

Scottish Natural Heritage Corporate Strategy 2008–2013



Foreword

Andrew Thin, Chairman
Scottish Natural Heritage



Most Scots agree that our wildlife and scenery are among this country's greatest assets. It is in the interest of everyone that this remarkable inheritance is properly cared for, which is why SNH – as a public service organisation – exists. Our work is paid for by the tax payer, and it is delivered by some of the most highly motivated public servants that I have ever met. It is essential that we think very carefully indeed about how to make best use of this combination of resources.

This document is the product of a great deal of hard thought and angst. There are so many things that SNH could be doing that would help to make this country a better place. Nature impacts on all our lives, and indeed it is because of the quality of Scotland's natural environment that so many of us choose to live here at all. It is not easy to prioritise, and vital that we are clear about the basis on which we have done so. We believe that our natural heritage is of huge economic and social importance to Scotland, and that it is central to our future as a vibrant and sustainable country. In fulfilling our statutory duty to look after these assets on behalf of the Scottish people, we therefore seek to do so in a manner that will secure the widest possible range of benefits for as many people as is practicable.

That means, of course, that some will find our strategy challenging. It is focussed not on the natural heritage per se but on the benefits that we seek to secure for the Scottish people from it. Nobody should be in any doubt, however, about the value that we attach to the extraordinary natural assets with which Scotland is so well endowed. We will do everything that we can to ensure the immortality of this golden goose, and we will strive in every way possible to bring it to even more productive health.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Andrew Thin". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Introduction

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) is a non-departmental public body, responsible through Ministers to the Scottish Parliament. We are funded by Government and our Board members are appointed by Scottish Ministers.

SNH's remit comes from the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act 1991. Our purposes are to promote the care and improvement, responsible enjoyment, greater understanding and appreciation, and sustainable use of the natural heritage, now and for future generations. Scotland's natural heritage is its wildlife, habitats, landscapes and natural beauty and includes the rocks, soils, landforms and water on which these are based.

Our mission is to promote 'All of nature for all of Scotland'.

SNH works by:

championing the natural heritage and its contribution to the social and economic well-being of Scotland's people;

undertaking research and review to understand the natural heritage and how it can best be managed;

advising others about how to look after the natural heritage;

regulating some of the activities that can affect special sites and protected species;

funding the activities of land managers, communities and voluntary bodies to help people enjoy and enhance the natural heritage; and

informing and explaining to others about the natural heritage, how it works and how it is changing.

As a government-funded organisation we strive to deliver the best possible value for taxpayers in everything that we do. We focus our resources on a range of priorities that evolve as circumstances change. This corporate strategy sets out our strategic priorities over the next five years, and reflects the wider public policy agenda within which we operate.

It is intended to:

state our aspirations for the natural heritage and how it can benefit people;

guide our work and explain our priorities;

inspire our staff;

inform and engage others in delivering shared outcomes for Scotland; and

form the basis for our business planning.





The Context for this Strategy

This strategy takes as its starting point the importance of the natural heritage, as one of Scotland's greatest assets. It is part of what makes Scotland special, and we believe it is of central importance to our success as a nation.

For a country of its size, Scotland has a huge diversity of landscapes, habitats and wildlife. Underwater sealife, wintering flocks of ducks, geese and waders, and the mosses of our west coast woodlands, are all examples of things regarded as important internationally. Scotland is also renowned for its attractive scenery and wild places – mountains and lochs, islands, rivers and coasts, woods and fields – with these landscapes in turn associated with well-known wildlife and habitats like wild salmon, eagles, deer and pinewoods.

Scotland's natural heritage has shaped our history and culture

Scotland's natural heritage has shaped, and been shaped by, our history and culture. It reflects our ways of living, past and present – the peat-cuttings of the bogs and the machair of the Hebrides, the patchwork of grouse moors and the rolling sheepwalks of the Borders, the deer forests of the Highlands, the Argyll oakwoods formerly managed for charcoal, the chequered cropland of the lowland carse, and the parks and gardens of our towns and cities. It is the ongoing product of a living landscape – while it is rich and diverse, there is little that is not affected to some degree by past or present management of the land.

The natural heritage is an enormous asset for Scotland's people

Many people are attracted to places where they can enjoy being outdoors, away from the stresses of modern life, experience nature close at hand or take part in active pursuits. Others, including visitors to Scotland, value the diverse and scenic landscapes for which Scotland is renowned. These attractions add greatly to the quality of life in Scotland, and give Scotland an innate competitive advantage by helping to attract and retain a skilled workforce. They are key resources for many living in rural areas who are directly dependent on the natural environment for their livelihood, whether through forestry, fisheries, food production, country sports, or energy. They also provide the basis for one of Scotland's largest industries – tourism.

