

Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme – Deer Management

Purpose of this briefing

This LINK briefing from the Climate Adaptation Taskforce (CATF) is intended as a resource and reference to be used by LINK colleagues for information regarding Scottish Government policies relating to adaptation of interest to specific taskforce sectors. **Please note this briefing does not include any analysis of the specific adaptation policies**, although the CATF general concerns are detailed below, alongside links to our previous consultation response. The full Adaptation Programme can be viewed here: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00451392.pdf>

Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme (SAP) background

Climate change impacts are being felt now in Scotland, particularly in the natural environment. Scotland needs to act urgently to address the consequences and impacts of our changing climate. Scotland must reduce GHG emissions but also adapt how we run our economy, our society and how we look after our environment. Adaptation is the term used to describe our responses to a changing climate and its impacts – including building resilience. Adaptation is inevitable – the important thing is to plan early and to do it in the right way. With the publication of the SAP, it's essential that climate adaptation becomes a higher priority within Government - **building the resilience of Scotland's environment to climate change must be a priority at a time when our natural resource base needs to be valued as an important asset.**

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009¹ requires Government to lay before the Scottish Parliament 'programmes for adaptation to climate change'. The Scottish Government has developed measures based on risks identified for Scotland in the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) 2012. The CCRA is however limited and does not adequately cover some impacts, such as sea-level rise or extreme weather events. Publication of the first Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme brings into force the adaptation requirement of the public bodies climate change duties, which requires that a public body must, in exercising its functions, act in the way best calculated to help deliver the Programme.

The programme contains an overall **Aim** – to increase the resilience of Scotland's people, environment and economy to the impacts of a changing climate. Within this are three **Themes** and relevant **Objectives** for the long-term (up to 2050), to facilitate achieving the Aim:

Natural Environment	Buildings and Infrastructure	Society
<i>Outcome: productive, healthy, diverse natural environment able to adapt to change</i>	<i>Outcome: well-managed, resilient infrastructure and buildings providing access to amenities and services needed</i>	<i>Outcome: strong, healthy, resilient communities which are well informed and prepared for changing climate</i>
N1: understand effects of climate change and impacts on the natural environment	B1: understand effects of climate change and impacts on buildings and infrastructure	S1: understand effects of climate change and impacts on people, homes and communities
N2: support a healthy and diverse natural environment with capacity to adapt	B2: provide knowledge, skills and tools to manage climate change impacts on buildings and infrastructure	S2: increase awareness of impacts of climate change to enable people to future extreme weather events
N3: sustain and enhance the benefits, goods and services the natural environment provides	B3: increase resilience of buildings and infrastructure to sustain and enhance benefits and services	S3: support health and emergency services to respond effectively to increased CC pressures

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2009/12/part/5/chapter/1>

LINK'S general concerns with SAP

Some of our initial main concerns that the SAP contains few *new* policies or *new* resources and funding still stand - it is predominantly a collection of existing policies collected together to address the risks highlighted by the UKCCRA. In general there are also no specific **targets** and **timescales** attached to the programme, making progress difficult to assess. The CATF principle concerns are detailed below and our consultation response can be viewed here - many of our comments still apply: <http://www.scotlink.org/files/policy/ConsultationResponses/LINKResponseDraftSCCAP13.pdf>

- **Ecosystem approach:** We welcome that the SAP recognises that the natural environment provides benefits to Scotland in terms of resilience to climate change. However, we believe an ecosystem approach of 'working with nature' should be central to the SAP to; avoid maladaptation, ensure appropriate scale of action and provide a sustainable flow of benefits from ecosystems, such as flood attenuation (LINK Consultation: Section 1a/2a)
- **Greater clarity:** We welcome the long list of policies in the SAP, however, too many are vague, lack sufficient detail, and fail to outline the actions to be taken. This makes it difficult to confidently assess whether the SAP Objectives will be met. We recommend effort to further develop the policies (LINK Consultation: Section 2b/d).
- **Implementing existing legislation:** Whilst the SAP does include existing policies to improve the natural environment, LINK wants to see the SAP emphasise the need to fully implement all existing environmental legislation. Improving our environment will increase the resilience of the natural environment, society and economy to climate change impact (LINK Consultation: Section 2c).
- **Demonstrating action:** We welcome efforts to embed adaptation across Government but it is vital that adaptation is embedded throughout wider society too. Demonstration projects and an effective communication strategy must be included in the SAP to allow wider society to understand the need for effective adaptation and ensure appropriate adaptation action (LINK Consultation: Section 5b).

Major climate impacts on deer management in Scotland

The occurrence of pests and disease

As our climate changes, it will create new conditions that may allow existing pests and disease to spread and new threats to become established in Scotland. This may impact on the health of our people, animals, plants and ecosystems if risks are not properly managed.

