

# A Flourishing Scotland



Sustainable development: Scotland's voice for Rio+20



## Scotland's Celebrations

*in relation to sustainable development*

Twenty years after the Earth Summit, Scotland has much to celebrate in terms of sustainable development and the potential to provide a pathway towards 2050 that will benefit all in Scotland if our ambitions are allowed. This document is both a reminder of these successes, as well as a collection of our ambitions that need to be realised to ensure a 'Flourishing Scotland for All'.

# Scotland's Celebrations

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## A Pioneering Climate Change Act

In 2009, Scotland passed a pioneering, progressive and, in a number of areas, world-leading Climate Change Act. There was unanimous cross-party Scottish Parliament support for this legislation with the strong endorsement of business and civil society. This Act included the groundbreaking 42% emission reduction targets for 2020, along with commitments to a statutory climate adaptation programme and Scotland's first land use strategy. The Act includes a statutory duty on all public bodies to contribute to meeting emission reduction targets.

## Leadership and Parliament

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The Scottish Parliament has brought sustainable development closer to the heart of decision making in Scotland. Several progressive policies including social enterprise and health care demonstrate how devolution has facilitated leadership at a Scotland level. The Parliament has encouraged more people to get engaged in the decisions that directly affect them. There is now a deeper trust between political, community and business leaders who are increasingly collaborating on a wide variety of social, economic and environmental initiatives.

# Scotland's Celebrations

## Education

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Scotland is leading the world in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) by embedding ESD in the 3-18 curriculum, having 98% of all local authority schools involved in Eco-Schools and having two Action Plans for the UN Decade of ESD. Beyond school education, the further and higher education sectors continue to innovate and are gaining international recognition for their sustainable development programmes. 60 universities and colleges in Scotland are signatories of the Universities and Colleges Climate Commitment for Scotland. Scotland is exploring the fertile edges between environment and development, education and activism, values and behaviour, culture and natural ecology.

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## Community Empowerment

Scotland has made great strides in community empowerment in the past 20 years. Many communities have self organised and are leading bottom-up approaches to environmental sustainability, generating long term income streams from community social enterprises, including from local renewable energy initiatives. The Land Reform Act, the first major piece of legislation for 21st century Scotland, introduced community 'right to buy' and gave every citizen the 'right to roam'. For example, Isle of Eigg's pioneering community buy-out ushered in land reform in Scotland, giving islanders control of their future for the first time.

# Scotland's Celebrations

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## Community Resourcing

Resources have been made available to support community-led enterprises and help bring vibrancy back to many settlements. For example the Climate Challenge Fund has successfully supported almost 350 communities in Scotland to take action to reduce their carbon footprints relating to energy, transport, food and waste. The Community and Renewable Energy Scheme is helping communities to deliver renewable energy projects and encouraging sustainable living. There is now considerable activity by community-based organisations including the Transition Town movement which has increased local resilience across Scotland.

## Health and Wellbeing

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The Act introducing a smoking ban in public places was a hugely significant piece of legislation which will reap population health benefits. Other preventative spend initiatives, including 'Good Places Better Health', greenspace mapping and assessment, active travel projects, and air and water quality improvements are all helping improve life expectancy and quality of life in Scotland. There is also an increased understanding of the relationship between healthy living and sustainable development which is being promoted across sectors.

# Scotland's Celebrations

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## Biodiversity

The 1992 Earth Summit prompted the first systematic plans for the recovery of threatened species and habitats in Scotland. Biodiversity Action Plans remain important and are now set within a broader understanding that we need to restore the health of whole ecosystems, not just the biodiversity hotspots within them. The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 introduced a biodiversity duty on all public bodies, a landmark duty that now needs to be translated into action on the ground to build on successful initiatives such as water environment restoration funds. The 2011 Marine Act, currently being implemented, received cross-party support and will form the basis of marine ecosystem recovery in the coming decades.

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## Business Unusual

Business has become more outward focused, collaborating with all sectors of society, including the third sector, to drive sustainable development. The 2020 Climate Group has been successful in fostering partnerships between global competitors based in Scotland. These partnerships, formed across sectors and between competitors, should help create the conditions for the transition to a low carbon economy and achievement of the Climate Change Act targets for 2020. Businesses have also responded by addressing key challenges relating to employability, health and wellbeing and the environment. Vigorous pro-renewable energy policies are creating sustained business and employment opportunities as Scotland seeks to develop into a globally important renewable energy hub.

# Scotland's Celebrations

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## Collaboration and Connectivity

Scotland has become more connected. NGOs, businesses, government, local authorities, community groups and research institutes are increasingly part of a collective effort to create a sustainable future, and ensure employability, through for example, training and mentoring programmes. Whether it is businesses engaged in corporate social responsibility, or social enterprises transforming local neighbourhoods, different sectors are now working far more effectively together, and as a result creating opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish. An example of this is where a private sector partner is expanding its innovative and environmentally friendly recycling solutions with profits re-invested in order to create jobs and volunteering/training opportunities for disadvantaged people.

