

North east transition

Innovate Revitalise **Transition** Transform Sustain

This area broadly includes Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire with links through Moray towards Inverness, and south towards the Tay estuary.

The north east is a centre for the skills and expertise we will need to meet our climate change commitments. This area will evolve, through a just transition, to move industry and business away from the oil and gas sector towards a cleaner, greener future. We can build on the area's experience to find innovative solutions to climate change.

Emissions generated from this area arise mainly from transport, industrial and commercial activity and domestic properties, with land use and forestry providing carbon sequestration. Car ownership is particularly high in Aberdeenshire. Significant parts of the coast will be vulnerable to future climate impacts.

This area is amongst the most prosperous parts of Scotland, but has experienced significant economic challenges in recent years and has pockets of deprivation. The area comprises a mix of rural and urban communities, with the city of Aberdeen and a surrounding network of towns including Elgin, Huntly, Fraserburgh, Peterhead, Ellon, Inverurie and Stonehaven, and significant rural areas including more accessible countryside around Aberdeen city. Whilst parts of the area have experienced population decline, several settlements around Aberdeen have grown.

Affordability and choice of homes remains a challenge, contributing to a housing driven disadvantage within Aberdeen. Projections show that the population of retired people living in Aberdeenshire could grow by around 43% by 2043. There are lower levels of educational attainment and limited access to services for communities along the Aberdeenshire and Moray coast. Many of these places will benefit from further regeneration that builds on their identity and natural assets.

The excellent quality of the built environment, natural assets and cultural heritage already contribute to health and wellbeing in the area and can form the basis of a transition to net zero. Some of our highest quality agricultural land is concentrated here, and the economy benefits from a strong fishing industry, alongside its globally significant energy sector. The dominance of these sectors, together with wider changes including from the pandemic, EU Exit and global markets, means that economic diversification and repurposing of buildings and infrastructure are likely to be key priorities.

In this area we will:

- transition to net zero;
- improve local liveability;
- regenerate coastal communities; and
- decarbonise connectivity.



North east transition

Legend

-  Strategic maritime routes
-  Strategic connection
-  Blue economy
-  Transmission infrastructure

Liveable places

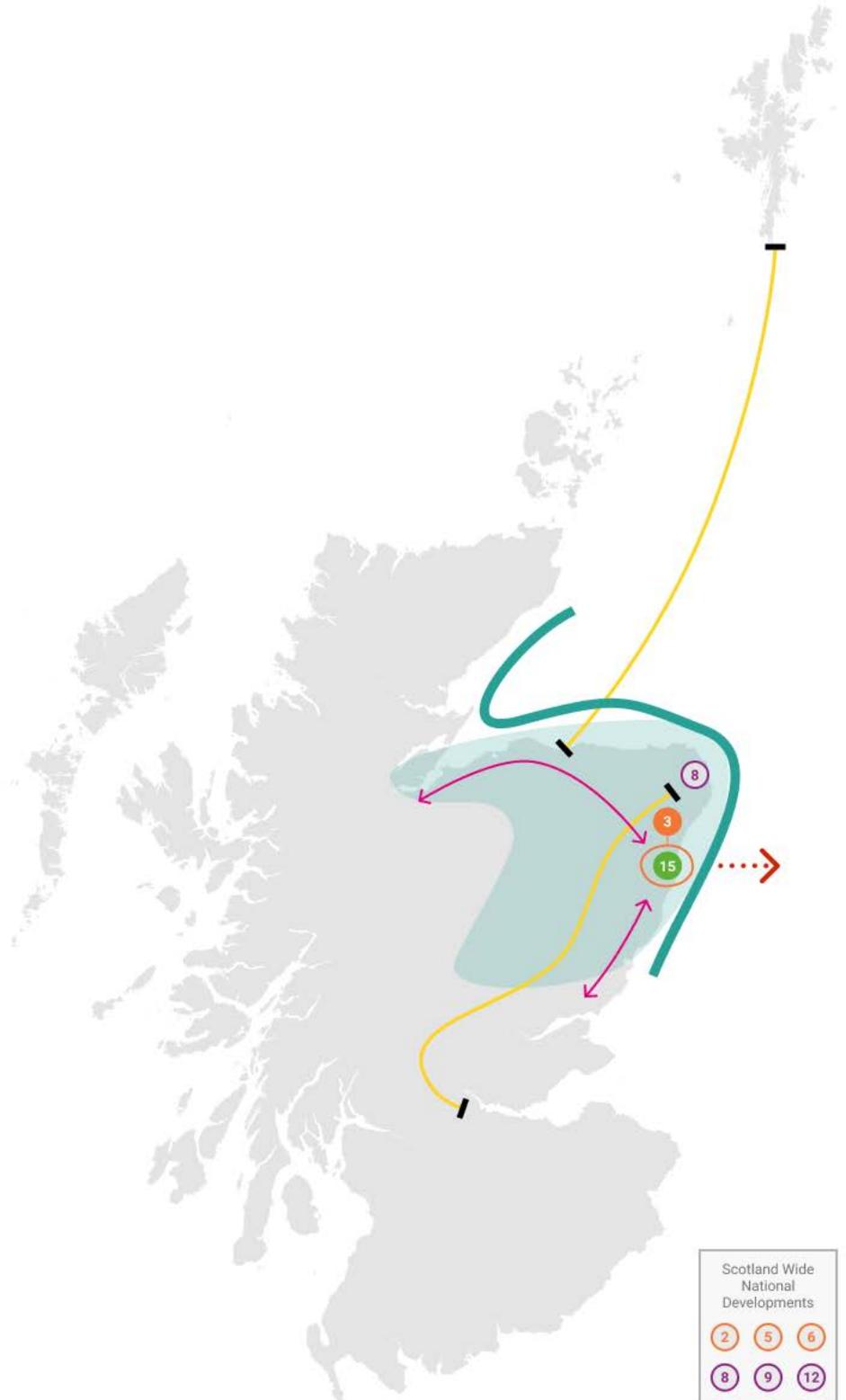
-  National Walking, Cycling and Wheeling Network
-  Urban Mass / Rapid Transit Networks
Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow
-  Circular Economy Material Management Facilities
-  Digital Fibre Network