The quality of our soils

We rely on soils to sustain biodiversity, support agriculture and forestry, regulate the water cycle and store carbon. Soils also have an historic environment value, as a proxy record of environmental change and for the preservation of archaeological deposits and artefacts. Soils and vegetation may be altered by changes to rainfall patterns and increased temperatures - as well as the way we use the land.

The health of our natural environment

Climate change may affect the delicate balance of Scotland's ecosystems and transform Scotland's habitats and biodiversity, adding to existing pressures. Some distinctive Scottish species may struggle and could be lost, invasive non-native species may thrive, while a degraded environment may not be able to sustain productive land or water supply.

Areas of the SAP relevant to the Deer Taskforce

Relevant sections of the Programme are reproduced, verbatim, below. SAP references are included and, where applicable, the LINK consultation response references.

Role of Scottish Government

It is vital that the Scottish Government provides clear leadership in promoting a sustainable approach to climate change adaptation (p24).

What's already being done

The below sets out what is already being done to achieve the natural environment objectives in relation to impacts on the deer sector:

Policy: Implement the Land Use Strategy (LUS) and associated action plan - incorporates principles for sustainable land use and includes a commitment to investigate the relationship between land use change and ecosystems processes to identify adaptation priorities.

How it will deliver: The LUS Action Plan Proposals contain a number of specific milestones such as the publication of Achieving Diversity in Scotland's Forest Landscapes which provides guidance on planning future forests in a changing climate (N2-8, p52).

Policy: Implement the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy which promotes action to enhance the health & resilience of the terrestrial and marine environments, and the benefits they provide to people, taking account of climate risk & principles for helping nature adapt.

How it will deliver: Climate risk is fully integrated into the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. Research under the strategy will contribute knowledge regarding the priority risks for biodiversity that need to be managed (N2-9, p52; LINK 2c).

Policy: Review objectives and priorities for action in Scotland's Wild Deer: a National Approach (WDNA) Prepare best practice guidance for deer management groups to support the code of practice on deer management under the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 as amended.

How it will deliver: Will support sustainable deer management and minimise adverse impacts from deer on ecosystems and landscapes, such as excessive grazing and trampling causing erosion of carbon rich soils (N2-1, p50; LINK 2c).

Policy: Pilot the use of the Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) Wildlife Management Framework to integrate climate change risks into wildlife management decisions (including deer). The Framework includes questions around the impact of management actions on the ability of the species to adapt to climate change and on woodland expansion. It will be tested within SNH and then rolled out for use by others, including land managers.

How it will deliver: This is a tool to support decisions around wildlife management issues such as controlling non-native species, managing conflicts between species, or ensuring sustainable use of species as a resource for food or sport. This should help make such decisions more robust in the face of climate change, and so contribute to adaptation (N2-5, p50).

Policy: Sourcing For Growth Initiative - A knowledge hub to match food manufacturing companies with producers of quality Scottish produce has been set up to build on the nation's growing gourmet reputation.

How it will deliver: The Sourcing for Growth initiative will help Scottish producers prepare to meet manufacturers' demands for raw materials. It will enable manufacturers and farmers to work together to take advantage of the opportunities of Scotland's growing food industry. This will encourage local businesses to work together therefore reducing supply chains and help protect Scotland's food producing markets (N3-16, p61).

Research

The Scottish Government is funding research into the resilience of Scotland's biodiversity to climate change and land-use change. There are currently no specific research programmes investigating deer and adaptation detailed in the SAP (p62).

Proposals - potential new policies

There are currently only 3 proposals detailed which may become policies if needed during the lifetime of the SAP, only 1 of which is relevant to this sector:

1) Greater recognition of the role of integrated land management in tackling climate change (as opposed to sector-based responses) and this being backed up by Scottish Government policy and support mechanisms. Land Use Strategy Regional Land Use Framework pilots will be utilising the LUS principles and taking an ecosystem approach to consider land use and land use change in their area in an integrated manner (N3-17, p63).

UK Climate Change Risk Assessment

Some risks associated with deer that are not considered an issue now in Scotland may become problems in the future, one reason why LINK called for the SAP to set a long-term direction (LINK Consultation² Section 2). There may also be other potential climate change risks to your sector that are not addressed on top of the above, especially those not identified in the UKCC Risk Assessment. Of those risks that are addressed in the programme, many may be inadequately dealt with.

² <http://www.scotlink.org/files/policy/ConsultationResponses/LINKResponseDraftSCCAP13.pdf>

LINK is a Scottish Charity (SC000296) and a Scottish Company Limited by guarantee (SC250899). LINK is core funded by Membership Subscriptions and by grants from Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Government and Charitable Trusts.