In 2007, in its economic strategy, the Scottish Government established a new overarching purpose, to focus the Government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth. Sustainable economic growth means building a dynamic and growing economy and at the same time ensuring that future generations can enjoy a better quality of life. This overall purpose will be delivered through the Government's five strategic objectives which together map out the direction of a successful, sustainable Scotland: Healthier; Wealthier and Fairer; Smarter; Safer and Stronger; and Greener. Government recognises that economic growth objectives must be balanced against social, regional and inter-generational equity objectives, that they must embrace major reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and that enhancing Scotland's natural heritage for the benefit of future generations is an integral component. In this Corporate Strategy, we outline how SNH's priorities will contribute to all five of these objectives and to the national outcomes which the Government has set to support them.

Scotland is undergoing a period of change

Climate change is set to result in major changes by mid-century, through warmer winters, increased severity of storms and increased risk of river and coastal flooding. There has been substantial economic growth – though the long-term rate is below that of the UK average – accompanied by repopulation of parts of the Highlands, facilitated by improved transport networks and information technology. Urban areas affected by past heavy industry are being regenerated. Communities have a growing stake in the management of the environment around them, including through increased ability to acquire and manage land and other assets. More people are participating in outdoor recreation and there is increased concern about the environment. New agricultural support systems and world markets are changing the way land is used, one example being recent declines in sheep

numbers in the hills. These changes bring about both opportunities for and risks to the natural heritage. Continuing development expansion requires careful planning if it is not to lead to pressures on landscapes and fragmentation of habitats. SNH's role is not to resist such change but to help in guiding it in a way which helps to create high quality environments and build environmental capital.

SNH monitors trends and changes in the natural heritage and the use made of it. Indicators relevant to each of our proposed strategy priorities are reported in the Environmental Report which accompanies the Strategy. Some of these trends show recent improvements in response to positive management, such as the number of farmland birds and the condition of special sites. Others show the effects of increasing development pressures on landscapes and habitats. Others, like a decline in seabirds breeding on our coasts, are not yet fully understood but in part may relate indirectly to climate change.

SNH has articulated a vision for the natural heritage for the year 2025 within our Natural Heritage Futures prospectuses. These present our view of how the natural heritage can contribute to sustainable development in practice¹. They reflect the two founding principles upon which the Scottish sustainable development strategy 'Choosing our Future' is based – 'living within environmental limits' and 'ensuring a strong, healthy and just society'. To move towards that vision will require action by a wide range of organisations and individuals. This Corporate Strategy sets out what we intend to do towards meeting that vision. It will be delivered through our Corporate Plan which includes shorter-term priorities and measures of success.

Our priorities

Our five strategic priorities are described in the following sections. For each, we include a set of 'actions' to indicate how we intend that priority will be carried forward.

1 Caring for nature

Considers how, in the context of a growing economy, with increased pressure for development and repopulation of rural areas, wildlife and habitats can flourish – and in some places be restored – and how people can become more engaged in delivering that aim.

2 Responding to climate change

Considers how SNH can help in lessening the effects of climate change, how we can help wildlife to adjust as temperature and rainfall changes, and the role which the natural heritage can play as society adapts to climate change, for example in flood management.

3 Delivering health and well-being

Focuses on how the natural heritage can add to the quality of life, through landscapes which contribute to our sense of place and cultural identity, and by enabling people to enjoy the outdoors, including having access to well-managed paths and green space close to where they live. It also considers how the natural heritage can help in improving health, by providing better local environments and opportunities for more active lifestyles.

4 Supporting the Scottish economy

Addresses how we can contribute to sustainable economic growth, by making the most of the natural assets that Scotland has to offer, so as to attract people to live and work here, and to support industries which depend on a high quality natural environment, like food and tourism.

5 Delivering a high quality public service

Outlines how we will continue to provide a public service which is efficient, effective, responsive and green, participating in a single delivery service with other rural and environmental public bodies (SEARS²), and sharing office infrastructure where appropriate. It also indicates how we will contribute to the new relationship being established between Scottish Government and local authorities.

