



Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

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CONNECTING PEOPLE AND NATURE

Corporate Plan - 2018 Onward

Foreword

The priorities and activities carried out by SNH support the purpose of the Scottish Government 'to focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth'.

Connecting people and nature is vital to rise to the challenges of our times and contributing to prosperity and wellbeing. Improving the state of nature and addressing climate change both need to be tackled together. This is the surest path to enhancing Scotland's natural capital as the basis for inclusive sustainable economic growth and realising the vision of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy: 'It's 2030 – Scotland is recognised as a world leader in biodiversity conservation. Everyone is involved; everyone benefits. The nation is enriched.'

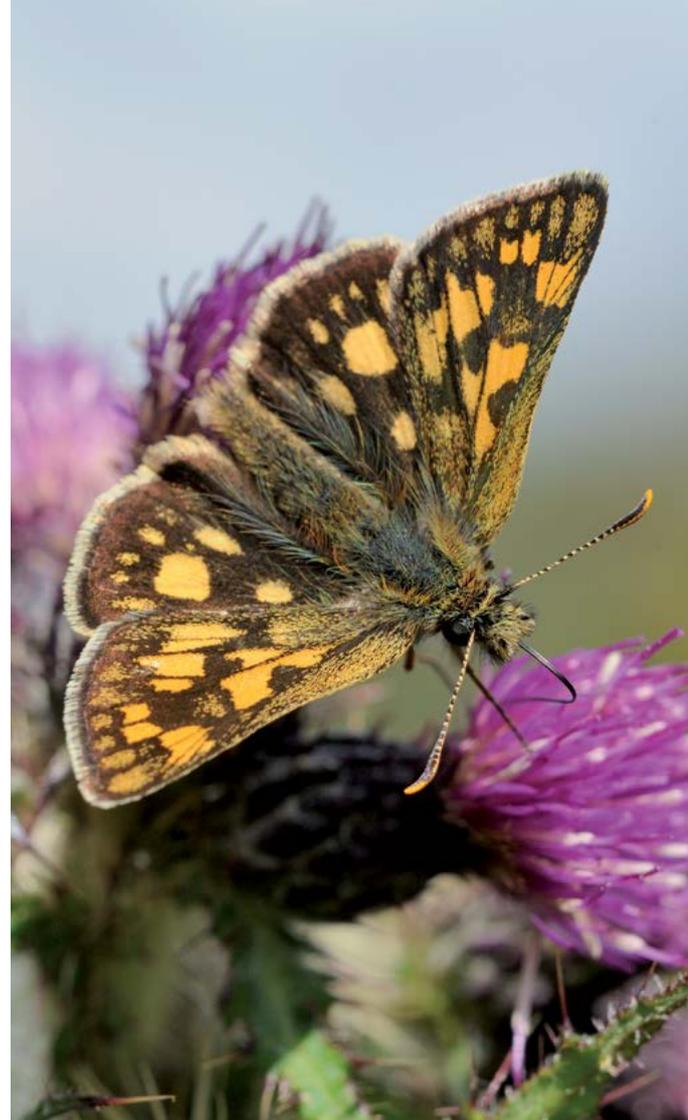
The period of this Corporate Plan straddles the exit of the UK from the EU. We will need to be flexible. Along with other public bodies we will need to help the Scottish Government to take stock of the implications of Brexit-related work for SNH.

We will need to adjust our priorities to respond to prevailing challenges and opportunities while ensuring delivery of our statutory functions.



I believe this is the right Plan for uncertain times. As a heritage body we are shaped by the past, but we are here to help create the future.

Mike Cantlay, OBE, Chairman



Scotland's natural assets and SNH

Scotland's nature – from the parks and gardens in our towns and cities to our remote and wild mountains, islands, coasts and seas – is fantastic and unique. It's a national asset that provides us with a strong sense of identity and national pride. It's a big part of what makes Scotland special.

Scotland's rich nature gives us a vital competitive edge. It underpins our global reputation and supports sustainable economic growth.

Nature is the cornerstone of a flourishing Scotland – helping more people from all parts of society experience better health and well-being and helping our businesses to prosper sustainably.

