The Highland Council

Agenda Item	**7**
Report No	**ECI/57/2023**

Committee: **Economy and Infrastructure**

Date: **16 November 2023**

Report Title: **Tackling the Nature Emergency: Consultation on Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity – Proposed Council Response**

Report By: **Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy**

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 The Scottish Government consultation is seeking views on a range of topics and proposals related to biodiversity and tackling the nature emergency in Scotland including the first 5-year delivery plan (to deliver the actions of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS)) **146 actions**; Nature Networks policy framework; 30 by 30 policy framework; a framework for establishing statutory nature targets to drive delivery; and changes to the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000.

1.2 The full consultation document can be accessed here: Tackling the Nature Emergency: Consultation on Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity

1.3 This paper outlines the proposed Council response to the consultation and is seeking approval from Members to submit the full consultation response within Appendix 1 to Scottish Government by the deadline of 14 December 2023.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to **approve** the proposed Council response to Tackling the Nature Emergency: Consultation on Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity.

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** – A number of the actions contained within the 5-year delivery plan (which outlines the actions required to deliver the SBS) have direct resource implications for the Council. Actions that the Council may be expected to lead, be a delivery partner or consultee or that may impact the work of the Council have been highlighted in an annotated extract of the Delivery Plan within Appendix 2. The delivery plan is not explicit as to what bodies are expected to contribute to the delivery of each action and, so whilst it is anticipated that resource implications are inevitable, the exact nature, extent or impact on resources cannot be determined with certainty at this stage.

Significant resource implications are anticipated in respect of the requirement for local authorities to undertake the mapping, co-ordination and delivery of nature networks, especially and disproportionately so for an area the size and complexity of Highland.

There may be an opportunity to reduce, albeit not remove these pressures at the initial mapping stage by participating in a pilot study led by NatureScot. However, resource pressures will persist as nature networks will need to be developed and managed over the long term.

It is likely that local authorities will be directly affected by a number of statutory targets that may be proposed as part of the forthcoming Natural Environment Bill and this may have an impact on resourcing. The precise targets that will be used to measure nature recovery have not, however, been identified at this stage and as such the precise nature and scale of any impact is not clear from this consultation.

3.2 **Legal** – The consultation includes early consideration of statutory targets for nature restoration that may be included in the forthcoming Natural Environment Bill. A full suite of targets has yet to be formed or agreed, and it is unclear which targets would be applicable to local authorities. At this stage the consultation is concerned with developing a framework considering how statutory targets are selected and set, reviewed and reported upon.

The consultation proposes a series of changes to the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 to provide a legal framework and the necessary powers to tackle the interlinked crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, whilst also welcoming visitors and supporting local communities and business. The changes include proposals that public bodies operating within the National Park should have regard to the aims and the National Park principle (i.e. that if there is conflict between the National Park aims, greater weight should be given to the first aim which would seek to protect, restore and enhance the natural assets, biodiversity and ecosystems within the National Park). It also proposes to strengthen duties on public bodies, including local authorities, in respect of supporting and contributing to the implementation of National Park Plans.

3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)** – Tackling the nature crisis and addressing biodiversity loss will have many and far-reaching positive benefits across all Highland communities. Improving biodiversity, habitat restoration and habitat connectivity also contributes to tackling other issues impacting Highland's communities, such as climate change, flooding and sea level rise.

It is also noted that some of the new actions under the SBS and potentially statutory targets will impact on how the terrestrial and marine environment is managed, especially around agriculture, forestry, fisheries and estate management.

Many of the outcomes and outputs of the consultation relate to improving biodiversity within communities making them greener, more healthy and attractive places to live, work and visit whilst encouraging the green economy, green skills and green jobs in rural areas.

3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** - The twin climate and nature crises are interlinked and reinforcing; a decline in biodiversity will exacerbate the climate crisis, and a changing climate will accelerate the rate of biodiversity loss. It is expected that, should the actions outlined in the consultation be implemented in full with appropriate resources in place, this will make a significant and meaningful contribution not only to be nature recovery, but to net zero and tackling climate change.

3.5 **Risk** – It is unclear from the 5-year delivery plan what role the local authority is expected to play in each of the delivery plan's actions, i.e. whether it is to be the lead body, a consultee or a partner, and what impact the actions may have on the operation of the Council's functions. Whilst it is apparent that some of the actions will directly affect the duties and functions of the Council in some areas, and therefore have implications for how the Council operates, other actions are more ambiguous, and it is less clear if and how the Council may be affected.

Local authorities are required to lead the design, co-ordination and delivery of nature networks. This represents a significant risk and burden to the Council amplified by the size and complexity of our area with no resource identified. We are looking to partially mitigate this risk by implementing a project in partnership with the Highland Environment Forum and funded through the Nature Restoration Fund to start to map local areas that are being managed for nature through local community projects and initiatives, for example, as well as areas identified by local communities as important for biodiversity with a view to designating a network of Local Nature Conservation Sites. These, along with statutory designated sites, will help form a baseline upon which a Highland nature network can be built.

Statutory targets introduced by the Natural Environment Bill underpinning the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS) delivery plan, including the mapping of nature networks may have both operational and resource implications for the Council. As this element is at an early stage in the consultation process, the potential impact on the Council is currently unclear and there is uncertainty as to what level of risk this brings for the Council.

3.6 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – No implications.

3.7 **Gaelic** – No implications. This is a Scottish Government consultation and as such it is expected that it will adhere to all necessary Gaelic requirements.

4 Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS) 5-Year Delivery Plan

4.1 Summary

The SBS sets the goal to halt biodiversity loss and be Nature Positive by 2030 and to have restored and regenerated biodiversity across Scotland by 2045. The SBS identifies a series of outcomes for both the terrestrial and marine environments.

A series of rolling delivery plans, of which this is the first, are being implemented to support the SBS. The delivery plan outlines the actions that are needed to meet the 2030 milestone and to deliver the vision. It is anticipated that the delivery plan will be refreshed approximately every five years.

The actions outlined in the Delivery Plan are organised under the objectives as set out in the SBS:-

1. accelerate restoration and regeneration;
2. protect nature on land and at sea, across and beyond protected areas;
3. embed nature-positive farming, fishing and forestry;
4. protect and support the recovery of vulnerable and important species and habitats;
5. invest in nature; and
6. take action on the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss.

4.2 Proposed Council Response

The draft Council response within **Appendix 1** concentrates on those actions that may have a direct operational impact on the Council. Other actions included within the delivery plan will impact other sectors i.e. farming, forestry or fisheries and may raise political considerations but do not have direct implications for the Council.

The delivery plan includes c.146 actions split across the six objectives outlined above. The actions cover many different areas and issues and seek to deliver positive change for a wide range of habitats and species. If delivered in their entirety and collectively and supported with appropriate resourcing, these actions would undoubtedly make a significant contribution to tackling the nature emergency, and make a substantial contribution to delivering the 2030 milestone.

4.3 This is a substantial document, and it is appreciated that there is a balance to be struck between size and usability/readability; brevity is clearly important in ensuring the delivery plan is accessible. However, it is equally important that sufficient detail is included to allow stakeholders to understand the scope and implications of each of the actions and what their role may be in delivering that action. Currently, each action lacks detail on who is responsible as a lead or partner, how the action may be expected to be delivered and by when.

4.4 There are a number of actions that, it is assumed, will directly or indirectly impact the different services and functions of the Council. However, at this stage, the wording of each of the actions does not make clear what our role, and that of other stakeholders, in delivering the action is. It is currently uncertain, for example, which of the actions local authorities may be expected to lead (either individually or in partnership), which of the actions local authorities would provide input on or be a consultee and which actions would impact one or more of our functions. The consultation response seeks clarity from Scottish Government on this particular issue as there are potential risks and resource implications resulting.

Members should note that, following an assessment of each of the actions contained within the delivery plan, an annotated version has been appended to this paper within **Appendix 2**. This shows, based on the information provided, what actions we believe *may* directly or indirectly impact the Council's work (highlighted in orange), actions that the Council *may* be expected to lead on (black tick) and actions where the Council *may* be a partner/consultee/provide input (red circle). It should be noted, however, that at this stage and with the information provided this constitutes 'a best guess' analysis only.

4.5 Whilst we appreciate that the delivery plan is to be reviewed every 5-years and it is intended to be an agile and dynamic document, the actions would benefit from their own and more definitive set of timescales and/or timetable for delivery. Currently the actions, many of which are substantial in scope, appear to be too open-ended. Equally, some of the actions would benefit from being worded more strongly to demonstrate a greater level of commitment to their delivery.

5 Nature Networks Policy Framework

5.1 Summary

Improving ecological connectivity to create fully functioning, healthy and robust ecosystems, where animal and plant species can move and adapt to pressures is a critical part of the nature restoration agenda. Nature Networks can bring benefits to nature and people, such as clean water, flood mitigation, natural cooling and health and wellbeing.

A Nature Network connects together nature-rich sites, including restoration areas and other environmental projects, through a series of areas of suitable habitat, habitat corridors, and stepping-stones. Nature Networks will be developed as long-term features of local and regional landscapes, which support nature restoration and provide multiple benefits for society.

The vision for Nature Networks is as follows: *By 2030 Scotland will have evolving, flexible and resilient Nature Networks connecting nature-rich areas allowing wildlife and natural processes to move and adapt to land use and climate change pressures. The networks will help build people's connection to nature, providing biodiversity-rich spaces that deliver local benefits, and meet the priorities of local communities for nature.*

It has been recognised for some time and since NPF4 that local authorities will be expected to play an important and leading role in the mapping and delivery of nature networks, for example through local development plans.

The consultation provides a summary of the Nature Networks policy framework. The full Framework can be found here: Framework for Nature Networks in Scotland.

5.2 Proposed Council Response

The mapping of nature networks presents a challenge to all local authorities, but for an area the size of Highland with a rich diversity of habitats and species the challenge is significantly magnified.

The draft Framework for Nature Networks in Scotland provides a much greater level of detail on how Scottish Government proposes to support the delivery of nature networks and reinforces the requirement that the design, co-ordination and delivery of nature networks at a local level will be led by local authorities.

The Council are fully supportive of Nature Networks and agree that they will make a significant contribution to improving habitat connectivity and tackling biodiversity loss. There are, however, significant resource and risk implications for the Council. Themes 1 and 2 of the Framework set out the governance and decision-making principles and expectations with regard to participation, engagement and communication. Whilst we do not disagree with the content of either theme, the Framework sets out a process that is likely to be resource intensive, time consuming and challenging to deliver in an area the size and composition of Highland. The Framework may be more easily and straightforwardly applied to a predominantly urban area, or a smaller/less diverse Council area, but with current resourcing levels Highland Council are unlikely to deliver a comprehensive or cohesive nature network whilst adhering to the Framework in its current form.

The Framework is divided into six key themes, none of which are problematic or raise concerns in principle. The resource and time required to implement the themes to deliver a nature network in Highland, however, raise significant concerns. The proposed response for each theme is detailed in the draft consultation response.

In the consultation response we have asked for further detailed discussion with colleagues in Scottish Government and/or NatureScot regarding Nature Networks at the earliest opportunity. We are keen to move forward positively on this important initiative in a manner that is realistic and pragmatic and takes account of the specific challenges of applying Nature Networks to Highland.

6 30 by 30 Policy Framework

6.1 Summary

The Global Biodiversity Framework included a commitment to ensure that at least 30% of land and sea is effectively conserved for nature by 2030.

The following is the Vision for 30 by 30: *By 2030 at least 30% of Scotland's land will be protected or conserved for biodiversity, delivering for people and climate. Sites showcase the best in nature restoration, protection and in mitigating and adapting to climate change. They help protect the rare and vulnerable, as well as delivering diverse, complex, and resilient ecosystems that provide important services that benefit everyone far into the future. These 30 by 30 sites are integrated into the wider landscape, acting as the beating, nature-rich hearts of Scotland's Nature Network and beyond.*

6.2 The consultation provides a summary of the 30 by 30 policy framework. The full Framework can be found here: draft 30 by 30 Policy Framework.

6.3 Currently c.18.2% of Scotland is designated for nature. Sites that will contribute to 30 by 30 will primarily be designated sites that meet the IUCN World Congress of Protected Areas definition, i.e. SSSIs, SPAs, SACs, Ramsar sites and NNRs. National Parks are not currently included but work to include more of their area will be ongoing as part of the commitment to establish at least one new national park in Scotland. Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) will also be used; OECMs are sites not protected through legislation and designation, but through legal and contractual agreements.

6.4 Proposed Council Response

From a local authority perspective, 30 by 30 is unlikely to have a significant impact. As a result of this commitment more of Scotland will, in due course, be protected for nature and this may potentially limit some development activity and opportunities. There is an opportunity for the Council to contribute to 30 by 30 as well as ensuring that the remaining 70% is still improved and has value for nature and contributes to delivering net zero. Although sites designated by the local authority (e.g. Local Nature Reserves and Local Sites of Nature Conservation) would not automatically count towards the 30 by 30 target, some could meet the criteria in the future via small changes to their management arrangements. Likewise, sites set aside as a consequence of development for biodiversity enhancement or through habitat management plans could potentially be included as an OECM if the correct management requirements were put in place.