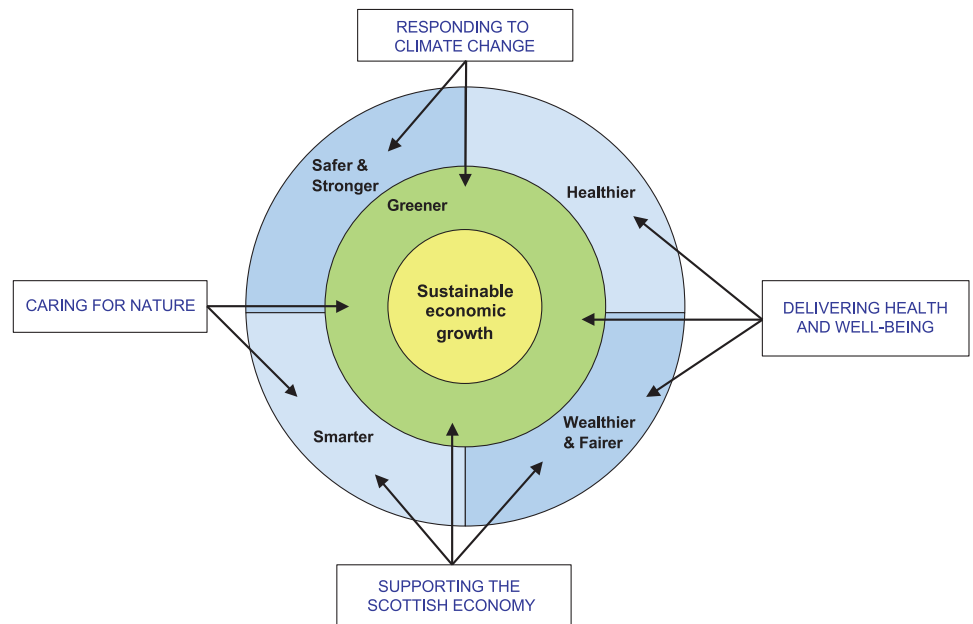


¹ There are six national prospectuses covering respectively forests and woodlands, hills and moors, coasts and seas, settlements, farmland and fresh waters, plus twenty-one local prospectuses each covering a distinctive region of Scotland. See: snh.org.uk/futures/Data/index.htm

² Scotland's Environmental and Rural Services

The following diagram identifies the main connections between the first four of these key priorities and the five strategic objectives and overarching purpose of Scottish Government. The fifth of our key priorities describes our overall approach. As might be expected, all of our priorities will contribute to the 'Greener' objective, but they will also contribute in various degrees to each of the other strategic objectives.

Principal contributions of this Strategy to Government's purpose and five strategic objectives



Safer and Stronger

SNH helps people to take a pride in and get involved in improving their local environment and make good use of it in developing resilience to climate change

Healthier

SNH encourages people to actively enjoy the outdoors improving physical activity and mental well-being

Greener

All of SNH's work seeks to improve Scotland's natural environment – wildlife, habitats and landscapes – and its sustainable use and enjoyment

Wealthier and Fairer

SNH's advice helps to sustain the natural resources and high quality environment on which our economy depends

Smarter

SNH makes information available and promotes outdoor learning to build self-confidence and enable communities and organisations to understand and care for their natural environment

These five strategic objectives of Scottish Government are supported by 15 National Outcomes which describe what Government wants to achieve over the next ten years. Our work is relevant to most (though not all) of these. In each of the following sections, we list the National Outcomes which our priorities will help achieve, and the National Targets and Indicators through which Government will track progress towards these outcomes.

CARING FOR NATURE



Caring for nature

Enhancing Scotland's biodiversity and re-kindling the relationship between people and the natural world

1

In common with most developed countries, Scotland has been losing biodiversity for many years, for reasons which include pressures for development, more intensive agriculture and commercial afforestation. All European countries have committed to ending this attrition. An ambition within 'Choosing our Future' is that Scotland should be a world leader in biodiversity conservation by 2030.

This ambition will only be achieved with the support of a wide range of organisations and by capturing the engagement and interest of people. The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy sets out how these aims can be achieved. SNH will work closely with the Scottish Biodiversity Forum in evolving that strategy and implementing it. A key component is securing local action in support of biodiversity enhancement, through local authorities, community and voluntary groups, and businesses. We will also help address threats to biodiversity from wildlife crime, and from invasive species which, by accident or design, people have introduced to an area from elsewhere. More generally we want people to appreciate the value of the natural world, understand the effects they have on it, and recognise how acting responsibly benefits both people and nature.

