

# DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND: Discussion Paper



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This discussion paper invites your views to help develop an Environment Strategy for Scotland. It takes forward the commitment in the Scottish Government's 2017/18 Programme for Government – A Nation with Ambition<sup>1</sup> – to develop a strategic approach on environmental policy to protect and enhance our environment, safeguard natural capital and continue Scotland's leading role in addressing environmental challenges.

In particular, the discussion paper invites your feedback on:

- a draft vision and set of outcomes to set out what we are collectively working to achieve through Scotland's environment and climate change policies
- a series of knowledge accounts – based on current evidence – that will help to inform decisions over priorities for action to achieve this shared vision and outcomes.

### Who is this discussion paper for?

In developing an Environment Strategy for Scotland, we want to create a shared statement of ambition for all those working to protect Scotland's environment and make our contribution to addressing global challenges. We would welcome your ideas to shape this.

### Introduction

The approach we take to environment and climate change policies will play an essential role in our nation's success over the coming decades. It will protect the beauty and uniqueness of Scotland's landscapes and nature, which are precious in their own right. And it will create new opportunities to strengthen our economy, social wellbeing, health and equality. Our ambition is to continue to establish Scotland's place in the world as a country ready to lead global action to address current and future environmental challenges, and to collaborate with others as we do that.

In individual areas of environmental policy, Scotland already has strong, ambitious strategies in place. For example:

- Earlier this year, we published our new Climate Change Plan<sup>2</sup> – a sister document to our new Energy Strategy<sup>3</sup> – which details how the Scottish Government will continue to drive progress towards the currently legislated emissions reduction target of 80% by 2050. In response to the international Paris Agreement, we have introduced a new Bill to Parliament which will make Scotland's existing climate legislation even tougher. The Bill immediately sets a 90% emissions reduction target for 2050 and requires that the earliest achievable date for reaching net-zero emissions is regularly reviewed. As soon as a target date for reaching net-zero emissions can be set credibly and responsibly, we will write that date into law. We will always strive for the most ambitious target possible, based on the best available evidence.
- Last year, the Scottish Government and its partners won "The Circulars" Award at the World Economic Forum in Davos, reflecting the core position of the circular economy

1 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/09/8468>

2 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/02/8867>

3 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/12/5661>

in our Economic Strategy<sup>4</sup> (2015) and Manufacturing Action Plan<sup>5</sup> (2016), and our ambitious circular economy strategy, Making Things Last<sup>6</sup> (2016).

- We have a pioneering Land Use Strategy<sup>7</sup> (2016) with a strategic vision on how to realise the full potential of Scotland's land in ways that result in multiple benefits for our economy, environment and communities.
- Our biodiversity strategy, the 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity<sup>8</sup> (2013), is Scotland's response to the EU biodiversity targets and UN Aichi targets. It sets a target of halting the loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystem services in Scotland by 2020 and is accompanied by a Route Map<sup>9</sup> (2015), which sets out six 'Big Steps for nature' and Priority Projects to deliver them. Scotland is a stronghold for habitats and species threatened elsewhere in Europe, providing the largest part of the UK's contribution to the EU Natura 2000 network of protected sites.
- Scotland has the most stringent air quality targets in the UK. Our air quality strategy, Cleaner Air for Scotland<sup>10</sup> (2015), sets out how we will reduce air pollution to protect human health and fulfil EU legal commitments by 2020.
- Our holistic approach to implementing the EU Water Framework Directive, through the River Basin Management Plans for the Scotland River Basin District<sup>11</sup> (2015) and the cross-border Solway Tweed River Basin District<sup>12</sup> (2015) is an exemplar in Europe.