The future of this national asset matters to us all. We need to work together to make sure that this treasure remains world class. People will flourish in Scotland only if nature flourishes too.

People care about nature and the quality of the local environments where they live, work and play. And they want to be involved in decisions that affect it.

We use our research, knowledge and expertise on how nature works to deliver benefits for people and nature. Scotland's people and nature deserve a world-leading environmental agency.

With more people from all backgrounds working together for Scotland's fantastic nature, we can create a greener, healthier and more prosperous country for us all.

This Corporate Plan sets out our priorities from 2018 onwards and what we'd like to achieve in the context of our longer term ambition for people and nature. Our detailed commitments are set out in annual business plans which are available on our [website](http://www.nature.scot/about-snh/our-work/how-we-plan-our-work) (www.nature.scot/about-snh/our-work/how-we-plan-our-work).

Our vision

By 2030, Scotland is recognised as a world leader in looking after and improving nature. Everyone is involved; everyone benefits. Scotland is greener, healthier and more prosperous.

“And finally, the world's most beautiful country is revealed: Scotland. Who can deny that these wild beaches, deep lochs and craggy castles are some of the most wonderful and beautiful sights in the world?”

(Rough Guide, September 2017)

“Protecting and enhancing this stock of natural capital, which includes our air, land, water, oil and biodiversity and geological resources, is fundamental to a healthy and resilient economy.”

(Scotland's Economic Strategy, Scottish Government, 2015)



Inspired by nature in the Great Trossachs Forest National Nature Reserve, one of the UK's largest nature reserves and a forest in the making, only 40 miles from Glasgow city centre.



"On west coast reefs, dead man's fingers add to Scotland's complex and productive seabed habitats." (Chris Leakey, SNH Coastal and Marine Unit)

Our outcomes and priorities for action

We want to help create a greener, healthier and more prosperous country for Scotland's people.

Our outcomes focus on people, places, investment, nature and transforming the way we work:

- More people across Scotland are enjoying and benefiting from nature.
- The health and resilience of Scotland's nature is improved.
- There is more investment in Scotland's natural capital and its management to improve prosperity and wellbeing.
- We have transformed how we work.

These outcomes depend on one another, and many of the priorities we identify in the following pages contribute to more than one outcome. In taking forward these priorities, we will strive to reduce inequalities, tackle disadvantage and promote fairness.

Measuring our impact

We will judge our success by how well we are working for Scotland's people and nature. The indicators outlined in the following sections focus on where SNH will have an impact and will help us to monitor our progress and respond accordingly. Our priorities are also informed by the state of nature as well as economic and social factors. Progress on specific projects and areas of work will be assessed and reported through our annual business plan.

More people across Scotland are enjoying and benefiting from nature



Getting fit and active needn't be a treadmill -
Polbeth Community Green Gym at West Calder.



Good quality green infrastructure is critical to making it easy for more people to enjoy the outdoors. Here, residents of Williamson Moss Heights look forward to better quality greenspace, funded by the Green Infrastructure project.

Good-quality nature encourages people to get outdoors, to get active and healthier and to champion nature.

Over 81% of Scots live in towns and cities. Some, particularly in the more deprived areas, don't have good quality greenspace nearby. Achieving this near to where people live could reduce the £94m currently spent on health treatment as a result of inactivity. Less than half of Scotland's population has regular contact with nature and fewer than one-in-twenty of Scottish adults do some form of environmental volunteering. We need to improve access and opportunities for the people who benefit least from nature.

Evidence from around the world shows that access to nature and high quality green spaces and to opportunities for physical activity, such as regular walks in the outdoors, are essential to create and protect the public's health, build stronger communities, adapt to climate change and foster prosperity. Our investment in the National Cycling and Walking Network is generating £85m for the local economy.

Each one of us has a right to enjoy and benefit from the nature around us. Outdoor health programmes can reinforce the importance and value of getting outdoors and having regular contact with nature. This is our 'Natural Health Service' at work. For these kinds of programmes, alongside investments in paths, green networks and better places to live, work and play, we need more coordinated efforts across housing, transport, education, recreation, environment and health.

