

Renewing Scotland's Rural Areas

A Role for Future Farming and Rural Land Use Policy

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 35 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

INTRODUCTION

Since joining the European Economic Community in 1973, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has been a major influence on Scotland's rural areas. It has set the direction of agriculture policy and provided a substantial level of financial support to farmers and crofters, which continues today. Successive reforms have broadened the CAP's focus and extended its reach, setting new objectives and introducing agri-environment payments, support for forestry and a range of rural development measures.

Following the referendum on EU membership, the UK now looks set to leave the EU. Recent events mean that Scotland's future relationship with the EU remains uncertain. Any changes will have significant implications for Scottish agriculture and other land uses such as forestry, for our environment and rural communities. It is therefore already a topic of much debate.

Whilst there are many challenges ahead, not least questions about future funding for agriculture and rural development, there are also opportunities. The most significant perhaps is the chance to consider afresh our objectives for farming and rural land use in Scotland, how these objectives might best be achieved and the role of public policy in doing so.

This paper offers the initial views of Scottish Environment LINK on the future of farming and rural land use policy in Scotland.

In summary, we need to:

- **Retain... current levels of public investment in our rural areas.** If we leave the CAP behind, this must not be used as an excuse to lower the level of public expenditure in the rural sector. The challenges facing farming, crofting and other rural land use businesses and the environment are too great to ignore. Without public investment, these challenges will not be met and opportunities will be missed.
- **Reshape... how we spend public money**, allocating resources in three main ways:
 - **public money for public goods** with the lion's share of resources focused on this;
 - **investments to facilitate change** such as helping farming, crofting, forestry and other rural businesses adapt and develop, improve business efficiency and explore market opportunities; and,
 - **investments in supporting activities** including research, knowledge transfer, advice and training.
- **Renew... our rural areas for the benefit of all of us:** rewarding farmers, foresters and other land managers for the full range of goods and services they provide and helping rural businesses become more profitable and sustainable; protecting and enhancing the environment and the natural resources that underpin economic activity; and, spending taxpayers' money effectively, helping to create good livelihoods and jobs and contributing to our health and wellbeing.

LINK VISION FOR SUSTAINABLE LAND USE

Our starting point is to offer our vision for sustainable land use in Scotland. We recognise we have limited land resources and need to use and manage land sustainably - environmentally, socially and economically. We want to see land used in ways that are good for people and good for the environment. Our vision is for a thriving countryside where:

- all land managers help to enhance landscapes and biodiversity and where a clean, healthy and wildlife rich environment is regarded both as an asset to society and essential for underpinning economic activity such as farming and forestry;
- land is adaptable and resilient to climate change, and is used and managed in ways that contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation more broadly;
- people live and work and rural communities are sustained, with opportunities for young people to work and manage the land, and where new entrants to traditional sectors are encouraged and supported;
- a broad range of land use and rural business activities offer good livelihoods and employment opportunities. Those who manage the land secure a fair return from it, whether producing traditional products such as food and timber or delivering public goods;
- the full range of ecosystem services land provides are recognised and valued for their contribution to our economy and to society;
- land is used and managed in more integrated ways in order to deliver multiple outputs and benefits wherever possible.

It is important to recognise the contribution that the land and natural resources make to the economy. The gross value added (GVA) from the food and drink sectors was £5.3 billion in 2014 (Scottish Government, 2017); the agricultural sector employs 63,400 people (Scottish Government, 2016a), and the total income from farming was £749 million. GVA from the forestry sector, including both forestry and timber products as well as forest recreation and tourism amounts to £954 million, and the forestry sector provides 25,000 full time equivalent jobs (Forestry Commission Scotland, 2015). Last but certainly not least, Scotland's iconic landscapes contribute to a thriving nature-based tourism sector worth £1.4 billion and provide 39,000 full-time equivalent jobs (Scottish Natural Heritage, 2010). Much of this economic activity is underpinned by our natural resources, and depends on their continued existence into the future.

In our view, achieving this vision demands we take a different approach to rural land use and management than has been facilitated by the CAP to date.

THE POLICY CONTEXT FOR TAKING A NEW APPROACH

Scotland's future policies for farming and rural land use must reflect the Government's overall commitment to sustainable development. Scotland was one of the first countries to sign up to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and these should increasingly provide the framework for our economic, social and environmental policies and performance measures.