7 Statutory Targets for Nature Restoration

7.1 Summary

The Bute House Agreement includes a commitment to passing a new Natural Environment Bill, of which a key part will be the introduction of legally binding nature restoration targets ensuring the commitments in the SBS are delivered.

This is a very early consultation; no statutory targets are being proposed at this stage and no public bodies are being identified as responsible for delivering statutory targets. The consultation is seeking views on the process for identifying, selecting and setting targets and the processes for reviewing and reporting on statutory targets.

7.2 Proposed Council Response

Given the interlinked and interconnectedness of the twin climate and nature crises it is logical that nature restoration targets are placed on the same statutory footing as climate change and the same level of scrutiny and monitoring is applied.

The process to identify, select and set targets is considered reasonable and it is noted that further consultation will be undertaken once a final suite of targets has been identified. We welcome the inclusion of both output and outcome targets. The range of target topics appears extensive and captures the range of challenges and threats that are contributing to biodiversity loss. We agree that keeping targets to a minimum is a sensible approach; too many targets would likely confuse and risk alienating stakeholders.

It is noted that public bodies and organisations that may be responsible for the delivery of statutory targets is not considered in this consultation. We appreciate that there are a number of areas in which local authorities will be expected to make a contribution to tackling the nature crises, i.e. through NPF4, developing and delivering nature networks, biodiversity duty reporting etc. Whilst we recognise this is an early-stage consultation it would be useful to have clarity and further detail as to which, if any, statutory targets local authorities may be responsible for, and which may be applied to or impact our work and functions at the earliest opportunity.

We look forward to commenting further in due course once a more definitive suite of targets has been developed.

8 National Parks

8.1 Summary

The consultation is seeking views on a series of proposed amendments to the National Parks (Scotland 2000) Act to ensure that both existing and new National Park Authorities have the legal framework and powers they need to fulfil a leadership role in respect of the twin nature and climate crises.

8.2 Proposed changes include amendments to the legal framework which sets out the overarching purpose and aims of a national park to ensure that they are fit for purpose, in particular to respond to the interlinked biodiversity and climate crises.

8.3 The consultation seeks views on whether the duty placed on public bodies (including local authorities) to have regard to the National Park Plan should be strengthened so that public bodies have an obligation to actively support and contribute to the National Park Plan.

8.4 The consultation seeks views on the enforcement of byelaws and what other changes should be made to the general powers of a National Park Authority.

Finally, views are sought on proposed changes to the governance of national parks. The proposed amendments seek to ensure that existing and new National Parks have effective and efficient governance, that membership of their boards is diverse and reflects and represents local communities whilst also bringing relevant skills, expertise and experience into the organisation.

8.5 Proposed Council Response

The Council welcome and support the proposed amendments to the National Park aims and agree that the National Park Principle should be retained. Strengthening the obligation in respect of public bodies supporting and contributing to the National Park Plan aligns with the policy goals in NPF4 and raises no significant concerns.

With regard to powers of National Parks we propose that the powers and duties of the Planning Authority referred to in the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967 are devolved to National Parks. Currently the National Parks act as the Access Authority, but the Council retain responsibility for dealing with Public Rights of Way. It is logical and more efficient if National Parks act as the Access and Planning Authority for all public access-related issues.

Members may also have views on other powers that should be devolved to National Park authorities. If Members wish, a workshop could be arranged with Scottish Government's National Parks Team to discuss the range of options and opportunities available.

It is proposed to amend the size and composition of National Park boards. We agree that the board should be diverse, include a broad range of skills and have local representation. We agree with the principles outlined in the consultation, and the importance of having a board that has the skills, expertise and experience to ensure that the National Park authorities can respond to the climate and biodiversity crises. It is, however, of equal importance that local representation both from local authorities and local communities is not underplayed or underrepresented in the make-up of the board; local communities and local voices must not be inadvertently marginalised.

9 Next Steps

9.1 Subject to any additional comments by Members and committee agreement, the proposed Council response will be submitted to Scottish Government via Citizen Space, the Scottish Government's consultation hub. The response will clearly highlight the need for clarification regarding what delivery plan actions and statutory targets the Council will be responsible (and any associated timescales) and the impacts this may have on resources.

Designation:	Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Date:	16 October 2023
Author:	Andrew Puls, Environment Team Leader
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Draft Council response to Tackling the Nature Emergency: Consultation of Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity Appendix 2 – Annotated Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Delivery Plan

Draft Highland Council response to Tackling the Nature Emergency: Consultation of Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity

Full consultation document including consultation questions can be found here: Responding to this consultation - Tackling the Nature Emergency - strategic framework for biodiversity: consultation - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

General Comments
The Delivery Plan is a substantial document containing nearly 150 separate actions. It is appreciated that there is a balance to be struck between size, detail and usability/readability; brevity is clearly important in ensuring the delivery plan is accessible. However, it is equally important that sufficient detail is included to allow stakeholders to understand the scope and implications of each of the actions and what their role may be in delivering that action. There is no detail or indication within each action as to which organisation/agency/group would be responsible/lead, who would be partners, consultees or stakeholders and how the action may be expected to be delivered and by when.

There are a number of actions that (it is assumed) will directly or indirectly impact the different services and functions of the Council. However, at this stage, we remain unclear what Scottish Government are expecting from local authorities in terms of delivery. The brief description does not identify which actions local authorities (or others) are expected to lead on (either individually or in partnership), which of the actions local authorities may input into or be consulted on or which actions would impact one or more of our functions. We ask that Scottish Government provide clarification and/or further detail on each of the actions in due course, including key delivery partners and stakeholders so that the Council can have greater clarity on where there may be potential risks and resource implications for services across the organisation.

Whilst we appreciate that the delivery plan is to be reviewed every 5-years and it is intended to be an agile and dynamic document, many of the actions would benefit from a more specific and definitive set of timescales and/or timetable for delivery. Currently the actions – many of which are substantial in scope – appear to be too open-ended. Equally, some of the actions would benefit from being worded more strongly to demonstrate a greater level of commitment to their delivery.

2a. Have we captured the key actions needed to deliver the objective: accelerate restoration and regeneration?

- (●) **Yes**
- ( ) **No**
- ( ) **Unsure**

Overall these appear to be a comprehensive set of actions required to deliver the above objective. We particularly welcome the action to develop a new Register of Ancient Woodlands (and look forward to feeding into this action in due course). The Council also fully support the actions proposed to tackle Invasive Non-Native Species and would note the significant scale of this challenge, the work involved and resources required if a 2030 target is to be delivered.

The actions include developing policy and guidance, which we expect to be led by Scottish Government and/or national agencies. Other actions relate to facilitating national level projects, including ecosystem restoration, reducing deer numbers and new legislation and licensing of grouse moors and muirburn. Whilst these actions are unlikely to directly impact the activities of Highland Council, they are likely to have implications for highland landowners and land managers; consultation and engagement with local communities, landowners and land managers will be an important component of the successful implementation of these actions.

It is envisaged that the Council would have a partnership role in a variety of actions related to improving the resilience of coastal and marine systems and would welcome positive input, especially around local partnerships to deliver adaptive coastal management. It is, however, assumed that these actions will require a multi-agency approach with a range of partners and agencies promoting delivery.

We support the inclusion of the Cleaner Air for Scotland 2 Strategy and lead on duties for local Air Quality Management.

2b. Are the key actions, to support the objective: accelerate restoration and regeneration, sufficient to put Scotland on track to ending the loss of biodiversity by 2030?

- (●) **Yes**
- ( ) **No**
- ( ) **Unsure**

We would agree that the key actions are sufficient. The scale of the challenge outlined in these actions is considerable and they are only sufficient if the agencies delivering and contributing to them are properly resourced, especially given the short timeframe in which positive outcomes are expected. Work and engagement with relevant stakeholders (both in the public and private sectors) will need to begin with urgency.

2c. Which actions do you think will have most impact?

The key actions identified in under this objective will have significant roles to play in ending biodiversity loss and enabling nature recovery. Addressing the challenges of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) will make a substantial contribution – provided this challenge is tackled at a landscape-scale and affected areas are subject to sustained management over multiple years to help prevent reestablishment.

2d. Have we captured the key actions needed to deliver the objective: protect nature on land and at sea across and beyond protected areas?

- (●) **Yes**
- ( ) **No**
- ( ) **Unsure**

Yes, the key actions will make a positive contribution to protecting nature on land and sea. The actions contained in this objective are likely to have the most significant resource implications for local authorities, and given the geographical size

of Highland, and diversity of its habitats, there is a concern that this is likely to disproportionately impact Highland Council.

In relation to the following key actions, the Council has significant concerns regarding resourcing the delivery of Nature Networks whilst adhering to the accompanying Nature Network Framework. This is considered in more detail in Question 3a. 30 by 30 is considered in Question 4a and National Parks in Question 7a-7m. However, if one of the areas within Highland currently developing a nomination to be Scotland's new National Park is successful, then this action will also have implications for the Council moving forward.

The Council recognise that new planning and development measures for protecting and enhancing biodiversity through NPF4 represent a significant change to the assessment of development proposals. The challenges that this brings in terms of the Planning Authority's ability to access expertise and specialist advice in respect of whether development proposals conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity and deliver positive effects is also acknowledged. The Council have previously strongly advocated for a biodiversity net-gain metric to assist in the assessment of development proposals as well as to provide developers with clarity, transparency and consistency with regard to what their biodiversity obligations are under NPF4. The action to explore options for developing a biodiversity metric or related tool is therefore welcome but given the urgent need and consistently strong views of local authorities and developers we would prefer that the Delivery Plan *committed* to developing a metric for Scotland to be implemented at the earliest opportunity.

The Council are pleased to see that new guidance to support the delivery of Policy 3 will be forthcoming, and we are committed to continuing to contribute to developing this guidance via the project working group. We also welcome that the same action states that it will support wider work on building skills and capacity on biodiversity and nature across the planning system. We would recommend that this should be a separate and stand-alone action and would welcome further detail and discussion on what this means in practice – is there, for example, a recognition from Scottish Government that, if NPF4 is to be fully realised and if all development proposals are to deliver positive effects for nature, that planning authorities will need to be better resourced and upskilled?

Many of the actions listed under '*Champion new planning and development measures*…' and '*Enhance biodiversity in Scotland's green and blue spaces'* will have a direct impact on the Council who – it is assumed – will be the lead body tasked with delivery. It is noted that most actions have been allocated a 2030 timescale which should allow time for local authorities to prepare but equally will delay progress to meeting the 2030 targets. We would welcome further and more detailed discussion with Scottish Government on the actions included within this objective in particular so we can fully understand exactly what is required, how Scottish Government expect the actions to be delivered and what the impact on the Council will be.

It is noted that guidance will be provided by 2030 that details how local authorities will be expected to measure, monitor and demonstrate long-term positive effects from green and blue spaces and on sustainable use and management of soil in the

planning process. The Council would request that it is involved in developing such guidance and would also note that – especially in respect of soils – guidance is required on this subject (and NPF4 Policy 5) with immediate effect, and we ask that the delivery date of 2030 is expediated.

2e. Are the key actions, to support the objective: protect nature on land and at sea across and beyond protected areas, sufficient to put Scotland on track to ending the loss of biodiversity by 2030?

- (●) **Yes**
- ( ) **No**
- ( ) **Unsure**

As headline statements, yes. However, more detail is required to properly understand and appreciate the scope and requirements of many of the actions – especially those that require significant engagement and involvement of the Council.

The Council has declared a climate and ecological emergency and recently become a signatory to the Edinburgh Declaration. The Council can, therefore, demonstrate a clear willingness to support this objective, to tackle the nature emergency and help halt biodiversity loss. Access to resources, skills and expertise, however, may prevent some of these key actions being delivered as fully or as quickly as may be needed or expected in order to meet the 2030 target.

A commitment to and support for the delivery of Local Nature Conservation Sites and Local Nature Reserves would be a welcome addition to the actions and will help support nature networks. We would also advocate acknowledging the importance of the Flow Country candidate World Heritage Site and following any successful inscription continued commitment to its long-term management.

2f. Which actions do you think will have most impact?
All of the key actions will make a positive contribution towards delivering tackling biodiversity loss.

However, NPF4 and the cross-cutting policies that relate to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity (including green and blue infrastructure) will, cumulatively, make a substantial impact and bring new areas into positive management for biodiversity. This impact could be further improved if Scottish Government committed to a quantifying biodiversity enhancement through NPF4 Policy 3 guidance, i.e. 10%. Not only would this make it simpler for planning authorities to assess whether development proposals are delivering significant biodiversity enhancement proportionate to the scale of development (in accordance with NPF4), but it would provide clarity and certainty for developers and enable them to plan ahead. The Council recommend that this added as an additional action in this objective.

Likewise Nature Networks have the potential to not only increase the amount of land managed for nature but address the fragmentation of habitats and seek to create, repair and strengthen nature corridors through urban, peri-urban and rural areas across Scotland. We have significant reservations regarding the delivery of nature

networks and the supporting Framework (see Question 3) but, if properly resourced, nature networks across Scotland could have a significant and positive impact for nature recovery.

