



## Introduction

Our corporate plan for 2015-18 will set out how we will help to deliver the Scottish Government's purpose of *creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth*.

Scotland's public services – nationally and locally – are increasingly focussed on tackling a small number of big challenges: securing economic recovery and growth; increasing employment and reducing youth unemployment; giving young children the best possible start in life; building safer and stronger communities and reducing offending; tackling health inequalities and increasing physical activity; and delivering outcomes for older people.

This requires public bodies to work together to deliver shared outcomes, and to promote early intervention and prevention. These efforts should improve people's lives and their sense of social justice, and should also help to reduce the inequalities that exist within populations and between areas.

So how can Scotland's nature and landscapes help do this?

Scotland's natural assets – our wildlife, geology, landscapes and ecosystems – underpin our economy, health and well-being and are critical in defining the character of Scotland. These natural assets are a sustainable economic, environmental and social resource for the nation and there is growing evidence that they support a wide range of benefits which can help with some of these big challenges. They are also important in their own right, for their intrinsic value and appeal.

The link between Scotland's natural assets and the role that they play in supporting economic growth, improving people's health and wellbeing, adapting to climate change and strengthening communities is increasingly reflected in Scottish Government policies, including the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, National Planning Framework 3, Land Use Strategy, Marine Strategy, Equally Well and A More Active Scotland.

Whilst our natural assets already provide a wide range of benefits, stronger investment in their health and resilience will help to generate more benefits for more people.

We wish to work with a wide range of partners to:

- increase the flow of public benefits and services from Scotland's natural assets
- improve the capacity of these natural assets to support delivery of these benefits now and in the future

We believe that this focus will help us – and Scotland's natural assets – to make an even stronger contribution to the Scottish Government's purpose and to help implement a wide range of Scottish Government policies. This approach requires stronger links to be developed across the environment, land management and social and economic sectors. It also reflects a wider trend, particularly in the health sector, towards building on our assets and creating value.

This discussion paper sets out our developing thinking on our new Corporate Plan and our priorities for 2015 to 2018.

## Drivers

Our new corporate plan will cover the period 2015 to 2018. During this period, we need to respond strongly and positively to a wide range of drivers.

Drivers relating to the environment and the focus of our work include:

- The [2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity](#) reframes Scotland's efforts to protect its nature and landscapes, and to harness nature to improve our prosperity and welfare. Connecting people with nature is a critical part of this. SNH has a leading role to play in working with a wide range of partners to implement this strategy.
- The [Christie Commission](#) emphasised the benefits of preventative spend in reducing long-term costs and the need to involve communities in the design and delivery of public services.
- The Scottish Government is strongly supporting the role of community planning and the importance of community empowerment. The new **Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill** is about placing communities more at the centre of efforts aimed at improving outcomes for them and about changing how we deliver public services.
- The continuing need to help nature and society **adapt to climate change**, such as through the restoration of peatlands and flood prevention.
- An increasing focus across Scottish Government on improving **health and wellbeing** outcomes, reducing health inequalities and increasing social justice.
- The need to secure **better value from protected areas** and improve their condition.
- A need to achieve a more sustainable approach to the **management of our natural assets**, including responding to threats from non-native invasive species, tackling wildlife crime and securing more sympathetic land management of important habitats.
- Supporting the roll-out of **river basin management planning** in order to improve nature throughout catchments to support better water quality and flood management.

Drivers relating to how we work include:

- The continuing pressure on **public sector budgets**. The Scottish Government draft budget for 2015/16 indicates the same budget for SNH as in 2014/15 but our budget beyond next year is not yet clear.
- **Better Regulation**, reform of the planning system and the new Regulators Code, which will take effect from 2015/16.
- The need to provide better and more accessible **information** about the condition of our natural assets and their use.
- A continuing and developing focus on collaborative working, particularly with other Scottish Government bodies and through **Community Planning Partnerships**, and including more joint resource planning.
- The continuing development of a system for **sustainable marine management**, focussing on new protected areas and the management of marine data and information.
- The continuing move towards more efficient ways of **working across Scottish Government** and public services more generally, including the McClelland Review on information and communication technology and Audit Scotland requirements on workforce planning.

## Issues

What issues might these drivers generate for our next corporate plan?

