

Consultation Title: Environment Strategy Consultation Response

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To: Scottish Government

From: Scottish Land & Estates

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General comments

SLE is pleased to see the development of an Environment Strategy. It would be beneficial to know the timescales that this will cover and when reviews will take place. Our members are committed to good practice in protecting and enhancing the landscapes for which they are responsible. For example, on a large scale they are involved in WES accreditation, native woodland planting and peatland restoration, and on a smaller scale, soil sampling individual fields and introducing 'green credentials' to their diversified businesses. In addition, SLE members are involved in a range of projects within Scotland to support the needs of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, our involvement is currently centered on the following projects: Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels, Scottish Wildcat Action and the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project.

As a general point, we urge that consideration of the Environment Strategy looks beyond an 'environment silo'. The environment is integrated throughout so many sectors such as land management, health, transport etc.

We understand there will be a monitoring framework developed next year but we encourage Scottish Government to keep in mind the notion of measuring the progress towards the outcomes, and ultimately the vision, while setting them.

The inclusion of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the diagram is welcomed and we believe it is important the relationship between these and the Environment Strategy is made.

1. What are your views on the following draft vision for Scotland's environment and climate change policies?

SLE supports this vision. 'One planet' reminds us that we have a single place with finite resources upon which to build our lives and act with the subsequent generations in mind. 'Prosperity' is the idea of a successful, flourishing, thriving state of both the planet and the population.

Regarding the accompanying text that goes with the vision, we would welcome the addition of 'and enhancing' to 'This means protecting nature...'. It important we strive to improve on our current position where possible rather than remain static. We welcome the vision and description being succinct.

2. What are your views on the following draft outcomes that will help achieve this vision?

1. *We are a climate leader and play our full role in limiting global temperature rise to well below 2° C.*

We would welcome more explicit reference to our commitment to the Paris Agreement. We would recommend the pursuance of limiting temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels rather than the 'well below 2° C'.

2. *We are a zero waste, resource efficient nation.*

SLE supports the principles of the Scottish Government's Zero Waste Strategy and the drive towards an environmentally sustainable Scotland where waste use is minimised. The vision for a 'zero waste, resource efficient' Scotland is an ambitious one and will require significant change in the way we approach the management of our waste.

The Scottish Government's [Zero Waste Plan](#) aims to change how waste is viewed and managed in Scotland and clear links between this outcome and this plan need to be made which is surely the backbone in terms of driving this high level change forward.

3. *Our biodiversity is protected and enhanced, supporting healthy ecosystems.*

SLE is supportive of the outcome. Most of Scotland is not designated for conservation, and it is recognised that the wider landscape is critical for the delivery of Scottish biodiversity. While designated sites should retain their current level of effort and funding, they should sit as the jewels in the crown of a larger landscape that is also better able to deliver environmental outcomes.

It is important to be aware that this outcome requires a long-term commitment and therefore some guarantee of funding into the future is necessary. Is there realistically the budget to continue to devote the same amount of effort to protected sites on top of finding funding to deliver large scale ecosystem enhancement and/or restoration? The strategy does not currently set out the delivery mechanisms to achieve this and we would argue that there needs to be a focus on supporting land managers factored into this.

Clear linkages need to be made with national strategies such as the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, the National Peatland Plan, the Land Use Strategy, Forestry Strategy, National Park Plans and possible Moorland Vision which are key delivery tools in achieving this outcome.

4. Our air, freshwater, seas and soils are of excellent quality.

The attempt to join up land, freshwater and coastal policy is welcomed. Scottish Land & Estates would support policies recognising there is a need for a balance between the economic strategy and the environmental strategy. For example, healthy soils are good for the environment but also good for farm productivity.

5. Everyone can access, enjoy and connect with nature.

Taking advantage of the outdoors benefits our health and well-being, and here in Scotland we have outstanding nature which is easily accessible. We therefore suggest the wording is slightly changed to 'everyone accesses, enjoys and connects with nature'. We believe everyone can access nature, but there are reasons why many choose not to.

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code has been a factor in helping ensure the people of Scotland can enjoy outdoor recreation responsibly. We would welcome the widening or rewording of this outcome to include the education and awareness that is required to encourage more people to engage and connect with nature and understand how and why it is important to take responsible access to the outdoors and care for our precious environment.

6. The global footprint of our consumption and production is sustainable.

We believe this is an important outcome. It would be possible to reduce our own emissions by importing goods from elsewhere but to think on a global scale prevents this outsourcing which just transfers the impact to another country. There is also the opportunity to boost goods and services produced locally and sustainably as part of this ambition.

3. What are your views on the draft knowledge accounts which will be used to help identify priorities for action in the coming years? What additional source of key evidence can you add?

We would welcome a clearer relationship between the outcomes and the knowledge accounts.

SLE has some concern that having 'priorities' may downgrade other elements when we should be aiming for a collective effort across all issues to improve practices etc. We would encourage greater transparency of how these priorities are selected, how long they last, how they will be supported by funding, and how they will be monitored.

The knowledge accounts could be strengthened to reflect the scale/intensity of impact and therefore the level of required response.

We feel there is a missing table between ‘Where are we now’ and ‘Where do we want to be’. We suggest the accounts would benefit from ‘how do we get there’? This needs to set out who, how, when, costs, and time scales.

Current initiatives are detailed but we suggest it would be helpful to set out a timeline for these current initiatives and when they expire. It is worth consideration of whose role it is to pursue and ensure future initiatives exist to achieve the required progress.

Page 2 highlights that Scotland already has strong, ambitious strategies in place. We suggest these are noted somewhere in each of the knowledge accounts as the priorities will be delivered through these strategies.

In the Ecosystems and Wildlife knowledge account we would urge the inclusion of the Wildlife Estates Scotland (WES) initiative. WES accreditation demonstrates a landholding is a producer of integrated solutions for positive land management and biodiversity.

Finally, we have a concern that “outdoors” is not the best word to describe nature or green space. We understand this comes from the national outcomes but would welcome further consideration of this point.