30 by 30 is a very positive and important initiative that will primarily provide statutory protection for new areas that are already of some importance and value for nature. By contrast, NPF4 would deliver biodiversity enhancements on areas that – in many cases – currently have little biodiversity value.

2g. Have we captured the key actions needed to deliver the objective: embed nature positive farming, fishing and forestry?

- ○ **Yes**
- ○ **No**
- ◉ **Unsure**

Whilst there are implications under this objective for highland landowners and land managers, the Council has a limited operational remit. It is, however, noted that some actions (e.g. the requirement for Whole Farm Plans and biodiversity audits and for forests and woodlands to deliver increased biodiversity and habitat connectivity) have implications for the mapping of nature networks, as well as potentially development management. It would be useful and ensure a joined-up approach to habitat restoration and connectivity if, through this objective, the areas of farms and forests that are being removed from a purely productive use to being managed for nature is collected and collated (along with data collected through biodiversity audits) and fed back into complimentary initiatives, such as Nature Network mapping.

Implementing Scotland's vision for sustainable aquaculture will require a multi-agency approach and the Council look forward to working with stakeholders where appropriate.

2h. Are the key actions, to support the objective: embed nature positive farming, fishing and forestry, sufficient to put Scotland on track to ending the loss of biodiversity by 2030?

- ○ **Yes**
- ○ **No**
- ◉ **Unsure**

The success of the key actions will depend on the uptake and adherence of the proposed new requirements, guidance and frameworks. Statutory targets will likely be important in underpinning the key actions and securing positive change for biodiversity.

2i. Which actions do you think will have most impact?

The actions that seek to address biodiversity loss in farming and fisheries are likely to have the most positive impacts for biodiversity. Ensuring appropriate levels of consultation, engagement, support and buy-in across both industries will be key to the success of this objective.

2j. Have we captured the key actions needed to deliver the objective: protect and support the recovery of vulnerable and important species and habitats?

- (●) **Yes**
- ( ) **No**
- ( ) **Unsure**

We welcome the revision of the Scottish Biodiversity List and Priority Marine Feature list. We recognise the strain on certain habitats and species as a consequence of human pressure and activity and we would be interested to hear more regarding what measures are proposed to reduce those pressures. Would this, for example, include restricting outdoor access rights to certain areas that contain priority habitats or species, and if so how would this be reconciled with the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003?

We fully support the action to develop and build upon the Better Biodiversity Data project. NatureScot will be aware that Highland Council have offered to be part of this project in an advisory capacity or as part of a working group to help develop this resource. Data management for biodiversity in the Highland area has long been recognised as problematic and represents a significant barrier to protecting, conserving and enhancing biodiversity, determining a biodiversity baseline and measuring progress. We are also aware of significant volumes of data gathered through planning applications that would enhance the biological record and improve our understanding and management of biodiversity in Highland. Data, how it is collected, accessed, curated and disseminated is of paramount importance moving forward.

The action to support surveillance and monitoring to manage pathogens and disease is noted and the Council would welcome further information on this and what support may be available, especially in relation to tree disease.

2k. Are the key actions, to support the objective: protect and support the recovery of vulnerable and important species and habitats, sufficient to put Scotland on track to ending the loss of biodiversity by 2030?

- ( ) **Yes**
- ( ) **No**
- (●) **Unsure**

There is a substantial amount of work to be done over the 5 years to deliver on the actions listed. The key actions, however, if implemented now and with sufficient resource and funding to support them, would make a positive contribution to tackling biodiversity loss.

2l. Which actions do you think will have most impact?

Data is fundamental in underpinning and informing all of our decision making; without good data it is difficult to demonstrate positive wins and maximise opportunities. Access to current biological data will also ensure that the Council can properly assess development proposals and that mitigation and enhancement measures are appropriately sized, sited and designed. The Better Biodiversity Data

project should, therefore, be an integral part of any Biodiversity Strategy and delivery plan.

As keystone species, managing existing and emerging pressures to improve the conservation status of seabirds, marine mammals and elasmobranchs are likely to be positive for whole marine ecosystems.

2m. Have we captured the key actions needed to deliver the objective: invest in nature?

- (●) **Yes**
- ( ) **No**
- ( ) **Unsure**

Highland has a unique offering for both terrestrial and marine habitats with a wide range of opportunities available that would maximise nature recovery targets. Additional funding is, however, required. The Council welcome the action to develop a Biodiversity Investment Plan and maintain and seek to increase investment in the Nature Restoration Fund. Financial support to tackle biodiversity loss needs to be greater, funding streams need to be more agile (with more time to allocate funding) and funding allocated to projects being delivered over multiple years.

The Flow Country Green Finance initiative is referenced in the accompanying text, but the Flow Country (and candidate World Heritage Site) is not referenced as an action. The Flow Country candidate World Heritage Site, as a globally important blanket bog, should have its own action and funding commitment.

In relation to establishing a market for private investment in natural capital, it is important that local community benefits, flowing either directly or indirectly from biodiversity benefits, is referenced and not overlooked.

2n. Are the key actions, to support the objective: invest in nature, sufficient to put Scotland on track to ending the loss of biodiversity by 2030?

- (●) **Yes**
- ( ) **No**
- ( ) **Unsure**

Investment, finance and funding are key to tackling biodiversity loss by 2030 and will underpin many of the contributing activities that support the actions listed in the delivery plan. If the funding sources can be secured and made available in good time, and if they can be flexible, for example to allow multi-year projects to be adequately funded, then it would make a positive contribution to tackling biodiversity loss.

Whilst the investment in green skills, nature-based education and nature restoration skills are welcome, we would suggest that investment is also needed to ensure local authorities have access to appropriate specialist advice (e.g. in planning to deliver NPF4 and nature networks and within the organisation more generally to manage Council land), to upskill and train local authority staff and elected members, and have access to the correct equipment to manage land for biodiversity.

2o. Which actions do you think will have most impact?
All have potential to make a significant impact, but increased investment in biodiversity, nature restoration and in coastal and marine environments (i.e. through an increased Nature Restoration Fund and SMEEF) are key.

2p. Have we captured the key actions needed to deliver the objective: take action on the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss?

- (●) **Yes**
- ( ) **No**
- ( ) **Unsure**

Engaging and strengthening the connection between people and communities with nature is one of the most important, and yet one of the most challenging actions in the Delivery Plan. The actions outlined in this section are all positive and necessary but if engagement is to be undertaken at a meaningful level and with a wide cross-section of communities this requires significant resource and commitment from a range of stakeholders, including local authorities.

We welcome the actions to mainstream biodiversity policy across government and support the review of the Biodiversity Duty Reporting system and especially the proposal to align this with climate change reporting.

We note that, subject to final decisions on the Scottish Government's future legislative programmes, that specific requirements may placed on local authorities through Bills on Land Reform, Wellbeing and Sustainable Development and the incorporation of the human right to a healthy environment in the Human Rights Bill. We would like more information from Scottish Government on what might be expected in terms of any forthcoming content, duties and requirements in due course.

2q. Are the key actions, to support the objective: take action on the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, sufficient to put Scotland on track to ending the loss of biodiversity by 2030?

- (●) **Yes**
- ( ) **No**
- ( ) **Unsure**

2r. Which actions do you think will have most impact?
Tackling the nature crisis cannot be done in isolation of local communities and people, and engaging and strengthening the connection between people and communities with nature – if properly resourced – would potentially have a significant impact on ending biodiversity loss.

3a. Do you have any comments on the Nature Networks Framework?
Yes. The Council are fully supportive of Nature Networks and agree that they will make a significant contribution to improving habitat connectivity and tackling biodiversity loss.

The Framework highlights that the design, co-ordination and delivery of nature networks at a local level will be led by Local Authorities, which is as expected. The mapping of nature networks presents a challenge to all local authorities, but for an area the size and complexity of Highland with a rich diversity of habitats and species the challenge is significantly magnified. There are significant resource and risk implications for the Council associated with this.

Themes 1 and 2 of the Framework sets out expectations for governance and decision-making and participation, engagement and communication. Whilst we do not disagree with the content of either theme, the Framework describes a process that is likely to be resource intensive, time consuming and challenging to deliver in an area the size and composition of Highland with the resources currently available. The Framework may more easily and straightforwardly be applied to a predominantly urban area, or a smaller/less diverse Council area, but with the Framework in its current form and with the resources available it is unlikely that Highland Council will be able to deliver a comprehensive or cohesive nature network.

It is noted that NatureScot intend to work with stakeholders (including local authorities) to develop approaches, plans and a toolbox. This is welcome and a timescale around when such assistance may be made available would be helpful in enabling us to plan for how, when and if nature networks may be deliverable.

None of the six themes are problematic or raise concerns in principle. As above, the resource and time required to implement the Framework's themes in Highland, however, raises significant concerns.

Theme 1: Governance and Decision Making. Whilst we do not disagree with the stated principles of this theme, the size and predominantly rural nature of Highland – that also includes a number of sizeable settlements – will make the design, co-ordination and delivery of nature networks especially challenging, time consuming and resource intensive. The additional proposal to ensure cross-boundary connectivity at regional network group adds further resource pressures.

Theme 2: Participation, engagement and communication. We do not disagree with the key principles but as with theme 1, the specifics circumstances in relation to area and resources mean that it will be challenging to deliver nature networks in accordance with this theme. Local authorities will likely be well placed to provide assistance locally for some groups either directly or through plans and policy, again subject to resources.

Theme 3: Knowledge and skills. This theme acknowledges the challenge faced by local authorities in terms of access to knowledge, skills and experience. However, the solution proposed – sharing knowledge across local authority areas and mobilising education and green skills development – whilst an important component of successful delivery, does not address the fundamental lack of resource/s available to the Council to deliver this initiative; this can only be addressed through dedicated funding.

Theme 4: mapping. The Council have had informal and early discussions with NatureScot regarding mapping as part of their CivTech project, and the Council have

expressed interest in entering a pilot study to map nature networks across Highland. This would help NatureScot develop a methodology that could be rolled out more widely but would also allow Highland to start to address the significant challenge of mapping nature networks across our area.

Theme 5: Finance and Resources. This theme considers how the delivery of nature networks can be funded and resourced, i.e. long term action for nature restoration, ensuring existing funding schemes complement and work with nature networks etc. Whilst this is naturally of importance if this initiative is to be a success, it does not appear to consider how local authorities – who are expected to play a pivotal role by leading the design, co-ordination and delivery of nature networks – may be financed and resourced. Within Highland this is *at least* as important as funding groups delivering nature networks on the ground. Current resourcing within the Council will mean that delivering nature networks will be challenging and with competing responsibilities are unlikely to be given the priority required.

Theme 6: Policy and Mainstreaming. We agree that priorities should focus on mainstreaming biodiversity across planning, forestry, agriculture and climate in the first instance, with further alignment across education, transport, and health explored in due course. These are the areas where numerous synergies and benefits can be realised.

It is noted that policy and planning levers will be the primary means of establishing and maintaining nature networks over the long term. It is nonetheless unclear as to what level of policy protection is expected to be afforded nature networks once they have been spatially mapped and defined. We would welcome further clarity and/or discussion on this issue.

The framework sets out how success will be measured and considers 5 main criteria, the majority of which would appear to be the responsibility of the local authority to report upon. Again, this raises significant concerns regarding resourcing, but would also require access to data, criteria, guidance, and a methodical approach that is standardised across Scotland. If, as seems likely, some or all of these measurements of success will translate to statutory targets in the Natural Environment Bill, it is important that local authorities are properly resourced and equipped to deliver nature networks and not inadvertently set up to fail.

If properly resourced with a standardised methodology that can be applied to a large rural authority such as Highland, then Nature Networks can undoubtedly be a significant, powerful, dynamic and expanding positive asset for both nature and local communities. However, in its current form, the Framework will be very difficult to apply in Highland with the resources available. We would welcome further discussion with Scottish Government and/or NatureScot at the earliest opportunity to urgently understand expectations as they relate to our particular circumstance and context and how we can move forward positively on this important initiative.

4a. Do you have any comments on the 30 by 30 Framework?
30 by 30 will relate predominantly to designated sites and OECMs (Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures) and therefore it is understood that local authorities will have limited involvement.

However, where the Council can contribute to 30 by 30 (as well as ensuring that the remaining 70% of Scotland is still improved and has value for nature) it would be pleased to do so. For example, we would be interested to understand how the IUCN requirements can be applied to sites set aside as biodiversity enhancement or through habitat management plans and whether these could potentially be included as an OECM if the correct management requirements were put in place, for example through planning conditions or legal agreements.

Question 6a: Do you agree with this approach to placing targets on a statutory footing?
Yes. Statutory targets demonstrate long-term commitment and provide clear targets and focus for stakeholders. Given the many uncertainties and complexity of applying targets on nature restoration, we would agree that high-level topics should be included in primary legislation with quantitative figures and targets reserved for secondary legislation to ensure a degree of flexibility and adaptability.

Question 6b: Do you agree with the criteria set out for the selection of targets?
Yes. Targets should align with the SBS and GBF targets and we agree that it is important to select targets that galvanise cross-sectoral support and action.

Question 6c: Do you agree statutory targets should include a combination of outcome targets and output targets?
Yes.