We will play a leading part to:

- Create more and better quality local green spaces for communities, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas, by engaging with communities and a wide range of partners to make better places.
- Get more of Scotland's population outdoors regularly and benefiting from nature through recreation, environmental volunteering and citizen science.
- Work with local councils, transport partnerships, communities and non-governmental organisations to create the National Walking and Cycling Network and to promote its use for recreation, health and active travel.
- Improve access to good-quality green spaces for communities and outdoor learning opportunities in the 20% most disadvantaged areas across Scotland.
- Transform existing spaces into thriving places for people and nature through investing in the Green Infrastructure Fund and landscape partnerships, taking forward the Central Scotland Green Network and helping to develop the John Muir Way into the world's first pollinators' corridor.



Taking a break – health walks encourage people to be active and sociable at the same time.

Measuring our impact

Indicators:

- More people agree with the statement “More people across Scotland are enjoying and benefiting from nature.”
- More people are getting outdoors, feeling healthier as a result of their experience of nature, volunteering and championing nature.

“There is compelling evidence that green exercise improves not only our physical health, but also our emotional and mental health as well. Maximising the potential of nature-based solutions can contribute to the collective responsibilities for public health and health and social care delivery. I welcome the joined-up approach encompassed in the Our Natural Health Service initiative...”

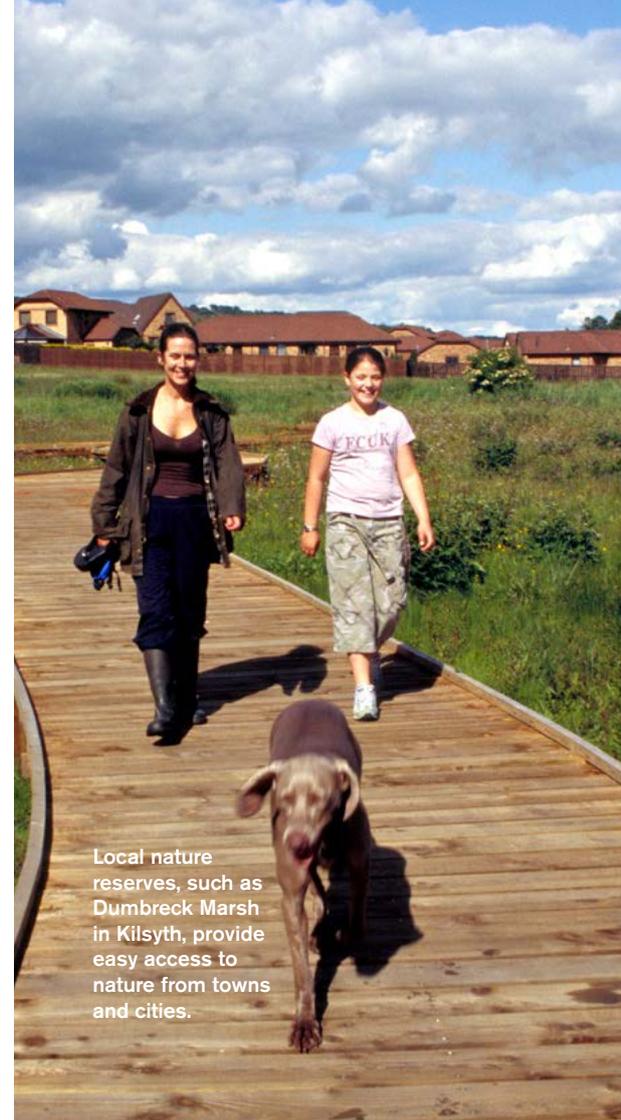
(Dr Gregor Smith, Deputy Chief Medical Officer – 2017)

“The advice that I would have previously given to one of my [cancer] patients would have been to ‘take it easy’. This has now changed significantly because of the recognition that if physical exercise were a drug, it would be hitting the headlines.”

(Prof Jane Maher, Macmillan Cancer Support Chief Medical Officer)

A European study found that access to green spaces significantly reduces the gap in wellbeing between richer and poorer people. “Our research supports the idea that environments could play a part in reducing inequalities in health, either in tandem with other social policies, or independently.”