Many of Scotland's own existing national policies are already supportive of a transition towards more sustainable farming and other land use. This is reflected in the [Land Use Strategy](#), the [Climate Change Act](#), [Land Reform Act](#) and [Community Empowerment Act](#). The '[Future of Scottish Agriculture](#)' discussion paper explicitly references the desire for Scotland to '*become a world leader in greener farming*', which LINK supports. Meanwhile, a number of forthcoming Bills should help to drive the sustainability agenda further e.g. a Good Food Nation Bill and a Forestry Bill.

We now have the opportunity to consider how farming and rural land use policy, post CAP, could help to further the goals of sustainable development and achieve our vision for sustainable land use.



FAILURES OF THE CURRENT CAP

Scottish Environment LINK has argued consistently for fundamental reform of the CAP in order to address its failures and better deliver environmental outcomes. Successive reforms from the early 1990s have ameliorated some of the worst effects of the policy and introduced more positive measures such as agri-environment schemes and other rural development support. But the CAP today remains poorly designed and ill-suited to addressing the challenges facing farming and our rural areas. These challenges include:

- how to ensure the viability of farming and crofting in Scotland in the face of economic challenges, especially in upland and more marginal farming and crofting areas, and how to help farms, crofts and other rural businesses adapt and become more resilient;
- preventing environmental damage and ensuring that farming, crofting, forestry and other rural land use make a positive contribution to the management of our natural resources, helping to combat climate change, halt the loss of biodiversity, improve water quality, maintain attractive landscapes and deliver other environmental outcomes;
- how to maintain prosperous rural communities and prevent decline, and ensure our rural areas are good places for people to live and work and offer opportunities for young people.

Box 1: State of Scotland's Environment

- Almost a quarter of Scotland's GHG emissions come from agriculture and related land use, with agriculture a primary contributor due to emissions of methane and nitrous oxide from livestock, manures and fertiliser use (Scottish Government, 2014).
- Many species of wildlife associated with farmland are in decline due to historic and current changes in land management practices. Scotland remains a stronghold for many farmland birds but a number of key species have shown strong declines between 1994 and 2015: curlew (-49%), lapwing (-53%), oystercatcher (-40%), kestrel (-60%) (Scottish Natural Heritage, 2016).
- Botanical diversity throughout the countryside declined by 10% and the abundance of bird and butterfly food plants declined by 8% between 1998 and 2007 (Countryside Survey, 2007).
- Overall, the quality of water bodies in Scotland is good but 34% of water bodies and 17% of protected areas are not in good quality due to a range of factors (Natural Scotland, 2015). Tackling diffuse pollution and modifications to the physical condition of water bodies are two of the biggest challenges (Natural Scotland, 2015). Both these pressures are connected with various land uses, including farming.
- The State of Nature Scotland report shows that, overall, biodiversity and ecosystem services have declined. Scotland's Biodiversity Intactness Index (BII) is 81.3%. BII values that fall below 90% indicate that "ecosystems may have fallen below the point at which they can reliably meet society's needs" (Hayhow *et al.*, 2016: 3). Scotland ranks in the bottom fifth of all 208 countries analysed.

The current 'two pillar' system of CAP support reflects and exacerbates a tension between two different policy goals: supporting farm incomes and maintaining production; and, achieving environmental and rural development goals.

Pillar I provides direct payments, as a form of income support, to farmers and crofters based on the amount of land they farm, with higher payment rates per hectare for better quality, more productive land. It also provides some support coupled to production for the beef and sheep sector and other market measures. Approximately two-thirds of the CAP budget is spent on Pillar 1. Total Pillar I expenditure in Scotland amounts to c. £430 million per annum (Scottish Government, 2016d). 'Greening' payments were introduced at the last round of CAP reform with 30% of the budget allocated to them. These payments were intended to encourage a shift to more environmentally friendly farming but have serious shortcomings; a recent EU review (European Commission, 2016) showed that the greening measures that are most effective for biodiversity have the lowest uptake.

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Despite this significant investment of public money in farming, many farmers and crofters fail to make a decent livelihood. In 2014-15, the average Farm Business Income (FBI) was £23,000, the lowest level since 2009-10. When subsidy payments are excluded, this loss was £17,000. Lower market prices, rising input costs and changes in subsidy all contributed to these figures. But the overall average figure does not tell the whole story; farm business performance varies hugely between the top and bottom 25%. Whilst the average FBI for businesses in the bottom performing quartile was a loss of £14,000, those in the top performing quartile earned an average income of £74,000 – three times the overall average. Average income was also greater for farms engaged in diversified activities at £36,000 (Scottish Government, 2016b).