Question 6d: Is the list of potential target topics sufficiently comprehensive in terms of the focus of proposed target areas and overall scope?
Yes. It is acknowledged that the list provided is not exhaustive or definitive and that not all will be suitable and/or selected for statutory targets. It is, however, comprehensive in scope and range and picks up on the main and most pressing issues and challenges.

6e. Do you have any other comments on the list of potential target topics?
Yes. It is important, once the target topics have been further refined and potential statutory targets identified that the agency/organisation responsible for delivering and/or reporting on the target is identified at the next consultation stage to enable preparations to be made and resources/impacts/risks identified.

Question 6f: Do you agree with the proposal to have the smallest feasible number of targets which reflects the complexity of nature restoration?
Yes. Too many targets would likely confuse and could potentially risk alienating stakeholders.

Question 6g: Do you agree statutory targets should align with the 2030 and 2045 timescales set out in the Strategy?
Yes. It would reinforce the timescales set out in the Strategy and ensure that targets are unified. To not align with the Strategy would cause unnecessary confusion.

Question 6h: Do you agree the Bill should allow for the review of statutory targets?

Yes. Given the many uncertainties and complexity of applying targets to nature restoration it is important that targets are capable of being reviewed and are flexible and adaptable to take account of new information and research and changing conditions that may not have been foreseeable at the time the targets were first set. It is also important, however, that if a statutory target is reviewed that the review process is transparent and independent and/or can clearly demonstrate independent advice has been taken.

Question 6i: Do you agree that reporting on targets should align with existing Biodiversity reporting requirements?
Yes.

Question 6j: Do you agree that an Independent Review Body is needed to report on Government's progress in meeting the statutory targets?
Yes. The reporting body should be independent and have no responsibility in itself for delivering or contributing to statutory nature targets. This will ensure transparency, public and stakeholder confidence and guard against unconscious bias/conflict of interest.

Question 7a: Do you agree that the purpose of National Park authorities should be amended in order to emphasise the important leadership role that National Park authorities need to play in restoring nature and in mitigating and adapting to climate change?
Agree.

Question 7b: Do you agree with these suggested changes to the first National Park aim?
Agree. Currently the first aim includes reference to conserving and enhancing both the natural and cultural heritage of the area. The proposed amendment seeks to separate natural and cultural heritage into two aims. The challenges that face natural and cultural heritage are very different and in our experience the emphasis is currently weighted strongly toward natural heritage with cultural heritage a secondary consideration. We therefore agree that the first aim should be separated so the two different issues can be dealt with individually, with their own unique challenges acknowledged and addressed. We also agree that the proposed wording (for both the natural and cultural heritage aims) is appropriate, subject to making reference to maximising the benefits of cultural heritage for the economy and people (see below).

Question 7c: Do you agree with the suggested change to the second National Park aim?
Agree, and we especially welcome the acknowledgement that the local economy and those living and working in the national park, as well as those visiting, should see benefit from the sustainable management of the area's natural resources.

In addition, there would be benefit acknowledging within the national park aims the benefits to the same range of stakeholders in promoting the sustainable management of the area's cultural heritage and historic environment. Reference to maximising the benefits of cultural heritage, especially in relation to the economy and people, could be added to the new aim considered in Question 7b.

Question 7d: Do you agree with the suggested change to the third National Park aim?
Agree.

Question 7e: Do you agree with the suggested change to the fourth National Park aim?
Agree.

Question 7f: Do you agree that the National Park 'principle' set out in section 9(6) of the 2000 Act should be retained? This would mean that, if there is a conflict between the National Park aims, greater weight should be given to the first aim which would seek to protect, restore and enhance the natural assets, biodiversity and ecosystems within the National Park.
Agree. Given the urgency of the biodiversity and climate crises and the leadership role National Parks are expected to play in tackling biodiversity loss and climate change it would be inconsistent to not retain the National Park principle.

Question 7g: Do you agree that public bodies operating within the National Park should have regard to the proposed National Park aims?
Agree. It is important that all public bodies operating within the National Park are aligned and working towards the same outcomes and goals and not undertaking works that could potentially undermine or set back the statutory purpose of a National Park.

Question 7h: Do you agree that public bodies operating within the National Park should have regard to the National Park principle?
Agree. As above, all public bodies operating within the National Park should be aligned and working towards the same outcomes and goals, with the same aims.

Question 7i: Do you agree that the duty on public bodies operating within National Parks should be strengthened so they have an obligation to support and contribute to the implementation of National Park Plans rather than having regard to these plans?
Agree. Where the local authority is operating within the National Park and where it is possible and feasible to do so, our activities should align with the National Park Plan.

Question 7j: Do you agree with the proposal that National Park Authorities should be able to enforce byelaw breaches within National Parks by issuing fixed penalty notices rather than referring them to local Procurators Fiscal?
Agree.

Question 7k: Do you think that any other changes should be made to the general powers of National Park authorities?
Yes. There is an opportunity to correct what we consider an anomaly in relation to public access. The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) is the access authority in relation to the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 but it has not adopted the role of the Planning Authority in relation to the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967 and Public Rights of Way. This means that the Council continues to field and address Public Rights of Way issues and disputes within the Cairngorms National Park. As a result neither organisation is able to deliver their powers and duties as

efficiently as they could be. It is more logical that the Cairngorms National Park Authority acts as the Access **and** Planning Authority for all public access-related issues referred to in both the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967. It is therefore proposed that the powers and duties of the Planning Authority referred to in the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967 are devolved to the Cairngorms National Park Authority within the Cairngorms National Park. It is also proposed that those same powers and duties are devolved to any new national park authority in their respective designation orders.

Question 7l: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the governance of National Parks?
Partially agree. We agree that the board should be diverse, include a broad range of skills and have local representation. We agree with the principles outlined in the consultation, and the importance of having a board that has the skills, expertise and experience to ensure that the National Park authorities can respond to the climate and biodiversity crises. It is, however, of equal importance that local representation (both from local authorities and local communities) is not underplayed or underrepresented in the make-up of the board; local communities and local voices must remain strongly represented and not be inadvertently marginalised.

Question 7m: Do you have any other comments that you would like to make about the aims, powers and governance of National Parks?
No.

Appendix 2 – Annotated Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Delivery Plan (as extracted from Tackling the Nature Emergency: Consultation of Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity)

Key

Highlighted (orange) – Actions that *may* directly or indirectly impact the Council's work.

Black tick - actions that the Council *may* be expected to lead.

Red circle - actions where the Council *may* be a partner and/or consultee.

Section Two: Scottish Biodiversity Delivery Plan

Chapter 1

Introduction: From Strategy to Delivery

The Scottish *Biodiversity strategy to 2045: tackling the nature emergency* sets out the compelling evidence of long-standing global and Scottish biodiversity loss. The Strategy sets our goal: **to halt biodiversity loss and be Nature Positive by 2030 and to have restored and regenerated biodiversity across the country by 2045.**

This is embodied in the **Strategic Vision:**

> By 2045, Scotland will have restored and regenerated biodiversity across our land, freshwater and seas.
>
> Our natural environment, our habitats, ecosystems and species, will be diverse, thriving, resilient and adapting to climate change.
>
> Regenerated biodiversity will drive a sustainable economy and support thriving communities, and people.

The Strategy identifies a series of outcomes which capture what success looks like across our landscapes and marine environments.

A series of rolling delivery plans will ensure our approach is agile and dynamic and responding to conditions on the ground or at sea. This is the first draft delivery plan. It outlines the actions we need to take to set us on the path to meeting the 2030 milestone and delivering the vision. We anticipate refreshing and publishing delivery plans approximately every five years.

This Delivery Plan was developed through a modelling process. It was developed with the input of experts, scientists and key stakeholders. These actions were refined through discussion with policy experts, delivery partners and stakeholders. The full process is detailed here.

The resulting set of actions forms the basis for this Delivery Plan. They are organised under the **five objectives** set out in the strategy:

1. Accelerate restoration and regeneration;
2. Protect nature on land and at sea, across and beyond protected areas;
3. Embed nature-positive farming, fishing and forestry;
4. Protect and support the recovery of vulnerable and important species and habitats;
5. Invest in Nature; and,

We have added a sixth objective to capture a broader set of actions:

6. Take action on the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss

These objectives align broadly with the drivers of biodiversity loss identified by UN advisory body IPBES[3] and the Global Biodiversity Framework's Goals and Targets.

Actions under each of the objectives in the Delivery Plan includes a landscape or seascape code that identifies which outcome's logic model the action originated from, however, many actions will apply more widely (see list of codes below). Some of the actions are universal and contribute to several outcomes. Others are more specific to landscapes or marine environments. To filter the list of actions by landscape and seascape code, please view this alternative format for the tables.

Landscape and Seascape Codes:

Woodlands – 

Coastal – 

Freshwater – 

Urban – 

Uplands and Peatlands – 

Soils – 

Agriculture – 

Marine – 

Overarching - 

[3] Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

Chapter 2

Objective 1: Accelerate Restoration and Regeneration

The actions set out in this Chapter align with CBD Goal A and Targets 2, 6 and 9. The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration aims to prevent, halt, and reverse the degradation of ecosystems across our land and seas.

Large-scale ecosystem restoration on land and sea is at the heart of our efforts to tackle the nature-climate crisis. Healthy and restored ecosystems will massively contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions and help us adapt to the climate change which is already happening. The restoration of ecosystems in urban areas is also important, requiring changes to the way we plan and manage the green and blue spaces of our towns and cities (**Chapter 3**).

Work is already in progress across Scotland to restore and regenerate ecosystems and habitats including for example ambitious woodland creation and peatland restoration programmes but we urgently need to **accelerate** and expand the **scale** of our efforts.

Proposed Key Actions

Detailed actions contributing to Objective 1 are contained in the Delivery Plan tables on page 18. The most significant are summarised here. We will:

- **Introduce Statutory Nature Restoration Targets –** The Natural Environment Bill will put in place a framework for statutory nature targets.

- Identify and facilitate partnership projects for **six large scale landscape restoration areas** with significant woodland components by 2025 and establish management structures with restoration work progressing by 2030.

- **Implement the Scottish Plan for INNS Surveillance, Prevention and Control** and secure wider support measures to enable long-term effective INNS removal at scale. INNS management and damage costs increase rapidly over time as new species arrive and established ones continue to spread due to many factors, including as a consequence of climate change. Investing in prevention provides economic returns up to fifty times higher than trying to manage an INNS after it arrives.

- **Increase resilience in coastal and marine systems by reducing key pressures and safeguard space for coastal habitat change.** Actions that provide naturally functioning coastal habitats and landforms will reduce key pressures on the coast and allow for natural change and adaptation to sea level rise and coastal erosion. Tackling marine litter and plastics, noise, other marine

contaminants and seabed disturbance will provide healthier marine ecosystems that can maximise support for biodiversity.

- **Substantially reduce deer densities across our landscapes in parallel with ensuring sustainable management of grazing by sheep to improve overall ecosystem health.** Reducing herbivore impacts is one of the biggest levers we have in Scotland for reducing biodiversity loss and enabling regeneration at scale. It is a pre-requisite for many of our nature restoration activities including peatland and woodland restoration.

  We will work with the deer management sector to secure average densities of 2 deer per km^2 in priority woodland, 5-8 deer per km^2 in the Cairngorms National Park, and more widely a maximum of 10 deer per km^2 nationally by 2030. This will require a minimum increase of 25-30% on current cull levels sustained over several years. Careful alignment of incentives and regulatory levers will be needed to achieve optimal herbivore densities and reduced grazing and browsing impacts to support biodiversity outcomes.

  We will explore how best to support optimal herbivore densities to enhance biodiversity outcomes in the uplands.

- **Implement a Programme of Ecosystem Restoration –** The Habitat Map of Scotland (HabMoS) gives extensive detail on globally and nationally important habitats and ecosystems.[4] Alongside our peatland restoration programme, the restoration of Scotland's Rainforest has already been identified as a priority for restoration and we will further develop a funding and investment model to deliver this. We will also identify species assemblages and species which require action beyond that focussed on the restoration of their ecosystem, and update the Scottish Biodiversity List (Chapter 5).

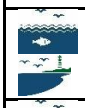
- **Enhance water and air quality and undertake water management measures to enhance biodiversity and reduce negative impacts.** We will address pollution, water and air quality, and extremes of water availability, through a range of mechanisms to support the restoration of ecosystems and provide wider societal benefits.

- **Ensure Grouse-Moor management sustains healthy biodiversity.** The Wildlife Management and Muirburn (Scotland) Bill is addressing raptor

[4] The programme of ecosystem restoration will include the following ecosystems: Montane and arctic-alpine scrub, heath and grasslands; Oceanic bryophyte-rich upland heaths; Peatlands; Temperate (Atlantic) rainforest; Caledonian pinewood; Other ancient woodlands of all types; Species rich grasslands; Rivers, riparian woods, freshwater lochs, ponds and freshwater wetlands; Machair; Coastal dunes and shingle; Saltmarsh; Estuaries; Maritime cliff habitats; Urban ecosystems rich in native plants and ponds; Marine habitats included on the Priority Marine Feature list; Island ecosystems especially vulnerable to Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) or outstanding for nature.

persecution and the use of muirburn to ensure it is undertaken in an environmentally sustainable manner by trained individuals.