(Prof Rich Mitchell, study leader, University of Glasgow – 2015)



Local nature reserves, such as Dumbreck Marsh in Kilsyth, provide easy access to nature from towns and cities.

The health and resilience of Scotland's nature is improved



Puffin and other shoreline birds are a signature of our coasts. Marine recreation and tourism activities in 2015 were estimated to contribute £3.7 billion to the Scottish economy. Around £2.4 billion of this is associated with general recreation and tourism, with around £1.3 billion associated with more specialist activities including wildlife watching, sailing, kayaking, surfing and angling.

Scotland's nature is among the best in the world. Some of our wildlife is recovering, reversing considerable declines from the 1950s to the early 2000s. Climate change will continue to have a significant impact on the make-up and range of Scotland's nature.

Scotland will need to deliver big and sustained improvements to its nature and wildlife to meet its international obligations to restore degraded ecosystems (a global biodiversity target). These improvements will also help to create a low-carbon economy by 2030, reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, and help nature and people adapt to a changing climate.

In the future, Scotland's relationship with Europe will change, as much of the statutory and policy framework transfers from Europe to the UK. Creating a framework to deliver our aspirations for use of the land and sea, tackling climate change and improving the state of nature is essential.



Many seabed habitats, including seagrass beds, help us by providing storm defences, storing carbon and many other benefits.

We will play a leading part to:

- Lead delivery of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and associated Route Map to 2020, develop a plan for action after 2020 and develop a national ecological network for Scotland.
- Enhance stewardship of the environment through clearer priorities for land and sea, including protected areas.
- Work for the continued delivery of benefits to people and nature from the use of the land and sea through any support mechanisms that replace the current EU-funded programmes.
- Improve the resilience of ecosystems by taking action for threatened species and the most vulnerable woodland, freshwater, grassland, upland, coastal and seabed habitats.
- Restore a further 70,000 ha of peatland, help to create 40,000 ha of new woodland and increase understanding of blue carbon in support of the Climate Change Plan.



“Restoring peatlands and creating new woodlands helps to lock up large stocks of carbon as well as improving water quality and helping to reduce flood risk – and we can only do this by sharing our understanding of ecosystems, how they work, why they fail and how to make them resilient to climate change.” (Andrew McBride, Peatland ACTION)

Measuring our impact

Indicators:

- More people agree with the statement “Scotland’s nature is healthy and resilient.”
- Scotland’s nature is healthier and more resilient.

“Young people recognise a huge variety of benefits from nature in Scotland such as the oxygen we breathe and the food we eat, a beautiful park to keep fit in, or somewhere to relax and escape stress. Our experiences need to be taken into account when important decisions are being made for the future of Scottish nature – our inheritance.”

(Izzy Steeley, ReRoute, Scotland's Youth Biodiversity Panel)



Volunteers help in all sorts of ways to make nature great – from citizen science to local conservation projects and caring for parks. These kinds of environmental citizenship make Scotland a fantastic place to visit and reduce threats to wildlife.



There is more investment in Scotland's natural capital and its management to improve prosperity and wellbeing

Improving the state of nature and addressing climate change both need to be tackled together. Making connections between people and nature at all scales, from the window box to hill tops, is key to making better decisions for people and nature.

Scotland's land, coasts and seas are always changing, both naturally and in response to choices about how we use them. The consequences of these choices can be complicated and impact on nature and people. Examples include wildlife crime, the impacts of grazing in the uplands, coastal change, the loss of wildlife-friendly places in the lowlands, and the spread of invasive species.

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, the National Planning Framework and the Land Use Strategy all encourage businesses, communities and government to work together for a more prosperous country with healthier and more resilient nature.

Helping businesses to realise the benefits of investing in nature is a crucial step.

Ensuring that nature thrives is a vital part of the solution to many of the challenges we face when managing land, freshwater and the marine environment. Environmentally-friendly land management that works with nature and natural systems strengthens benefits for people, for example, by providing sustainable stocks of fish and healthy soils as the basis of more productive agriculture, and better places to live and work in. These 'nature-based' solutions will help to maintain Scotland's world-class nature and competitive edge.

We will work in partnerships to tackle these and other issues, using evidence-based and innovative solutions that work for people and nature.