An important part of this effort is to ensure that specially protected sites (including both Natura sites which are of European importance, and Sites of Special Scientific Interest which are of national interest) are well managed so as to protect their features of interest. We will guide the special funding which will be available to land managers under the Scottish Rural Development Programme where special management is required. We will also follow up the provisions of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 by reviewing the list of operations requiring consent, making these simpler for managers of these sites to understand and act upon.

However, habitats, species and sites cannot be managed in isolation – they are linked through natural processes which work at a variety of scales. Human society also depends on these natural processes through the 'ecosystem services' that they provide, for example soil productivity, flood regulation, or simply areas for people to enjoy. SNH is working with others to develop a more holistic approach to biodiversity conservation in which a wide range of land-use objectives – such as arable farming, grazing by sheep and cattle, deer

management, forest and woodland expansion, catchment management to improve water quality and reduced flood risk, soil conservation, and public access – are fully integrated alongside habitat enhancement. Our aim is for healthy ecosystems to be able to continue to support all life, including our own, even in changing circumstances.



Actions we will take

Lead action to prevent further biodiversity loss and promote recovery, concentrating on developing healthy ecosystems that are resilient to a changing climate.

Advise on the management of biodiversity and geodiversity, and promote codes of practice for activities where there is a potential for damage.

Support the Scottish Biodiversity Forum in developing and implementing the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.

Advise and support land managers to ensure that protected natural features in Natura sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest are well managed, and review and simplify lists of operations requiring consent.

Identify a suite of marine Natura sites to deliver Scotland's share in meeting UK obligations under EU wildlife legislation, and propose other action required to meet international commitments for the north-east Atlantic and North Sea.

Provide places for enjoying nature and make information about wildlife and geology accessible to people, including through a suite of well-managed and promoted National Nature Reserves.

Communicate more widely the nature and value of Scotland's protected areas.

Promote opportunities for people to volunteer, look after and learn about the natural world.

In particular, support opportunities for outdoor learning and voluntary action by young people, both within and outwith the school curriculum, to help them develop confidence and citizenship.

Raise awareness of the range of functions which ecological systems fulfil and the loss to society if they cease to function.

Promote an integrated approach to use and management of the land and sea that incorporates conservation of all aspects of the natural heritage, amongst those who manage the resource, in land-use planning and in national policy.

Build capacity across all sectors to care for the natural heritage, by sharing of good practice through events and professional training and by making information widely available.

Help people understand how sustainable lifestyles can reduce their overall impact on nature.



Outcomes sought

Rich and diverse wildlife habitats on land and at sea, with management that maintains healthy ecosystems

Losses in biodiversity halted by 2010 and a robust process of recovery set in train

Special conservation areas that are well managed, with at least 95% of features in favourable or recovering condition by 2010

Greater understanding and appreciation of nature and closer involvement and care by people in managing the nature around them

More opportunities for young people to learn about the natural world and the need for sustainable lifestyles

This priority supports these Scottish Government National outcomes

We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations

Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens

We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity

We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production

Tracked using these National targets and indicators

Increase to 95% the proportion of protected nature sites in favourable condition

Biodiversity: increase the index of abundance of terrestrial breeding birds

Improve people's perceptions, attitudes and awareness of Scotland's reputation

Reduce overall ecological footprint

RESPONDING TO CLIMATE CHANGE



Responding to climate change

Understanding the effects of climate change and helping to deliver the contribution that the natural heritage can make in limiting it and adapting to it

2

Scotland is a leading player in the international effort to reduce global carbon emissions. The Scottish Government has made a commitment that Scotland should reduce emissions by more than its 'fair share' within the UK, through a range of measures including energy efficiency, renewable electricity, use of biofuels and encouraging use of more sustainable transport modes. We will help in achieving these objectives, by ensuring that the advice we give on new infrastructure and land management takes proper account of climate change benefits and natural heritage impacts. We recognise that the development of renewable energy resources entails significant impacts on landscapes and biodiversity and that there is a need for sound advice on appropriate siting and minimising impacts. Also, Scotland has a large reservoir of stored carbon in its peatlands and other carbon-rich soils. We need to understand better the effect which land use on such soils has on emissions and how to conserve and manage soil carbon.