4 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/03/5984>

5 <https://www.scottish-enterprise.com/knowledge-hub/articles/insight/scotlands-manufacturing-action-plan>

6 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/02/1761>

7 <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00505253.pdf>

8 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2013/06/5538>

9 <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00480289.pdf>

10 <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00488493.pdf>

11 <https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/163445/the-river-basin-management-plan-for-the-scotland-river-basin-district-2015-2027.pdf>

12 [https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/218890/rbmp\\_solway\\_tweed\\_2015.pdf](https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/218890/rbmp_solway_tweed_2015.pdf)

- We were the first country in the world to develop a natural capital asset index, which is embedded in our National Performance Framework<sup>13</sup>.
- Scotland's first National Marine Plan<sup>14</sup> (2015) provides a single framework for the sustainable development and use of Scotland's seas, and our Marine Nature Conservation Strategy<sup>15</sup> (2011) has helped to establish a Marine Protected Area network covering more than one fifth of our seas.

Further strategies on areas such as higher activity radioactive waste also help to provide frameworks to guide long-term investment and decision-making. As we develop integrated future policy on agriculture, land use and environment we will look to provide stability and security for producers, land managers and businesses while at the same time working to maintain and protect environmental standards and support decarbonisation. And, over the summer, we will begin engagement on a new Forestry Strategy to focus on the long-term strategic framework for the future direction of forestry in Scotland.

The new National Performance Framework sets out a new purpose to focus on creating a more successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increased wellbeing, and sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Our Environment Strategy will set out how our collective work and the commitments being delivered through our existing strategies are contributing towards the achievement of this ambition for Scotland and for its environment. It will provide a strategic statement of the ambition and high-level outcomes that these individual strategies work collectively to deliver.

13 <http://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>

14 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/03/6517>

15 <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/marine-environment/Conservationstrategy/marineconstrategy>

Regardless of short-term challenges such as Brexit, it is vital that all of us working to protect, maintain and enhance Scotland's environment take decisions over the next few years with a clear focus on our longer-term goals and aspirations. What is our shared ambition for Scotland's land, air, water and biodiversity over the next 10, 20 or 100 years? What contribution can Scotland make to international goals and environmental challenges? And what does evidence tell us should be the priorities for our collective action and investment over the short-and-medium term to achieve that long-term vision?

### **Tackling global environmental challenges**

This century must see an urgent scaling-up of action to tackle global environmental challenges – *climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, resource depletion and waste* – to safeguard the wellbeing and prosperity of people around the globe, and the natural world we belong to. Current patterns of consumption and production are simply not sustainable. If everyone in the world lived as we currently do in Scotland, it would require the resources of more than three planets. We need to adapt to prosper – socially, economically and environmentally – within planetary limits: to work towards a world where no country uses more resources than the Earth can support and to replenish the natural systems that sustain us. This transformation will require commitment, collaboration, innovation and political leadership.

As the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals<sup>16</sup> make clear, these environmental challenges are deeply connected to our economic and social wellbeing. They have profound implications for human health, food security, equality and political stability. They will be some of

the defining issues of this century. That many of the worst effects of these challenges will be faced by the poorest nations and communities places an even greater moral responsibility on developed economies like Scotland to take action. Most can only be addressed through coordinated international action. Scotland is committed to playing its full part as a responsible global citizen and international partner.

Driving the transition to a low-carbon, resource efficient economy is not only a moral responsibility, it presents strong opportunities for Scotland's economic and social prosperity. The UN Paris Agreement will help open up an estimated \$23 trillion worth of economic opportunities between now and 2030. It also offers important opportunities to improve human health and wellbeing. For example, reducing reliance on petrol and diesel vehicles will increase air quality and encourage active lifestyles. The Scottish Government's 2017/18 Programme for Government sets out bold commitments on energy, low-carbon infrastructure, circular economy, sustainable transport, low emission zones and carbon capture and storage to ensure that Scotland grasps these opportunities. We want to establish Scotland as the best place in the world to invest in low-carbon business and technologies, attracting and retaining the researchers, designers, and innovators that will shape the low-carbon, resource efficiency transition. We will also establish a Just Transition Commission, to ensure the transition supports social justice, protecting livelihoods and helping to create a fairer and more equal nation.