The pattern of distribution of Pillar 1 payments is also problematic since they are not targeted at where income support is most needed. By making higher payments on better quality land, the bulk of direct payments go to Scotland's more productive and commercially viable farming regions with much less support helping farmers and crofters in the more agriculturally disadvantaged parts of the country, which are often of high environmental importance. In addition, direct payments:

- are capitalised into land values, making it more difficult for new entrants and exacerbating the problem of an ageing farmer population;
- have very few conditions attached, and thus have no discernible impact on improving resource use efficiency, and stifle change within farming businesses and land uses;
- do not ensure the maintenance of public goods and ecosystem services such as biodiversity, water quality and climate change mitigation;
- can cushion but not prevent the impact of market forces on the sector;
- do not contribute to wider community development.

Taking all this into account, direct payments are simply too blunt an instrument to help farmers and crofters adapt and move to more sustainable business models and fail to target funds to where support is most needed. They also fail to reward the non-market goods and services that agriculture can provide and keep many farmers and crofters on a production pathway even when this makes little economic sense.

Meanwhile, Scotland's Rural Development Programme (Pillar II of the CAP) which contains a range of schemes and measures that can support farm business and wider rural development and pay for environmental land management, receives only 30% of the CAP budget. Many schemes are, in our view, underfunded and a sufficient level of investment is not being made to deliver the step changes required to deliver greener farming, encourage sustainable land use more widely or help businesses adapt, develop and thrive.

SCOTTISH ENVIRONMENT LINK PROPOSALS

I. Retain...current levels of investment

For all its faults, the CAP represents a significant investment of public money in Scottish farming and crofting, the environment and rural areas. In leaving the CAP behind, it will be tempting for Government to lower the level of public expenditure in the rural sector, given the pressures on public finance. We believe this would be a false economy and that ***the same level of investment must be maintained in future***; without it many challenges will fail to be met and opportunities not be grasped.

We now have the chance to put Scottish farming and other rural land use on a more sustainable footing, respond to the urgent problems of climate change and biodiversity loss and revitalise our rural areas. This requires public investment - and political leadership - to drive change.

The rationale for making such public investments in farming, crofting and rural areas needs to be much clearer in future than it has been to date. It simply cannot be right that so much of the current funding is invested in payments that fail to deliver for society. We believe the strongest arguments for continuing to spend public

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money in rural areas is to ensure the delivery of public goods and to bring about transformational change and renewal through appropriate investments.

The logic of public money for public goods

Some of the outputs from rural land uses such as farming, crofting and forestry are products with a commercial value, the price of which is determined by market prices. We recognise there are serious imbalances in the way these markets operate, particularly when it comes to the price farmers receive for their produce, compared to food retail prices. This needs to be addressed and we support efforts by Government and others e.g. the Grocery Adjudicator, to ensure farmers get a fairer deal, if they are to remain viable. But such market failure does not justify the kind of public subsidy to farming that we have witnessed to date. Price support and production linked subsidies are discredited mechanisms which lead to over production and distort markets, as demonstrated by the past failures of the CAP. We have also described earlier why direct payments fail on a number of counts.

The concept of public goods is a way of describing the environmental and social goods and services provided by agriculture and forestry that are not rewarded through the market. Maintaining or encouraging their production therefore needs supporting, through financial incentives or other mechanisms. The main environmental public goods that are provided by agriculture are farmland biodiversity, cultural landscapes, high quality water, air and soil, a stable climate and resilience to flooding (IEEP, n.d.). Paying for public goods delivers the outcomes society demands whilst supporting farming, crofting, forestry and other land management activities in the process. In very many cases, these outcomes can only be achieved through the continuation of such activities.

II. Re-shape....how we spend public money

We have set out above why we think '**public money for public goods**' is the clearest rationale for investing public funds in farming and rural land use. In future, we believe a large share of any rural support budget should be focused on this. We also recognise however that much more needs to be done to help farming, crofting, forestry and other rural businesses adapt and develop, improve business efficiency and explore market opportunities and to support new entrants. These can be thought of broadly as '**investments to facilitate change**'. A third component of public funding must be '**investments in supporting activities**' including research, knowledge transfer, advice and training.

We explore ideas for each of these three different types of investments in more detail below. First though, we set out some key principles for spending public funds and say why effective regulation must set the baseline for the use of public money.

