



National Developments – Response Form

Please use the table below to let us know about projects you think may be suitable for national development status. You can also tell us your views on the existing national developments in National Planning Framework 3, referencing their name and number, and providing reasons as to why they should maintain their status. Please use a separate table for each project or development. **Please fill in a [Respondent Information Form](#) and return it with this form to scotplan@gov.scot.**

Name of proposed national development	Scottish Nature Network
Brief description of proposed national development	<p>A spatial network of natural assets that would guide and inform long-term investment in Scotland’s green infrastructure. Helping to align and coordinate the achievement of shared objectives across planning and land use sectors particularly in terms of taking action on the climate and nature crises at local, regional and national scales.</p> <p>The network identifies existing good quality natural habitat and the locations where opportunity exists to improve connectivity between these habitats by restoring and expanding its extent. The objective is to achieve a strategic network of natural and/or semi-natural habitats that help to protect, enhance and restore nature, which in turn provide multiple benefits for people and climate. The network would offer focus on the nature-based land use changes that are required to reverse biodiversity loss and maximise the ecosystem services that benefit urban and rural communities. Directing investment toward the likes of woodland creation, peatland restoration, natural flood risk alleviation, urban green spaces and other nature based solutions.</p>
Location of proposed national development (information in a GIS format is welcome if available)	The Scottish Nature Network would operate at national, regional and local scales. Spatial datasets of natural and semi-natural habitats will exist already (e.g. existing protected area network, National Parks, ecological coherence project EcoCo Life linked to the Central Scotland Green Network), however additional mapping

	<p>and assessments are likely to be required to better understand available opportunities and priorities across Scotland.</p>
<p>What part or parts of the development requires planning permission or other consent?</p>	<p>Existing parts of the network which are in place do not need any permissions. Some types of habitat creation or improvement would not need planning permission. Planning permission and other consents (such as those from SEPA) will be required depending on the scope of individual projects contributing toward the network. Some areas may be linked to existing planning permissions which are contributing to the network as a condition of consent. The infrastructure levy could be used to enhance strategic sections of the network in addition to investments from a biodiversity net-gain framework.</p>
<p>When would the development be complete or operational?</p>	<p>The network can be initiated immediately through adoption in NPF4. The 'live' mapped outputs could be established within 2 years to inform the development plan, including Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Plans. The management of Scotland's natural environment is a long-term commitment and milestones would need to be set to ensure the coherent ecological network is achieved and maintained up to and beyond the life of NPF4 (10 years).</p>
<p>Is the development already formally recognised – for example identified in a development plan, has planning permission, in receipt of funding etc.</p>	<p>The 'national ecological network' features as a key action in Scotland's' current National Planning Framework 3 (see action 18.)</p> <p>In Scottish Planning Policy, reference is made to the aims of NPF3 to significantly enhance green infrastructure networks and the need for planning to '<i>protect, enhance and promote green infrastructure, including open space and green networks, as an integral component of successful placemaking.</i>' Whilst only a component part of the Nature Network, the intent of these green infrastructure policy principles complement the achievement of a national Nature Network.</p> <p>A high level outcome of the NPF4 is to achieve positive effects for biodiversity. An outcome that the Nature Network directly supports the delivery of.</p> <p>The Infrastructure Commission for Scotland identified the need to incorporate green infrastructure into the country's investment plans.</p>

Specifically recommending a systems wide Scottish Infrastructure Needs Assessment that covers all relevant sectors and which should include natural infrastructure. A national nature network provides the framework needed to support such an assessment as well as identifying and allocating investment toward projects that deliver the greatest outcomes for nature, climate and society.