### **Safeguarding our natural environment**

Scotland's rich and diverse natural environment is our greatest national asset. It is at the very heart of our national identity and culture and is world-renowned for its beauty. Scotland's nature is unique, with awe-inspiring landscapes and habitats

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

found in few other places on earth: from our diverse marine life and spectacular coastal machairs to ancient Scots pine forests, peatlands and heather-clad mountains. It deserves to be celebrated and protected for its own sake and because the success of our nation depends on it. The quality of our natural environment is fundamental to the prosperity and wellbeing of our society, and that of generations to come.

The ecosystem services our environment generates are estimated to contribute at least £20 billion to the Scottish economy every year, and the real contribution will be much greater, since many ecosystem services cannot be valued in monetary terms. Our natural environment directly supports the productivity of our farming, forestry and fishing industries and provides the energy, resources and other services (such as water purification and natural flood management) needed by a wide range of other industries. The beauty of our nature and landscapes is the essence of Scotland's global brand, supporting the success of key growth sectors such as food and drink and tourism.

Scotland's natural environment is also fundamental to our culture, national identity and social wellbeing. Our landscapes and nature have long provided an important source of inspiration for our art, literature and music and help to define who we are as a nation. They provide the spaces we need for exercise, recreation, education, inspiration and spiritual connection. Access to a healthy environment is a human right, creating important benefits for physical and mental health, for example through clean air and water, greenspaces for exercise and socialising, and a sense of connection to nature. Improving air quality and access to greenspace is a particular priority in more deprived urban areas, helping to tackle inequalities and improve the health, wellbeing and confidence of people and communities.

In the coming decades, it is clear that Scotland must play its part in addressing global environmental challenges and to protect and replenish our own natural environment.

### **Scotland's environmental performance**

We can be proud of the progress we have already achieved in Scotland. We are recognised as a world leader in tackling climate change and developing a circular economy. We were one of the first countries to commit publically to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and to announce our intended framework for implementing them through our refreshed National Performance Framework. We have set tough targets on air pollution, are helping to lead the way on reducing dependency on single use items, including being the first part of the UK to commit to introducing a deposit return scheme for drinks containers. And following extensive consultation, we have issued a preferred policy position not to support fracking, subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

We are a nation with ambition. But, when we look at the evidence, it is clear that significant future action is needed, for example, to halt the loss of biodiversity in Scotland and restore healthy ecosystems; to enhance our natural capital after past decades of decline; to continue reducing greenhouse gas emissions and tackle air pollution, waste and diffuse pollution of water courses; to increase the number of people accessing, enjoying and connecting with nature, particularly those from the most deprived areas; and to reduce Scotland's international ecological footprint.

### **Scotland's place in Europe – protecting, maintaining & enhancing environmental standards**

Scotland voted clearly and decisively to remain within the European Union. And we have demonstrated in 'Scotland's

Place in Europe'<sup>17</sup> (2016) and its follow-up on 'People, Jobs and Investment'<sup>18</sup> (2018) that this is the best option for Scotland's future. Given the unprecedented need for strong, collaborative international action to address environmental challenges, the decision taken for the UK to leave the EU is a significant and unwelcome setback: creating uncertainty, draining resources and risking the progress achieved to date.

Much of the progress in environmental protection in Scotland and the UK has been driven and enabled by EU membership. Around 80% of our environmental legislation originates from the EU, driving up environmental standards. EU membership has also provided essential sources of funding, labour, scientific expertise and collective initiatives, like the Emissions Trading System, all of which have played an important role in delivering Scotland's environment and climate ambitions.

While Scotland did not vote for Brexit, we do now have to manage the consequences. The Scottish Government has committed in future to protecting, maintaining and enhancing EU environmental standards. We will ensure that the four EU environmental principles – polluter pays, preventative action, tackling pollution at source and the precautionary principle – continue to sit at the heart of Scotland's approach to environmental protection in the future.