- Delivering on our vision for Scotland’s nature and landscapes is a team effort. The task facing SNH is always how we can best use **our resources** to make the most difference; the Corporate Plan describes how we propose to do so. We believe that our resources go furthest when we work in partnership with a range of stakeholders, working jointly towards shared outcomes and using new sources of funding wherever it makes sense to do so.
- Developing what “**delivering a national service locally**” might mean in practice requires us to reconcile national priorities with local assessments of need, including conservation priorities. We are seeking a better understanding of the values that people and communities attach to natural assets in different circumstances and in different places.
- While the main focus of our work is within Scotland, the environmental issues we work on have a wider **international context**. We will continue to support the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, particularly at the European level, to ensure we are well aligned to these wider agendas, and share our practical experiences to help shape them.
- For many years, we have invested heavily in our **protected areas** on the basis that this is where the most important nature and landscapes are. But protected areas aren’t islands divorced from the wider countryside within which they sit. There may need to be some re-balancing of our investment in protected areas and at a wider ecosystem or landscape scale.
- We may also need to re-balance our investment between tackling issues in specific locations and addressing more systemic issues at an **ecosystem or landscape scale**. Our approach will need to be well defined, proportionate, risk-based and specific to the context in which we are working.
- We believe that all of nature is important for all of Scotland’s people. This approach increases the value we place on **nature close to where people live** and the benefits that people derive from it.
- National and local government in Scotland is likely to become more focussed on those **communities experiencing multiple negative outcomes**, which are often localised and more acute in our urban areas. We will need to change some of our approaches and patterns of investment to support this focus.
- As with our investment in places, we have often tried to use our resources to encourage or support anyone and everyone to get outdoors. In future, we will need to focus more on people that don’t currently **visit the outdoors**, those who experience exclusion and those in poor health. Identifying more innovative ways of engaging people from these groups and reducing health inequalities is likely to become more important.
- By continuing to work ‘upstream’ in **regulatory frameworks**, such as development planning, and to work with partners to create better places for people and nature, we should be able to focus more effort on other drivers of ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss.

Whilst these issues are challenging, there are also big opportunities to improve our use of scarce public resources, reach new audiences, generate greater public value and improve nature and landscapes on a wider front.

Do you think SNH has correctly identified the main drivers for our work in the next 3 years?  
 What are the key drivers affecting your own plans for 2015/18 and beyond?  
 Do you think SNH has correctly identified the most important areas of activity given these drivers?  
 Are there any other issues you would like us to consider in developing our new Corporate Plan?

## Alignment with the National Performance Framework

The Scottish Government’s draft budget for 2015/16 states that it will “*continue to protect and enhance our world class environment. We will maintain our efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity*”

*and to restore and enhance our ecosystems. We will invest in our natural resources, focusing on optimising the way that we use our land resources and ensuring that their role in health and wellbeing and in supporting Scotland's economy is fully recognised and taken into account.”*  
This is the basis of our corporate plan.

Working with our partners, we need to respond to the drivers in ways that help to solve the bigger challenges outlined in the introduction. In doing so, we shall contribute especially to the following National Outcomes in [Scotland Performs](#):

1	We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe
6	We live longer, healthier lives
10	We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need
11	We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others
12	We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations
14	We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production
16	Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs

## Planning our work – outcomes and priorities

Our new corporate plan will set out how we will work with others to:

- increase the public benefits generated by the sustainable use of Scotland's natural assets
- improve the health and resilience of these natural assets so that they can generate greater public benefits now and in the future

Our purpose is to work with the people of Scotland to help look after and improve Scotland's natural assets and enhance the quality of, and access to, the benefits they provide. Annex 1 summarises these benefits and provides some facts and figures. We need to be efficient in the use of resources as a public body and lead by example in delivering a public service for Scotland. We have particular responsibilities for certain public benefits that nature provides: its diversity of wildlife; its amenity, natural beauty and consequent recreational benefits; its scientific interest.

We have therefore divided our work into four portfolios:

- Enriching people's lives – helping to improve people's health and well-being and support economic growth through better places for people and nature and increased opportunities for people to experience and value nature at first hand.
- Caring for the natural world – maintaining and, where possible, improving the condition of nature and landscapes so that they continue to benefit community well-being and economic success.
- Promoting sustainable economic growth – developing and sustaining our natural capital as a key asset for sustainable economic growth.
- Delivering a high-quality public service – by putting customers first, focussing on services for the people of Scotland and providing value for money.

Do you have any comment on our proposed focus on increasing the benefits delivered through Scotland's natural assets and on improving the health and resilience of those assets?

We have identified a number of significant areas of work that we expect will be the focus of our investment and these are described in more detail in the following sections. In taking these forward, we will work to secure multiple benefits from them.

