

Scotland's progress report on sustainability 1992-2002

"must try harder"



A review by Scottish Environment LINK's Steering Group on the World Summit on Sustainable Development, 2002

Introduction

The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 gave the world hope that it could solve the growing and intertwined problems of environmental degradation and social injustice. The solution, agreed by 179 countries, was sustainable development, defined as: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

The summit produced four international agreements for action by all the world's nations on Climate Change, Biodiversity, Forestry and Sustainable Development for the 21st century.

Political leaders will meet in Johannesburg in August 2002 for the World Summit on Sustainable Development "to take a critical look back at the Earth Summit, and aim to arrive at a comprehensive, frank and useful review of the past ten years." It is the most important environment gathering since Rio.

Scotland is one of the world's over-consuming nations, using more of the world's resources than is sustainable (see below).

Environmental groups in Scotland have undertaken a review of Scotland's progress towards sustainable development. A progress report is published opposite, and conclusions in each of the four areas covered by the Rio agreements are given on the inside pages. On the back page is a ten point urgent action plan for the Scottish Executive.

World Ecological Footprint

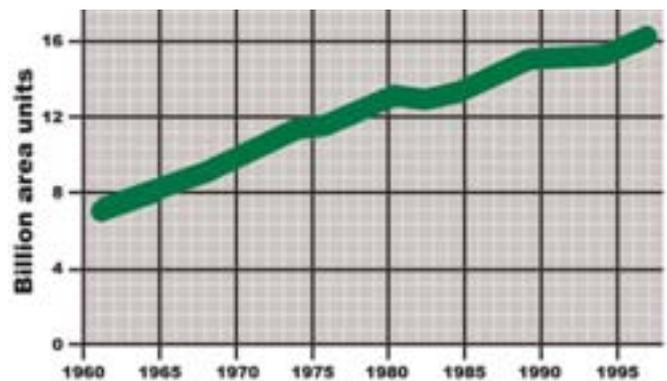
According to WWF's annual index of the rate of environmental decline, the level of pollution and consumption of resources means that we will need **two more planets** by the end of this century.

The global Ecological Footprint increased by 50% between 1970 and 1997, about 1.5% per year.

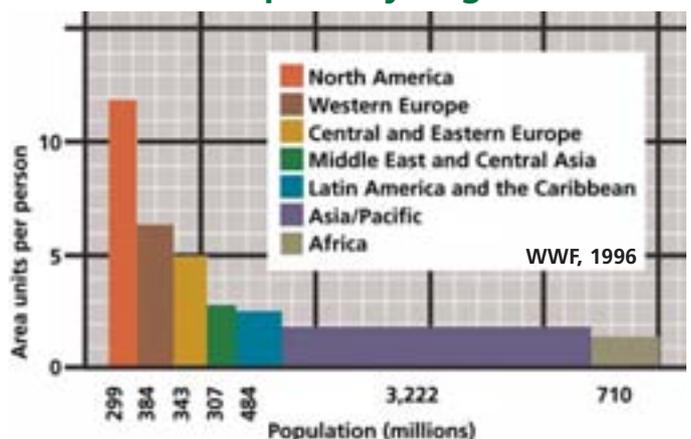
The Ecological Footprint of any individual is the sum of six separate components: the areas of cropland, grazing land and sea required to meet their consumption of food and animal products, the area of forest required to produce wood and paper, and to absorb the CO₂ emissions resulting from that individual's energy consumption, and the area of land required to accommodate housing and infrastructure.

The Ecological Footprint is measured in 'area units'. One area unit is the equivalent of one hectare of world average productivity.

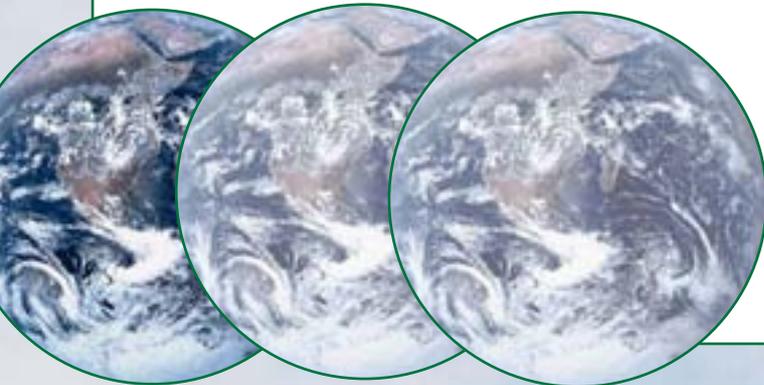
Ecological Footprint 1961-97



Footprint by Region



Total footprint for a region is given by multiplying the per person footprint (vertical axis) by the number of people (horizontal axis).



