

## **NATURAL PLACES**

Draft NPF 4 supports the protection and restoration of our natural places, and the management of our natural assets in a sustainable, regenerative way so that they can continue to provide the essential benefits and services upon which we all rely. The planning system should make best use of nature-based solutions and support our national commitment to reverse biodiversity loss.

### **Local Development Plans should:**

- identify and protect valued natural assets, landscapes, species and habitats.

### **Development proposals:**

- that would have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment, including biodiversity objectives should not be supported.
- likely to have an unacceptable impact on an existing or proposed European site which is not connected with conservation management must be subject to an appropriate assessment of their implications for the conservation objectives of the site.
- that will affect a National Park, National Scenic Area, Site of Special Scientific Interest or a National Nature Reserve should only be supported where the objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the area will not be compromised; or any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance.
- likely to have an adverse effect on a protected species should not be supported unless it meets the relevant statutory tests. If there is evidence to suggest that a protected species is present on a development site or might be affected by the development steps must be taken to establish its presence.
- developers should take into account legislation on non-native species where non-native species are present on a site, or where planting is planned as part of a development.
- that affect a Local Nature Conservation Site or a Local Landscape Area should only be supported where development will not have a significant adverse impact on the integrity of the site, or if any adverse impact is clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of local importance.
- for areas identified as wild land (per Nature Scot Wild Land Areas map 2014) proposals should only be supported where:
  - the development cannot be reasonably located outside the wild land area;

- it is for small scale development directly linked to a rural business or croft, or required to support a fragile population in a rural area; and
- an assessment of the impact on the area is undertaken which informs the siting and design of the development and any mitigation which can be included to minimise adverse impacts.

## **Responses to the Position Statement**

There was support for strengthening the approach to protecting and restoring the natural environment including an increased focus on biodiversity. In addition to protecting existing habitats, it was suggested NPF4 should also incorporate policies that make nature recovery a consideration in every planning decision. There was also calls for wider recognition of landscape and mixed views on wild land policy, from increasing protection for wild land areas, to allowing development in some circumstances. Some commented on the importance of sustainable rural development, and the need for a balance between supporting development for rural communities and the protection of our rural areas.

## **Policy changes**

NPF3 and SPP sought to protect, enhance and promote access to our key environmental resources whilst supporting their sustainable use.. Draft NPF4 builds on this approach of protecting our places, supporting nature recovery and restoration, balanced with sustainable rural development and supporting targets for Net Zero.