of community funding, donations, and grants from the **Scottish Land Fund**, these island communities have demonstrated the principles behind our land reform commitments and the value of community buy-outs. Now run and managed by community trusts, these islands are developing as thriving communities with increasing populations and investment in infrastructure including housing and renewable energies.

NatureScot’s Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund supports new opportunities to promote the outstanding scenery, wildlife and culture of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland in ways which support inclusive and sustainable economic growth. It will help to retain jobs and sustain populations and services in rural communities.



Marine

The offshore marine environment is by definition beyond the extent of our land but the terrestrial and marine environments form part of a wider ecosystem. The ways that we manage and use our land and our terrestrial water bodies affects our marine environment, and offshore development and use also has onshore components and impacts. This Land Use Strategy includes a marine section because effective management of our natural capital needs to be integrated across our land and seas.

How we are delivering sustainable land use

The [Scottish National Marine Plan](#) is the key document for our territorial waters and puts forward our vision of clean, healthy, safe, productive and diverse seas; managed to meet the long term needs of nature and people. The Plan recognises the need for consistency when it comes to policy guidance, plans and decisions that affect both the marine and terrestrial environment. This is particularly relevant

for the River Basin Management Plan, the current National Planning Framework and Scottish Planning Policy.

To achieve this, the National Marine Plan provides a comprehensive overarching framework for all marine activity in our waters. It facilitates sustainable development and use of our marine area in a way that will protect and enhance the marine environment whilst promoting both existing and emerging industries. Through the delivery of the plan's strategic objectives we seek to integrate both the ecosystem approach and the guiding principles of sustainable development to deliver a robust approach to managing the human impact on Scotland's seas.

Helping our seas support...

... Climate Change mitigation & adaptation

The National Marine Plan addresses both mitigation and adaptation. Technologies such as offshore wind will have a key role to play in reaching net-zero, while projected impacts of global heating include sea level rise, increased flooding, sea warming and declines in marine biodiversity. Achieving net-zero requires

the decarbonisation of the power sector, including by an increase in offshore wind. We have recently published both our [Offshore Wind Policy Statement](#) and the [Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy](#).

... Scotland's Nature

The National Marine Plan promotes an ecosystem approach, putting the marine environment at the heart of the planning process to promote ecosystem health, resilience to human-induced change and the ability to support sustainable development and use. This Plan also adopts the guiding principles of sustainable development, to ensure that any individual policy, plan or activity is carried out within environmental limits