A review of Scotland's progress towards sustainable development

A review of activity related to sustainable development in Scotland 1992–2002 shows that:

Natural resources

Scotland's natural resources are being depleted.

- ~ Scotland's biodiversity has continued to deteriorate and the Scottish Executive's promised wildlife laws have been much delayed. However, a biodiversity strategy is now in preparation and good progress has been made in designating terrestrial SPAs and SACs.
- ✓ Native woodlands have expanded, but the Scottish Forestry Strategy in 2000 focused on timber production rather than sustainable forestry.
- ~ Scotland's first National Park in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs has been created. The Executive have, however, proposed halving the size of the second Park, in the Cairngorms – where planning powers are also likely to be inadequate.
- ✓ The (former) Environment Minister, in a test case of the Executive's approach to sustainable development, rejected a proposal to develop a superquarry on Harris. The developers have now forced Ministers to reconsider this decision – any change of mind would fatally undermine commitments to sustainability.
- ✓ The First Minister has committed to recycling targets for local authorities; the current rate of 6% is one of the worst in Europe. Scotland set a 25% recycling target in 1990 for 2000, and failed miserably.
- ✗✗ Only three out of 21 commercial fish species in Scottish waters are within safe biological limits, but measures to protect Scotland's marine environment are in their infancy.
- ✗ Fish farming has developed unsustainably and control of its environmental impact has been poor. However, recent belated commitments to a strategy and to improve regulation have been welcomed.
- ✗✗ The food industry has suffered serious crises, farm support still favours intensive farming and plans to support organic and other environmentally friendly farming are weak.
- ~ Scotland's air quality is better than in the past, but 2,000 people are still killed each year by vehicle exhaust fumes, and local authorities' air pollution strategies are behind schedule.

Sustainable Development

Scotland has been deprived of sustainable development despite the commitment in 1999 to "integrate the principles of environmentally and socially sustainable development into all government policies."

- ✓✓ The First Minister has made a major speech on sustainable development, committing to Environmental Justice and a review of spending.
- ~ The Scottish Executive has published 24 indicators of sustainable development, although they do not cover every issue and only half of them have targets.
- ✗ Bills brought to the Scottish Parliament are not always properly assessed for their impact on sustainability.
- ✗✗ Few of the ten recommendations of the Advisory Group on Sustainable Development published in 1999 have yet been acted upon.

Climate

Scotland's climate is deteriorating because of pollution from vehicles, industry and agriculture.

- ✗✗ 150,000 Scottish homes are currently at risk of flooding. As flooding is predicted to increase significantly, the cost of damage is set to more than double this century.
- ✗✗ The Executive will fail to meet the UK target of a 12.5% reduction in pollution by 2012 but has refused to set specific targets for reducing emissions in Scotland.
- ✓✓ A climate change levy has been introduced.
- ✓ Steps have been taken to eradicate fuel poverty within 15 years, but thousands still die annually because of fuel poverty.
- ✓ Clean, renewable energy is expanding rapidly and looks set to easily exceed its unambitious target of 18% by 2010.
- ✗✗ The Scottish Executive has embarked on a £500m road-building programme, far outweighing the expenditure on sustainable transport and leading to more emissions.



Climate change

Emissions of carbon dioxide and other 'greenhouse gases' from vehicles, industry and agriculture are causing the most serious environmental crisis threatening the earth: warming it up, causing floods, storms and droughts.

Temperatures in the 1990s were the warmest since records began and scientists predict that the world's average temperature could increase by as much as 5.8 degrees centigrade over the next hundred years, causing sea levels to rise by up to 13 metres, submerging much of the world's fertile farmlands and dozens of major cities, and displacing over a billion people.



