



# Getting the best from our land

A guide to Scotland's first Land Use Strategy



natural  
scotland  
SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT



## What is the Land Use Strategy?


It is a strategic framework bringing together proposals for getting the best from Scotland's land resources. This is the beginning of a process which will change the way that we think and the ways that we work.

Published by the Scottish Government in March 2011, this is Scotland's first ever Land Use Strategy. It:

- sets out a new Vision to guide our thinking about the use of land and Objectives relating to the economy, environment and communities – the three pillars of sustainability
- provides a set of Principles for Sustainable Land Use to guide policy and decision making
- builds on the Government's current activities and includes further Proposals to help meet the Objectives.

You can access the Strategy and other resources here:

[www.scotland.gov.uk/landusestrategy](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/landusestrategy)



## 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. It is a key component of our national identity.

Yet we demand more and more from the land – produce, recreation, carbon storage, biodiversity. So we must optimise the ways in which we use the land and face up to the difficult choices that this involves if we are to continue to benefit from it.

The Land Use Strategy helps us think more strategically about the potential of our land and the ways in which land is used now and into the future. It sets the long-term directions we need to pursue to get the best from Scotland's land and contribute to a more prosperous and successful nation.

## How will it make a difference?

The Scottish Government and its partner bodies will take forward the Land Use Strategy's Proposals, publishing an action plan with more detail on delivery later in 2011. The Principles for Sustainable Land Use will be central to future review and revision of all our relevant plans and policies.

We expect the wider public sector to take a leading role in implementing the Strategy – by utilising the Principles for Sustainable Land Use in the ways that it manages its own land; develops and implements its plans and strategies; and promotes partnership working.

The Principles for Sustainable Land Use are also relevant for everyone else involved in land use in Scotland – and we strongly encourage them to consider the Principles in their actions and decisions, enabling us to build a common approach to get more from Scotland's land.

Achieving sustainable land use across Scotland relies on many individuals and bodies in the private, public and third sectors working together in partnership, and many are already playing their part. Meeting our Objectives will take time, but the following key shifts in our approach will result in the changes we want:

- Delivering multiple benefits
- Partnerships with nature
- Linking people with the land

The Strategy's approach will help us to get the best from our land. It will help land managers to increase and sustain their returns; communities to better understand and enjoy the land and its benefits; and the natural environment to thrive and adapt to a changing world.



## Our Vision

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.

## Our Objectives

- Land-based businesses working with nature to contribute more to Scotland's prosperity
- Responsible stewardship of Scotland's natural resources delivering 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

## Principles for Sustainable Land Use

We expect that these Principles will be used by public bodies when making plans and taking significant decisions affecting land use. We also encourage all others with an interest in the land to have regard to them.

- A.** Opportunities for land use to deliver multiple benefits should be encouraged.

---

- B.** Regulation should continue to protect essential public interests whilst placing as light a burden on businesses as is consistent with achieving its purpose. Incentives should be efficient and cost-effective.

---

- C.** Where land is highly suitable for a primary use (for example food production, flood management, water catchment management and carbon storage) this value should be recognised in decision-making.

---

- D.** Land use decisions should be informed by an understanding of the functioning of the ecosystems which they affect in order to maintain the benefits of the ecosystem services which they provide.

---

- E.** Landscape change should be managed positively and sympathetically, considering the implications of change at a scale appropriate to the landscape in question, given that all Scotland's landscapes are important to our sense of identity and to our individual and social wellbeing.

**F.** Land-use decisions should be informed by an understanding of the opportunities and threats brought about by the changing climate. Greenhouse gas emissions associated with land use should be reduced and land should continue to contribute to delivering climate change adaptation and mitigation objectives.

---

**G.** Where land has ceased to fulfil a useful function because it is derelict or vacant, this represents a significant loss of economic potential and amenity for the community concerned. It should be a priority to examine options for restoring all such land to economic, social or environmentally productive uses.

---

**H.** Outdoor recreation opportunities and public access to land should be encouraged, along with the provision of accessible green space close to where people live, given their importance for health and well-being.

---

**I.** People should have opportunities to contribute to debates and decisions about land use and management decisions which affect their lives and their future.

---

**J.** Opportunities to broaden our understanding of the links between land use and daily living should be encouraged.

## Our Proposals

These Proposals are in addition to existing Scottish Government policies and ongoing work, and will be taken forward by the Government, supported by its partners.

### The Scottish Government will:

- 1.** Publish an action plan following publication of the Strategy.

---

- 2.** Provide an annual progress statement on the Land Use Strategy.

---

- 3.** Align land-use regulations and incentives with Land Use Strategy Objectives.

---

- 4.** Further encourage land-based businesses to take actions that reduce land-based greenhouse gas emissions and that enable adaptation to climate change threats and opportunities.

---

- 5.** Use the Land Use Strategy Objectives to influence negotiations on Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform.

---

- 6.** Use demonstration projects to determine the best means by which land use and land management practice can contribute to climate change objectives.



- 7.** Identify more closely which types of land are best for tree planting in the context of other land-based objectives, and promote good practice and local processes in relation to tree planting so as to secure multiple benefits.

---

- 8.** Demonstrate how the ecosystem approach could be taken into account in relevant decisions made by public bodies to deliver wider benefits, and provide practical guidance.

---

- 9.** Develop a methodology to take account of changes in soil carbon for carbon accounting purposes; improve understanding of potential benefits from conservation and management of carbon-rich soils; and deliver measures to help secure long-term management of all land-based carbon stores.

---

- 10.** Investigate the relationship between land management changes and ecosystem processes to identify adaptation priorities.

---

- 11.** Develop the land-use aspects of our Climate Change Adaptation Framework to support communities as they adapt to change.

---

- 12.** Identify and publicise effective ways for communities to contribute to land-use debates and decision-making.

---

- 13.** Provide on its website a Land Use Information Hub.



## A few more details

The Land Use Strategy builds on our wide-ranging research work and stakeholder participation, and will be revised at least every five years.

It follows the provisions of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, by setting objectives that contribute to greenhouse-gas emission reduction targets, to climate change adaptation and to sustainable development. It also sets out policies and proposals for meeting those objectives and the timescales over which these are expected to take effect.

## The Strategy...

...sets a high-level, long-term agenda which takes a broad view of the wellbeing and future needs of Scotland's land and people

...does not set out to provide a blueprint for how individual fields, hills or plots of land should be used – but does highlight what needs to change in our policies and our behaviours to achieve our goals

...explains the Scottish Government's approach to enabling and sustaining the wide variety of benefits that people want from the land – reflecting the views of all stakeholders



**...provides a context for all decisions about land use, including those subject to the statutory planning system – in line with Scottish Planning Policy and the National Planning Framework**

**...provides a forum for dialogue and key reference point for anyone across Scotland interested in getting the best from our land**

## **What's happening next?**

The Scottish Government is working with its partners to implement the Land Use Strategy. Shortly after publication of the Strategy, an action plan will be published to take forward the Proposals in the Strategy. This action plan will be maintained in light of progress, stakeholder feedback and other developments. The Government will provide an annual progress statement on the Land Use Strategy.

## Where can I find out more?

Access the full Strategy and associated information and updates at:  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/landusestrategy](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/landusestrategy)

Or contact the team directly:

0131 244 7726

[landusestrategy@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:landusestrategy@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

Land Use Strategy Team  
The Scottish Government  
1D North  
Victoria Quay  
EDINBURGH



**The Scottish  
Government**

© Crown copyright 2011

ISBN: 978-0-7559-9882-1

This document is also available on the Scottish Government website:  
[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

APS Group Scotland  
DPPAS11425 (03/11)