Draft Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) for the draft Environment Strategy

**Disclaimer**

This document is a point in time assessment of the likely effects of the draft Environment Strategy on the rights and wellbeing of children and young people. This draft impact assessment should be read in conjunction with other draft impact assessments prepared for the draft strategy.

The Scottish Government acknowledge the importance of monitoring and evaluating the impact of strategic decisions and legislation on children’s rights and wellbeing. Any information gathered during the consultation on the draft Environment Strategy to which the impact assessment relates, will be used to inform future determinations of impact. Any new strategic decision or new legislation (including amending legislation) would be subject to a new CRWIA in line with the legislative requirements.

# Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment Template

## Introduction

1. **Brief Summary**

**Type of proposal:**

Decision of a strategic nature relating to the rights and wellbeing of children and young people.

**Name the proposal, and describe its overall aims and intended purpose.**

Name: [Draft Environment Strategy](https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781836917670)

The [draft Environment Strategy](https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781836917670) sets out a holistic framework for delivering Scotland’s role in tackling the global crises of nature loss, climate change and pollution. The draft Strategy brings together the Scottish Government’s existing policy response to tackling nature loss, climate change and pollution, highlighting the importance of carefully managing synergies and trade-offs across these goals. It builds on these existing policies by outlining new priorities and proposals. These focus, in particular, on opportunities for supporting the economic and societal changes needed to help tackle these global crises in ways that create wider benefits for Scotland – supporting green jobs and industries, improving people’s health, tackling poverty and promoting social justice.

The draft Strategy sets out It sets out steps for supporting and enabling these changes in ways that will transform our country for the better, improving the lives of people across Scotland, including children. Achieving the Environment Strategy’s vision will play a fundamental role in improving outcomes for children and young people. For example:

* Younger generations will be most affected by the impacts of climate change, nature loss and pollution - we have a responsibility to safeguard the planet for current and future generations and to ensure the voices of children and young people are heard and respected as part of this.
* Tackling air pollution and improving our resilience to climate change is particularly important for safeguarding the health of children, who are disproportionately affected.
* Outdoor, nature-based play and education can play an important role in improving children and young people’s health, wellbeing and educational attainment.

The draft Environment Strategy fulfils Ministers obligation under section 47 of the UK Withdrawal from the EU (Continuity) (Scotland) Act 2021 to prepare and publish an environmental policy strategy, with section 47 also requiring Scottish Ministers to have due regard to the strategies when making policies, including proposals for legislation.

**Vision and outcomes**

The vision for the strategy begins by describing our 2045 vision: by restoring nature, ending Scotland's contribution to climate change and tackling pollution, our country is transformed for the better - helping to secure the wellbeing of our people and planet for generations to come. The vision recognises that tackling these crises will depend on changes in Scotland’s economy and society. This, in turn, can help to transform Scotland for the better – for improving people’s health and wellbeing. The vision the collective wellbeing and safeguards the planet for future generations.

The draft strategy aims to improve the wellbeing of everyone in Scotland, including children and young people. The aim of the Strategy is to ensure that everyone, including children and young people can enjoy the life-supporting benefits the environment provides. This includes improving people’s health and wellbeing, tackling poverty and inequalities, and supporting green jobs and businesses in the transition to net zero by 2045.

To achieve the draft strategy’s Vision, we have identified a set of outcomes that will contribute to this aim, these include:

* Scotland’s biodiversity is restored and regenerated
* We have ended Scotland’s contribution to climate change
* We minimise pollution and waste in our environment
* Scotland’s net zero, nature positive and circular economy thrives within the planet’s sustainable limits

Two outcomes describe the positive transformations in our society and economy that will support these goals, while creating wider benefits for Scotland’s prosperity and wellbeing:

* Scotland’s society is transformed for the better by living sustainably, in harmony with nature.
* Scotland’s global environmental impact is sustainable.

The draft Strategy also sets out two cross-cutting outcomes, that inform policies across all of government, including:

* We build Scotland’s resilience to climate change and other global environmental risks.
* These transformations are achieved through a just transition and support climate and environmental justice.

The draft Strategy also presents high-level pathways for driving progress towards the outcomes. These pathways summarise key existing policies while also identifying proposals and priorities to guide future policy development across the breadth of government. The pathways are followed by a summary of arrangements for monitoring and reporting progress towards the outcomes, in order to guide improvements to our approach.

To support the development of the draft strategy, we have commissioned substantial new research focusing on the economy, society and global outcomes, which have been supported by stakeholder working groups with a wide range of stakeholders.

