

Land use strategy

Scotland's land provides us with a wealth of benefits, such as food, timber, clean water, energy, and a space for recreation. However, we still demand more. The Land Use Strategy addresses how we can sustainably manage our land to ensure we get the most from it.

Summary

Key messages

- Scotland's landscape is heavily shaped by the way our land is used and managed. From this, we get a wide range of benefits that contribute to the character and attractiveness of being in Scotland.
- Over centuries, land use has significantly influenced the production of food, wood, energy, recreation, a wide range of amenities, and the character of the landscape we have today.
- Scotland's [Land Use Strategy](#) provides a strategic vision that will allow us to realise the full potential of our land and use it in ways that result in multiple benefits.

Laid before Parliament in 2011, Scotland's first [Land Use Strategy](#) sets out how we can try to get the best from our land. It:

- provides a new Vision for land use.
- sets out three Objectives relating to the economy, environment and communities – the three pillars of sustainability.
- provides 10 Principles for Sustainable Land Use that will guide policy and decision-making.
- includes Proposals to help meet these objectives.
- includes 10 strategic indicators which measure the three objectives.
- builds on the Scottish Government's current activities.

State and trend

The strategy is being monitoring through 10 high-level indicators, they are being monitored annually and the most recent summary can be found at the [Land Use Strategy pages](#).

Overview

The term 'land use' covers all forms of land (and water) management. Farming, forestry, renewable energy, housing developments and recreation are just a few of the major land uses in Scotland. Practically every hectare of Scotland is used in at least one way, though a few of our remote coastal cliffs and mountain tops are free from such uses.

In other areas on the website we give details of the range of land uses, such as agriculture and forestry.

<http://www.environment.scotland.gov.uk/get-informed/people-and-the-environment/land-use-strategy/>

As a key commitment of Section 57 of the [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#) the Scottish Government committed to developing a land use strategy. The Strategy was laid before Parliament two years later, in March 2011. It emerged from a wide consensus that we are not getting the best from Scotland's land, even though we continue to demand more and more from it. Accordingly, the Strategy looks at the challenges facing land use. By recognising the benefits and implications of decisions we make about land use, and by focusing on common goals, the Strategy will provide a more integrated approach to land use.

Structure of the strategy

The Strategy sets this out its Vision as: 'A Scotland where we fully recognise, understand and value the importance of our land resources, and where our plans and decisions about land use deliver improved and enduring benefits, enhancing the wellbeing of our nation.'

Its three Objectives are to have:

- land-based businesses working with nature to contribute more to Scotland's prosperity;
- responsible stewardship of Scotland's natural resources, providing more benefits to Scotland's people;
- urban and rural communities better connected to the land, with more people enjoying the land and positively influencing land use.

The Strategy has 10 [Principles for Sustainable Land Use](#) to help guide decision-making and 13 [Proposals](#) for action.

The [Land Use Strategy Action Plan](#) provides details explaining how the Strategy will be taken forward by the Scottish Government and its partners. In May 2014 the Scottish Government published an [update on progress](#) in developing the Strategy.

Why do we need it?

Scotland's land provides us with a wealth of benefits, such as food, timber clean water, energy, employment, transport links and recreation opportunities.

Yet we demand more and more from the land – in terms of produce, recreational enjoyment, carbon storage, and a home for nature. So, we must try to find the best means of managing the land within its capabilities, while trying to get the most from it in a sustainable way.

Over much of Scotland there are strongly competing interests. In the uplands, for instance, neighbouring interests may favour using the land for sheep farming, grouse shooting, forestry, wind farms or leaving areas wild for nature. In some places all of these uses can be accommodated, but in others some may act against others. Here, the Strategy should guide decisions in an integrated way so that choices are well informed.

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Therefore, it helps us think more strategically about the potential of the land and the ways in which it can be better used. Clearly, there are opportunities for major land users to work together to develop the Strategy. Information on some of the key land-use sectors can be found at the following links:

- [agriculture](#);
- [planning](#);
- [Forestry Commission Scotland](#), which maintains three [public information registers](#);
- [energy consents](#);
- [Scotland Rural Development Programme](#), giving details of LEADER and Challenge Funds.

What is being done

The Proposals within the Land Use Strategy are being taken forward by Scottish Government and its partners. Plans and policies in future will follow the [Principles for Sustainable Land Use](#).

The Strategy identifies three significant changes in the way we approach how we use our land to help us meet the Objectives set out in the Land Use Strategy. These changes are:

- delivering multiple benefits from our land;
- working in partnership with nature;
- linking people to the land.

Work is underway to evaluate current land use delivery mechanisms, and to determine their effectiveness in turning the 10 Principles into practical decision-making.

Two ambitious regional [land use pilot projects](#) were established in 2013. One is in the north east and is led by [Aberdeenshire Council](#). The other is in the south of Scotland and is led by [Scottish Borders Council](#). These pilots are using an [ecosystems approach](#) to develop a framework to guide future decisions about land use.

Although the ecosystems approach has been discussed in ecological and environmental circles for decades, its formal integration into global government thinking came through the [Millennium Ecosystem Assessment](#) and, in the UK, through the [UK National Ecosystem Assessment](#) published in 2011.

The principles of the ecosystem approach are to:

- take account of how nature functions;
- take account of the services that the land provides;
- involve people in decision making.

A wide range of organisations throughout Scotland are involved in projects and initiatives that demonstrate the ecosystems approach and the benefits it can bring. Examples of these projects are:

- [Fountainbridge Canalside Initiative](#);

<http://www.environment.scotland.gov.uk/get-informed/people-and-the-environment/land-use-strategy/>

- [Grandhome Charette](#);
- [Loch Leven Heritage Trail](#);
- [Carse of Stirling Project](#);
- [iDee Project](#).

The Land Use Strategy will evolve over time to take account of changing circumstances. It will be reviewed every five years and the next strategy is due to be published by March 2016. During 2014 and 2015 the government will provide opportunities for you to give your views on the next Strategy. You can find all the documents associated with the Land Use Strategy on the Scottish Government's [Land Use Strategy](#) web page.