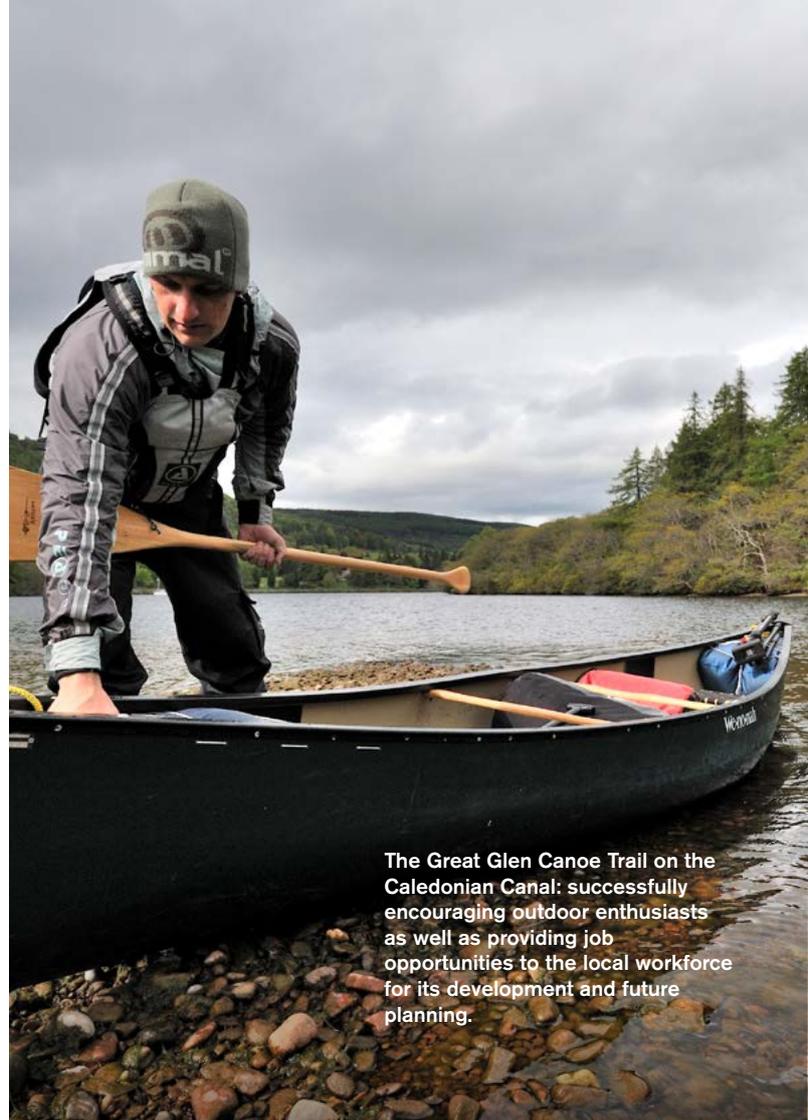


Win-win.