Both people and nature will respond to the effects of a changing climate. People want protection from the increased risks of river and coastal flooding, and agriculture and forestry will change in response to both climate and new markets such as energy crops. Warmer weather and changes in rainfall are leading to changes in biodiversity. Habitats will change, and some species may be lost from Scotland whilst others will arrive from elsewhere. We will try to understand and communicate what is happening, and what is likely to happen, to the natural heritage as a consequence of climate change. We will encourage habitats to be developed in a way which helps both people and wildlife adapt to the changing climate – for example by creating habitat networks which enable species to disperse more easily and by making use of natural habitats to alleviate flood risks.

Existing conservation targets for some species and habitats may become unattainable because of climate change, and there may be a need to review these. In the longer term there may also be a need to review the overall role of protected areas, if the features of interest for which they are designated are subject to change, by placing a stronger emphasis on their role in securing healthy ecosystems. These are fundamental issues which may re-shape our approach to biodiversity conservation in the light of climate change.



Actions we will take

Find out and publicise what's happening to the natural environment as a result of climate change.

Work with other agencies in the UK to assess the implications of climate change and possible adaptation measures for habitats and species at a national level.

Help achieve reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by advising on how renewable energy can be harnessed with least impact on the natural heritage.

Develop a better understanding of the role played by peatland and other carbon-rich soils as a long-term carbon store, and advise on how best to protect or manage such soils to retain carbon.

Help nature as far as possible to adapt to a changing climate, by promoting conservation, land management and planning approaches which maintain healthy natural systems and enable species to disperse and colonise new habitats.

In the light of climate change and change to habitats, review the extent to which conservation targets may require to be adjusted, and indeed the role which should be played by protected areas.

Advise people on how to make best use of natural processes in adapting to climate change, for example in flood management.

Provide an example to others in environmental management by reducing SNH's carbon emissions.

Outcomes sought

Lower emissions of greenhouse gases

Ecosystems that help people and wildlife adapt to our changing climate

This priority supports these Scottish Government National outcomes

We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production

We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger

We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations

Tracked using these National targets and indicators

50% of electricity generated in Scotland to come from renewable sources by 2020 (interim target of 31% by 2011)

Reduce overall ecological footprint

Increase the proportion of journeys to work made by public or active transport



DELIVERING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Delivering health and well-being

Creating places where people want to live or visit, enhancing landscapes, providing opportunities for healthier and greener lifestyles and enabling people to enjoy the natural heritage

3

Scotland's countryside and green spaces make an enormous contribution to quality of life and well-being, through the diverse and scenic landscapes for which Scotland is renowned and through the opportunities they provide for outdoor recreation, active or passive.

Recent access legislation and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code have established a new relationship of mutual responsibility between those accessing land and land managers, a relationship which we will consolidate by continuing to promote and improve understanding of the Code. Through the Code we will also help minimise any adverse impacts of increased access on wildlife and habitats.

In towns, we will promote the development of well-managed green spaces which provide for regular recreational activity and which accommodate footpaths and cycle paths to enable more sustainable patterns of travel. They also add to an area's attractiveness and contribute to its identity. Green spaces play an important role in urban regeneration, in improving environmental quality, in supporting mental well-being and as a shared interest around which a community can engage. We aim to stimulate a much higher level of involvement by people in planning and managing their local environment.

Health statistics show that people in many areas of Scotland have unduly high rates of heart disease and obesity. Opportunities for outdoor activity have a major

role to play in encouraging more active lifestyles. SNH will continue to encourage the development of more and better places for people to enjoy the outdoors, both in the rural and urban environment. We will place a new emphasis on securing greater and wider participation, and in particular encourage more outdoor activity by young people, among disadvantaged groups, and in areas where current opportunities are limited.

Scotland's diverse landscapes are an integral part of our natural and cultural heritage, and make an important contribution to our sense of place, both regionally and locally. Good planning and design in new development is critical in maintaining this. The European Landscape Convention to which the UK is a signatory embodies the principle that local communities should be involved in planning how their local landscapes should be managed and protected. With the help of the Scottish Landscape Forum, SNH aims to raise awareness of the socioeconomic benefits of good quality and distinctive landscapes, and of the contribution these make to cultural identity and well-being. Recent legislation has reconfirmed the status of National Scenic Areas as the national landscape designation. SNH actively seeks the support of a range of organisations in developing effective action to protect and manage special landscapes.



Actions we will take

Promote and help create a better and more attractive environment for people to live and work in, with accessible, well-managed greenspace, and advise on the policies and practices needed to achieve it.

Encourage the development of places and facilities of improved quality for people to enjoy the outdoors, both in the rural and urban environment, and a network of paths close to where people live for both recreation and local travel.

