

Scotland's Land Use Strategy – One Year On

Summary

- Scotland's Land Use Strategy (LUS) is unique in the UK. It should help in the fight against climate change and promote sustainable development. If implemented fully, and in the right way, it has considerable potential to benefit Scotland's natural environment and people.
- **The three objectives of the LUS can be summarised as: 1) Delivering multiple benefits; 2) Partnerships with nature; 3) Linking people with the land.**
- LINK wishes to see Government use the LUS to guide Scotland toward sustainable use of its land. It must not become a forgotten strategy. We will:
 - Challenge Government and public bodies to put LUS Objectives and Principles at the heart of decision-making - especially when developing or reviewing land use policies.
 - Work with Government to develop and deliver the Proposals and seek environmental protection and benefit through them,
 - Monitor progress on implementation of the LUS and share our findings.

Why do we have a Land Use Strategy?

Scotland's first [Land Use Strategy](#)ⁱ (LUS) was published by the Scottish Government and laid in Parliament on 17th March 2011. Its development was a key commitment of Section 57 of the [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#)ⁱⁱ. LINK, with NGO partners, was instrumental in calling for the LUS to be part of the Climate Change Act. LINK argued for a high level, strong, comprehensive and influential strategy before and during the public consultation periodⁱⁱⁱ.

Scotland needs a Land Use Strategy because of the recognition that we are demanding more and more from our limited area of land - land that provides us with many valuable benefits. Having a strategy should help Scotland make decisions about how we use land to attain these benefits for the long-term, even with the added pressure and uncertainty of a changing climate.

What does the Land Use Strategy aim to do?

The Land Use Strategy is a high level strategy which sets out Government's direction and policy for land use – underpinned by the Ecosystem Approach. It:

- sets a Vision toward 2050:
 - ***A Scotland where we fully recognise, understand and value the importance of our land resources, and where our plans and decisions about land use deliver improved and enduring benefits, enhancing the wellbeing of our nation.***
- sets Objectives - relating to economic prosperity, environmental quality and communities:
 - ***Land-based businesses working with nature to contribute more to Scotland's prosperity***
 - ***Responsible stewardship of Scotland's natural resources delivering more benefits to Scotland's people***
 - ***Urban and rural communities better connected to the land, with more people enjoying the land and positively influencing land use***
- provides a set of 10 Principles for Sustainable Land Use,
- includes 13 Proposals to help meet the Objectives.

In December 2011, the Scottish Government followed up with an Action Plan^{iv} which outlined how Government is moving the original Proposals forward.

What will its influence be?

In the LUS Action Plan Government stated that, *'Our view is that the Strategy provides a context for all decisions about land use and that the application of the Principles to decision-making will, over time, deliver the Strategy's Objectives'*.

Government expects public bodies to follow the LUS Principles when planning and taking significant decisions about the use of land. It also wants those in the private sector who manage land to follow the Principles.

The LUS has influenced two 5-year research programmes and the establishment of new Centres of Expertise, such as ClimateXchange and CREW (water).

Finally, the detailed actions to develop the 13 Proposals are aimed at influencing delivery of the objectives on the ground.

One year on – is it making progress?

Two examples show mixed results in terms of how embedded the LUS is within Government thinking and how much its objectives and principles are guiding policy development.

It appears that the work of the Woodland Expansion Advisory Group (Proposal 7 of the LUS) is being positively guided by the LUS principles and objectives.

Proposal 5 of the LUS aims to use LUS Objectives to influence negotiations on CAP reform. Scottish Government-led discussions and their documentation on CAP reform have, so far, made little reference to LUS Objectives and these do not seem to be underpinning CAP policy development.

How can we make the most of the Land Use Strategy?

LINK wishes to see Government use the LUS to guide Scotland toward sustainable use of its land. It must not become a forgotten strategy. We will:

- challenge Government and public bodies to align land use policies to the LUS Objectives and Principles and have them at the heart of decision-making. This must be more than paying lip service to the LUS but actively keeping the promises contained in the LUS Action Plan:
 - *'We will ensure that our own policies, as they relate to land use, are aligned with the Strategy's Objectives and Principles'*.
 - *'These plans and policies will be reviewed on an ongoing basis so as to align with the Strategy'*;
- urge Government to use LUS Objectives to influence the development of National Planning Framework 3;
- work with Government to develop and deliver the Proposals and seek environmental protection and benefit through them;
- foster links with research deliverers and the new Centres of Expertise, especially ClimateXchange and CREW (water); and
- monitor progress on implementation of the LUS and share our findings.

This briefing is supported by the following members of LINK's Sustainable Land Use Task Force:

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| • RSPB Scotland | • Scottish Wildlife Trust |
| • Butterfly Conservation Scotland | • Scottish Campaign for National Parks |
| • Woodland Trust Scotland | • Archaeology Scotland |
| • Buglife | • North East Mountain Trust |
| • Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland | • John Muir Trust |

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ⁱ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/03/17091927/0>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/climatechange/scotlands-action/climatechangeact>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.scotlink.org/public/work/taskforce.php?id=19>

^{iv} <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/365706/0124378.pdf>

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