Contribution of proposed national development to the national development criteria (maximum 500 words):

NPF4 is an opportunity to radically accelerate our efforts to restore nature and contribute to Scotland's efforts to combat climate change, whilst also supporting vibrant and sustainable communities. Adoption of the Scottish Nature Network as a national development within NPF4 is readily achievable and would represent a shift in approach that is urgently needed and which can help deliver the following, as set out in the National Development Assessment Criteria:

- **Climate Change:** restored and healthy ecosystems are more resilient to climate impacts and can perform critical nature-based solutions through processes such as carbon sequestration, flood alleviation, protection of water quality and cooling and shading in urban environments. Nature networks create space for species to move and adapt to a changing climate.
- **People:** ecological networks extend from rural to urban environments, many habitats can offer opportunities for people to access, commute through, exercise in and experience nature. Accessibility to nature can bring benefits for mental and physical health, encouraging people to be more active and allowing greater connection with wildlife. This could contribute significantly to individual wellbeing which benefits communities, improving the quality of life for all sections of society. Benefits such as increased resilience to extreme flood events, natural water filtration and management and cleaner air.
- **Inclusive Growth:** A Nature Network provides opportunities to channel investment toward habitat creation, restoration and land management projects. Such projects will arise across multiple habitat and landscape types and across Scotland's full extent, in urban, rural and remote locations. Such projects require a variety of skilled personnel to be delivered, with a large proportion needing to work on or near locations that would support rural development. Furthermore, Scotland's Infrastructure Commission has highlighted the need to include green infrastructure within Scottish Government's forthcoming Infrastructure Investment Plan. Investing in projects as far ranging as woodland creation, peatland restoration or enhancing riverine habitats in urban environments, presents sustainable economic opportunities that require a strategic approach which can be offered by the Network. Opportunities that could also be brought forward by delivery of a biodiversity net gain requirement for development within Scotland.

- **Place:** Scotland's nature, which ranges from Machair habitats to mountains, coastlines to Caledonian pinewood, inner city canals to community woodlands, plays a huge role in making Scotland such an incredibly special place. The strategic approach that the Network offers to managing our natural habitats and species could deliver a step change in the fortunes of our biodiversity and bring about a much-needed recovery. Such an outcome is supported by the vision of the Environment Strategy for Scotland where it is acknowledged that a resilient and abundant natural environment can offer life-supporting benefits that society relies upon, including for food, clean water, a stable climate and high-quality places to live. A Nature Network would contribute to the quality of places, making them more distinctive and attractive.

Globally, the largest negative impact on terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems in the last 50 years has been land-use change. This is caused by, but not restricted to, built infrastructure, urbanisation, agriculture, forestry and mineral extraction.¹ Across Europe, the last decade has seen a continuing decline in biodiversity. Unfortunately, this has been recorded in Scotland, with 49% of species experiencing a decrease in abundance with more species having decreased in distribution (33%) than increased (20%) since 1970². This loss of nature affects the functioning and overall health of plant, animals and habitats and the ability for them to provide the services upon which we rely. These losses are impacted further by the effects of climate change. In contrast, the benefits of a healthy natural environment are fully acknowledged in [The Environment Strategy for Scotland](#). These include the contribution a restored and resilient natural environment makes to Scottish Governments National Outcomes and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which reflect the four national development assessment criteria.

¹ IPBES (2019): Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. S. Díaz, J. Settele, E. S. Brondízio E.S., H. T. Ngo, M. Guèze, J. Agard, A. Arneth, P. Balvanera, K. A. Brauman, S. H. M. Butchart, K. M. A. Chan, L. A. Garibaldi, K. Ichii, J. Liu, S. M. Subramanian, G. F. Midgley, P. Miloslavich, Z. Molnár, D. Obura, A. Pfaff, S. Polasky, A. Purvis, J. Razzaque, B. Reyers, R. Roy Chowdhury, Y. J. Shin, I. J. Visseren-Hamakers, K. J. Willis, and C. N. Zayas (eds.). IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany. 56 pages. 2 Hayhow DB, Eaton MA, Stanbury AJ, Burns F, Kirby WB, Bailey N, Beckmann B, Bedford J, Boersch-Supan PH, Coomber F, Dennis EB, Dolman SJ, Dunn E, Hall J, Harrower C, Hatfield JH, Hawley J, Haysom K, Hughes J, Johns DG, Mathews F, McQuatters-Gollop A, Noble DG, Outhwaite CL, Pearce-Higgins JW, Pescott OL, Powney GD and Symes N (2019) The State of Nature 2019. The State of Nature partnership

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