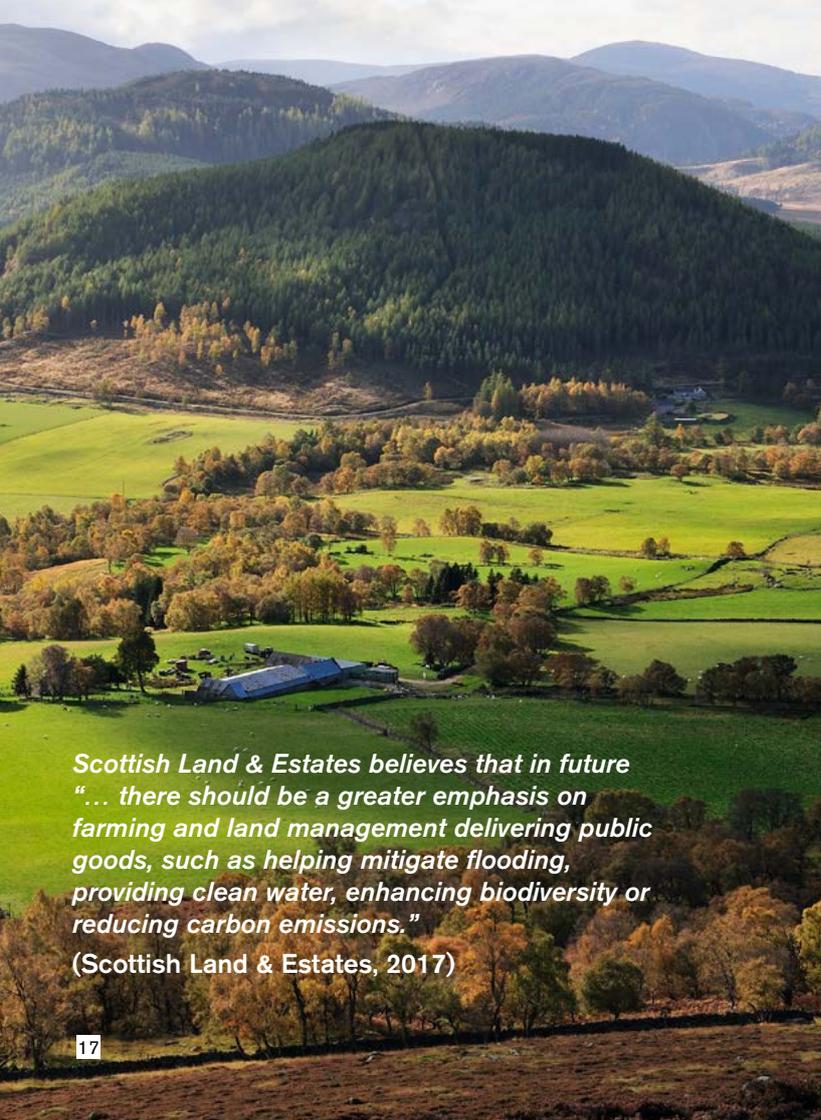
By improving watercourses for the freshwater pearl mussel, the Pearls in Peril project benefits the whole river ecosystem.

We will play a leading part to:

- Work with partners to reduce wildlife crime and to create long-term solutions for wildlife management and for sustainable land use in Scotland's uplands.
- Set out a strong rationale for future support for farmers and other land managers that is based on investing in natural capital and contributing to a low-carbon economy.
- Help key sectors such as housing, transport, energy, tourism, fisheries, and food and drink, that trade on Scotland's reputation for high environmental quality to invest in maintaining and protecting our natural capital.
- Help to maintain the capacity and rural skills to manage Scotland's natural capital particularly where nature is important to the local economy.
- Encourage innovation and investment in natural capital at a landscape scale to sustain a prosperous and flourishing Scotland.



The Great Glen Canoe Trail on the Caledonian Canal: successfully encouraging outdoor enthusiasts as well as providing job opportunities to the local workforce for its development and future planning.



*Scottish Land & Estates believes that in future
“... there should be a greater emphasis on
farming and land management delivering public
goods, such as helping mitigate flooding,
providing clean water, enhancing biodiversity or
reducing carbon emissions.”*

(Scottish Land & Estates, 2017)

Measuring our impact

Indicators:

- More people agree with the statement “There is more investment in Scotland’s natural capital and its management to improve prosperity and wellbeing.”
- Measures of improved prosperity and wellbeing are associated with an increase in investment in natural capital.

“... as an industry, we will be firmly committed to the wellbeing of the people we employ, the customers we serve and the communities and environment around us. This commitment to responsibility will pervade all our work and we’ll be fiercely proud of it.”

(Ambition 2030, Scotland Food & Drink, 2017)

“The Scottish government sees the concept of natural capital as an important tool for making better decisions as we look towards that better world. That’s why natural capital is embedded in our performance framework, and also in our national economic strategy.”

