**Environment Strategy: Consumer Duty Assessment**

The Scottish Ministers are specified as a relevant public authority under the Consumer Scotland Act 2020 (Relevant Public Authorities) Regulations 2024 (SSI 2024/78). This means that the Scottish Ministers are subject to the consumer duty (“the Duty”) under the Consumer Scotland Act 2020 (“the 2020 Act”) and must therefore comply with the four requirements of this duty, which are:

* When making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise their functions, to have regard to the impact of those decisions on consumers in Scotland;
* When making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise their functions, to have regard to the desirability of reducing harm to consumers in Scotland;
* To publish information about the steps they have taken to meet the Duty; and
* To have regard to any guidance published by Consumer Scotland about the Duty.

The Duty ensures consumers are at the heart of all strategic decisions within the Scottish Government. Under the 2020 Act, the definition of consumers includes individuals and small businesses who buy, use or receive in Scotland goods or services (or who could potentially do so) which are provided by public bodies.

As with similar publications of its type, the Environment Strategy collectively constitutes a ‘strategic decision,’ even if each of the various policies contained within it do not. The approach taken to meet the Duty considers the impact of the constituent elements as well as the cumulative impact of the Environment Strategy.

The Environment Strategy has met the requirements of the 2020 Act. The following impact assessment has been carried out:

**Stage 1 – Planning:**

**1. Is this a decision of a strategic nature? Yes**

The [draft Environment Strategy](https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781836917670) 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.

The Scottish Government published the Environment Strategy Vision and Outcomes in 2021. We then published progress reports to Parliament in 2022, 2023 and 2024 to provide an update on the progress of the Environment Strategy. The publication of the draft Environment Strategy will coincide with the launch of the consultation, which can be accessed via the following link: <https://consult.gov.scot/environment-forestry/draft-environment-strategy/>

**2. Is the strategic decision likely to have an impact on any/all consumers?**

Yes

**Stage 2 – Evidence Gathering:**

**3. What is the proposal trying to achieve?**

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 consultation draft of the Strategy can be found [here](https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781836917670). 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.

*Vision and outcomes*

The vision for the draft Strategy begins by describing our 2045 vision for fulfilling our role in tackling the global crises of nature loss, climate change and pollution, helping to safeguard our shared planet for all life on Earth. We will harness the enormous opportunities this creates for Scotland to flourish as a fairer, greener and more prosperous nation.

The vision recognises that tackling these crises relies will depend on changes in Scotland’s economy and society. This, in turn, can help to transform Scotland for the better – for example by supporting green jobs and enabling people and communities in Scotland to live sustainably – in ways that also tackle inequalities and poverty and create wider benefits for people’s health and wellbeing.

The draft Strategy aims to improve the wellbeing of everyone in Scotland. The aims of the draft Strategy is to ensure that everyone can enjoy the life-supporting benefits the environment provides. This includes improving people’s health and wellbeing, tackling poverty and inequalities, and supporting 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 outcomes 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 Environment 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.

**4. What are the impacts on consumers?**

The Environment Strategy is likely to result in a positive impact for consumers in Scotland, including vulnerable consumers, by improving the services provided by public authorities. These include reducing flood risk, increasing green and blue spaces and tackling air pollution.

One of the key impacts on consumers as a result of the draft Environment Strategy is from promoting environmental quality and providing access to nature. These impacts will give greater benefits to consumers, especially those living in more deprived areas, such as better health and wellbeing outcomes. These impacts can help transform towns and cities into more enjoyable, attractive and safer places to live, and reduce the level of demand that is placed on the National Health Service.

In addition to increasing health opportunities and equalities, the Environment Strategy can also maximise the wider opportunities to create green jobs and businesses, and for achieving Scotland’s ambitions for a wellbeing economy. It will help ensure Scotland’s net zero, nature positive economy positive and circular economy thrives within the planet’s sustainable limits, and harnessing the opportunities this creates for good, green jobs.

The actions that follow the publication of the Environment Strategy will be assessed for their impact on consumers, and further impact assessments, including the Consumer Duty Impact Assessment, will be carried out where appropriate.