Code[5]	Action
	Introduce statutory nature restoration Targets
	• Drive cross sectoral action by introducing a framework for statutory nature restoration targets in the proposed Natural Environment Bill (scheduled to be introduced in this parliamentary session).

Code	Introduce a Programme of Ecosystem Restoration
	• Identify and facilitate partnership projects for six large scale landscape restoration areas with significant woodland components by 2025 and establish management structures with restoration work progressing by 2030.
	• Develop the new Register of Ancient Woodlands, to include locational data, a definition of the required 'protected and restored' condition of ancient woodlands, and a process for recording ancient woodlands that reach the required standard.
	• Support landowners to protect and restore priority ancient woodlands by 2030, where the initial priority list is those protected/designated woodlands that are currently in unfavourable condition.
	• Develop a strategic approach for restoring Scotland's Rainforest by 2024 ○ Building on the work of the Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest agree and publish a strategic approach ○ Working with partners produce a framework for funding and support for SG delivery in priority areas ○ Investigate the application of technology to improve monitoring and follow up work.
	• Develop best practice guidance on measures for upland restoration to regenerate peatlands, increase native woodland cover, manage grazing, protect certain target species and priority habitats, and increase habitat heterogeneity.
	• Develop a national peatland monitoring framework that incorporates on-site and remotely sensed assessments of biodiversity indicators, climate resilience and associated functions within the wider landscape, hydrological and ecological network contexts.
	• Following consultation in early 2023, continue on-going work towards implementing a ban on the sale of peat in Scotland.
	• Publish a plan for marine and coastal ecosystem restoration, including prioritising habitats and locations suitable for restoration by 2025.
	• Deliver additional protection for spawning and juvenile congregation areas, and for species which are integral components of the marine food web, such as sandeels by 2028.

[5] **Landscape/Seascape codes:** We have indicated which outcome's logic model the action originated from, however, many actions will apply more widely.  (Woodlands);  (Coastal);  (Freshwater);  (Urban):  (Uplands and Peatlands);  (Soils);  (Agriculture);  (Marine);  (Overarching)

	• Develop a new approach to marine biodiversity monitoring, including testing through pilots, covering both state and pressure work. This will include a review of the Scottish MPA Monitoring Strategy (2028). STATE: ○ Develop and implement a co-ordinated programme of benthic habitat surveillance; ○ Extend existing plankton monitoring programmes; ○ Undertake targeted monitoring of fish species that are integral components of marine food webs to enable better assessment of the effects of prey availability on seabird and marine mammal populations. PRESSURE: ○ Continue to develop bycatch and entanglement surveillance schemes; ○ Extend the requirement for Vessel Tracking and Monitoring Systems across the whole commercial fishing fleet by 2026, and increase capacity and capability in related compliance monitoring and protection; ○ Extend current monitoring programme for marine litter to include monitoring of microplastics; ○ Work with marine users to establish an effective risk-based monitoring and surveillance programme for marine INNS.
	• Implement a programme of measures to restore catchments and rivers through River Basin Management Planning to achieve 81% of water bodies at 'Good' or better condition by 2027.
	• Convene stakeholders to implement local and national catchment restoration initiatives, developing best practice through demonstration sites and the provision of expert advice by 2030.

Code[6]	**Implement Scottish Plan for INNS Surveillance, Prevention and Control.**
	• Take action to ensure pathways for the introduction and spread of INNS are managed to prevent or reduce their rate of introduction and establishment, and prevent further damage to ecosystems. To include: i. reducing the rate of establishment of known or potential INNS by at least 50% by 2030 compared to 2020 level; and, ii. detection of priority INNS through increased inspections and vigilance of citizen scientists and eradicated or contained before they become established and spread.
	• Develop and implement a pipeline of strategic INNS projects to coordinate the control of priority INNS at scale, to eliminate or reduce the impacts of INNS in at least 30% of priority sites by 2030.
	• Raise public awareness of the impacts of INNS and embed INNS biosecurity practice across industries and recreational activities linked to the most important pathways of introduction and spread by 2030.

[6] **Landscape/Seascape codes:** We have indicated which outcome's logic model the action originated from, however, many actions will apply more widely.  (Woodlands);  (Coastal);  (Freshwater);  (Urban):  (Uplands and Peatlands);  (Soils);  (Agriculture);  (Marine);  (Overarching)

	• Develop best practice guidelines and a voluntary code of conduct for INNS biosecurity suitable for supporting marine habitat restoration by 2025.
	• Complete feasibility study of eradication / managed control of marine INNS and develop and implement a rolling programme of island INNS management, focussed on targeted removal of predators impacting on nesting seabirds.

Code[7]	**Improve Resilience in Coastal and Marine Systems by reducing pressures and increase and safeguard space for coastal habitat change**
	• Identify and address gaps in current evidence on coastal habitats, through research and monitoring as an enabling action for all coastal biodiversity actions (2024-2028) and fund research commencing in 2024 into better quantifying the adaptation benefits of coastal landforms and habitats to maximise biodiversity benefits.
	• Develop Coastal Change Adaptation Plans (CCAPs) which promote: ○ National, regional, and local partnerships which deliver adaptive coastal management with benefits for flood and coastal change management and biodiversity. ○ Promotion of naturally functioning coastal landforms and habitats to reduce pressures, allow recovery and improve their health and resilience to enable natural functioning and associated biodiversity benefits. ○ Embed Dynamic Coast's "sea level rise" predictive adaptive management approach (to forecast coastal and flood changes) including in public engagement via local partnerships, to allow opportunities to be identified to safeguard and create dynamic natural, biodiverse habitats.
	• Investigate scope to identify and create appropriate coastal accommodation space to promote recovery and adaptation, and explore funding options enabling future strategies and plans to protect dynamic natural biodiverse coastal habitats.
	• Reduce marine litter and marine plastics: ○ Implement the Marine Litter Strategy for Scotland through a 6 year action plan, published in 2022; ○ Develop a waste management scheme to improve recycling routes for the end of life fishing gear by 2027 ○ Enable improved plastic pellet handling and management across the plastics supply chain to reduce pellet loss, and provide guidance to support pellet clean up in the environment by end 2025
	• Contribute to the OSPAR action to agree a regional action plan by 2025, setting out a series of national and collective actions and, as appropriate, OSPAR measures to reduce noise pollution.
	• Develop policy by 2028 to address contaminants that exceed OSPAR threshold values.

[7] **Landscape/Seascape codes:** We have indicated which outcome's logic model the action originated from, however, many actions will apply more widely. (Woodlands); (Coastal); (Freshwater); (Urban): (Uplands and Peatlands); (Soils); (Agriculture); (Marine); (Overarching)

Code[8]	**Substantially reduce deer densities across our landscapes in parallel with ensuring sustainable management of grazing by sheep to improve overall ecosystem health**
	• Introduce new deer legislation which will modernise the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 and introduce new powers for intervention for the purposes of enhancing or restoring nature, including preventing biodiversity loss, by 2025.
	• Establish a national deer management programme including monitoring capacity.
	• Set deer cull to level at which habitats and ecosystems can recover and regenerate and deer densities are maintained at sustainable levels and appropriate to context by 2030; • Broad targets of 2 deer per km^2 in priority woodland, 5-8 deer per km^2 in Cairngorms National Park and 10 deer per km^2 nationally by 2030.
	• Explore how best to support optimal herbivore densities to enhance biodiversity outcomes in the uplands.
	• Establish mechanisms to ensure new and existing woodlands are designed to enable effective and safe deer management such as within revised FGS by 2027.

Code	**Enhance water and air quality. Undertake water management measures to enhance biodiversity.**
	• Ensure River Basin Management Plans include actions to limit pollution and improve water quality achieving Good status in over 90% of waterbodies by 2030.
	• Ensure contaminants of emerging concern that may impact on biodiversity are identified through existing mechanisms with an additional system in place by 2030 that uses Scottish data to identify new problems.
	• Contribute to the reform of UK chemicals regulations by 2030.
	• Support projects and programmes (2023-2030) that complement regulation to address emerging or novel contaminants in the water environment, e.g. The One Health Breakthrough Partnership on pharmaceuticals and the water industry's Chemical Investigation Programme.
	• Implement actions in The Cleaner Air for Scotland 2 strategy by 2026.
	• Take an adaptive approach to abstraction and flows management to protect freshwater biodiversity from the impacts of water scarcity in response to future climate change pressures, using the Controlled Activity Regulations and review of abstraction.
	• Continue to invest in improvements to the wastewater service to improve freshwater biodiversity by upgrading 40 wastewater treatment works and 24 intermittent sewage discharges, as required, by 2027.
	• Develop a mechanism to promote positive management of rural and urban sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) for biodiversity benefits.

[8] **Landscape/Seascape codes:** We have indicated which outcome's logic model the action originated from, however, many actions will apply more widely. (Woodlands); (Coastal); (Freshwater); (Urban): (Uplands and Peatlands); (Soils); (Agriculture); (Marine); (Overarching)

	• Maintain the long term monitoring of the freshwater environment in addition to being enhanced and supplemented by new developing technologies such as eDNA when available.

Code[9]	Ensure Grouse Moor management sustains healthy biodiversity
	• Introduce legislation and develop a licensing approach to grouse moor management. • Develop with stakeholders a new Code of Practice on grouse shooting to ensure moorland management supports biodiversity by 2025.
	• Introduce legislation and revise Muirburn Code to regulate the use of all muirburn and only allow burning on peatland by exception for limited purposes by 2025.

Question 2a: Have we captured the key actions needed to deliver the objective: accelerate restoration and regeneration?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:
……
……
……
……
……

Question 2b: Are the key actions, to support the objective: accelerate restoration and regeneration, sufficient to put Scotland on track to ending the loss of biodiversity by 2030?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:
……
……
……
……
……

[9] **Landscape/Seascape codes:** We have indicated which outcome's logic model the action originated from, however, many actions will apply more widely.  (Woodlands);  (Coastal);  (Freshwater);  (Urban):  (Uplands and Peatlands);  (Soils);  (Agriculture);  (Marine);  (Overarching)

Question 2c: Which actions do you think will have most impact?

Please state the actions and explain the reasons for your response:

……
……
……
……
……

Chapter 3

Objective 2: Protect Nature on Land and at Sea across and beyond Protected Areas

These Actions align with CBD Goal A and Targets 1, 2, and 3.

Halting biodiversity loss by 2030 and adapting to climate change requires a step change in action to protect and restore habitats for the long-term and ensure they are well connected. Areas that are protected for nature through legal designation and other mechanisms, and the nature networks they form a part of, form a vital backbone for nature recovery across the wider land and sea. Protected areas provide benefits for society through capture and storage of carbon, provision of local employment opportunities and support to health and wellbeing. They provide a wide range of environmental services including pollinator services, water quality and flood management.

Key Actions

The set of detailed actions underpinning Objective 2 are set out in the Table below.

Most significantly we will:

- **Ensure that at least 30% of land and sea is protected and effectively managed to support nature in good health by 2030 (30 by 30).** Areas that are protected for nature through legal designation and other mechanisms contribute to protecting the most important areas for biodiversity, ecosystem functions and services.

  On land, currently 18.2% is formally designated, meaning we need to protect approximately 990,000 additional hectares for nature, through a combination of Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) and formal designations. This does not mean removing people or all activity from this land, rather it is about developing an approach to sharing our land to create positive outcomes for our biodiversity. We have engaged extensively with stakeholders to develop a policy framework for 30 by 30 which sets out the vision and principles underpinning its implementation. We will continue to engage with stakeholders to build an implementation road map which will include guidance on how we will operationalise OECMs in Scotland. The proposed Natural Environment Bill will provide the opportunity to put in place any legislative provisions necessary. Framework for 30 by 30 in Scotland - Draft | NatureScot

  Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) already cover 37% of our seas. We will put in place fisheries management measures for those sites in the Marine Protected

Area (MPA) network that require them, increasing the level of protection to support the recovery and resilience of Scotland's Seas. We will continue our engagement with stakeholders, developing a new pathway and timetable for enhancing marine protection.

- **Expand the role of National Parks and ensure they act as exemplars of biodiversity protection and recovery.** Scotland currently has two National Parks and plan to designate at least one more by 2026. We are consulting on a refreshed purpose for our National Park authorities which will emphasise their role in addressing the climate and nature emergencies. New Partnership Plans set out ambitious visions and targets with respect to nature restoration and place an increased emphasis on the role of the Parks' communities, third sector organisations and the public and private sectors in the implementation of those Partnership Plans.

- **Fulfil the potential of National Nature Reserves (NNRs) for nature recovery.** As well as providing places for nature to flourish, Scotland's 43 NNRs are important gateways to nature, providing opportunities for all of Scotland's people to experience and enjoy the best of Scotland's habitats and wildlife. We will identify opportunities for expansion or the designation of new NNRs. Working with the NNR partnership, we will ensure these sites are managed as key building blocks for Nature Networks across Scotland.