Start date of proposal’s development: 29 January 2021

Start date of CRWIA process: 21 June 2024

1. **With reference given to the requirements of the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, which aspects of the proposal are relevant to or impact upon children’s rights?**

The relevant articles to the draft Environment Strategy, which will provide positive benefits to children and young people, include (additional information can be found in Annex 1):

* Article 2 (non-discrimination) and Article 23 (children with a disability) – the draft strategy will benefit all children and young people and will address areas of inequalities, especially race and disability. Evidence indicates that all children and young people will benefit from greater air quality, especially those with disabilities and children and young people who live in more ethnically diverse communities.
* Article 3 (best interests of the child), Article 6 (life, survival and development), Article 24 (health and health services) & Article 27 (adequate standard of living) - the draft strategy will benefit everyone, but children and young people will benefit more than others from improvements in air quality, as children and young people are more at risk of lung conditions such as asthma and chest infections.
* Article 28 (right to education) & Article 29 (goals of education) - nature-based education will help benefit children’s health, wellbeing and educational attainment.
* Article 31 Leisure, play and culture – the draft strategy will help children and young people benefit from increased access to environmental spaces.

The Environment Strategy will apply across Scotland, and while the draft strategy will benefit society as a whole, children and young people in particular will benefit. This is because evidence shows that poorer air quality is more likely to impact children and young people than adults, with more children and young people being admitted to hospital with lung conditions such as asthma and chest infections[[1]](#footnote-2). Children and young people living in more deprived areas[[2]](#footnote-3), and those living with poor health[[3]](#footnote-4) are at greater risk.

The proposed outcomes of the draft strategy will enable children and young people to benefit from increasing access to greenspaces and improving air quality, which will create significant health benefits and help to reduce inequalities. It will also support children and young people as they finish education and look to move into the job market.

There is also a commitment in the draft strategy to strengthen nature-based education to inspire care for nature and improve outcomes for children, as there is strong evidence of the benefits this can create for children and young people’s health, wellbeing and educational attainment.

1. **Please provide a summary of the evidence gathered which will be used to inform your decision-making and the content of the proposal.**

Existing research:

* [Air quality | Scotland's environment web](https://www.environment.gov.scot/our-environment/air/air-quality/)
* [Millions of children are exposed to dangerous levels of outdoor pollution at school | Asthma + Lung UK (asthmaandlung.org.uk)](https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/media/press-releases/millions-children-are-exposed-dangerous-levels-outdoor-pollution-school#:~:text=Every%20day%2C%20an%20estimated%203.1,5).&text=Asthma%20%2B%20Lung%20UK%20analysis%20also,5%20were%20above%20WHO%20levels.)
* [Respiratory Admissions Linked to Air Pollution in a Medium Sized City of the UK: A Case-crossover Study - Aerosol and Air Quality Research (aaqr.org)](https://aaqr.org/articles/aaqr-23-03-oa-0062)
* [Air quality – knowledge account (www.gov.scot)](https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2020/02/environment-strategy-scotland-vision-outcomes/documents/air-quality-knowledge-account/air-quality-knowledge-account/govscot%3Adocument/air-quality-knowledge-account.pdf)
* [Air pollution and children's health — European Environment Agency (europa.eu)](https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/air-pollution-and-childrens-health#:~:text=Before%20birth%2C%20ambient%20air%20pollution,as%20well%20as%20having%20an)
* [Impacts of air pollution across the life course – evidence highlight note (london.gov.uk)](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-04/Imperial%20College%20London%20Projects%20-%20impacts%20of%20air%20pollution%20across%20the%20life%20course%20%E2%80%93%20evidence%20highlight%20note.pdf)
* Scotland’s People Annual Report 2019 (www.gov.scot)
* [Air quality exposure and inequalities study - part one - London analysis.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/Air%20quality%20exposure%20and%20inequalities%20study%20-%20part%20one%20-%20London%20analysis.pdf)
* [How frequently visiting green spaces benefits our mental health | Student news from King's College London (kcl.ac.uk)](https://www.kcl.ac.uk/students/how-frequently-visiting-green-spaces-benefits-our-mental-health)
* [Air pollution and children's health — European Environment Agency (europa.eu)](https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/air-pollution-and-childrens-health#:~:text=Before%20birth%2C%20ambient%20air%20pollution,as%20well%20as%20having%20an)
* [A breath of toxic air: UK children in danger - UNICEF UK](https://www.unicef.org.uk/publications/child-health-breath-of-toxic-air/)
* [UK must act to protect children from risks of air pollution, say paediatricians | The BMJ](https://www.bmj.com/content/386/bmj.q2071)
* [Children are especially vulnerable to air pollution: we need data on transport emissions near schools | The BMJ](https://www.bmj.com/content/383/bmj.p2675)
* [Research uncovers link between green space and children’s mental health – Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (bradfordhospitals.nhs.uk)](https://www.bradfordhospitals.nhs.uk/research-uncovers-link-between-green-space-and-childrens-mental-health/)
* [Greenspace, Health and COVID-19 - Our blog - Public Health Scotland](https://publichealthscotland.scot/our-blog/2022/july/greenspace-health-and-covid-19/)
* [The climate crisis is taking a toll on the mental health of children and young people (rcpsych.ac.uk)](https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/news-and-features/latest-news/detail/2020/11/20/the-climate-crisis-is-taking-a-toll-on-the-mental-health-of-children-and-young-people)
* [What are paths worth and who's missing out? - Ramblers](https://www.ramblers.org.uk/who-has-access-our-paths)
* [Air quality exposure and inequalities study - part one - London analysis.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/Air%20quality%20exposure%20and%20inequalities%20study%20-%20part%20one%20-%20London%20analysis.pdf)
* [Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey - The Lancet Planetary Health](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(21)00278-3/fulltext)