Later this year, in line with commitments made by Scottish Ministers during the passage of the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Legal Continuity) (Scotland) Bill, we will consult on how Scottish Ministers and public authorities will continue to have regard to the EU environmental principles once the UK exits the EU. This consultation will seek views on how the principles should

be applied in practice, by Scottish Ministers in developing policies (including proposals for legislation) and by Scottish Ministers and other Scottish public authorities in exercising their functions.

We will also consult on arrangements for environmental governance, after the UK exits the EU, to ensure the continued effective monitoring and enforcement of environmental standards, given the UK government's intention to no longer be subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice and other EU institutions. This consultation will build on the findings of the recent report by the Roundtable on Environment and Climate Change on 'Environmental Governance in Scotland on the UK's withdrawal from the EU'<sup>19</sup>.

The feedback to this discussion paper will set a helpful strategic context to those consultations.

We are also continuing to press the UK Government on a range of priority areas in the EU-UK negotiations and future intra-UK arrangements to ensure Scotland can continue to deliver our environment and climate change ambitions. These priorities are summarised in Box 1.

17 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/12/9234>

18 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/01/6407>

19 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/06/2221>

## Box 1: Environment and climate change priorities in the EU-UK negotiations

**1. Safeguarding and expanding Scotland's devolved powers.** Scotland has taken a more ambitious approach to environmental protection than the UK government on a range of areas, including climate change, the circular economy, air quality, river basin management planning, Natura 2000 designation, woodland creation and our position on fracking (subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment). We are also leading the way in the UK on tackling single use plastics. After the UK's exit from the EU, there must be no limitation on Scotland's ambitions for the environment. When repatriating powers from Brussels, the UK government must ensure that Scotland's devolved powers are maintained or expanded and any UK common frameworks must be negotiated and agreed with devolved administrations and not imposed.

**2. Maintaining or exceeding EU environmental standards.** Scotland is committed to maintaining or exceeding EU environmental standards and carrying forward EU environmental principles. It is also vital to ensure effective governance arrangements are in place to monitor and enforce these standards. We will consult later this year on post-Exit environmental governance in Scotland and the future application of EU environmental principles.

**3. Ensuring future trading arrangements do not compromise standards.** Scotland's interests would be best served by remaining within the European Single Market and EU Customs Union. Failing that, Scottish producers must be protected from third country imports produced to lower standards and there must be no weakening of standards as a condition of future trade agreements.

**4. Maintaining funding for environmental outcomes at least at current EU levels.** EU funding plays a crucial role in delivering Scotland's environment and climate change ambitions, supporting the sustainable management of our land and seas, providing investment for renewable energy and other low-carbon industries and promoting innovation through research and development. Post-Exit, funding for environmental outcomes must be at least maintained at current levels.

**5. Protecting the rights of EU citizens and their contribution to our environment sector.** EU nationals make a vital contribution to Scotland's environment sector, addressing skills gaps and fulfilling a broad spectrum of employment needs, including highly-skilled posts in areas such as hydroecology, environmental engineering, radioactive waste processing and low-carbon technologies. EU nationals also make an important contribution to the Scottish voluntary sector. Post-Exit, we need an immigration arrangement which allows Scotland to continue to recruit the best talent and meet our workforce needs.

**6. Collaborating and demonstrating leadership on the international stage.** Scotland is committed to playing our full role in tackling global environmental challenges and maintaining our international leadership on climate change and the circular economy. Ongoing co-operation at the European and international levels is essential to achieve this. We will press to ensure the UK remains party to all multilateral environmental agreements and that we can continue to participate in and influence EU collective action and wider international negotiations.