Climate change will have a dramatic impact on Scotland:

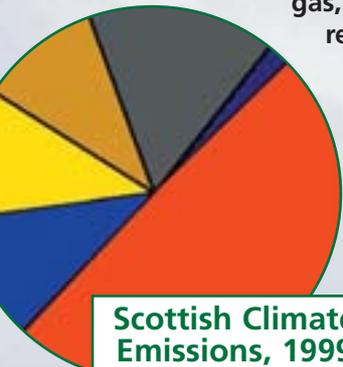
- warmer, wetter and stormier weather;
- 150,000 Scottish homes are currently at risk of flooding. As flooding is predicted to increase significantly, the cost of damage is set to more than double this century;
- coastal areas submerged, including farmland, wildlife habitats, scenic areas and leisure facilities;
- some flora and fauna dying out while others, including some pests, multiply;
- disruption to agricultural production.

The Rio agreement led to the Kyoto Protocol and a target for the UK to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 12.5% on 1990 levels by around 2010.

The UK Government has introduced a Climate Change Levy on sales of polluting electricity, coal and gas, and the Scottish Executive has set up a Climate Change Unit and developed a strategy for reducing emissions of greenhouse gases.

However, Scotland has no specific targets for reducing emissions and is doing little to contribute to the UK target. Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions fell just 5% between 1990 and 1999, compared with 17% in England.

About 30% of Scotland's climate emissions come from the energy industry, mainly from burning coal and gas in power plants, while Scotland's vast resources of wind and wave energy are almost totally unused.



Scottish Climate Emissions, 1999

Energy industry	49.6%
Industry	10.6%
Transport	11.3%
Agriculture	10.5%
LUCF	16.0%
Waste	2.0%

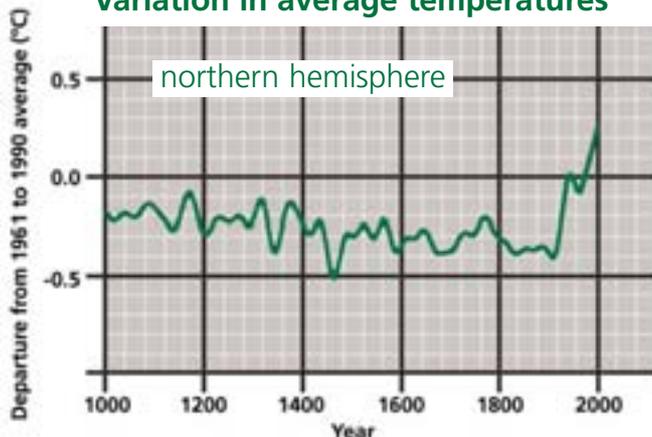
Source: Netcen, 2002

The Scottish Executive has set an unambitious target of 17.5% of electricity to come from renewable sources by 2010. Scottish Environment LINK proposes targets of 25% by 2010, and 50% by 2020.

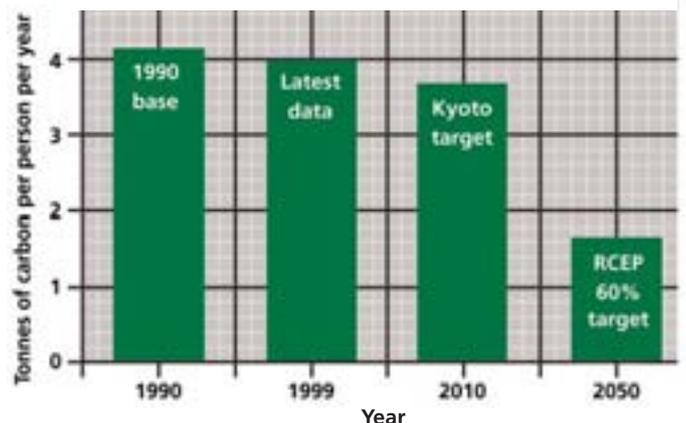
The transport sector is a significant, and growing, contributor to Scotland's climate change emissions. Despite promises by Ministers to tackle the problem, the Executive's commitment to a £500m road-building programme means emissions will continue to rise.

Scotland must urgently set its own, ambitious, targets for cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 2010, with specific aims for each sector of the economy. In the longer term, the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution has recommended a 60% cut by 2050.

Variation in average temperatures



Scottish carbon emissions



Biodiversity

The Convention on Biological Diversity commits Governments to protecting and enhancing the world's 13 million or so species of plants and animals. Up to a quarter of these could face extinction this century. Scotland's wildlife is also in trouble. A Scottish Executive report, in 2000, named 226 animals and 41 natural habitats that are under threat. This included 20 birds, 25 mammals, and 128 plants.

