

Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

Draft Budget 2020-21

Written submission from SNH

The arguments and evidence we provided last year remain valid – the scope and level of our activity on preventative spend is broadly similar, reflecting a similar level of resources. In response to the announcement of a Climate Emergency, the UK CCC Net Zero report and IPBES Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystems, SNH is examining areas where it can heighten and shift the focus of our work. That assessment is still in progress, but the examples below begin to reflect the scale and pace of transformation required.

We believe that a nature-rich future can help address the Climate Emergency. It is one of the key foundations for a healthy, wealthy and flourishing Scotland. We have a triple challenge: to transition to a net zero economy; adapt to changes in the climate that are now inevitable; and address the state of nature. All on the same land and over the same time period. Multiple benefits at a range of scales will be essential.

Significant carbon savings can be achieved by investing in a nature-rich future, which also provide co-benefits in adapting to climate change that is already locked into the system, help to address the state of nature as well as enhancing wellbeing, addressing aspects of child poverty and investing in inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Given the issues around biodiversity loss and climate change, as well as the continued tight public sector funding regime, SNH recognises that public spending alone may not be sufficient to deliver change at the pace and scale required. Therefore, we have begun to explore, different funding models which can enhance the considerable public sector resources devoted to these issues.

Climate Emergency and Biodiversity Loss

- The IPBES report sets out five drivers of biodiversity loss. Examples of SNH's work to address each of these drivers are given below:
 - Changing use of the land and sea especially for agriculture, forestry and coastal infrastructure (e.g. Green Infrastructure Fund, Central Scotland Green Network, Pollinator Strategy, SRDP – Agri-environment Climate Scheme, Biodiversity Challenge Fund, management of protected areas)
 - Direct exploitation of organisms via harvesting, logging, hunting and fishing (e.g. Marine Protected Areas, priority marine features, advice on sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, Moorland Review, woodland expansion)
 - Climate change – a driver in its own right as well as intensifying all of the others (e.g. Peatland Action, Our Dynamic Coast, work to identify stocks of marine ('blue') carbon, facilitating renewable energy)

- Pollution (e.g. Loch Leven catchment management, Pearls in Peril project)
- Invasive non-native species (requires sustained investment after initial works – e.g. Scottish Invasive Species Initiative which covers the north of Scotland, £3.34m over 4 years; Orkney Native Wildlife Project)
- **Peatland restoration.** A principal advantage of peatland restoration is that it prevents emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and secures stocks of carbon that have accumulated over thousands of years. This complements woodland planting, in which carbon from the atmosphere accumulates in trees as they grow over several decades. The benefits of peatland restoration are well known and include.
 - Hydrological & biodiversity including reduced flood events, enhanced water quality, habitat restoration and associated species.
 - Preventing carbon losses: targeting the most degraded areas first means that each 20,000 hectares restored equates to an annual reduction of around 0.25 million tonnes of CO₂ (equivalent).
 - Carbon sequestration: restoration of peatland leads to a state where the peatland sequesters carbon. This is equivalent to 20,000 hectares in due course sequestering 5,000 t/ha CO₂ per annum.

Sustainable Inclusive Economic Growth

- There is increasing recognition of the dependence of the economy on nature and climate and hence the value of promoting the benefits from natural capital and natural capital accounting approaches. We have applied natural capital accounting to our own land and, working with Crown Estates, we have tested a natural capital approach on land based industries. We believe rolling out this approach more widely would provide multiple benefits.
- Nature-based tourism - including walking and cycling on the NWCN and Scotland's Great Trails - contributes an estimated £1.4bn to the Scottish economy, equivalent to about 40% of the overall value of tourism, and employing 39,000 FTE jobs. In 2015 marine recreation and tourism activities were estimated to contribute £3.7 billion to the Scottish economy. The £5m Nature and Cultural Heritage Fund aims to conserve, protect and promote the nature and culture of the Highlands & Islands.
- SNH is a founding partner of the Central Scotland Green Network, Europe's largest greenspace project, benefitting 70% of Scotland's population. The CSGN is restoring and transforming the landscape of an area stretching from Ayrshire and Inverclyde, to Fife and the Lothians. The CSGN will deliver £6 billion to 2050 or over £2 for every pound spent with benefits for crime and antisocial activity reduction; physical health; mental health; carbon sequestered in restored peatland and new broadleaf woodland; and avoided flood damage

- ‘*Planning for Great Places*’ – our new approach to supporting good development, reflects our commitment to early upstream engagement providing advice to achieve the right development in the right place. The role of nature-based solutions in making places more resilient to a changing climate is becoming critical and needs to become embedded in planning approaches.
- Most of the renewable energy in Scotland is generated in rural areas through hydro and wind power. Our advice is key to ensuring renewable power is developed in a way that maximises the carbon savings and minimises wider environmental impacts.