Encourage greater levels of outdoor recreation, promoting wider participation and recognition of its health benefits, especially among young people and disadvantaged groups.

Promote use and understanding of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and maintain an overview of the success of access legislation.

Encourage greater involvement by people, and pride, in the planning and management of the places and landscapes around them, through volunteering and community initiatives.

Champion the diversity and distinctiveness of Scotland's landscapes, and stimulate people's awareness of how landscapes and wildlife contribute to cultural identity and quality of life.

Encourage the planning and design of new development and land use which enhances regional distinctiveness and sense of place.

Stimulate action by all relevant public bodies for more positive management of National Scenic Areas and other designated landscapes.

Outcomes sought

Greater and wider participation in enjoying the outdoors

Adequate good quality greenspace in towns

Improved health and well-being

More sustainable patterns of travel, especially walking and cycling, close to where people live

Greater involvement by communities in managing their local environment including the landscapes around them

Effective protection and management of special landscapes

Raised awareness of the contribution made by Scotland's diverse and distinctive natural heritage to cultural identity

This priority supports these Scottish Government National outcomes

We live longer, healthier lives

We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need

We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others

We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity

We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations

Tracked using these National targets and indicators

Increase the proportion of adults making one or more visits to the outdoors per week

Reduce the rate of increase in the proportion of children with their body mass index outwith a healthy range by 2018

Reduce mortality from coronary heart disease among the under 75s in deprived areas

Increase the percentage of adults who rate their neighbourhood as a good place to live

Improve people's perceptions, attitudes and awareness of Scotland's reputation

Increase the proportion of journeys to work made by public or active transport



SUPPORTING THE SCOTTISH ECONOMY



Supporting the Scottish economy

Identifying and helping to deliver the contribution that the natural heritage can make to sustainable economic growth

4

The health of Scotland's economy depends on being able to attract and retain a skilled workforce. Wildlife, scenery and associated recreational opportunities therefore provide Scotland with an innate competitive advantage. Our aim is for the natural heritage to underpin Scotland's claim to be one of the most attractive countries in the world in which to live and work. We look for people to be able to enjoy, close to where they live, high quality natural heritage. We look for greater understanding and appreciation of the economic benefits deriving from the natural heritage, and increased commitment to its care.

SNH has a role in advising on development and land management and their impacts on the natural heritage. We seek to ensure that any adverse impacts are kept to a reasonable minimum while recognising the value of associated public and socio-economic benefits. We will build on the conclusions of our planning review, currently in progress, with a view to ensuring that the advice we provide to planning authorities and to Government is effective, constructive and helpful.

Where nationally or internationally protected species, habitats or landscapes are involved, our advice will always reflect the need for compliance with relevant statutory requirements and national policy. For national designations, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or National Scenic Areas, national planning policy is that development should not compromise the objectives of a designated area or its overall integrity, unless such adverse effects are clearly outweighed by social or economic benefits of national importance. Where development may affect Natura sites, or certain European species, there must be reasons of over-riding public interest, alternatives must have been fully considered, and certain other criteria must be met; and the UK has responsibilities under EU law to ensure that decisions adhere to these requirements. For all such proposals, SNH will aim to provide advice on the likely effects on protected interests and how these impacts might be avoided.

Traditionally, regulation over use of the sea has been less coordinated than on land. Growing development demands on the sea, for example for aquaculture and renewable energy, concerns over the management of fish stocks, and the need to protect valued areas of marine natural heritage all now point to the need for a new, planned approach towards the management of marine



resources. SNH will work to help Government in establishing the required new systems.

In rural and coastal areas, a significant proportion of economic activity depends on the quality of the natural heritage, whether through tourism, food, or use of natural products. The scope for such economic opportunities is often greatest in or around areas which are designated on account of the quality of the natural heritage. In our advice on sustainable use of the natural heritage, we will place a particular priority on providing support to initiatives, including community-based ones, which create new economic opportunities based on the natural heritage in economically fragile areas. We will also support and promote environmental improvement initiatives in rural and urban disadvantaged areas where a poor quality environment contributes to that disadvantage.

Tourism is one of Scotland's largest employers and is in large measure founded on the quality of Scotland's natural and cultural heritage. However much of the natural heritage is not managed with the needs of tourism in mind. We aim to make renewed efforts to support the development of better places for visitors to experience, enjoy and learn about their environment. This will be our contribution to Government's ambition to increase the value of tourism by 50% by 2015.