Key principles for spending rural funds

Given we are calling for a continued investment of significant sums of public money in farming, the environment and rural land use, we believe it is right that this money is used as effectively and efficiently as possible. In order to achieve this, the policies designed to deliver this expenditure must be:

- Coherent with other Government policies, objectives and targets
- Transparent, with explicit objectives and intended beneficiaries
- Targeted at specific outcomes
- Tailored to deliver outcomes across different land use sectors and geographic regions and at appropriate scale (farm, landscape, region)
- Accountable to the public with Government able to measure and demonstrate the benefits of public expenditure through appropriate monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

This latter point is critical. Too often, large sums of public money are spent with Government unable to measure or demonstrate the benefits and impacts that arise from it. This is especially the case with the current CAP. In future, investment in monitoring and evaluation regimes should be seen as essential spending and vital to demonstrating the public benefits of expenditure.

Effective regulation

We have a substantive body of EU and domestic legislation in force relevant to farming, crofting, forestry and other land uses that is designed to protect public interests and meet societal expectations. This spans a wide range of issues from food safety, animal welfare, nature conservation, water quality and climate change, to name just a few.

It is vital that we retain the requirements and standards of this legislation, whatever the future holds, and resist calls from industry for the removal of such requirements. We therefore welcome the confirmation that, *'The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that Brexit does not lead to a regression from the high standards we have attained in these areas, largely through the implementation of EU law'* (Scottish Government, 2016c). But simply maintaining regulatory requirements is meaningless unless there is also effective enforcement to ensure compliance. Appropriate inspection regimes must be in place to achieve this. It should also be a condition of receiving public payments or grant aid that beneficiaries are compliant with all relevant legislation.

Such regulation is often seen by businesses in a negative light; as a constraint, rather than something beneficial. But not only does this legislation protect public interest, it also underpins Scotland's brand for quality food and other products and facilitates trade and sales to consumers, both here and abroad. Setting off a 'race to the bottom' in terms of regulations and standards is in no one's interests, not least Scottish farmers.

Investing in public goods

Delivering public goods requires appropriate land management across rural Scotland. This could be achieved in a number of ways, including through, for example:

- Sustainable land management payments – available to all land managers (farmers, crofters, foresters, estates, communities, NGOs etc) to pay for good land stewardship, with options relevant to different land use activities and locations. Requirements would be above and beyond baseline regulatory requirements and would aim to protect soil, air and water resources, reduce GHG emissions, maintain wildlife habitats and landscapes.
- Support for specific types of farming that benefit the environment – including payments to support organic and other agro-ecological farming systems (based on the known benefits they provide) and to support the continuation of High Nature Value farming, crofting and forestry, especially in the uplands and more marginal farming areas.

Box 2: Support for agroecological farming

Agroecology is the science of sustainable farming. It can be defined as *'the application of ecology to the management of agricultural systems'* and a number of different farming systems and practices can be considered as agroecological. Organic farming is one of the best recognised of these and research is showing its environmental and other benefits. Organic farming has large positive effects on biodiversity and, on average, increases species richness by 30%, compared to more intensively managed, non-organic farming systems (Tuck *et al.*, 2014). Other studies have shown that systems such as Integrated Crop/Farm Management and Agro-forestry can also yield environmental improvements (Lampkin *et al.*, 2015). The wider adoption of agroecological practices and systems could make a significant contribution to tackling issues such as biodiversity loss, GHG emissions from agriculture and diffuse water pollution, whilst meeting our food needs.

- Targeted agri-environment payments and woodland grants – to conserve priority species and habitats, to ensure the appropriate management and condition of designated nature conservation sites and to support habitat recreation and restoration e.g. peatlands and saltmarsh. Woodland grants should support both the management of existing woodland resources and new tree planting in appropriate locations.



Box 3: Forestry and Woodland Management

Scotland's forests and woodlands make a significant contribution to the economy and, alongside timber products, provide a wide range of other valuable goods and services. In 2015, the GVA of the forest industries in Scotland, including forest related tourism, was £954 million supporting 25,000 jobs, mostly in rural areas (Forestry Commission, 2015). Scotland is now one of the least wooded countries in Europe and the Scottish Government has set targets for woodland expansion; 12,000 ha per annum by 2020/21 rising to 15,000 ha per annum by 2024/25. New woodlands, when appropriately located and managed, can deliver multiple benefits for wildlife and people but it can also pose a threat when it encroaches into important open ground habitats such as peatlands, heathlands and wetlands. Regional land use frameworks offer opportunities to balance woodland expansion with other land uses and ensure that multiple benefits are delivered as a result of public spending.