Under the Convention, the Scottish Executive is responsible for seeking to conserve and enhance Scotland's biodiversity. This responsibility is discharged in many ways: through direct nature conservation laws and policies (often carried out by SNH) as well as by integrating biodiversity into other policies – such as that for agriculture, planning or enterprise.

The Executive's commitment to protecting wildlife has been questioned. Its 'Action for Scotland's Biodiversity' report, published in 2000, had all 30 of its wide-ranging recommendations cut by senior civil servants, against the advice of scientists, before publication. This may be rectified by the newly promised Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.

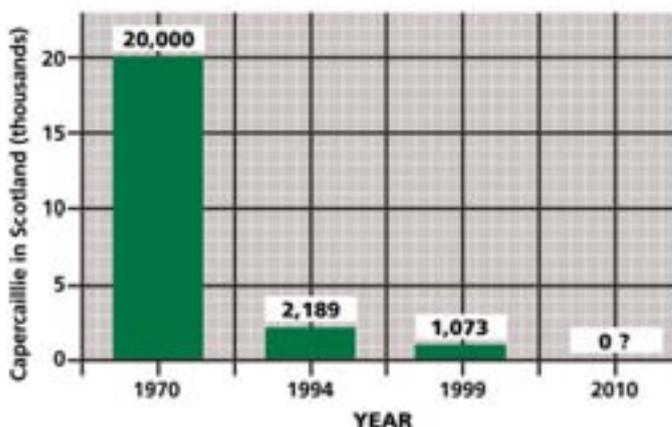
In March 2001, the Scottish Executive published 'The Nature of Scotland' which proposed a series of measures to strengthen Scotland's wildlife laws, including a duty on public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation. Notably, this latter proposal is weaker than that already enacted in England and Wales - where it is extended to include a duty to identify priority species and habitats and to further their conservation. As at May 2002, no legislation to enact these proposals has been published.

The Scottish Executive should ensure conservation and enhancement of Scotland's biodiversity by:

- Legislating urgently to implement the Nature of Scotland proposals, and increase resources and efforts to combat wildlife crime;
- Producing a clear Biodiversity Strategy identifying Executive actions (across all policy portfolios) to conserve and enhance biodiversity. These actions must include:
 - increasing funds for agri-environment schemes;
 - positive management schemes for designated areas;
 - ecosystem management of fisheries to restore depleted stocks;
 - improved planning guidance; and
 - a means of reporting progress to Parliament, based on a clear set of biodiversity indicators.



Capercaillie in Scotland – extinct by 2010?



Many species in Scotland are still in serious decline. The capercaillie is one of the most threatened.

However, a few species and habitats are now recovering, but poor data also make it difficult to know how many are faring. In particular, the seas and the wealth of marine species they support are very poorly understood.



Source: RSPB Scotland

1970, estimate from bag records; 1994 & 1999, national surveys; 2010, population modelling prediction)

Forests

At Rio, a 'Statement of Forest Principles' set out 15 principles on how countries should manage their woodlands, to ensure that timber was harvested in ways which did not damage the environment. In the past, the Scottish forestry industry's record has hardly been a model for sustainability, with provision of timber for profit the overriding priority. Until the 1980s, landowners were given tax breaks and grants to plant industrial forests. Over 80% of plantings were of sitka spruce – a non-native tree with little ecological value. Many hills are still covered with uniform forests of sitka spruce, providing few jobs and little recreational or ecological value, and, as owners are learning to their cost, precious little economic value either.



The Government's Forestry Commission has been changing for the better in recent years, and grants are now dependent on compliance with good practice guidelines. Although there are still grants for industrial plantations, more than 50% of new plantings are now of native trees. Currently in the UK about 40% of the forest area is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council as meeting the Rio criteria for sustainable forest management.

Forests, woods and trees are evidently very important to the people of Scotland, with a great deal of support for more native woodlands. This has been demonstrated in support for initiatives such as Scottish Native Woods, the Woodland Trust Scotland and Reforesting Scotland. Since 1990 over one hundred Community Woodland Groups (such as Laggan, Abriachan and Lochinver) have acquired and are managing more than 50,000 acres (20,000 ha) of woodlands.