- **Expand and enhance Nature Networks and ecological connectivity.** By 2030 each Local Authority in Scotland will have a spatially defined Nature Network. Important areas for biodiversity, other sites of local importance for biodiversity (e.g. Local Nature Reserves) and areas being restored for nature will also contribute to Nature Networks. They will provide a range of opportunities for more people, especially those in urban areas, to experience and connect with nature. We have engaged extensively with stakeholders to develop a policy framework for nature networks which sets out the vision and principles underpinning its implementation. Framework for Nature Networks in Scotland - Draft | NatureScot

- **Champion new planning and development measures for protecting and enhancing biodiversity.** NPF4 is Scotland's national spatial strategy and has the climate and nature crises at its heart. It sets out our spatial principles, regional priorities, national developments and national planning policy. We have identified several key actions which will ensure NPF4 secures positive effects for biodiversity such as exploring options for developing a biodiversity metric .

- **Enhance biodiversity in Scotland's green and blue spaces.** The green and blue spaces within and around our buildings and settlements, particularly in our urban areas, provide important places for both people and nature, many of which can be enhanced for biodiversity. We will establish a new National Charter with a clear vision for improving biodiversity in our urban green and blue spaces, and support delivery through strategies and plans that promote best practice management, wider sharing and greater understanding.

Code [10]	Action
	Ensure that at least 30% of land and sea is protected or conserved and effectively managed to support nature in good health by 2030 (30 by 30)
	• By 2030, ensure that at least 30% of land and sea is protected or conserved, as protected areas or Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs), and effectively managed to support nature restoration.
	• Develop and implement a monitoring regime to ensure that Protected Area sites deliver their objectives.
	• Put in place fisheries management measures for those sites in the MPA network that require them by 2025, increasing the level of protection to support the recovery and resilience of Scotland's Seas.
	• Develop and implement an adaptive management framework for the MPA network by 2028.
	• Assess the network of marine protected areas in respect of the resilience of marine biodiversity to climate change by 2026, based on a regional assessment by OSPAR.
	• Establish a programme to enable protected woodlands to be brought into favourable condition with clear targets and a clear framework for decision making.

Code	**Expand the role of National Parks and ensure they act as exemplars of biodiversity protection and recovery**
	• Designate at least one new National Park by 2026.
	• Strengthen the powers and governance of our National Parks by 2026.
	• Ensure National Parks, National Nature Reserves and protected areas are exemplars in better delivery of biodiversity outcomes by 2030.

Code	**Fulfil the potential of National Nature Reserves (NNRs) for nature recovery**
	• Actively use the NNR suite to develop, deliver and demonstrate best practice in wildlife management – putting in place five demonstration examples by 2025.
	• Identify and realise opportunities for expansion of existing NNRs or the designation of new ones – identifying a range of sites by 2026 and designating those considered suitable by 2028.

[10] **Landscape/Seascape codes:** We have indicated which outcome's logic model the action originated from, however, many actions will apply more widely. (Woodlands); (Coastal); (Freshwater); (Urban): (Uplands and Peatlands); (Soils); (Agriculture); (Marine); (Overarching)

	• Adapt the planning and management of NNRs in response to the impacts of climate change on nature – putting in place refreshed management plans for NNRs by 2028.

Code [11]	Identify, expand and enhance Nature Networks and ecological connectivity
✓ ●	• Ensure nature networks are implemented in every Local Authority area to provide connectivity between important places for biodiversity, deliver local priorities and contribute to strategic priorities at regional and national scales by 2030.
✓	• Undertake mapping of opportunities for creating local-authority-wide Nature Networks by 2030.
✓	• Incorporate and embed Nature Networks into policy frameworks and decision-making processes as a component of Local Development Plans and Regional Land Use Partnerships nationally by 2030.
●	• Support local authorities in their land use decision making to deliver overall positive outcomes for biodiversity and the creation of nature networks, through developing toolkits, including a nature networks mapping tool and development of training by 2025.
	• Develop an open source platform for blue and green infrastructure and other nature assets in urban areas to support approaches to valuing and financing blue and green infrastructure.

Code	Champion new planning and development measures for protecting and enhancing biodiversity
●	• Explore options for developing a biodiversity metric or related tool, specifically for use in Scotland.
●	• Raise awareness and promote the Developing with Nature guidance to support delivery of NPF4 policy 3c and develop user-friendly version of the guidance.
●	• Publish new guidance to support delivery of NPF4 (policy 3) biodiversity policy and to support wider work on building skills and capacity on biodiversity and nature across the planning system.
✓	• Include a requirement within the development management process (under NPF4) for management and maintenance plans for blue/green infrastructure to be routinely submitted (and finance secured) demonstrating how the design and maintenance of these areas will contribute to lasting positive effects for biodiversity.
	• Develop a consistent approach to assessing existing and potential biodiversity value of green and blue spaces and measuring,

[11] **Landscape/Seascape codes:** We have indicated which outcome's logic model the action originated from, however, many actions will apply more widely. (Woodlands); (Coastal); (Freshwater); (Urban): (Uplands and Peatlands); (Soils); (Agriculture); (Marine); (Overarching)

	monitoring and demonstrating long-term positive effects for biodiversity and agreed approach to standardised monitoring has been provided to Local Authorities by 2030.
	• Ensure that information on soil health is considered in planning decisions, to support development proposals that protect soil from damage, and that minimise soil sealing and enhance soil quality.
	• Provide guidance for Scottish Planning Authorities on sustainable use and management of soil in planning processes (2030).
	• Ensure that development relating to renewables and essential infrastructure provides positive effects for upland biodiversity and peatland habitats, by developing clear guidance on NPF4 requirements for delivering positive effects for biodiversity.

Code [12]	Enhance biodiversity in Scotland's green and blue spaces
	• Prepare and implement nature-positive amenity grassland management strategies for the public estate in town and cities by 2030, incorporating improved technical guidance for practitioners and access to suitable machinery for local authorities.
	• By 2030 broker the agreement of a National Charter with all stakeholders for nature-positive green and blue space management which includes a definition of 'nature-rich places' as part of a national campaign to increase awareness of more nature-positive green and blue space management.
	• Every local authority should consider the need to prepare and implement a vision for surface water management including appropriate actions for blue green infrastructure by 2030.
	• Every new transport and active travel infrastructure project should incorporate elements of blue-green infrastructure (and seek opportunities for enhancing/expanding blue green infrastructure) by 2030.
	• Prepare and implement Wee Forest Vision and Delivery Plan.
	• Work with social housing providers, developers and homeowners to promote and share good practice for residential gardens to better support biodiversity by 2030.

Question 2d: Have we captured the key actions needed to deliver the objective: protect nature on land and at sea across and beyond protected areas?

- Yes
- No

[12] **Landscape/Seascape codes:** We have indicated which outcome's logic model the action originated from, however, many actions will apply more widely.  (Woodlands);  (Coastal);  (Freshwater);  (Urban):  (Uplands and Peatlands);  (Soils);  (Agriculture);  (Marine);  (Overarching)

- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:
……
……
……
……
……
……

Question 2e: Are the key actions, to support the objective: protect nature on land and at sea across and beyond protected areas, sufficient to put Scotland on track to ending the loss of biodiversity by 2030?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:
……
……
……
……
……
……

Question 2f: Which actions do you think will have most impact?

Please state the actions and explain the reasons for your response:
……
……
……
……
……
……

Chapter 4

Objective 3: Embed Nature Positive Farming, Fishing and Forestry

These Actions align with CBD Goal A and Targets 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6.

70% of Scotland's land is classified as agricultural land and woodlands and forestry cover 19% percent. We won't halt biodiversity loss and address the impacts of climate change without significant changes to the way we use and manage these resources.

Farming

Historically incentives have supported a model of production which often had a negative impact on biodiversity.

The Vision for Scottish Agriculture puts biodiversity upfront alongside other key outcomes. We will transform how we support farming and food production in Scotland to become a global leader in sustainable and regenerative agriculture.

We recognise that many farmers and crofters already support and enhance biodiversity and we want to build on that. Over 3,000 farms for example are tackling the nature-climate emergency with the support of funding from the Agri-environment Climate Scheme (AECS).

This delivery plan includes actions which will be incorporated into the new agricultural support system to help farmers and crofters transition to practices generating substantial regeneration in biodiversity, ecosystem and soil health and significantly reduce carbon emissions, while sustaining high-quality food production.

This will align with the Agricultural Reform route map and build on existing support, for example, through AECS, actions such as soil testing under Preparing for Sustainable Farming, our partnership work with NatureScot through Farming with Nature and the advice and support available under the Farm Advisory Service.

Forestry

Scotland is leading the way on forestry. Forest and woodland cover in Scotland has increased from a post-industrial low of around 5% to 19%. While our productive forests provide carbon and biodiversity benefits, the urgency of the nature crisis demands this is increasingly matched by an improvement in the quality of nature in forests and an expansion of natural regeneration. Large-scale action is now needed to reduce the negative impacts from grazing, invasive species, climate change and

novel pests and pathogens. We need to improve the biodiversity benefits from all woodlands, with a specific focus needed on our most valued and protected natural woodlands.

Fishing

Scotland's Marine Assessment 2020 identified direct pressures on the condition of the marine environment in Scotland's seas associated with bottom contacting and other fishing across the majority of marine regions around Scotland. The actions in this plan reflect and build on Scotland's Fisheries Management Strategy's vision for delivering responsible and sustainable fisheries management. Collectively, delivery of these actions will support the implementation of an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management that minimises adverse impacts on non-target habitats and species.

Key actions

The set of detailed actions underpinning Objective 3 are set out in the Table below. Most significantly we will:

- Ensure increased uptake of high diversity, nature-rich, high soil-carbon, low intensity farming methods while sustaining high quality food production.
- Introduce an agricultural support framework which delivers for nature restoration and biodiversity alongside climate and food production outcomes.
- Shift at least half of all funding for farming and crofting from unconditional to conditional support by 2025 with recipients of support to deliver on targeted outcomes for biodiversity gain and low emissions production.
- Ensure that forests and woodlands deliver increased biodiversity and habitat connectivity alongside timber and carbon outcomes.
- Implement further fisheries measures in vulnerable marine ecosystems and Priority Marine Features outside of MPAs.
- Implement a sustainable approach to sea fisheries, using best available scientific advice, and minimising adverse impacts on non-target species and habitats.
- Implement Scotland's vision for sustainable aquaculture to minimise negative impacts on biodiversity.

Code [13]	Action
	Ensure increased uptake of high diversity, nature-rich, high soil-carbon, low intensity farming methods while sustaining high quality food production
	• By 2030 increase the uptake of integrated pest management across Scottish agriculture to minimise risks and impacts of pesticides to the environment in line with the UK National Action Plan on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides.
	• Revise and update Scotland's Soil Framework and action/implementation plan by 2030.
	• Develop evidence-based Soil Health Indicators (SHIs) that can be considered for inclusion in Whole Farm Plans and forest management plans.
	• Undertake an evidence-based update of information/advice on biodiversity management currently available to farmers/land managers to ensure it is up-to-date, clear and easily accessible by 2030.
	• Improve information for land managers on how to assess soil erosion risks and implement measures to avoid erosion (and other impacts on soil health related to climate change), including: i) raising awareness about the impacts of extreme rainfall / drought events on soils; and ii) mapping soils that have been subject to anthropogenic degradation and are candidates for soil improvement programmes by 2027/28.
	• Develop and promote clear guidance for practitioners on soil compaction and ensure that by 2030 farm and forestry machinery contractors are engaged in ensuring appropriate use of equipment, uptake of decision-making tools and training, to minimise and ultimately avoid compaction damage to soils.
	• Set up monitoring frameworks to assess change in soil health, based on evidence from the Strategic Research Programme (2022-2027).
	• Reduce inputs of nutrients to freshwaters that cause enrichment impacts on biodiversity, by controlling diffuse pollution through effective nutrient management under agricultural reform and priority catchment work under RBMP (current plan 2022 – 2027); and by controlling point sources through the Controlled Activities Regulations (CAR).

Code	Introduce an agricultural support framework which delivers for nature restoration and biodiversity alongside climate and food production outcomes
	• From 2025 farmers and crofters will be required to adopt the following practices as the foundations of the whole farm planning approach to qualify for agricultural payments: soil testing, animal health and welfare declarations, carbon audits, biodiversity audits and supported effective business planning.
	• Implement actions specifically benefitting farmland species as part of ongoing support and the new agricultural payments framework by 2030, backed by advisory support.

[13] **Landscape/Seascape codes:** We have indicated which outcome's logic model the action originated from, however, many actions will apply more widely.  (Woodlands);  (Coastal);  (Freshwater);  (Urban):  (Uplands and Peatlands);  (Soils);  (Agriculture);  (Marine);  (Overarching)

	• Adjust rural support mechanisms to incorporate requirements to protect and enhance soil health, promote control of soil erosion/compaction and maintain/ enhance soil organic matter through appropriate balance of input/outputs and nutrient levels.
	• Ensure that rural support mechanisms incorporate a mandatory requirement for a farm-level biodiversity audit in return for support, moving towards shifting 50% of direct payments for farming and crofting to climate action and funding for on farm nature restoration and enhancement by 2025.
	• Ensure that farmers and crofters can access tools, information and advice necessary to produce an integrated biodiversity audit as part of the Whole Farm Plan from 2025 as a pre-requisite to claiming support.