Wellbeing

- Scotland has made great progress in increasing participation with weekly visits to the outdoors growing by around 10% in the last decade, with the strongest growth in visits to local greenspace and countryside. This trend has positive impacts on the nation’s well-being (though increased levels of physical activity and associated mental health), economy (though visitor and tourism spend) and climate change (by increasing active travel through walking and cycling). Maintaining progress in this area will require maintaining investment in both physical infrastructure (NWCN, Scotland great trails, national and local nature reserves, parks and greenspaces) and social infrastructure (people - rangers, wardens and other greenspace and countryside, staff) as well as on-going work on visitor management and promoting the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.
- Green Infrastructure – making places better by helping to transform some of Scotland’s most disadvantaged areas by giving people access to greenspace and by engaging communities to effect change at the grass root level. Nature-based solutions for wellbeing and child poverty create green infrastructure that also supports sustainable and inclusive growth. Since 2014 SNH has led the delivery of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention, amounting to £37.5m by 2022 delivered through around 20 major projects in total, as well as 14 Green Infrastructure Community Engagement projects. Working with Scottish Forestry, NHS HS and NHS HFS, we have worked with 11 area health boards to improve over 80 hectares of greenspace on the NHS estate using funding from Scottish Government.
- Our Natural Health Service – four Green Health Partnerships in Dundee, Highland, Lanarkshire and North Ayrshire focus on the physical and mental health benefits of place-based approaches, building momentum and creating more effective links with the health sector, including formal referral and social prescribing pathways (£750k from 2017-21)

Addressing Child Poverty

- The Conservation Volunteers and Volunteering Matters – securing environmental improvements with social co-benefits through volunteering opportunities particularly for people who rarely engage with nature. Activities

target lower SIMD areas, the young and old, minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities and people with mental health concerns (including dementia). The work also builds community resilience and empowerment priorities and young people enjoy the health and educational benefits of outdoor learning. (TCV - £340k jointly funded by SNH and SG, Volunteering Matters and John Muir Award – £160k)

- CSGN – connecting people to the green and blue spaces in central Scotland's towns and cities from Ayrshire and Inverclyde to Fife and the Lothians. Resources are targeted to where they will have most impact, especially lower SIMD areas, the young and old. Higher quality local environments promote active travel and healthier lifestyles; provide opportunities for outdoor learning and make central Scotland a more attractive place to live, visit and do business. In central Scotland, CSGN provide an important context for a range of other investment e.g. Green Infrastructure Strategic Intervention, Transforming Vacant and Derelict Land, National Walking and Cycling Network and Peatland Action
- Outdoor Learning (Outdoor Learning in Nature Challenge Fund, Learning in Local Greenspace and John Muir) - getting young people from the most deprived and disadvantaged backgrounds to have regular, frequent, structured and progressive outdoor learning experiences (£850k from 2018-20). This work helps to build confidence in young people, helps to close the attainment gap and addresses child poverty.
- Early Years – from August 2020, the Scottish Government are extending funding for ELC from 600 hours to 1140 hours for all 3 and 4 years olds. £476 million of funding is being provided to local authorities over four years to support new buildings projects to create indoor and outdoor capacity to deliver the expansion, with a strong emphasis on use of the local greenspaces and countryside. We are currently exploring with SG and A&DS the scope for SNH to support this work.
- Junior rangers – giving 11-18 year olds the opportunity to look after people, the countryside and environment. SNH is providing funding to SCRA to promote the roll out of JR programmes across Scotland and we are also working with a range of partners to establish new pilot schemes in some of Scotland's urban areas.