Better management of existing woodland resources is also needed. Loss of structural diversity, overgrazing by deer and colonisation by invasive non-native species all pose significant challenges to our native woodlands (Forestry Commission Scotland, 2014). Woodland management and planting grants must be targeted to ensure that wildlife is protected and the negative effects of climate change are mitigated against, whilst encouraging productive forests and supporting rural livelihoods and the economy.

- Support for collaboration – to encourage groups of land managers to work together at landscape or catchment scale to deliver specific outcomes e.g. for priority species or to improve water quality, and to support projects facilitating collaborative approaches. Co-operation between producers for activities such as processing and marketing should also be encouraged.

Investments to facilitate change

Payments for public goods could provide a solid revenue stream for many land management businesses, alongside market returns and other sources of income. But, we also see a need for public investment to support the adaptation and development of such businesses and encourage wider rural development. This could take the form of one-off capital investments and grants. Such investments could be to help improve environmental performance, support diversification and develop new income streams or improve business efficiency, for example. Funding could be available for purchasing machinery, IT or physical infrastructure, amongst other things, where this offers good value for public money. There may also be scope for other financial mechanisms such as loans and tax breaks to play a role here.

Box 4: Opportunities in the food sector

A relatively small proportion of farmers and crofters are directly engaged in processing and marketing food, suggesting that many are failing to maximise returns from what they produce. With appropriate investments and supporting advice and training, there is scope for more farmers to engage in these activities. At the same time, only 45% of agricultural output is processed in Scotland with many Scottish food companies sourcing produce from the rest of the UK and elsewhere (Scottish Government, 2015). Again, with appropriate investments there is scope for more of our agricultural produce to be processed here, retaining added value in the economy.

Future policy should also do more to encourage new entrants to rural businesses, especially into farming, and encourage greater diversity e.g. more women.



Investments in supporting activities

In order to support and enhance the benefits of public good payments and capital investments, there is a need for greater emphasis on supporting activities including **knowledge transfer, advice and training**. This should build on the significant investment of public funds in agricultural, forest and other land use research and do more to ensure the results of this reaches those who could benefit most from it. Low levels of formal education and training in the land use sectors need to be addressed.

We see a particular need to strengthen knowledge transfer, advice and training with respect to farming and the environment. Funding for knowledge transfer programmes that can bring together land managers, researchers, specialists, and policy makers must continue. Such programmes must have an emphasis on sustainable farm practices rooted in agroecological principles that contribute to climate change mitigation, reductions in diffuse pollution, and reverse biodiversity decline. Whilst there are a number of existing mechanisms and initiatives designed to provide information and advice to farmers, too few have an explicit environmental remit. The Farming for a Better Climate initiative is one positive example but the number of farmers reached by it is small. Monitor Farms have also proved a successful mechanism for knowledge exchange but again, reach a relatively small proportion of the farming population and, to date, have been limited in terms of the environmental issues they explore. Where environmental issues have been considered these have tended to be in relation to climate change and renewable energy with little focus on biodiversity or water quality. Existing measures for knowledge transfer and advice under the current Scotland Rural Development Programme may help to address the environmental challenge but more is likely to be needed in future if faster progress is to be made.

Currently only 27% of farmers in Scotland have any formal agricultural training (Scottish Government, 2015). This seems very low for a sector that needs increasingly to embrace innovation and new technologies, be more market orientated and adopt greener farming methods. Much higher rates are likely to be required if the sector as a whole is to undergo transformational change. It is also vital that land management courses at Further and Higher Education level include environmental content and promote agroecological principles within all modules rather than as optional dedicated modules. **Continuing Professional Development should become the norm** for those working in the farming and land use sectors and be a requirement for receiving public money.

Box 5: Case study – Future Farming Scotland

[Future Farming Scotland](#) (funded through SRDP Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund) promotes productive and profitable farming and land use, using low-input and sustainable approaches to build financial and environmental resilience in a changing climate.

The programme runs farm-based skills and knowledge development events and interactive workshops to help farmers, crofters, growers and land managers across Scotland interested in using low-input, and agroecological approaches for sustainable agriculture and land use. It brings together leading experts, producers and land managers to share knowledge, practical top-tips and expertise on a range of subjects including soil, nutrient and grassland management, animal health and productivity, woodland creation and management, and organic farming.