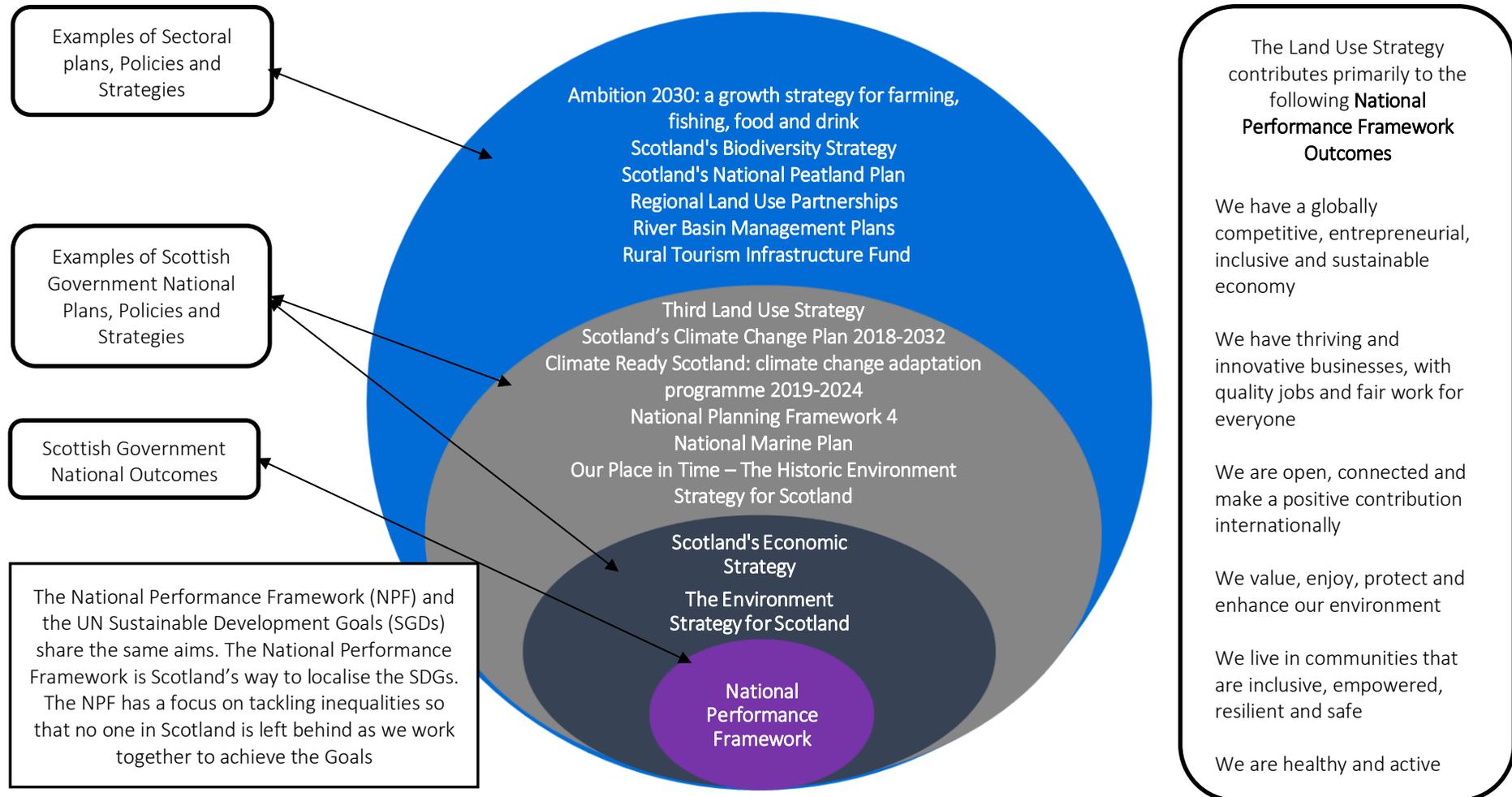
... Our Communities

Sustainable development and use of the marine environment can provide multiple economic benefits at a community and national level. These include economic growth, skills development, employment, maintaining or increasing population levels and opportunities for investment and trade. Particular consideration should be given to opportunities that aim to provide benefit to communities, including local job creation and local training either directly or through supply chain projects. Social benefits include those directly associated with economic growth such as increased wealth, improved quality of life and community regeneration.

Benefits of an intrinsic nature such as health and wellbeing associated with the natural and historic environment, a choice of location and lifestyle, sport and recreation are also important. Social benefits apply not only to coastal communities but also to those who travel to and use the marine and coastal environment for employment or leisure.

Annex A – Policy Alignment

The Land Use Strategy 2021 - 2026 has a vital role to play in delivering Scotland’s national outcomes. Feedback from our consultation has indicated that the relationship between the Land Use Strategy and other Government policies is not always clear. The diagram below has been added to clarify the relationship between key Government policy and strategy documents. The diagram is not comprehensive and uses the plans and policies most closely related in subject matter to the Land Use Strategy. It is also important to recognise that policy alignment and influence may be horizontal as well as vertical and that this is not easy to represent.



Annex B – Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement: Principles

Vision

A Scotland with a strong and dynamic relationship between its land and people, where all land contributes to a modern and successful country, and where rights and responsibilities in relation to land are fully recognised and fulfilled.