Actions we will take

Develop understanding of, and promote, the economic value of the natural heritage.

Help ensure that economic activities are sustainable in relation to the natural heritage and do not exceed environmental limits.

Advise local authorities and Government on how built development can be accommodated, and impacts mitigated, in a way that is compatible with natural heritage aims.

Support the development and use of spatial planning, both on land and at sea, in a way which helps protect the natural heritage and which fully involves users and communities.

Use SNH's current planning review as a foundation for a refreshed approach to giving effective planning advice.

Advise Government on structures and possible legislation for better management of the sea, including further advice, if required, on proposals for a coastal and marine national park.

Encourage the development of sustainable rural land uses which protect and enhance the natural heritage resource.

Provide support to initiatives, including community-based ones, which create new economic opportunities based on the natural heritage, especially in economically fragile areas.

Contribute to the regeneration of disadvantaged areas through environmental renewal.

Support the development of more high quality and readily accessible natural heritage in central Scotland for people to enjoy.

Enhance Scotland's tourism product by developing places where visitors can experience and enjoy the natural heritage better, and ensuring information about such places is readily available.

Outcomes sought

Scotland's natural heritage used to underpin economic well-being, especially in economically fragile areas

Scotland's natural heritage managed sustainably

Wide awareness of the economic benefits deriving from the natural heritage including its role in attracting and retaining a workforce.

No communities in Scotland disadvantaged as a result of poor management of the natural heritage

Places where visitors can enjoy a better experience of the natural heritage.

A system established for spatial planning in the marine environment

This priority supports these Scottish Government National outcomes

We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe

We realise our economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people

We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation

We have tackled the significant inequalities in society

We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations

Tracked using these National targets and indicators

Increase to 70% key commercial fish stocks at full reproductive capacity and harvested sustainably by 2015

Reduce overall ecological footprint

50% of electricity generated in Scotland to come from renewable sources by 2020 (interim target of 31% by 2011)

Increase the social economy turnover



**DELIVERING A HIGH
QUALITY PUBLIC
SERVICE**



Working with
community
people to create
an environment
for
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and
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As their number
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Delivering a high quality public service

Maintaining an efficient, responsive and environmentally responsible organisation which provides effective guidance on the natural heritage and value and satisfaction for customers, and working jointly with other agencies to ensure an integrated and streamlined approach

5

SNH is committed to delivering an excellent public service. This means making an effective contribution to a wide range of public goals, working with our customers in a constructive, responsive and positive manner, being informed by the best available science, and ensuring people know what we do and why we do it. Public organisations have changed markedly over recent decades, in part due to technological changes, in part due to cultural changes in the way public business is handled, and in part due to the need for greater efficiencies. Our aim is to help lead the way in making such change.

SNH is required, in common with the target set by the Scottish Government across the public sector as a whole, to make 2% per annum efficiency savings over the next three years. We are also committed to seeking greater efficiency and streamlined delivery of public services and working collaboratively with other organisations in Scotland with related remits and objectives. Financial support for the management of Sites of Special Scientific Interest has already been integrated within the Scotland Rural Development Programme and an integrated approach to delivery of that programme adopted across Scottish Government, with our staff working alongside agricultural and forestry advisers.

We are exploring, jointly with other organisations funded by Government, the potential for a more streamlined and integrated approach towards our activity, including how we manage land and communicate with rural interests. Our aim is to minimise duplication and where appropriate develop common business processes. We have already commenced a single delivery service in 2008, working jointly with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Forestry Commission Scotland, the Scottish Government and other organisations sponsored by the Scottish Government's Rural and Environmental Quality Directorates (SEARS⁽³⁾). This will provide rural land managers with a single point of entry to a wide range of Government services relating to rural areas and the environment. Our joint aim is to offer a service which is readily understood and easily accessed and which will minimise the regulatory burden on land managers.

With its network of rural offices, SNH is well placed to underpin and support local delivery of integrated services through sharing services with other

organisations. We will continue to look for efficiencies in our office infrastructure through co-location with related Government organisations, following the examples now established in Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Golspie. Other co-locations are being developed as opportunities and resources allow.

