

Society

The environment is key to our health and well-being. We should maximise the benefits from our ecosystem and minimise the damage we do to it.





The environment provides a wide range of essential goods and services on which our health and well-being depend, including food, clean air and water. Our environment needs to be managed to maximise the provision of these ecosystem services while minimising any damage to them.

The environment around us affects our physical and mental health; there is increasing recognition of the importance of a good quality environment, and in particular access to green space.

An important factor in improving health and well-being is simply visiting the outdoors and Scotland provides us with many opportunities for outdoor recreation activities, from walking in a park to climbing mountains.

Everything that causes a change on the environment impacts on the goods and services it provides. The main environmental pressure on our health and well-being is pollution, ranging from particulate matter in the air to bacteria in bathing waters. In addition, a range of factors causing deprivation, including environmental factors, are also likely to impact health and quality of life.

[Click for explanation of diagram.](#)

Topic	Summary
<p data-bbox="188 533 483 566"><u>Benefits from nature</u></p>  <p data-bbox="188 689 770 790">Human well-being depends on a wide range of resources and processes that are supplied by natural ecosystems.</p>	<p data-bbox="802 533 1398 667">Through working together, natural resources provide fundamental 'ecosystem services' to people, many of which are vital for social, economic, physical and emotional well-being.</p> <p data-bbox="802 703 1382 904">Monetary values for ecosystem services are impossible to determine as some, such as providing oxygen to breathe, have infinite value, but those that can be valued are estimated to be worth between £21 and £23.5 billion per year to Scotland.</p> <p data-bbox="802 940 1353 1075">Taking account of ecosystem services in decision-making allows inter-relationships between different natural resources to be considered.</p> <p data-bbox="802 1111 1353 1245">More interdisciplinary work is required, particularly to understand how changes in stocks of natural resources impact on ecosystem services.</p>
<p data-bbox="188 1254 499 1288"><u>Health and well-being</u></p>  <p data-bbox="188 1406 754 1541">The relationship between environment and health is complex. Our surroundings are a key factor in our health and sense of well-being.</p>	<p data-bbox="802 1254 1382 1420">The health of Scotland's people has improved greatly over a few generations. Historically, the emphasis on improving health was to create environments free from infectious diseases and chemical hazards.</p> <p data-bbox="802 1456 1390 1756">Today, we are increasingly recognising the key role that the natural environment has to play in influencing the state of health and sense of well-being, along with lifestyle, social and genetic factors. These relationships are complex, but it is becoming more and more important to address the link between health and deprivation and how these are affected by the environment.</p>

Recreation and amenity

Assessment not made

Scotland's natural and historic environment provides opportunities for a wide range of outdoor recreation activities and attracts millions of visitors each year.

Scotland's natural and historic environment provides a fantastic backdrop for a wide range of outdoor recreation activities.

These can include simple pleasures, like walking the dog or visiting the park as well as activity-based pursuits like mountain biking, climbing and kayaking or visits to historic buildings and sites.

The environment also provides opportunities for environmental and heritage education and volunteering