Principles

1. The overall framework of land rights, responsibilities and public policies should promote, fulfil and respect relevant human rights in relation to land, contribute to public interest and wellbeing, and balance public and private interests. The framework should support sustainable economic development, protect and enhance the environment, help achieve social justice and build a fairer society.
2. There should be a more diverse pattern of land ownership and tenure, with more opportunities for citizens to own, lease and have access to land.
3. More local communities should have the opportunity to own, lease or use buildings and land which can contribute to their community's wellbeing and future development.
4. The holders of land rights should exercise these rights in ways that take account of their responsibilities to meet high standards of land ownership, management and use. Acting as the stewards of Scotland's land resource for future generations they contribute to sustainable growth and a modern, successful country.
5. There should be improved transparency of information about the ownership, use and management of land, and this should be publicly available, clear and contain relevant detail.
6. There should be greater collaboration and community engagement in decisions about land.

Annex C - Policy action highlighted within the Strategy and how it relates to the land use outcomes.

Policy Action	LUS Objective 1 - Land based businesses working with nature to contribute more to Scotland's prosperity	LUS Objective 2 - Responsible stewardship of Scotland's natural resources delivering more benefits to Scotland's people	LUS Objective 3 - Urban and rural communities better connected to the land, with more people enjoying the land and positively influencing land use
National Planning Framework 4	X	X	X
Scottish Forestry Strategy 2019 – 2029	X	X	X
Biodiversity Strategy	X	X	X
2017-2027 Pollinator Strategy	X	X	X
Green infrastructure fund	X	X	X
Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund		X	X
Cleaner Air for Scotland Strategy– The Road to a Healthier Future’ (CAFS).	X	X	X
National Peatland Action Plan	X	X	
The Biodiversity Challenge Fund	X	X	X
Scotland Outlook 2030 (tourism Strategy)	X	X	X
Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund	X	X	X
Local Food Strategy	X	X	X
Ambition 2030 – a growth strategy for farming, fishing, food and drink	X	X	X
Scottish Land Fund		X	X
River Basin Management Plan (RBMP)	X	X	X
Climate Change Plan 2018-2032	X	X	
Climate change plan update		X	X
Our Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme (SCCAP) 2019-2024	X	X	X
Register of controlled interest in land			X
Land Rights and Responsibilities statement LRRS	X	X	X
Regional Land Use Partnerships	X	X	X
Regional Spatial Strategies		X	X
Local development plans		X	X

Local place plans		X	X
Open space Strategy		X	X
Climate Action Towns		X	X
Water Resilient Places policy framework		X	X
Place principles		X	X
Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs)	X	X	
Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAECs)	X	X	
Valuing Your Soils	X	X	
Crofting National Development Plan	X	X	X
Crofting Agricultural Grant Scheme	X	X	X
Scottish Land Matching Service		X	X
Peatland Action Fund	X	X	
Peatland Carbon Code	X	X	
Woodland Carbon Code	X	X	
Woodland Carbon Capture Investment Programme	X	X	
Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund	X	X	X
Biodiversity Challenge Fund		X	X
Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund	X	X	X
Marine Planning Partnerships		X	
Blue Economy Action Plan		X	
The Crown Estate Scotland's sustainable communities fund	X	X	X
Crown Estate Scotland's Community Capacity Grants	X	X	X
National Island Plan	X	X	X
National Marine Plan		X	
Rural and Islands Economic Recovery Plan	X	X	X
Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind		X	

Annex D – Examples of national crosscutting policy action.

In our ‘Using landscapes to understand land use’ section we have highlighted that within each illustrative landscape we have showcased policies most relevant to that landscape, but that these policies may be applicable nationally even if only highlighted in a single landscape. The table below provides a matrix showing how this works in practice.