Children and young people living in more deprived areas are more likely to live in areas with higher levels of air pollution and have less access to greenspaces than those who live in less deprived areas. This is evidenced by there being a smaller percentage of people living within the most deprived areas being less than a 5-minute walk to their nearest green or blue space than those living in the least deprived areas.

There is also a vast amount of evidence to suggestthat increasing access to greenspaces and improving air quality helps to improve mental wellbeing, which would benefit the mental wellbeing of all children especially for those suffering with poor mental wellbeing.

The evidence indicates that children with disabilities will also benefit from the draft strategy through better health and wellbeing. Research has shown that better access to greenspaces and improving air quality helps improve mental wellbeing and health, which will be of benefit to those people with disabilities, including children and young people with respiratory diseases.

In addition, poor environmental quality caused through issues such as poor air quality have been linked to a range of significant health risks for children and young people. Poor air quality has led to more children being admitted to hospital with lung conditions such as asthma and chest infections, and poor air quality can also increase the risk of babies being born smaller or as being born premature.

1. **Further to the evidence described at ‘3’ have you identified any 'gaps' in evidence which may prevent determination of impact? If yes, please provide an explanation of how they will be addressed**

No gaps in evidence have yet been identified, however we welcome views during the consultation to help identify any gaps that might have been missed.

The individual priorities and actions that follow the publication of the Environment Strategy will be assessed for their impact on children and young people, and further CRWIAs (and other relevant impact assessments) will be carried out where appropriate.

1. **Analysis of Evidence**

Evidence also suggests[[4]](#footnote-5) that increasing access to greenspaces and improving air quality can help to improve our health and mental wellbeing especially those suffering with poor mental health and health issues.

As mentioned above, evidence shows that air quality is more likely to impact children and young people more than adults, with more children being admitted to hospital with lung conditions such as asthma and chest infections, and even before birth with the risk of babies being born smaller or premature. The impact of the climate crisis is also having an effect on the mental health of children and young people[[5]](#footnote-6). It has been found that nature-based education can help benefit children’s health, wellbeing and educational attainment. Therefore, the evidence suggests that there is likely to be a greater, more positive impact to children from the draft strategy on their wellbeing than perhaps on other age groups.

However, any evidence submitted to the consultation will be considered to help identify any evidence that might have been missed.

1. **What changes (if any) have been made to the proposal as a result of this assessment?**

No changes have yet to be made to the draft strategy, as it has, so far, been found that the strategy will have a positive impact on children and young people’s wellbeing. However, changes will be made to the assessment if any evidence is identified during the consultation.

## Conclusion

1. **As a result of the evidence gathered and analysed against all UNCRC requirements, what is the potential overall impact of this proposal on children’s rights)?:**

Positive

1. **If you have identified a positive impact on children’s rights, please describe below how the proposal will protect, respect, and fulfil children’s rights in Scotland.**

Children and young people will benefit from the draft strategy through greater access to greenspaces and improved air quality, and through strengthening nature-based education to inspire care for nature and improve outcomes for children. As indicated above, the implementation of the draft strategy will help to improve the physical and mental health of all children. Tackling air pollution and improving our resilience to climate change is also particularly important for safeguarding the health of children, who are disproportionately affected.

