

National Planning Framework for Scotland (NPF4) – Call for Ideas

Who are we?

The Scottish Landscape Alliance (SLA) is a grouping of over 60 organisations with a common interest in raising awareness of the importance of Scotland's landscapes to climate resilience and biodiversity, our economic performance and public health and wellbeing. In doing this, we want to gain public and political support for the better care of Scotland's landscape and places to maximise future benefits

Our Vision

Our vision is a Scotland where the benefits of landscape are recognised and strengthened to support delivery of Scotland's National Outcomes, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the principles of the European Landscape Convention.

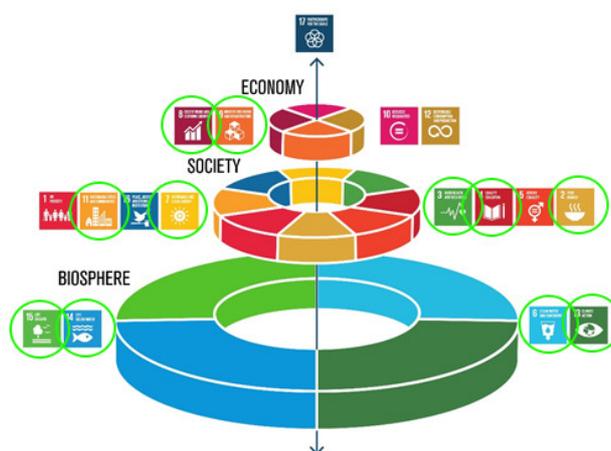
Contribution to the *Call for Ideas*

The SLA welcome the opportunity to contribute to the call for ideas on the new National Planning Framework and to outline what we consider to be the future priorities for the planning process as we emerge from the effects of the 2020 global pandemic. We believe it is essential that Scotland's landscape is seen as part of the critical infrastructure and solutions needed for our recovery and to support delivery of Scotland's National Outcomes. We have chosen to provide this high-level response with **17 key Recommendations** (pages 3-4) that also take on board the findings of Scotland's Landscape Alliance Working Groups on the importance of landscape to our health and wellbeing, as resilience to climate challenges and to our land use and economy.

Some of our comments go beyond planning policy to highlight the urgent need for a '**whole system approach**' to align policies, programmes, financing and control measures.

Introduction to high level comments

The Scottish Governments National Performance Framework is aligned to The United Nations' 17 Strategic Sustainable Development Goals.



credit: Azote Images for Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University

The *Wedding Cake* diagram demonstrates that the biosphere supports society and then the economy. Landscape and Natural Capital, highlighted, are fundamental to the founding base and key components to the delivery of a number of the UN goals and in consequence our National Performance Framework.

What is landscape?

Landscape is about the relationship between people and place. It provides the setting for our day-to-day lives and is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: our urban areas, countryside, coasts and waterways, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty, as well as everyday spaces. Landscapes are an essential component of people's surroundings, an expression of diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage and a foundation for their identity, now and in the future. Scotland's Landscape Alliance (SLA) April 2020

Benefits of Landscape and the Challenges Ahead

Scotland's landscapes provide the physical foundation for our lives and the places where we live, work, learn and play. Access to high quality landscapes influences our health, wellbeing and livelihoods. Landscape plays a vital role in tackling the global issues of climate change and biodiversity loss that are already having a major impact on all our lives. Scotland's landscape is essential to our nation's economic success both directly, in terms of the natural capital which underpins many industries, and indirectly through its impact on quality of life which attracts people to live, work in and visit Scotland.

We need to be alive to the changes that we face in the 21st century. There is a danger that responses to the climate emergency are not considered holistically and with consideration of potential impacts at a national scale. Carbon capture may result in monoculture of forestry without benefits of biodiversity. Large scale renewable energy development and storage needs planned and designed for strategically. Landscapes are capable of absorbing and adapting to change, but every place has its own carrying capacity and infrastructure development must be sensitive to that. There is a need for bespoke solutions that are genuinely place-based and approached at landscape-scale. Long term investment in our green infrastructure and stewardship of landscape at all scales needs to be considered to ensure liveable and healthy places protect our natural landscapes and support sustainable rural communities.

We are at a tipping point, where change is happening at such a scale and speed that it is hard to comprehend the potential and cumulative impacts, but we do know that some changes will be hard to reverse. We need early action to safeguard our landscape and through good design and stewardship maximise the benefits to society and nature now and for the future. Landscape scale design responses are required to tackle the global issues of climate change and biodiversity loss and address the challenges that Scotland faces.