**5. Is it likely that harm will be experienced by consumers as a result of this proposal?**

The Scottish Government believes it is highly unlikely that there will be harm to consumers caused by implementation of the draft Environment Strategy. However, there is an argument that reducing Scotland’s environmental impact could increase costs, which could be passed on to the consumer. The actions that follow the publication of the Environment Strategy will be assessed for their impact on consumers, and where there is a risk that harm may result alternative options will be given consideration.

**6. What alternative proposals are there that can improve outcomes for consumers and/or reduce harm to consumers?**

In preparing the draft Environment Strategy for consultation, we considered the possibility of  “doing more and sooner”, where the Environment Strategy would be ambition and aim to meet its aims much sooner than those set out in the draft strategy. We have not considered a ‘do nothing’ scenario, as the strategy was placed on a statutory basis by the Continuity Act 2021, with Section 47 requiring Scottish Ministers to prepare and publish an environmental policy strategy.

**7. How do these alternative proposals compare to the original proposal?**

It was decided that the “doing more and sooner” option would be discounted as our net zero target of 2045 is one of the most ambitious in the world and means reaching net zero five years ahead of the UK. The UK’s Committee on Climate Change also said that the 2045 target was set as it was the earliest achievable date for net zero without major disruption or unrealistic expectations. The option taken forward in this draft Environment Strategy will also ensure consistency with other Scottish Government net zero commitments.

**Stage 3 – Assessment and Improvement of Proposal:**

**8. What is the expected impact of a strategic decision on consumers in Scotland?**

It is expected that the impact of the draft Environment Strategy will be positive for consumers, especially vulnerable people. There will be greater access to greenspaces and improved air quality, which will create significant health benefits, help to tackle inequalities and help transform towns and cities into more enjoyable, attractive and safer places to live.

However, the actions that follow the publication of the Environment Strategy will be assessed for their impact on consumers, and further impact assessments, including the Consumer Duty Impact Assessment, will be carried out where appropriate.

**9. Has SG had regard to the desirability of reducing harm to consumers in Scotland?**

Yes – implementation of the draft Environment Strategy will help to create safer communities, create significant health benefits and help to tackle inequalities. This will be achieved through greater access to greenspaces and improved air quality and reducing overall demand for energy by promoting use of public transport and energy-efficient homes. These positive impacts can also help transform towns and cities into more enjoyable, attractive and safer places to live, and reduce the level of demand that is placed on the National Health Service.

Further impact assessments, including the Consumer Duty Impact Assessment, will be carried out where appropriate on actions following the publication of the Environment Strategy.

**10. Is there a need for further engagement with consumers?**

A public [consultation](https://consult.gov.scot/environment-forestry/draft-environment-strategy/) will be conducted with a wide range of input from the relevant stakeholders and sectors to help inform our understanding on the potential impact on consumers. Any feedback received during the consultation will be considered as part of this assessment.

We are aware that there may be other impacts, either positive or negative, which have not yet been identified in this impact assessment, and we would therefore be grateful for any feedback during the consultation period.

The consultation will open on 3 July and close on 29 September.

**Stage 4 – Decision:**

**11. Has SG met the Consumer Duty for this decision?**

Yes

**12. If yes to above, explain how?**

In the process of carrying out this impact assessment, we have considered the impact of the draft Environment Strategy for potential impacts on consumers in Scotland.

This was achieved by significant engagement with stakeholders throughout the development of the Environment Strategy and during the consultation period. We have therefore considered the needs of consumers as part of this Environment Strategy and the impact the Environment Strategy is likely to have on consumers and to the desirability of reducing harm to consumers.

**Stage 5 – Publication and Review:**

**13. Section 23 of the 2020 Act requires relevant public authorities to publish information about the steps which they have taken to meet the Duty. The relevant public authority must publish the information no later than 12 months after the end of period to which it relates.**

This statement will be published on [Citizen Space](https://consult.gov.scot/environment-forestry/draft-environment-strategy/) on 3 July 2025. The final Consumer Duty Assessment will be published on Gov.Scot following the conclusion of the consultation.

**14. How will the process carried out be reviewed and evaluated?**

As referenced above, the actions that follow the publication of the Environment Strategy will be assessed for their impact on consumers, and further impact assessments, including the Consumer Duty Impact Assessment, will be carried out where appropriate.