**7. Participating in EU initiatives which are of mutual benefit.** There is a range of EU initiatives where continued UK participation will be of mutual benefit, including EU energy and carbon markets; the regulation of chemicals and radioactive waste via REACH and EURATOM; data systems to prevent illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing; and the sharing of environmental data and scientific expertise. We will press to ensure that the UK continues to participate in these initiatives.



### How will the Environment Strategy be developed and how can you contribute?

No-one can be certain how future global trends and commitments – including in climate change, technology, consumer or land management behaviours, action to address social justice or trade agreements – will influence the well-being of Scotland's environment or our collective use of resources. But we should be confident and ambitious about what we can achieve over the short-to medium-term and maintain our focus on the long-term global transformation we are committed to help deliver.

The Environment Strategy will help to coordinate action and guide future prioritisation across Scotland's existing environment policies, addressing biodiversity, land use, water, air, seas, climate change, the circular economy and people's connection with nature. It will provide a strategic statement of the ambition and high-level outcomes that these individual strategies work collectively to deliver.

The Strategy will remain guided by the four EU principles:

- Polluter pays
- Preventative action
- Tackling pollution at source
- Precautionary principle.

We will take a whole-of government approach to developing the Strategy, taking advantage of opportunities to collaborate across portfolios on mutual objectives. For example we will explore opportunities to strengthen our integrated approach to the sustainable management of our land and seas through our future policies on agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

The Strategy will set out a shared **vision** of what we are collectively working to achieve through Scotland's environment and climate change policies and their contribution to social wellbeing and inclusive, sustainable economic growth. And it will set out the **outcomes** that will enable us to deliver this shared vision.

## Box 2: Draft vision and outcomes

**Our draft vision is for “one planet prosperity”.** *This means protecting nature and living within the Earth's sustainable limits, while building a more prosperous, innovative and successful nation.*

### Draft outcomes

1. *We are a climate leader and play our full role in limiting global temperature rise to well below 2°C.*
2. *We are a zero waste, resource efficient nation.*
3. *Our biodiversity is protected and enhanced, supporting healthy ecosystems.*
4. *Our air, freshwater, seas and soils are of excellent quality.*
5. *Everyone can access, enjoy and connect with nature.*
6. *The global footprint of our consumption and production is sustainable.*

The draft vision and outcomes set out for discussion in Box 2 have been developed through discussions and work with our public bodies. They are also presented in Annex A, with an overview of how they will help to deliver the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and the National Outcomes and Purpose set out in the new National Performance Framework.

In working towards a final Environment Strategy, we want to create a collective statement of ambition for all those working to protect Scotland's environment and make our contribution to addressing global challenges. We would welcome your ideas to shape this.

The Strategy will also seek to identify the **priorities** towards which action and resources should be focused in the coming years to achieve our shared vision and outcomes, based on the latest evidence. To help inform this, we are publishing a series of draft **knowledge accounts** on a range of environmental themes. There is a wealth of evidence on Scotland's environment held by the Scottish Government, public bodies, research institutes and other organisations. The draft knowledge accounts bring that evidence together as the baseline evidence for informing the development of our Environment Strategy.

There are various ways of organising the evidence, however we have chosen a set of key themes identified through discussions with experts in our public bodies. In other areas – such as the marine environment and climate change – thorough descriptions of the evidence have already been set out<sup>20</sup>.

Each account assesses our current position, identifies the factors which have influenced this position, highlights existing ambitions and the likely future drivers of change. In addition, the accounts summarise the evidence on the impact of current policy initiatives and identify the key gaps in the evidence base which need to be addressed.

These knowledge accounts should be seen as living documents. Further accounts will be developed over the coming months. We look forward to hearing your views and comments on them.