The Scottish Forestry Strategy, drawn up in 2000 by the Forestry Commission, failed to build on these steps forward, emphasising timber production rather than sustainable forestry. It missed the opportunity to move towards an integrated approach which could deliver the aims of industry, local communities and the environment. Many woodland and community groups were disappointed by the consultation process, questioning whether their responses had been taken seriously.



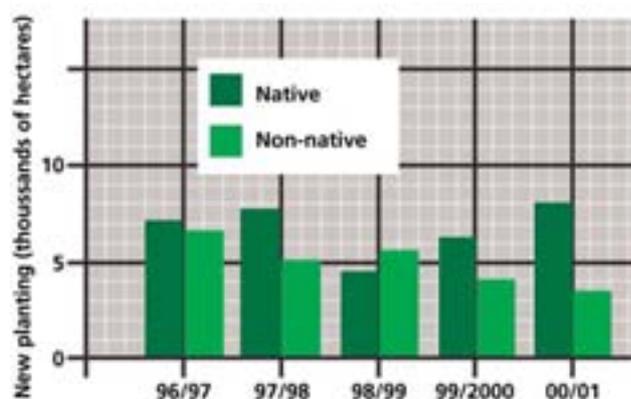
However, in a more positive move, a Scottish Forestry Forum was set up in 2001, bringing together a wide spectrum of environmental, social and economic interests to put the Scottish Forestry Strategy into practice and develop new areas of forest policy.

The Scottish Executive should ensure:

- no further loss of ancient, native or semi-natural woodland;
- all existing native woodlands are brought into sympathetic management;
- a further significant expansion of well-sited native woodlands;
- further support for community groups wishing to obtain woodlands;
- support for local wood-processing and manufacturing industries to assist rural development; and
- further encouragement for all woodlands to be certified through the Forestry Stewardship Council (also obtainable through the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme) to ensure sustainable woodland management.



New planting in Scotland



Scotland's forestry has changed significantly in recent years with a move to greater planting of native species.

Agenda 21

The centrepiece agreed in Rio was a 300-page plan for achieving sustainable development in the 21st century, called Agenda 21. It spelt out what international organisations, national governments, local authorities, businesses, communities and individuals had to do to save the world. It called for waste to be reduced, pollution to be cut, resources to be conserved and poverty to be ended.



Water

The European Union passed the Water Framework Directive in 2000. This obliges Member States to manage their water resources more holistically, and to place the environment at the heart of water management systems. In Scotland, the Executive intends to implement this Directive by the Water Environment Bill, and other secondary legislation. Early consultations on these proposals suggest that a number of positive steps will be taken; however, wetland enhancement and better management of flooding, as well as community participation are unlikely to be addressed well.

Transport

The Scottish Executive's massive investment in new roads dwarfs the money going to new public transport, walking and cycling projects. Road projects like the £250m M74 extension have been approved without consideration of the sustainable and more-cost-effective alternatives. The money being spent on just 5 miles of motorway in Glasgow could pay for a Safe Route to School for every child in Scotland.

Scotland is falling behind England, where two-thirds of transport spending is going on improving public transport. And while several cities in England are going ahead with the introduction of modern light rail or tram systems, there is no prospect of any north of the border before 2008. There are 22 schemes south of the border charging companies for city centre parking for their employees, but the idea was dropped by the Scottish Executive after complaints from businesses.

Waste

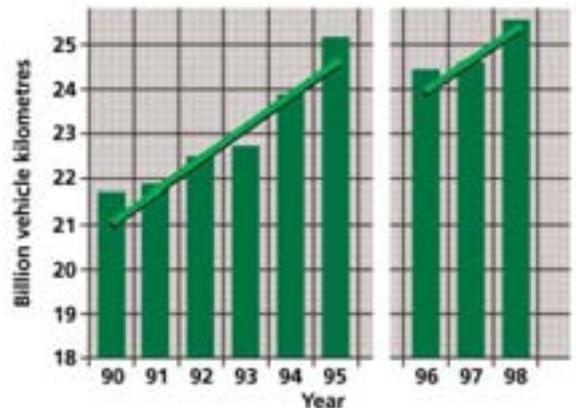
Scotland is close to the bottom of the world recycling table. Levels of waste produced continue to rise, and almost all of it is still dumped in landfill.