The links between the draft strategy and its positive impacts on the articles of UNCRC as stated above are drawn from the analysis of evidence gathered.

* The draft Environment Strategy will benefit all children and young people and will address areas of inequalities, especially race and disability. As highlighted above, improving air quality will benefit children with disabilities, children in more ethnically diverse backgrounds and children in lower socio-economic groups, as they will have greater access to greenspaces. This will uphold Article 2 (non-discrimination).
* The draft Environment Strategy will improve children’s physical and mental health by improving air quality and increasing access to greenspaces. The evidence indicates that children and young people with disabilities will benefit from the draft Environment Strategy through better health and wellbeing. Strengthening nature-based education will also help benefit children and young people’s health, wellbeing and educational attainment. This intends to positively impact articles 3, 6, 23, 24, 27 & 31.
* Strengthening nature-based education can help benefit children and young people’s health, wellbeing and educational attainment. This intends to positively impact articles 28 & 29.

1. **If a negative impact has been identified please describe below. Is there a risk this could potentially amount to an incompatibility?**

No negative impacts have yet been identified, however, possible changes will be considered if there is any evidence identified during the consultation.

1. **As a result of the evidence gathered and analysed against all wellbeing indicators, will the proposal contribute to the wellbeing of children and young people in Scotland?**

Safe: Likely positive impact

Healthy: Yes

Achieving: Yes

Nurtured: Yes

Active: Yes

Respected: Likely positive impact

Responsible: Likely positive impact

Included: Likely positive impact

As referenced above, the draft Environment Strategy will benefit all children and young people through improved air quality and increased access to clean, environmental spaces. These improvements will improve children’s physical and mental health and strengthening nature-based education will also help benefit children’s health, wellbeing and educational attainment.

1. **How will you communicate to children and young people the impact that the proposal will have on their rights?**

The final CRWIA will be published on gov.scot for those wishing to access it, and has, in so far as possible been written in accessible language for children and young people to understand its content and potential positive impact on their rights.

## Consultation

This draft CRWIA has been produced to help inform the formal consultation for the draft Environment Strategy.

We are aware that there may be other impacts, either positive or negative, which have not yet been identified, we would therefore be grateful for any feedback on this draft CRWIA during the consultation. The draft will then be updated to reflect the feedback during the consultation.

The consultation can be accessed via <https://consult.gov.scot/environment-forestry/draft-environment-strategy/> with the consultation opening on 3 July and closing on 29 September. The consultation asks for any further information or evidence that should be considered in the accompanying draft CRWIA.

## Post Assessment Review and sign-off

1. **Planning for the review of impact on children’s rights and wellbeing**

Chapter 3 of the Continuity Act requires Scottish Ministers to review the strategy “from time to time”, and may also revise the strategy or any document forming part of it.

Following the consultation, the delivery of the strategy will include regular monitoring and evaluation of the actions and plans listed in the strategy. The evidence and data gathered to support the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy will aim to develop our understanding of whether children and young people are experiencing the benefits that will come from the Environment Strategy. This evidence and data will also be used to determine whether the CRWIA needs to be updated when the Environment Strategy is reviewed.

In addition, the proposals and priorities that follow the publication of the Environment Strategy will be reviewed and assessed for their impact on children and young people through a new CRWIA for these new actions.

1. [Respiratory Admissions Linked to Air Pollution in a Medium Sized City of the UK: A Case-crossover Study - Aerosol and Air Quality Research (aaqr.org)](https://aaqr.org/articles/aaqr-23-03-oa-0062) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [Cleaner Air for Scotland 2 - Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report](https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/impact-assessment/2020/10/cleaner-air-scotland-2-environmental-report/documents/cleaner-air-scotland-2-strategic-environmental-assessment-environmental-report/cleaner-air-scotland-2-strategic-environmental-assessment-environmental-report/govscot%3Adocument/cleaner-air-scotland-2-strategic-environmental-assessment-environmental-report.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [Respiratory Admissions Linked to Air Pollution in a Medium Sized City of the UK: A Case-crossover Study - Aerosol and Air Quality Research (aaqr.org)](https://aaqr.org/articles/aaqr-23-03-oa-0062) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. [How frequently visiting green spaces benefits our mental health | Student news from King's College London (kcl.ac.uk)](https://www.kcl.ac.uk/students/how-frequently-visiting-green-spaces-benefits-our-mental-health) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. [Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey - The Lancet Planetary Health](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(21)00278-3/fulltext) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)