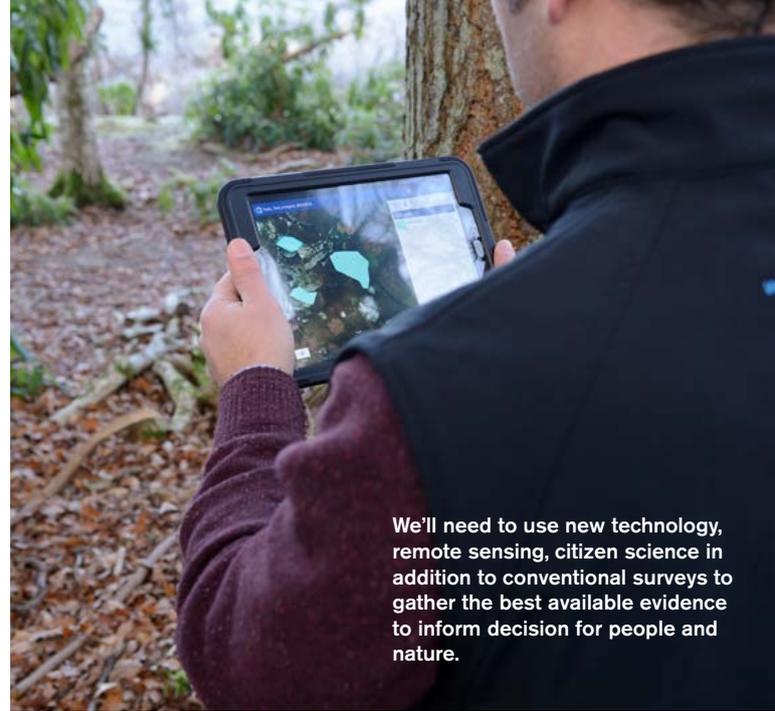
(Nicola Sturgeon, World Forum on Natural Capital, November 2017)

We have transformed how we work

*"We want to try and find another way of farming for the future which will help to enhance all of these habitats and help to connect industries such as farming and forestry and conservation and bring them all into one small unit."
(Lynn Cassells, Lynbreck Croft, Speyside)*

Achieving our vision and results means that we will have to transform the way we work with others and within SNH. We will listen. We will need to be creative, innovative and inspiring. We will act. We will continue to be dependable. We will:

- **Provide information at the right time to inform decisions about nature.** The evidence base and the knowledge and expertise of our staff are vital to our success: we are hungry both for new knowledge and to share the knowledge we have.
- **Work in partnerships, empowering communities to generate solutions together.** We've been most successful when we have worked with different sectors and communities of place and of interest to generate solutions together.
- **Reach and inspire more people to value nature by using digital technology and social media.** We'll be better at communicating, influencing and promoting the impact of our work.
- **Support innovation and diversify the funding for nature. We need to create innovative solutions that work for people and nature.** We need to help and inspire others to invest in increasing prosperity and improving Scotland's nature.
- **Be the change we want to see by being more flexible and leading by example.** We'll build on our strengths by being more flexible, engaging with young people, developing new skills, listening more and being responsive.



We'll need to use new technology, remote sensing, citizen science in addition to conventional surveys to gather the best available evidence to inform decision for people and nature.

Measuring our impact

Indicators:

- More of our partners agree that we work collaboratively, listen and are engaged and responsive
- We are increasing the reach, visibility and influence of our communications

Our contribution to the National Outcomes for Scotland



In Scotland we "... recognise that Scotland's rich and diverse natural environment is a national asset which contributes hugely to our economy and to our wider sense of wellbeing... Studies suggest that the elements of Scotland's natural capital that can be given a monetary value are worth more than £20 billion each year to our economy. It directly supports more than 60,000 jobs."

(First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, World Forum on Natural Capital, 2015)

SNH both advises the Scottish Government and helps it to achieve its objectives. Our role and remit is defined by legislation and Scottish Government policy. We lead the implementation of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. Our work is also driven by legislation and Scottish Government strategies, including Scotland's Economic Strategy, the Scottish Regulators' Strategic Code of Practice, the Climate Change Plan, the National Marine Plan, the Land Use Strategy, the Scottish Forestry Strategy, the National Planning Framework, the Mental Health Strategy and the National Physical Activity Strategy.

Our work contributes to the following National Performance Framework Outcomes:

- We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations.
- We live in well-designed sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.
- We live longer, healthier lives.
- We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.
- We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society.
- We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people.
- We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe.

A damselfly – insects are the engine room of ecological processes that underpin the benefits that people derive from nature.



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All images by Lorne Gill/SNH

ISBN 978-1-78391-542-2