For this to happen will require a major shift in the mindset of all organisations and people involved in matters that affect our landscape. This needs to permeate daily actions and support joined up decision making. Through the combined action of Scottish Government, stakeholders, landowners and communities we can ensure that Scotland's landscape is safeguarded and can play a full part in our recovery from current and any future biosecurity challenges through actions to deliver health and wellbeing, inclusive economic growth and climate resilience

High Level Comments

To incorporate SPP and all other policy and guidance (e.g. Creating Places and Designing Streets) into the NPF4 will give it a statutory function and therefore provide more weight. However, these policies cannot now be viewed in isolation as they interconnect with climate change, health and wellbeing, place, energy, housing and biodiversity.

NPF4 is an opportunity to radically alter the current format and siloed nature of the planning policy by reversing its structure and prioritising the role of landscape and new landscape-related policy in a top down approach in a **landscape and well-being economy: beauty + economy + tourism**. This would demonstrate commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, help deliver Scotland's National Outcomes and embed the principles of the European Landscape Convention.

Key Recommendations

High Level Advisory Role

1. **Landscape Advice:** Appoint an independent Chief Landscape Advisor to the Scottish Government and clearly identify responsibility for landscape within local authorities and planning.

National Standards, Indicators and Data

2. **Landscape Quality Standards:** Define appropriate quality standards and indicators to deliver positive health and wellbeing, environmental outcomes to address climate change action and biodiversity, and inclusive growth and reduced inequalities.
3. **National Indicators for landscape:** Develop and begin reporting on national indicators for landscape within the National Performance Framework.
4. **A statutory national plan and policy for *Landscape, Land Use and Infrastructure*:** Consider and design holistically at a strategic level for large scale change including National Developments to deliver on Scottish Government priorities for climate change, loss of biodiversity and health and wellbeing
5. **Landscape protection:** Develop a new statute based on best international practice (as for example developed by the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas) setting out a basis for protection based upon the benefits and co-benefits offered by landscapes towards other public goods.
6. **Landscape data:** Embed landscape thinking in the revision and digital transformation of Scotland's planning system, including the collection and inclusion of landscape data.
7. **Degraded landscape:** Define and map degraded landscape (urban, rural and coastal) and agree with landowners and communities the actions needed to revitalise them.

Decision-making

8. **Statutory Duties:** Embed the proper design, management and effective use of all landscapes (rural and urban) into the statutory climate change, biodiversity, health and economic duties of all public sector bodies.
9. **Accounting:** Expand the use of Natural Capital Accounting to inform asset management and investment decisions around infrastructure and development.
10. **Multifunctionality:** Develop appropriate place /landscape-based policies, controls, incentives and support schemes to drive the delivery of a multifunctional approach to landscape by landowners and/or developers to meet climate change, biodiversity net gain, health and wellbeing, net zero carbon and housing targets and help resolve land use conflicts.

11. **Existing Standards:** Reinforce Scotland's leading use of Landscape Character Assessment and including the Place Principle and the Place Standard. Extend landscape and place as a tool in NPF4 in wider land use planning and decision making as a means of getting better solutions and minimising land use conflicts.
12. **Good Practice:** Promote and support programmes that recognise, accredit and reward good practice in respect of design, delivery, management and use of quality landscape.

Funding Mechanisms

13. **Landscape Green Deal:** Develop a new Landscape Green Deal funding mechanism to support action by public/private/community landscape partnerships (for example to reinvigorate degraded land, deliver landscape scale action, promote cultural landscapes, address tourism landscape hotspots).
14. **Rural Development:** Include funding mechanisms in a new Scottish Rural Development Programme that aim to deliver landscape quality outcomes, and increase partnership working and community-led innovation in relation to agricultural landscape.
15. **Revenue funding:** Establish and utilise revenue budgets to properly resource the management of public landscape assets to address environmental challenges, deliver health and wellbeing services and resources to the community and individuals, and contribute to equitable inclusive growth.

People

16. **Communities:** Ensure that decisions affecting local landscapes are taken collaboratively with local communities given an equal voice and influence. Address landscape benefits explicitly in any decision-making processes involving local communities..
17. **Invest in staff:** Invest in staff training to support better decision-making about landscape outcomes, and equitable pay and conditions to help retain committed land-based workers, rangers and community facilitators who manage and connect communities with landscape.