## Portfolio 1: Enriching People's Lives

*Outcome: nature and landscapes help to improve people's physical and mental health and wellbeing, and support economic growth and regeneration, through better places for people and nature and increased opportunities to experience and value nature at first hand.*

*We could increase the flow of services and benefits by:*

- Helping a wider range of people to improve their **health and well-being** through recreation, volunteering and outdoor learning, and reduce health inequalities. We think our priorities will be to support health-related activities (such as green exercise and health walks), volunteering and skills development projects which are focussed on those target groups and areas where activity levels are low, and to promote Scotland's wide ranging access rights and responsibilities.
- Helping people to **enjoy and understand nature at first hand** by improving places for people and nature. We think our priorities will be to operate our own National Nature Reserves and support others to provide and improve places close to our urban areas, focussing on those places that are best able to attract and accommodate visitors from our target groups, and to improve the on-line information available to people on these places so as to make them more accessible.
- Helping communities to make the most of their natural assets. We think our priorities will be to engage with **Community Planning Partnerships** to help deliver local outcomes and priorities, work with partners to help more deprived communities and provide tools for communities to help them engage in issues about nature and landscapes close to where they live. There are strong links to our work on volunteering and citizen science, and to engaging with people in the planning and management of our National Nature Reserves.

*We could increase Scotland's natural capital by:*

- Improving the quality and accessibility of **green infrastructure** close to where people live, particularly in the more deprived areas. We think our priorities will be to deliver the European green infrastructure scheme and to support the priorities for the Central Scotland Green Network. This work is complemented by the LIFE+ ecological coherence project in portfolio 3 which is seeking to improve natural assets in central Scotland.
- Helping to deliver the **national walking & cycling network**, one of the national developments in the National Planning Framework 3. We think our priority is to lead a partnership to develop and implement an action plan for delivering the network. This work will also help to support the outcomes in portfolio 3 around supporting sustainable economic growth.

## Portfolio 2: Caring for the natural world

*Outcome: the condition of nature and landscapes is maintained and, where possible improved, to halt the loss of biodiversity so that ecosystems are resilient and continue to benefit community wellbeing and economic success.*

*We could increase the flow of services and benefits by:*

- Working with partners to further develop **ecosystem approaches** to ensure nature and landscapes continue to provide benefits to people. We think our priorities will be to work more at a landscape scale in priority catchments identified by SEPA and others, and to improve the evidence available on, and our understanding of, ecosystem health.

- Developing ways of incorporating the **public value of nature and landscapes** in decisions about land use and management and into national accounts and reporting systems.

*We could increase Scotland's natural capital by:*

- Helping to address the **drivers of biodiversity loss**, particularly diffuse pollution, land use change and intensification, climate change and invasive species. We think our priorities will be to lead development of a roadmap for addressing these drivers (and underlying factors such as patterns of consumption and whether and how people feel connected to nature) and to secure the involvement of a wider range of organisations in the implementation of this roadmap.
- Promoting awareness and care of Scotland's natural assets and showing their value to people. We think our priorities will be to develop monitoring and surveillance that supports assessment of **site status and trends**, develop a better understanding of changes in the status of Scottish species, and help the Scottish Government to develop Marine Protected Areas (including SPAs and SACs) and a framework for managing Scotland's seas to deliver "good environmental status".
- Securing the best possible outcome for Scotland's natural assets through delivery of the new **Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP)**.
- Helping to maintain the health of our protected areas. We think our priorities will be to coordinate effort to achieve favourable condition targets and to secure wider public benefits from these areas.
- Developing a **better evidence base** for the health of Scotland's natural assets and relating this more strongly to the drivers of change, supported by citizen science.

### Portfolio 3: Promoting Sustainable Economic Growth

*Outcome: natural capital is developed and sustainably managed as a key asset for sustainable economic growth.*

*We could increase the flow of services and benefits by:*

- Demonstrating how better **management of, and investment in, natural assets** can generate more benefits to people and businesses. We think our priorities will be to work with partners on water catchments, vulnerable coastal areas and peatlands, and to develop case studies with them to help future communication.
- Helping to **ease conflicts and negative impacts on economic interests**. We think our priorities will be to work in areas where these are most acute, promote best practice and develop better ways in which stakeholders can work together to achieve managed and well balanced solutions.
- Advising partners on how Scotland can **increase economic benefits from its natural assets**. We think our priorities will be to support the promotion of Scotland as a tourism destination based on the quality of its natural assets and to secure lasting impact from Year of Food & Drink in 2015/16 for how this quality underpins its brand value.
- Delivering **better regulation**. We think our priorities will be to deliver our regulatory functions in ways that are customer-focussed and which target our effort on where it is most needed, enabling the right development in the right place, and, which help to encourage businesses and communities to work together to support sustainable economic growth and wider public value from our natural assets.

*We could increase Scotland's natural capital by:*

- Improving the **resilience of our natural assets** and their capacity to sustain us. We think our priorities will be to respond to climate change, particularly through work to improve the management of peatlands, and to improve ecosystem health in key

catchments, targeting effort to help deliver the EU2020 15% ecosystem restoration target.

