

5 Key Tests for a Green Recovery

May 2020



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We are living in times of multiple emergencies. As we emerge from the Covid-19 emergency, there are growing calls from society and scientists that the recovery must be sustainable and fair. It must build a better society for all, in a healthy environment capable of sustaining communities and individuals and livelihoods. With only 10 years left to address the climate emergency¹ and the nature crisis^{2 3}, we owe it to future generations to make sure that our economic reset is the time when we started living as if we had a single planet, and not three⁴.

The challenges facing us, and our Governments, is that whatever we propose to do going forward must take us towards a sustainable and fair recovery. We will therefore be applying these tests to the environmental and wellbeing policies that emerge from both the Scottish Government, and UK Government for reserved matters, on their proposals for the recovery strategy going forward.

The Scottish Government is proposing a post-pandemic green recovery and has set up 2 advisory panels. The remit of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery is:

To advise on the economic recovery, including:

- *measures to support different sectoral and regional challenges the economy will face in recovery*
- *how business practice will change as a result of coronavirus, including opportunities to operate differently and how Government policy can help the transition towards a greener, net-zero and wellbeing economy*

The Group is expected to provide initial proposals by the end of June 2020.

The Sustainable Renewal Advisory Group is chaired by Environment and Climate Change Secretary Roseanna Cunningham. It has been tasked with:

Identifying opportunities to embed sustainability in Scotland's recovery from Covid-19 and with exploring the new challenges and opportunities we face in achieving a 75% reduction in emissions within a decade.

It is expected that a package of policies may eventually emerge from both groups.

Scottish Environment LINK urges that such policies are developed in accordance with a set of key tests to ensure that they truly deliver on the ambition that the recovery will be a green recovery. It is suggested that the following five tests be applied throughout the development of the policies:

¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on Global Warming to 1.5°C 2018: <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

² Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment Report for Policy Makers (2019): https://ipbes.net/system/tdf/inline/files/ipbes_global_assessment_report_summary_for_policymakers.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=36213

³ State of Nature (Scotland) 2019: http://scotlink.org/files/state-of-nature-Report-Scotland_.pdf

⁴ <https://www.sepa.org.uk/one-planet-prosperity/>

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1. Every individual policy/action adopted must be based on sound evidence, must not increase carbon emissions, must not damage nature and must not harm social wellbeing.

Green recovery policies, taken together as a package, must ensure these additional four tests are met, while each individual policy/action must contribute to at least one of:

2. Reduce pollution;
3. Improve adaptation to climate change and reach net zero by 2045;
4. Secure sustainable consumption of natural resources;
5. Improve biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The contributions must be quantifiable and reportable.

Case studies / scenarios:

Scenario 1: To convert all urban roads to incorporate cycle lanes. This would satisfy sound evidence and improve social and human capital. It would also satisfy reducing carbon, reducing pollution, reducing use of resources (eg petrol). It would fail on nature outcomes without some form of additional enhancement such as tree planting or verge management.

Verdict: pass. Test 1; meet Tests 2, 3, 4.

Scenario 2: Landscape scale restoration projects: there are a suite of landscape scale projects in development in eNGOs and public agencies that are now on hold. These projects, if brought forward would restore landscapes to meet sound evidence, provide ecosystem services to rural and urban communities and natural capital able to support rural businesses and tourism initiatives. If underpinned by a National Nature Network in NPF4, it would be strategic enough to mitigate against climate change, build nature resilience to climate change and would bring social and human capital into rural areas through skills training and business opportunities.

Verdict: pass Test 1; meet Tests 3 and 5

Scenario 3: Long distance routes for active travel. Linking up and promoting long distance routes for active travel, as part of promoting adventure tourism in Scotland, would satisfy sound evidence, and meet social, natural, human and physical capitals. It would reduce carbon and consumption of natural resources, by enabling people to leave cars at home. It would build physical health and would provide opportunities and income for rural businesses. It would require targeted, site appropriate habitat enhancement to meet nature outcomes.

Verdict: pass Test 1; meet Tests 2 and 3

These tests have been drawn together by LINK's [Green Recovery Group](#). This is an evolving piece of work that will be revisited.

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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.

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