Code [14]	**Implement further fisheries measures in vulnerable marine ecosystems and to protect Priority Marine Features outside MPAs**
	• Deliver further fisheries management measures for Priority Marine Features identified as most at risk from bottom-contacting mobile fishing gear outwith MPAs by 2025.
	• Introduce fisheries closures to protect Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems in offshore waters between 400-800m depth by 2027.
	• Identify high-risk areas and/or gear types for bycatch and entanglement of sensitive marine species.
	• Develop and implement a suite of technical and spatial measures to reduce levels of discarding of ‘unwanted’ fish catch alongside measures to reduce bycatch of sensitive marine species to ensure sustainable fisheries. Consultation on measures in 2023/24 with implementation by 2026.

Code	**Implement a sustainable approach to sea fisheries management, using best available scientific advice and minimising adverse impacts on non-target species and habitats**
	• Consult on implementing the inshore cap and options for other sustainable fishing management controls.
	• Develop 21 Fisheries Management Plans (as set out in the Joint Fisheries Statement) to increase or maintain sustainability of fish stocks.
	• Work with stakeholders to focus on identifying practical, achievable actions to reduce pressure on habitats most at risk or most extensively impacted by 2028.

[14] **Landscape/Seascape codes:** We have indicated which outcome’s logic model the action originated from, however, many actions will apply more widely.  (Woodlands);  (Coastal);  (Freshwater);  (Urban):  (Uplands and Peatlands);  (Soils);  (Agriculture);  (Marine);  (Overarching)

Code	Implement Scotland's vision for sustainable aquaculture to minimise negative impacts on biodiversity
	• Support SEPA in the implementation of the sea lice risk assessment framework, starting to apply the framework to applications for proposed new farms and expansions of existing farms in the second half of 2023.
	• Review the technical standards for fin fish farmers and support work towards zero escapes from farms by 2024.
	• Continue to support the implementation of the farmed fish health framework up to 2028.

Code [15]	Ensure that forests and woodlands deliver increased biodiversity and habitat connectivity alongside timber and carbon outcomes
	• Update woodland management guidance and plans (between 2023 and 2030) to reflect greater emphasis on actions that will improve biodiversity including use of elements from Site Condition Monitoring and Woodland Ecological Condition (WEC) monitoring.
	• Restructure woodlands during restocking. Undertake management interventions to incorporate a greater diversity of species, habitats and structure that benefit biodiversity and allow achievement of other forestry management objectives.
	• Increase biodiversity through diversifying age and species mixes, increasing woodland extent and connectivity (and edge habitat), increasing deadwood, and managing grazing and browsing to help facilitate natural regeneration and development of a ground/shrub layer as part of Sustainable Forest Management.
	• Identify site appropriate riparian buffers using an evidence based approach and implement them through a range of mechanisms including the agricultural reform programme, forestry grants and private restoration initiatives by 2027.

Question 2g: Have we captured the key actions needed to deliver the objective: embed nature positive farming, fishing and forestry?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:
……
……
……
……

[15] **Landscape/Seascape codes:** We have indicated which outcome's logic model the action originated from, however, many actions will apply more widely. (Woodlands); (Coastal); (Freshwater); (Urban): (Uplands and Peatlands); (Soils); (Agriculture); (Marine); (Overarching)

Question 2h: Are the key actions, to support the objective: embed nature positive farming, fishing and forestry, sufficient to put Scotland on track to ending the loss of biodiversity by 2030?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:
……
……
……
……
……
…

Question 2i: Which actions do you think will have most impact?

Please state the actions and explain the reasons for your response:
……
……
……
……
……
…

Chapter 5

Objective 4: Protect and Support the Recovery of Vulnerable and Important Species and Habitats

These Actions align with CBD Goal A and Target 4.

Scotland has approximately 90,000 species often of international importance. These include many species of mosses, liverworts and lichens, seabirds, raptors, waders, marine mammals, the elasmobranchs (more commonly known as sharks, skates and rays) and wild salmon.

However, our species are vulnerable to the loss and degradation of habitats, to climate change impacts and to outbreaks of disease. The 2021/22 outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) had a significant effect on wild bird populations. Approximately 20,500 dead seabirds were reported across 160 locations between April and September 2022, with the highest mortality reported in gannets, great skuas, common guillemots, kittiwakes, terns and large gulls. Important wintering populations of wildfowl were also severely affected with an estimated 13,200 Svalbard barnacle geese (around one third of the migratory or “flyway” population) dying in Winter 2021/22.

Restoring and regenerating ecosystems and habitats (Objective 1) is the foundation for regenerating and strengthening the resilience of biodiversity at scale. But this will take time – time which many vulnerable species do not have. We will therefore complement our actions to regenerate our seas and landscapes with actions targeted at specific species. This will build on recent success in this area with the recovery of sea eagles, golden eagles and the recent translocations of beavers.

Key Actions

The set of detailed actions underpinning Objective 4 are set out in the Table below. Most significantly we will:

- **Revise the Scottish Biodiversity List of species and habitats that Ministers consider to be of principal importance for biodiversity conservation in Scotland.** By identifying the species and habitats that are of the highest priority for biodiversity conservation, the Scottish Biodiversity List helps public bodies apply their biodiversity duty. NatureScot and eNGOs have collated data on species vulnerability in Scotland into the Species at Risk database. This work provides an evidence-based link between vulnerable species, known pressures driving decline and their ecosystems, and is a strong foundation for prioritising species based on risk of extirpation or extinction of endemics. Revision of the Priority Marine Feature (PMF) list is a separate process, and we will adopt the revised PMF list by the end of 2025. Inclusion of habitats and species on the

PMF list helps to focus marine conservation action, and also provides policy protection through the National Marine Plan.

- **Develop effective species recovery, reintroduction and reinforcement programmes.** The Species at Risk database will support an evaluation of actions to deliver biodiversity recovery through ecosystem management or targeted species action. This includes an assessment of likelihood of success and level of investment required. This work will inform the development of a prioritised list of species conservation, recovery, reintroduction and reinforcement programmes including support for surveillance and monitoring to manage pathogens and disease, for example, as identified by the Avian Flu Task Force. The Species on the Edge programme is an outstanding example of partnership working to restore biodiversity.

- **Manage existing and emerging pressures to improve the conservation of seabirds, marine mammals and elasmobranchs –** Work is ongoing to complete the Scottish Seabird Conservation Strategy. The Strategy will set out the actions required to address the key pressures on seabird populations, including those related to climate change. The UK dolphin and porpoise conservation strategy is being revised following public consultation and once published it will provide the framework for taking forward key actions. Alongside seabirds and marine mammals, elasmobranchs (sharks, skates and rays) make up the top three globally threatened marine species groups. Targeted research and management actions will be developed to help improve the status of elasmobranchs in Scotland's seas.

- **Implement measures to protect and recover Scotland's wild Atlantic salmon and migratory fish populations –** The Scottish Wild Salmon Strategy sets out the vision, objectives and priority themes for action to ensure the protection and recovery of wild Atlantic salmon populations in Scotland. It is supported by an Implementation Plan. Measures to protect European eel are contained within the Eel Management Plan for the UK.

Code[16]	Action
	Revise Scotland's list of priority species and habitats for biodiversity conservation
	• Revise the Scottish Biodiversity List of species and habitats that consider to be of principal importance for biodiversity conservation in Scotland.
	• Undertake a review of NatureScot's licensing approach for species conservation and management, consider outcomes and develop a programme to implement recommendations by 2024.
	• Adopt a revised Priority Marine Feature list at the end of 2025 to align with National Marine Plan 2.

Code	**Develop effective species recovery, reintroduction and reinforcement programmes**
	• Develop effective species recovery, reintroduction and reinforcement programmes drawing on partnership work on Species at Risk prioritisation, Species on the Edge programme, and evaluation of drivers. For example, continue to support and build upon existing strategies and schemes to protect and expand populations of species such as capercaillie, red squirrel, sea eagle, golden eagle and Eurasian beaver.
	• Develop and implement national plans for conserving species groups for which Scotland holds internationally important populations such as lichens, bryophytes, freshwater pearl mussels, and wetland waders.
	• Undertake measures to reduce human pressures to give habitats and species (especially specialists; arctic/alpine) more chance of surviving and improve the status of red listed species in Scotland.
	• Map genetic diversity risks across Scotland and ensure mitigating genetic diversity risks across Protected Areas and OECMs are included within Biodiversity Action Plans to reduce risks in protected areas by 2030.
	• Raise public awareness of science and practice around conservation translocations through public engagement by 2030.
	• The Better Biodiversity Data project will develop and build upon the first steps in a strategic approach to the collection, collation and sharing of biological data across Scotland; use of citizen science for monitoring key species will increase.
	• Support surveillance and monitoring to manage pathogens and disease risks.

[16] **Landscape/Seascape codes:** We have indicated which outcome's logic model the action originated from, however, many actions will apply more widely. (Woodlands); (Coastal); (Freshwater); (Urban): (Uplands and Peatlands); (Soils); (Agriculture); (Marine); (Overarching)

Code[17]	Manage existing and emerging pressures to improve the conservation status of seabirds, marine mammals and elasmobranchs
	• Develop and publish a Scottish Seabird Conservation Strategy by 2025 which will deliver action to conserve and increase the resilience of seabird populations.
	• Increase promotion of, and compliance with, the Scottish Marine Wildlife Watching Code.
	• Consider the requirement for marine management action to address cumulative impacts of wildlife tourism in key locations by 2027.
	• Begin implementation of actions relevant to Scotland in the UK Dolphin and Porpoise Conservation Strategy by 2025.
	• Review the approach to and locations of designated seal haul-out sites to ensure important locations are protected by 2026.
	• Develop and implement management actions to improve the status of elasmobranchs in Scotland's waters by 2028 and continue to build the evidence base for elasmobranchs in Scottish waters including: distribution, essential fish habitat, population abundance and social interactions.

Code	Implement measures to protect and recover Scotland's wild Atlantic salmon and migratory fish populations
	• Deliver the actions set out in the Wild salmon strategy Implementation plan 2023-2028 to improve habitat and reduce pressures on salmon and other fish species.
	• Undertake research on post-smolt and adult Atlantic salmon migration routes around Scottish coastal areas, and the use of estuarine and coastal habitats by sea trout, shad (Allis & Tawite), smelt, river and sea lamprey and European eel.

Question 2j: Have we captured the key actions needed to deliver the objective: protect and support the recovery of vulnerable and important species and habitats?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:

……
……
……
……

[17] **Landscape/Seascape codes:** We have indicated which outcome's logic model the action originated from, however, many actions will apply more widely. (Woodlands); (Coastal); (Freshwater); (Urban): (Uplands and Peatlands); (Soils); (Agriculture); (Marine); (Overarching)

……
…

Question 2k: Are the key actions, to support the objective: protect and support the recovery of vulnerable and important species and habitats, sufficient to put Scotland on track to ending the loss of biodiversity by 2030?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:
……
……
……
……
……
…

Question 2l: Which actions do you think will have most impact?

Please state the actions and explain the reasons for your response:
……
……
……
……
……
…

Chapter 6

Objective 5 – Invest in Nature

These Actions align with CBD Goal D and Target 19.

To meet the pace and scale of delivering our ambitious biodiversity targets we know that more investment is required. The Scottish Government has increased public investment in nature restoration in recent years, and is now making considerable large scale public investments in nature with the ambitious Nature Restoration Fund and Peatland ACTION fund. Future support for agriculture and the rural economy will also increasingly be designed to deliver nature recovery and to mitigate, and adapt Scotland to, climate change. Forthcoming Scottish Government research will seek to understand more fully the costs of delivering the ambitions of the Biodiversity Strategy.

There has been a significant increase in interest from private investors in nature restoration in Scotland. Our priority is ensuring that such investment is made as part of a values-led, high-integrity market for responsible private investment in natural capital. The Interim Principles for Responsible Investment in Natural Capital sets out the Scottish Government's ambitions for, and expectations of, responsible private investment. These will deliver for economic transformation, climate change and biodiversity, provide community benefits, and support a Just Transition.

The Scottish Government, NatureScot and the National Heritage Lottery Fund recently launched a 'Facility for Investment Ready Nature in Scotland' (FIRNS) fund. FIRNS will support projects that shape and grow private investment and market-based mechanisms to finance the restoration of Scotland's nature. Grants of up to £240,000 will be offered to help develop a viable business case and financial model, to attract investment in suitable projects.

The Flow Country Green Finance Initiative is a locally led partnership seeking to raise public and private funds to restore peatlands at scale. It aims to achieve a multi-use landscape where healthy and restored peatlands support globally significant biodiversity and climate protection, and a lively and prosperous region with high quality jobs. The region is also being considered for allocation of world heritage status by UNESCO.

Key Actions

The set of detailed actions underpinning Objective 5 are set out in the Table below. Most significantly we will:

- Develop with partners and stakeholders a **Biodiversity Investment Plan**. This will set out the strategic priorities for public investment through the Nature Restoration Fund and other public funds and where we can deliver best value for money. For example, investing in INNS prevention gives higher economic returns than trying to eradicate an invasive species after it arrives.