## Building Natural and Social Capital

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There is an increasing understanding within Scotland that the prosperity of the nation is underpinned by vital social and natural capital, not just the more visible economic capital. A good example of this is the effort to promote sustainable tourism. Scottish Government has taken a lead in Europe through robust implementation of Strategic Environmental Assessment which, when applied well, encourages better more sustainable outcomes at less cost.



# Ambitions

for a Flourishing Scotland



# Scotland's Ambitions

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## Measuring what Matters

In the past few decades, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has become not just a measure of economic growth but also a proxy for societal progress. As such, it has become a hugely powerful driver of government decision making across the world. More work is needed to measure what matters at a national level. Such measures could include fairness, the natural economy, happiness, reducing consumption, community, social justice and other key sustainable development objectives. Alternative measures to GDP should be sought by progressing a national conversation on measuring what really matters.

## Sustainable Development Governance

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We need effective sustainable development governance in Scotland, with clear goals and targets. While work has been undertaken in creating connections in Scotland, these strands of work need to be drawn together to ensure that collaboration becomes key in aligning different sectors and organisations. Scotland needs to generate a holistic vision that will inspire people and organisations to act together rather than compete on fragmented, single issues including transport, agriculture and construction. The Government's central purpose should be sustainable development leading to a flourishing Scotland for all.

# Scotland's Ambitions

## Behaviour and Culture Change

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Being aware of the scale of the sustainable development challenge facing us does not always mean people respond by adopting greener, more equitable, inclusive and environmentally responsible life styles. Our ambition is that the people of Scotland will increasingly understand the power that their individual choices have in moving society towards a more sustainable model. A shift to a values-based approach will help to embed sustainability across all sectors, as well as within our education system, media, national policies and economic modeling. The Scottish Government's Public Engagement Strategy on climate change should play a vital role in achieving this transition.

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## Long term Thinking and Leadership

To build on its successes and to reinforce its leadership on sustainable development, Scotland will need to become ever bolder in its budgetary decision making as well as in demonstrating effective adaptation of policies leading to improved social and environmental metrics in Scotland. To make the country more competitive, innovative and resilient over the longer term, we need to look beyond the horizon of the next election date or financial year end, and make long term decisions, for example on preventative spend for health, sustainable transport, green jobs and green infrastructure.

# Scotland's Ambitions

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## A Continued Positive Narrative for Climate Change

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and associated targets provide an excellent framework for action. A more compelling narrative is needed that links better lives and thriving businesses to climate action. This means changing the language of climate action from one of hardship and austerity, to opportunity and entrepreneurship. Climate action can achieve a flourishing, innovative Scotland and ultimately a healthier, smarter, fairer and greener society. We must also take action to ensure climate justice at an international level.

## Biodiversity

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As the 2010 target to halt the loss of biodiversity in Scotland was not met, more effort and investment is now required to turn around continuing declines in nature. Key threats to biodiversity including habitat loss, intensification of land use, invasive species, diffuse pollution and marine ecosystem degradation continue largely unabated. We need to better understand the true value of biodiversity and 'ecosystem services' and develop more effective mechanisms of protection and enhancement in the coming decade.

# Scotland's Ambitions

## Green Jobs and Smart Technology

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The prospect of de-carbonizing the economy and decoupling growth from resource use has the power to change the face of the jobs market. Scotland should aspire to grow the emerging green jobs market including jobs that help restore ecosystems to health; reduce energy, water and materials consumption, and minimise waste and pollution. Green jobs, social enterprise and fair trade initiatives are critical to restoring communities to become working models of viability.

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## Sustainable Cities

Green cities tend to be innovative cities, they attract business start-ups, have livable greenspaces and foster knowledge economies. Greener cities are where people want to live and do business. Scotland should aspire to make its cities greener and smarter, resilient to climate change and achieve emissions target. There is a need for an integrated approach including green infrastructure, waste, energy efficiency and making the transition from car dependency to more sustainable options. The pattern and design of new and existing places must create compact neighbourhoods where walking and cycling to local services are quick and easy options.

# Scotland's Ambitions

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## Health and Wellbeing

Health and wellbeing remains a central challenge for Scotland, life expectancy is increasing but the gap between rich and poor remains. While great examples of national (Equally Well) and local (Fife Diet) initiatives exist more are needed to create a healthier Scotland for all. This could include new regulation of the media and businesses on healthy eating, tackling obesity, better promotion of active lifestyles, and an alcohol strategy. More should be done to address the widening inequalities in relation to health and well being.

## Resilient Communities

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Resilience is closely linked to taking a long term view. Individuals, communities and organisations are increasingly taking responsibility for creating resilient and thriving places to live and work. Enabling communities to take ownership of their local assets and improving digital communications infrastructure are two very tangible ways Government can help build resilience at the community level. Developing sustainable food and energy production systems, along with more effective management of vital ecosystem services are all approaches which build resilience in a global context.