A key feature is to promote multiple beneficial actions which are good for farming, the environment and climate based on enabling farmers to know what resources they have and how to optimise these resources. Since 2011, over 1,200 farmers, crofters, growers, foresters and other and land managers have attended events and workshops delivered through SRDP funded programmes (SDS & KTIF) delivered by Soil Association in partnership with QMS, Forestry Commission Scotland, Zero Waste Scotland, Duchy Future Farming with support from a wide range of other organisations including NFUS, The James Hutton Institute, Moredun Research Institute, RSPB, and Woodland Trust Scotland.

We also wish to see land based businesses supported through an enhanced advisory service to produce **integrated business and environment plans** for the whole farm/land management unit. Having such a plan should be a precondition for receiving any payments, grants or other investments as discussed above.

III. Renew...and revitalise our rural areas

If we retain a substantial level of investment in Scotland's rural areas but reshape how that money is spent, focusing it on the delivery of public goods and helping businesses adapt and develop, then there is real scope for renewal over the next decade and more.

For business, this would mean:

- Farmers, crofters, foresters and other land managers rewarded for the full range of goods and services they provide, not just what the market pays for.
- Existing land managing businesses helped to become more profitable and sustainable, improving efficiency, reducing input costs and enhancing income streams through diverse activities.
- The opportunity to focus on producing high quality goods such as food and timber, adding value wherever possible, to sell to both domestic consumers and for export elsewhere.
- The support to enable new farming businesses and other enterprises to become established and thrive, creating employment and income streams.

For the environment, this would mean:

- Protected areas (our best nature conservation, landscape and cultural heritage sites) are in good condition and well cared for, ensuring the many benefits they provide are sustained for future generations.
- The emissions of climate warming GHGs from farming and other land use activities are significantly reduced and land is managed and used in ways that make a much more effective contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation e.g. maximising carbon storage in soils and reducing flood risk.
- Declines in wildlife have been halted, damaged and degraded habitats have been restored and new habitats created.
- Soil, air and water resources that underpin food and timber production, and are the foundation of healthy ecosystems, are in good quality.

For society, this would mean:

- Taxpayers' money spent transparently, more effectively and with demonstrable effect, delivering wide ranging benefits for us all.
- A wildlife rich countryside and attractive landscapes for people to visit and enjoy, enabling them to reap the many mental and physical health benefits that a quality environment provides.
- A more dynamic and vibrant rural economy with land based and other rural businesses, such as tourism and recreation, food processing and marketing, creating jobs and income streams and making rural areas attractive places to live.
- The choice for consumers of domestic supplies of food, timber and other market goods from our land that are of high quality and produced sustainably.

Transition to a new approach

Moving to a new policy framework for farming, crofting and other rural land uses cannot be achieved overnight. New delivery regimes will need to be established and the changes in schemes and funding involved will have significant consequences for many businesses. A period of transition is required to facilitate and enable change to take place.

The scale of change we are advocating cannot be achieved solely through whatever policy and funding replaces the CAP. Many other areas of Government policy and public investment, for example food, procurement and

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planning policies and investment in infrastructure and rural broadband, will need to play their part too. But whatever funds are available for rural areas in future, it is our firm view that these will need to be deployed more strategically, delivering multiple outcomes and be spatially targeted. It is for this reason that Scottish Environment LINK has been a strong advocate of the Scottish Government's Land Use Strategy and, in particular, proposals for **Regional Land Use Frameworks**. Such Frameworks have the potential to identify the challenges and opportunities in each of Scotland's regions, working with business, communities and other stakeholders, to do so, and to help direct public spend to deliver the best and most appropriate outcomes. It is therefore regrettable that faster progress is not being made to bring such Frameworks to life.

Finally, our vision for the future is one that encompasses all rural land use activities but we acknowledge the central role that farming and crofting plays, given how much land it occupies and its interaction with our environment. At the heart of our proposals is a desire for a renewed role for farming, one which very many farmers and crofters would recognise but which policy and other factors have failed to adequately reward or worse, led them away from. This is the role of land stewards; managers of our natural resources and suppliers of all the goods and services land can provide to wider society, from healthy food to clean water and a beautiful, wildlife rich countryside. We now have the chance for policy to re-energise farmers and crofters in the pursuit of this role and to encourage all land managers to see themselves similarly.

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- Scottish Badgers
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- Soil Association Scotland
- Woodland Trust Scotland

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