Productive places

-  Industrial Green Transition Zones
-  Pumped Hydro Storage
-  Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure

Distinctive places

-  Aberdeen Harbour



Scotland Wide National Developments		
		
		

Actions

9. Transition to net zero

Action is required to tackle industrial emissions and transition towards a greener future that benefits existing communities and attracts further investment. Rich in natural assets, this area, along with the wider Moray and Cromarty Firths, has built on its oil and gas experience to pioneer new technologies. This makes it a uniquely investable proposition that could benefit Scotland as a whole.

Greener energy choices, including hydrogen and offshore renewables, have a natural home here and will be at the heart of the area's future wellbeing economy. Investment opportunities focus on the green and blue economy and energy innovation. Significant infrastructure will be required to deliver a hydrogen network for Scotland, including repurposing of existing facilities and the creation of new capacity. £62 million in the Energy Transition Fund is supporting four projects to protect existing jobs and create new jobs in the North East, and across Scotland, by opening up opportunities through energy transition and harnessing private sector funding. This funding aligns with the Aberdeen City Region Deal and continuing support for retraining and skills development. Ports and harbours throughout the area are key assets in the blue economy. As offshore renewables are an important part of Scotland's energy transition, there will be a need to align terrestrial and marine development so as to maximise the potential of this sector.

The relocation of some activity at Aberdeen Harbour to the south harbour has been an important element in planning for the future. Further investment will help to realise its full potential as a low-carbon hub and gateway. This is also a significant opportunity to improve urban liveability by unlocking waterfront sites for mixed use development close to the city centre. Local people will need to be involved in deciding how potentially significant industrial and business activity can be accommodated alongside regenerating a vibrant, redesigned city centre in the coming years.

It is essential that environmental impacts arising from relocation of the harbour and new construction are carefully managed in a way that recognises the location's natural assets and sensitivities. We expect the local development plan and development management decisions, informed by the required impact assessments, to play a crucial role in guiding future development and mitigating any environmental effects to an acceptable level.

10. Improve local liveability

A new focus on local living could help to address the high levels of car ownership and respond to the area's dispersed settlement pattern. Growth corridors extending from the city to Peterhead, Huntly and Laurencekirk will be a focus for future development, and strategic sites include new communities at Chapelton, Grandhome and Countesswells. There is significant potential to promote more compact growth by making better use of brownfield sites and increasing density.

There will be benefits for people of all ages arising from an increase in local living and a shift towards 20 minute neighbourhoods. The area's towns contribute to its sense of place and further town centre regeneration will help communities to adapt to current challenges and future change. Service provision also needs to reflect the area's character. Several new or extended primary and secondary schools and community facilities are planned and the area will support wider rural communities by hosting a new centre of excellence for rural and remote medicine and social care. Access to good-quality open space and opportunities for local food growing, including allotments and community orchards, can benefit health and wellbeing and tackle inequalities as an integral part of placemaking.

The area's growth strategy includes a commitment to building with nature by creating multifunctional blue and green networks and improving green spaces in and around settlements, connecting with the national long-distance cycling and walking network and facilitating active travel. Community-led climate action projects will help to provide locally-driven solutions. A new water supply and waste-water systems will play an important role in building long-term resilience.

11. Regenerate coastal communities

The area benefits from a productive coastline that will be a focus for future economic activity and investment associated with offshore renewable energy and the blue economy. The coast is home to communities who will benefit from continued regeneration and a move towards 20 minute neighbourhoods that reduces the need to travel. Key regional priorities include the regeneration of Banff, Macduff, Fraserburgh and Peterhead. Future coastal vulnerability to erosion, sea level rise and flood risk will need to be factored into development strategies. The fishing industry will continue to contribute to the area's strong sense of place and shared heritage, communities and economy, with some ports and harbours also having opportunities in the cruise and marine leisure sectors.

12. Decarbonise connectivity

Aberdeen is a key transport hub providing vital connections internationally, as well as lifeline services to Orkney and Shetland. Congestion will be reduced as a result of the construction of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route, and the A92/A96 Haudagain Improvement project. In the city work is ongoing to lock in the benefits and prioritise sustainable transport, including Aberdeen Rapid Transit. More widely the Aberdeen to Central Belt Rail Improvements will bring benefits to both passengers and freight.

The area can lead the way in promoting low emissions vehicles, active travel and public transport connectivity as part of its contribution to net zero. Links south to the central belt and west towards Inverness remain vital. Work is progressing on the £200m investment being made to improve journey times and capacity between Aberdeen and the Central Belt for passengers and freight. Continuing improvements to digital connectivity and active travel will reduce the need to travel by unsustainable modes and facilitate further remote, home or hub-based working.

Q12: Do you agree with this summary of challenges and opportunities for this action area?

Q13: What are your views on these strategic actions for this action area?