- Supporting the sustainable management of our moorlands. We think our priorities will be to **support cross-partner initiatives** (such as the Moorland Forum) and contribute to the Forestry Commission Scotland's lead on woodland expansion through our work on deer management.
- Reducing threats to our most **vulnerable and valued wildlife**. We think our priorities will be to help tackle wildlife crime, poor practice and the impact of invasive non-native species on these natural assets.
- Improving the way decisions affecting **natural capital** are made. We think our priority will be to ensure significant impacts are recognised in regulatory work and decision making.

## Portfolio 4: Delivering a High Quality Public Service

*Outcome: delivering a high quality public service – focused on the needs of our customers, on securing real improvements in the services we deliver and on making sure that every public pound is spent wisely – that helps to free up resources for investing in Scotland's natural assets and the benefits they generate.*

*We could increase the flow of services/benefits by:*

- Providing better and more **accessible information** about Scotland's natural assets. We think our priorities will be to align our work with the Scottish Government Digital Strategy and provide information through the most effective routes, including SEWeb.
- Maintaining our capacity to **deliver a national agenda locally**. We think our priorities will be to use appropriate new technologies and share services and assets with our partners in support of our work with customers and stakeholders across Scotland.
- **Communicating with our stakeholders** and the public about Scotland's natural assets and their value. We think our priorities will be to focus on our corporate websites and the sensible use of social media.

*We could increase Scotland's natural capital by:*

- Meeting the expectations on SNH to deliver a high quality public service as efficiently as possible, through **reducing our running costs** so that more of our resources can be used to improve Scotland's natural assets and the benefits they generate. We think our priorities will be to make it easier for the public and stakeholders to work with SNH and ensure our external systems and processes are efficient, cost effective and easy to use.
- **Reducing our carbon footprint**. We think our priorities will be to deliver carbon savings through our Greening Project and to demonstrate best practice in managing our assets.

Do you see changes we are making in our priorities and activities as helping your work?  
Do you see new opportunities for collaborative working with SNH?  
Do you have any concerns?

## Annex 1. The benefits from our natural assets

### The benefits we gain from our natural assets – some facts and figures

- The value of the benefits from the environment in Scotland is estimated at between £21.5 and £23 billion per year ([UK National Ecosystem Assessment](#)).
- The peatland soils of Scotland are estimated to store ten times more carbon than in all of the UK's trees ([UK National Ecosystem Assessment](#)).
- Visits to the outdoors made by people living in Scotland generated around £2.6 billion in expenditure in 2010 ([Scottish Recreation Survey 2012](#)).
- In 2004, the value of marine biodiversity-related industries in Scotland was estimated to be over £1.2 billion ([Sustainable Seas for All, 2008](#)).
- A loss of only 1% of the carbon locked up in Scotland's peatland would equate to the total annual Scottish human-related emissions of greenhouse gases ([2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity](#)).
- A relevant environmental health agenda for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is as much about the creation of places which engender good physical and mental health, as it is about protection from hazards ([Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer Scotland 2006](#)).
- An 8-week wildlife and nature activity programme in Perth & Kinross for patients with a variety of mental health problems produced a social benefit of £12.43 for each £1 spent ([Woods for Health Pilot](#)).
- About 38% of Scottish adults and 30% of Scottish children fail to meet agreed physical activity guidelines ([Scottish Health Survey 2012](#)).
- An activity like brisk walking can reduce the risk of premature death by up to 30%, diabetes by 30-40% and heart attacks and strokes by 20-35% ([Chief Medical Officer Annual Report 2011 – Transforming Scotland's Health](#)).
- The proportion of people visiting the outdoors at least once a week between 2009 and 2011 varied from 34% in South Lanarkshire to 65% in Moray ([Scottish Recreation Survey 2012](#)).
- The Scottish Government, NHS Boards and other public bodies should take steps to encourage the use and enjoyment of green space by all as a means of improving health ([Equally Well: Report of the Ministerial Task Force on Health Inequalities](#)).

### Improving the health of our natural assets – some facts and figures

- The 2014 State of the Environment Report provides an assessment of Scotland's environment and how it is changing ([SEWeb](#)).
- The impacts of invasive non-native species have been estimated to cost up to £1.7 billion per year in Great Britain and possibly as much as £250 million in Scotland ([2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity](#)).
- Some 78.8% of features on protected nature sites were in favourable or recovering condition in early 2014/15 ([SNH Board, 2014](#)).
- In a significant number of access authorities, less than 40% of the population in areas of multiple deprivation have access to a core path within 5 minutes' walk. ([National Overview of Core Paths Plans and Path Provision](#)).
- In 2012, only 25% of people living in the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland rated their neighbourhood as a very good place to live. This compares to 86% of those living in the least deprived areas.

Figure 1. Ecosystem services and human wellbeing. Source: Scottish Environment Web, [what do we get from the environment?](#)