20 As part of the latest Climate Change Plan, an evidence review was published on the potential wider impact of climate change mitigation options. <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Environment/climatechange/climate-change-plan>. In addition, the UK Committee on Climate Change produced a risk assessment evidence report for Scotland. <https://www.theccc.org.uk/tackling-climate-change/preparing-for-climate-change/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2017/national-summaries/scotland/> The Marine Atlas (published in 2013) provides evidence on the state of the marine environment in Scotland and an assessment of the quality of the evidence. <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/science/atlas> The Scottish Offshore Renewables Research Framework is assessing evidence needs for marine offshore renewable energy development policy. Evidence plans will be published when they are completed. <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/marineenergy/mre/research> The forthcoming UK assessment of Good Environmental Status publication will provide further evidence on the marine environment.

Your input through this online discussion over the summer will help to shape the development of the Strategy. We aim to publish a high-level document in late 2018 setting out our agreed shared vision, with a

set of outcomes and high-level priorities to help guide decisions over the coming years. During 2019, we will develop a monitoring framework to track our progress in achieving the outcomes.

### Questions:

#### 1) What are your views on the following draft vision for Scotland's environment and climate change policies?

**Our draft vision is for “one planet prosperity”.** *This means protecting nature and living within the Earth's sustainable limits, while building a more prosperous, innovative and successful nation.*

#### 2) What are your views on the following draft outcomes that will help to achieve this vision?

1. *We are a climate leader and play our full role in limiting global temperature rise to well below 2°C.*
2. *We are a zero waste, resource efficient nation.*
3. *Our biodiversity is protected and enhanced, supporting healthy ecosystems.*
4. *Our air, freshwater, seas and soils are of excellent quality.*
5. *Everyone can access, enjoy and connect with nature.*
6. *The global footprint of our consumption and production is sustainable.*

#### 3) What are your views on the draft [knowledge accounts](#) which will be used to help identify priorities for action in the coming years? What additional sources of key evidence can you add?

### Responding to this discussion

We are inviting responses to this discussion by 24 August 2018.

Please respond to this discussion using the Scottish Government's consultation hub, Citizen Space (<http://consult.gov.scot>). Access and respond to this discussion online at <https://consult.gov.scot/environment-forestry/environment-strategy>. You can save and return to your responses while the discussion is still open. Please ensure that responses are submitted before the closing date of 24 August 2018.

If you are unable to respond using our consultation hub, please complete and send the Respondent Information Form to [environment.strategy@gov.scot](mailto:environment.strategy@gov.scot) or to:

Future Environmental Policy Team  
Scottish Government  
3H-South  
Victoria Quay  
Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ.

### Handling your response

If you respond using the consultation hub, you will be directed to the About You page before submitting your response. Please indicate how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are content for your response to be published. If you ask for your response not to be published, we will regard it as confidential, and we will treat it accordingly.

All respondents should be aware that the Scottish Government is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and would therefore have to consider any request made to it under the Act for information relating to responses made to this discussion exercise.

If you are unable to respond via Citizen Space, please complete and return the Respondent Information Form included in this document.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy: <https://beta.gov.scot/privacy/>

### Next steps in the process

Where respondents have given permission for their response to be made public, and after we have checked that they contain no potentially defamatory material, responses will be made available to the public at <http://consult.gov.scot>. If you use the consultation hub to respond, you will receive a copy of your response via email.

Following the closing date, all responses will be analysed and considered along with any other available evidence to help us. Responses will be published where we have been given permission to do so. An analysis report will also be made available.

### Comments and complaints

If you have any comments about how this discussion exercise has been conducted, please send them to the contact address above or to [environment.strategy@gov.scot](mailto:environment.strategy@gov.scot).

Annex A: Environment Strategy draft vision and outcomes



The National Outcomes will help to achieve  
**Our Purpose:**  
 To focus on creating a more successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increased wellbeing, and sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

The Environment Strategy will contribute to delivering the following **additional** National Outcomes and Sustainable Development Goals:

- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally
- We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential
- We are well-educated, skilled and able to contribute to society
- We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely

Icons for additional goals: 1 NO POVERTY, 2 ZERO HUNGER, 4 QUALITY EDUCATION.



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