We will also seek to collaborate with other bodies including local authorities, the enterprise networks and community planning partners to improve service delivery for the public, remove inefficiencies, and achieve shared objectives. In line with the new relationship and concordat which Scottish Government is establishing with local government, SNH will transfer the majority of its grant funding for local authorities directly to their core settlement from April 2009. We will develop outcome measures which can be used with local authorities, community planning partners and others to track the delivery of services relating to the natural heritage. The new mechanism of Strategic Environmental Assessment is particularly helpful in promoting early dialogue, with all public bodies who are preparing plans or programmes, about the contributions these can make to care for the natural heritage.

Following the recent confirmation of proposals to merge the functions of the Deer Commission for Scotland with those of SNH, we will make the organisational and operational changes required to ensure successful implementation of the Strategy for Wild Deer.

The natural heritage is not limited by national boundaries. Many of the issues or factors affecting it are equally relevant elsewhere in the UK or in Europe, and policy decisions at a European or UK level have important repercussions on the natural heritage in Scotland. We will maintain contact with organisations with remits related to our own throughout the UK and Europe, to ensure that we remain aware of best practice and current knowledge, and so that Scottish experience and concerns can have an appropriate influence on wider policies and agendas.

Our staff are our most important asset. We have an internal strategy in place which sets out how we will engage, motivate, develop and retain our staff, respond to the changing skills required by the priorities in his Strategy, and cultivate commitment, openness, innovation, achievement, and leadership. Our aim is for every one in SNH to be able to deliver at his or her personal and professional best, and our culture to one of continuous learning as to how to do things better.

Finally, as a public agency concerned with the environment, we aim to demonstrate leadership through our own environmental management, minimising energy and resource consumption and waste outputs. We intend to build upon the accolades already received for the environmental standards of our Inverness headquarters.

(3) Scotland's Environmental and Rural Services

Actions we will take



Maintain an open, responsive, collaborative and inclusive style of operating.

Ensure effective and efficient use of resources, delivering 2% per annum efficiency savings over the next three years, and exploring further shared use of offices.

Work with other parts of Scottish Government to deliver the Scottish Rural Development Programme.

Work with other bodies as part of Scotland's Environmental and Rural Services (SEARS).

Work with local authorities and Scottish Government to develop outcome measures to track delivery of services relating to the natural heritage.

Ensure our advice is well-informed, based where appropriate on sound science.

Continue to support the Joint Nature Conservation Committee as a focus for coordinated action by natural heritage agencies across the UK on common issues of wider-than-Scotland or international importance.

Implement our 'People Strategy' so that we engage, motivate, develop and retain the right staff for SNH.

Minimise our environmental footprint and set a good example through SNH's environmental management.

Work with the Deer Commission for Scotland and its stakeholders to integrate its staff and functions with SNH, making whatever changes are required to do so successfully.

Use effective and focused communications to raise awareness of issues affecting the natural heritage and of SNH's role and collaborative contribution.

Outcomes sought

An efficient, effective and responsive organisation

Satisfaction and value for customers

Streamlined and accessible services in collaboration with other organisations

Our staff delivering at their best and always learning how to do things better

A green organisation

This priority supports these Scottish Government National outcomes

We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production

Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs

Tracked using these National targets and indicators

Improve public efficiency through the generation of 2% cash releasing efficiency savings per annum

Improve people's perceptions of the quality of public services delivered

Reduce overall ecological footprint

Increase the proportion of journeys to work made by public or active transport



Taking the Strategy forward

This Strategy outlines our priorities for the five years from 2008. A Corporate Plan for the years 2008 – 2011 has been prepared which sets out how we will use our resources to deliver these priorities across our Programmes of work. That Plan also sets out how we will measure success. We intend to refresh the Corporate Plan in two years time for the period 2010 – 13.

For reasons of space we have not made reference in the text to many of the organisations and people with whom we expect to work in delivering this Strategy – Scottish Government and UK Government departments, local authorities, national park authorities, the enterprise networks, public agencies, Community Planning Partnerships, voluntary organisations, community groups, farmers, crofters, foresters, fisheries and estate managers, developers and many others; those bodies which we have helped establish for specific purposes; and a number of forums which serve a vital purpose in bringing a range of interests to bear on specific topics. Delivery of this Strategy will depend on all these and more, and we look forward to engaging with all as we move forward with this Strategy.

SNH will monitor progress in achieving the outcomes of this Strategy through our Natural Heritage Indicators . These also contribute to the indicators used by Scottish Government level to track sustainable development, biodiversity and the National Outcomes. Our Corporate Plan includes more detailed measures of success which will also track our contributions to the National Targets and Indicators.



Scottish Natural Heritage
All of nature for all of Scotland