Policy Action	Settlements	Enclosed Farmland	Semi-Natural land	Rivers and water bodies	Coastal	Islands	Marine
National Planning Framework 4	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Scottish Forestry Strategy	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Biodiversity Strategy	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Pollinator Strategy	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Green infrastructure fund	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Green Infrastructure Community Engagement Fund	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Cleaner Air for Scotland Strategy– The Road to a Healthier Future’ (CAFS).	X	X	X	X	X	X	
National Peatland Action Plan		X	X	X	X	X	
the Biodiversity Challenge Fund	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Scotland Outlook 2030 (tourism Strategy)	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Local Food Strategy	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Ambition 2030 – A growth strategy for farming, fishing, food and drink	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Scottish Land Fund.	X	X	X	X	X	X	
River Basin Management Plan (RBMP)	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Marine Plan					X	X	X

Annex E – Monitoring and evaluation of the Land Use Strategy

The ten Land Use Strategy indicators were chosen to monitor the progress being made in the delivery of the first Strategy’s three Objectives. Although they do not provide a comprehensive measure of every aspect of land use associated with the Land Use Strategy, they provide a relatively balanced picture of important representative elements and we shall maintain them in the publication of this Strategy whilst recognising the importance of on-going consideration.

In order to provide background, the national indicators are supplemented by related indicators and information to provide useful context. Further information on trends illustrated by the indicators and contextual indicators and information can be found on the Land Use Strategy webpages.

The indicators are shown below, and supplementary information and data is provided on the Scottish Government website. The relationship of indicators to the Land Use Strategy’s three long term Objectives is also shown.

Indicator and context	Land Use Strategy Objective
1 Land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) greenhouse gas emissions. Supplemented with information on renewable energy	All
2 Gross Value Added (GVA) in agriculture and forestry. Supplemented with information on Total Income from Farming.	1
3 Scottish tourism visits Supplemented with information on regional tourism, information from the Moffat Centre and Scotland Visitor Survey	1 and 3
4 High nature value farming and forestry Supplemented by information on the favourable condition target	1 and 2
5 Natural Capital Asset Index (NCAI) Supplemented with information from UK National Ecosystem Assessment	2
6 Water ecological status	2

Supplemented by information on river water quality	
7 Terrestrial breeding birds Supplemented by information on Scottish Natural Heritage Trend Notes and Farmland Bird Trends in Scotland	2
8 Volunteering in nature Supplemented by information from the Scottish Nature Omnibus	2 and 3
9 Visits to the outdoors Supplemented by data on the use made of greenspace	3
10 Community inclusion in land use decision making Supplemented by information on Forestry Commission Scotland indicators and the Scotland's People and Nature Survey (SPANS)	3

Annex F - Statutory requirement under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Section 57 – Duty to produce a Land Use Strategy.

1. The Scottish Ministers must, no later than 31 March 2011, lay a land use strategy before the Scottish Parliament.
2. The strategy must, in particular, set out—
 - (a) the Scottish Ministers’ objectives in relation to sustainable land use;
 - (b) their proposals and policies for meeting those objectives; and
 - (c) the timescales over which those proposals and policies are expected to take effect.
3. The objectives, proposals and policies referred to in subsection (2) must contribute to—
 - (a) achievement of the Scottish Ministers’ duties under section 1, 2(1) or 3(1) (b);
 - (b) achievement of the Scottish Ministers’ objectives in relation to adaptation to climate change, including those set out in any programme produced by virtue of section 53(2); and
 - (c) sustainable development.
4. Before laying the strategy before the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Ministers must publish a draft strategy and consult with such bodies as they consider appropriate and also with the general public.
5. The strategy must be accompanied by a report setting out—
 - (a) the consultation process undertaken in order to comply with subsection (4); and
 - (b) the ways in which views expressed during that process have been taken account of in finalising the strategy (or stating that no account has been taken of such views).
6. The Scottish Ministers must, no later than—
 - (a) 5 years after laying a strategy before the Scottish Parliament under subsection (1); and
 - (b) the end of every subsequent period of 5 years,lay a revised strategy before the Scottish Parliament; and subsections (2) to (5) apply to a revised strategy as they apply to a strategy laid under subsection (1).



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