Some positive measures have been taken:

- new rules on reduction and recovery of packaging, 1994;
- a landfill tax of £7 a tonne, 1996, now rising annually;
- the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and the Scottish Executive launched a Waste Strategy aiming to reduce, reuse and recycle more of Scotland's waste, 1999;
- Scottish Executive allocating £50.4 million by 2004 to help local authorities reduce the amount of waste dumped as landfill.

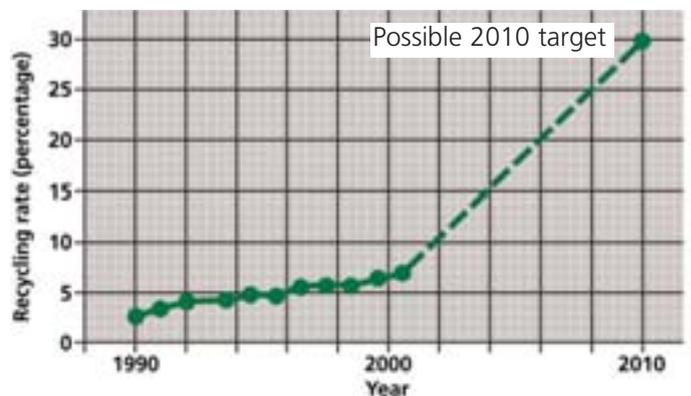
However, some local authorities may avoid any recycling targets by burning waste in incinerators – an unsustainable option which produces highly dangerous compounds like dioxins. The Executive has admitted that the £50m funding for local authorities needs to be tripled to fund the plans the Councils have been developing for the last 3 years.

Traffic in Scotland continues to grow



Total road traffic in Scotland 1990-1998 from Scottish Transport Statistics 2001. Although the measuring system changed in 1996 and data between the beginning and end cannot be compared, there is a clear increase in traffic in both periods.

Scottish recycling struggles to improve



LINK 10 Point Action Plan

For each of ten key areas requiring urgent action by the Scottish Executive, we state what needs to be done to make Scotland more sustainable and give examples of major action which could be taken in the next two years.

1 Sustainable development structures

Place sustainable development at the heart of the Executive, led by the First Minister, with all departments' decisions vetted for sustainable development by Parliament:

- Scottish Parliament to conduct an annual audit of sustainable development work within the Executive.
- The Executive to produce a comprehensive sustainable development strategy with targets and indicators.

2 Sustainable development processes

Ensure participation, power sharing & accountability:

- Establish a forum on sustainable development including business, community and environmental stakeholders to monitor and advise on progressing Scotland's sustainable development strategy.

3 Learning

Ensure that our education system plays its part:

- Make sustainable development and global citizenship a 'purpose' of education.

4 Consumption

Reduce Scottish overuse of natural resources:

- Calculate Scotland's global environmental footprint and use it as a key indicator of progress.
- Legislate for tough mandatory recycling targets for each local authority – with a minimum of 30%.

5 Energy

Secure sustainable energy use and production by increasing energy efficiency, conservation and use of renewables:

- Increase targets for energy from renewable sources from 18% to 25% by 2010.

6 Travel

Secure a sustainable transport strategy and integrated planning:

- Revise transport spending plans so that two-thirds goes to public transport, walking and cycling.

7 Biodiversity

Ensure conservation and enhancement of Scotland's biodiversity:

- Legislate to implement the 'Nature of Scotland' proposals.

8 Water resources

Secure sustainable management of Scotland's rivers, lochs and coasts:

- Add measures to the Water Environment Bill to ensure wetland conservation and enhancement, improved flood management and greater stakeholder participation.

9 Land resources

Promote sustainable agriculture, forestry and land management:

- Double agri-environment spending.
- Ensure that all forests and woodlands in Scotland are certified through the Forest Stewardship Council (also obtainable through the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme) to ensure sustainable woodland management.

10 Access and recreation

Secure recreation opportunities for all based on responsible access to land:

- Legislate for responsible land access.

Scottish Environment LINK is the liaison body for voluntary sector environmental organisations in Scotland. LINK brings together a wide variety of expert knowledge and experience to work across a range of environmental areas. The 33 member organisations of LINK have a combined membership of half a million people.

This report has been produced by a LINK Steering Group working on the World Summit on Sustainable Development;

it comprises Friends of the Earth Scotland, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Wildlife Trust and WWF Scotland. Thanks also to Nick Marshall of Reforesting Scotland.