- Establish a **values-led, high-integrity market for** responsible private investment in natural capital. This will include continuing to develop and enhance the **woodland and peatland carbon codes** to attract and assist additional investment and develop other codes where appropriate. Explore options for the use of biodiversity credits to secure increased levels of responsible private investment in nature including through CivTech Challenge 8.6.

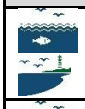
- Explore options for attracting private finance to support the restoration of Scotland's iconic Rainforest (Chapter 2).

- Increase investment in Scotland's Marine Environmental Enhancement Fund (SMEEF) and investment in activities that help restore Scotland's coast and seas.

- **Provide direction on, and investment in, green skills and local economic opportunities supporting nature-based education, nature restoration skills and volunteering –** Financial investment alone will not deliver the transformational change needed to halt biodiversity loss. We will invest in Scotland's workforce and support the development of nature restoration skills as part of a Just Transition.

Code [18]	Action
	Drive increased investment in Biodiversity and Nature Restoration
	• Develop a Biodiversity Investment Plan for Scotland which supports the delivery of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.
	• Maintain and seek to increase investment in nature restoration through our £65 million Nature Restoration Fund.
	• Develop the targeting of peatland restoration for cost-effective delivery (i.e. identifying priority restoration projects) including for greater private investment in peatland restoration.
	• Scale delivery of the Peatland Action programme, restoring the condition of peatlands as a key ecosystem in line with Net Zero targets and supporting the expansion and upskilling of the peatland restoration workforce.
	• Explore and promote complementary funding streams to the Water Environment Fund to restore rivers, particularly in rural environments.

Code	Establish a values-led, high-integrity market for responsible private investment in natural capital
	• Align the development of high integrity value led markets for responsible private investment in natural capital with the development of public funding streams for biodiversity (e.g. new agricultural support payments, peatland action, etc.) so that we 'crowd in' private investment rather than 'crowding out'.
	• Support the development of mechanisms for responsible private investment in biodiversity and development of biodiversity credits (e.g. through Civtech Challenge 8.6 and the Investment Readiness Fund).
	• Develop and support a Community of Practice within the Facility for Investment Ready Nature in Scotland to demonstrate what does and does not work through the sharing of new knowledge and approaches.
	• Support the development of Woodland Carbon Code/Peatland Code for improved biodiversity benefits and the development of new codes with direct or associated biodiversity benefits.

Code	Increase investment in Scotland's coastal and marine environments
	• Increase the investment in activities that help restore Scotland's coasts and seas by 2028.
	• Increase investment in Scotland's Marine Environmental Enhancement Fund (SMEEF) and the benefits delivered to Scotland's coasts and seas.

[18] **Landscape/Seascape codes:** We have indicated which outcome's logic model the action originated from, however, many actions will apply more widely.  (Woodlands);  (Coastal);  (Freshwater);  (Urban):  (Uplands and Peatlands);  (Soils);  (Agriculture);  (Marine);  (Overarching)

Code [19]	Provide direction on, and investment in, green skills and local economic opportunities supporting nature-based education, nature restoration skills and volunteering
	• Establish supported nationwide information and advice for land managers on biodiversity management including best practice and innovation through the complimentary tier of the new agricultural payment framework.
	• Develop guidance to support a programme of training/education for land managers to support best practice on: peatland and woodland restoration; deer and livestock management; integrated land management best practice; and, species and habitat management.

Question 2m: Have we captured the key actions needed to deliver the objective: invest in nature?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:
……
……
……
……
……
…

Question 2n: Are the key actions, to support the objective: invest in nature, sufficient to put Scotland on track to ending the loss of biodiversity by 2030?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:
……
……
……
……
……
…

[19] **Landscape/Seascape codes:** We have indicated which outcome's logic model the action originated from, however, many actions will apply more widely.  (Woodlands);  (Coastal);  (Freshwater);  (Urban):  (Uplands and Peatlands);  (Soils);  (Agriculture);  (Marine); O (Overarching)

Question 2o: Which actions do you think will have most impact?

Please state the actions and explain the reasons for your response:

……

……

Chapter 7

Objective 6: Take Action on the Indirect Drivers of Biodiversity Loss

These Actions align with CBD Goal B and Targets 14, 15, 16 and 18.

The *IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* sets out the drivers of biodiversity loss, including the five 'direct drivers' of loss which are prominently covered in chapters 2 – 6; and the equally important 'indirect drivers' of biodiversity loss. The latter are the key underlying causes of biodiversity loss and they include aspects of our culture and behaviour, demography, economy and governance, institutions, and technology. The IPBES report have identified these to be **people's disconnect with nature** and the consequent **lack of recognition for the value and importance of nature**. This manifests itself in unsustainable production and consumption patterns. The relationship between the direct and underlying drivers is important. Attempts to fix the direct drivers without addressing the underlying indirect causes will be inefficient or likely to fail.[20]

These indirect drivers transcend a wide range of policy areas. The Environment Strategy provides the overarching framework for tackling many of the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss. It aims for a just transition to a net zero, nature-positive Scotland with a circular economy. Of primary importance are Scotland's Climate Change Plan and Scotland's forthcoming Climate Adaptation Programme – Nature and Nature based Solutions are at the heart of these. The majority of climate change policy commitments and actions tackle the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss specifically unsustainable production and consumption patterns. For example, of the 61 specific climate change risks set out in the Climate Change Risk Assessment, to which the upcoming Climate Adaptation Programme will respond to, at least a third of risks need a nature-based response.

New commitments and legislation on the circular economy will be key to addressing unsustainable production and consumption patterns. Across all of what we do – we need a new approach for building society's awareness of the importance of Nature, strengthening the systems and mechanisms we have for valuing Nature and engaging communities and society in the identification and implementation of solutions – all fundamental for a Just Transition. Actions on the indirect drivers

[20] See also the report from the James Hutton Institute and NatureScot - https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-research-report-1309-understanding-indirect-drivers-biodiversity-loss-scotland

https://www.nature.scot/doc/understanding-indirect-drivers-biodiversity-loss-scotland-summary

require influencing 'levers of change' (e.g. strategies, plans, policies, legislation, guidance, standards, and regulations).

Key Actions

The set of detailed actions underpinning Objective 6 are set out in the Table below. Most significantly we will:

- **Engage and strengthen the connection between people and communities and nature –** We must widen public awareness and increase understanding of the actions needed to protect and restore nature on land and sea. We will provide more opportunities for people to experience and care for nature so that people's understanding of the role of nature in our daily lives is improved. Nature positive developments and stewardship of public, community and private land are vital to ensure far more people are actively working for nature recovery – and reaping the rewards.

- **Embed biodiversity and nature in curriculum development –** Knowledge of nature must be seen as key to prioritise decisions ahead, not just as a subset of science. Major changes are underway in the education system. Implementation of these reforms and plans provides the opportunity to embed the values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and confidence needed across all sectors to develop practices and take decisions which are compatible with a sustainable and more equitable future**.** These competencies, as well as a range of practical skills will be essential to Scotland reaching its climate and nature targets.

- **Mainstream and integrate biodiversity policy across government and address unsustainable supply and demand to reduce biodiversity impacts** – In Scotland the Environment Strategy has begun to tackle the global footprint of consumption and the challenges and opportunities of shifting to a wellbeing economy. Implementation of actions emphasise the importance of Just Transition and changing patterns of consumption across a wide range of topics.

  The Scottish Government's National Performance Framework can support this step change. Subject to final decisions on the Government's future legislative programmes, proposed legislation on land reform, well-being, and sustainable development and human rights to a healthy environment will provide the statutory framework to support it. Starting with the forthcoming National Marine Plan 2, further effort is needed in the marine environment to ensure biodiversity and sustainable developments are effectively built into decision making at all levels.

- **Address unsustainable supply and demand to reduce biodiversity impacts** Halting the loss of biodiversity requires action beyond traditional conservation and management measures. Recent research has pointed to the importance of sustainable natural resource consumption and trade, reduced food waste and more plant-based human diets having major positive influences on halting

biodiversity loss by 2050. This also has relevance to the Environment Strategy for Scotland.

- **Make Space for Nature** Running campaigns to encourage and support people to:

  Encourage nature into our lives
  - Provide water and homes for wildlife
  - Plant hedgerows and creating gaps in fences
  - Avoid using artificial grass, paving or decking

  Give our time for nature
  - Undertake regular citizen science activity
  - Join a conservation volunteer group
  - Encourage positive action for nature by public and private sectors

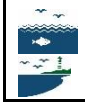
  Reduce our impact on nature
  - Use only peat-free garden products
  - Follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code
  - Take the steps we can to reduce our carbon foot print each year

Code [21]	Action
	Engage and strengthen the connection between people and communities with nature
	• Develop a communication and engagement programme by 2024 to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of biodiversity and its links to climate change and the changes needed to ensure a just transition to a net zero and nature positive Scotland.
	• Increase public connection and action for nature through expanding the reach of the Make Space for Nature campaign and develop a national nature volunteer and citizen science frameworks by 2025.
	• Encourage more community ownership of local and national nature reserves and other land managed for nature by 2030 by promoting best practice and helping to build capacity.
	• Work with stakeholders to complete a review of opportunities for increasing community participation in safeguarding marine biodiversity by 2026. Secure resources and begin piloting new approaches by 2028.
	• Promote and interpret new evidence and understanding relating to climate change and its relevance to Scotland's marine biodiversity to ensure good understanding by the general public.
	• Promote Scotland's Geodiversity Charter and raise awareness of the role of geodiversity in the delivery of valuable geosystem services that serve the needs of biodiversity conservation and restoration by 2024.

Code	Embed biodiversity and nature in curriculum development
	• Progress delivery of the outdoor learning elements of the Learning for Sustainability Action Plan, including nature connectedness and learning, to meet Target 2030 so every 3 – 16 place of education becomes a Sustainable Learning Setting.
	• Explore opportunities to further develop Curriculum for Excellence nature-based resources, and prepare new material on nature and nature based solutions to be included in the new Learning for Sustainability portal by 2027.
	• Publish an Update to the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan by the end of 2023 to ensure it remains in line with our economic and climate ambitions.

Code	Mainstream and integrate biodiversity policy across government
	• Increase the effectiveness of mainstreaming biodiversity on land and at sea through: - The National Planning Framework - Agricultural Reform Programme

[21] **Landscape/Seascape codes:** We have indicated which outcome's logic model the action originated from, however, many actions will apply more widely.  (Woodlands);  (Coastal);  (Freshwater);  (Urban):  (Uplands and Peatlands);  (Soils);  (Agriculture);  (Marine);  (Overarching)

	- Climate Adaptation Programme - Land Reform Programme - Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation - Climate Change Plan - National Marine Plan 2 - Progress by 2026, the mainstreaming of biodiversity including through the review of the National Performance Framework.
	• Develop our understanding within government and more widely of the application of just transition principles in moving towards a nature positive blue economy alongside net zero commitments.
 	• Develop a decision-making framework within NMP2 that supports marine ecosystem recovery through appropriate management of other supported marine activities by 2026. • Develop policies and objectives within NMP2 that support the mitigation of and adaptation to the impacts of climate change by 2026.

Code [22]	Address unsustainable supply and demand to reduce biodiversity impacts
	• Ensure the range of actions to tackle biodiversity loss and deliver a circular economy (through the Circular Economy Bill and Circular Economy & Waste Route Map) are complementary and co-ordinated.
	• Support global and regional efforts to enable business to more effectively monitor and report on their national and global impacts on biodiversity.
	• Review the Biodiversity Duty Reporting system by 2024, with a view to aligning with climate change reporting including consideration of voluntary engagement by business sector.
	• Subject to final decisions on the Government's future legislative programmes, place specific requirements on public bodies and local government through Bills on Land Reform, Wellbeing and Sustainable Development, and the incorporation of the human right to a healthy environment in the Human Rights Bill to: - assess and act to reduce the impact of their decisions (including procurement) to achieve sustainable development goals, - act in an inclusive, public and transparent manner, and - build the human right to a healthy environment into decision making and in time, comply with the right, to ensure healthy ecosystems and biodiversity in Scotland.
	• Work in partnership with the fishing industry to deliver fishing practices that are consistent with receiving accreditation.
	• Develop a climate change audit / impact assessment approach for marine policy making to ensure the most recent evidence is taken into account by 2028.

[22] **Landscape/Seascape codes:** We have indicated which outcome's logic model the action originated from, however, many actions will apply more widely.  (Woodlands);  (Coastal);  (Freshwater);  (Urban):  (Uplands and Peatlands);  (Soils);  (Agriculture);  (Marine);  (Overarching)

Question 2p: Have we captured the key actions needed to deliver the objective: take action on the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:
……
……
……
……
……
…

Question 2q: Are the key actions, to support the objective: take action on the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, sufficient to put Scotland on track to ending the loss of biodiversity by 2030?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Please explain the reasons for your response:
……
……
……
……
……
…

Question 2r: Which actions do you think will have most impact?

Please state the actions and explain the reasons for your response:
……
……
……
……
……
…