

29 May 2020

## Summary

This briefing is the first in a series of papers in which LINK will explore evolving ideas for Scotland's green recovery. It suggests where policy-makers' attention should be focused and offers 11 measures that can be implemented to achieve progress as part of the recovery.

LINK members suggest 11 measures that can be implemented by the Scottish Government to start a green recovery:

1. New policies must satisfy five key tests.
2. Launch a large-scale investment programme to rebuild the economy and meet nature and climate targets.
3. Invest in a Nature Network for Scotland.
4. Invest in nature-based solutions to climate change.
5. Prepare a new Economic Strategy for a just, circular and decarbonised economy.
6. Require companies receiving public funds to contribute to a just transition.
7. Build a circular economy.
8. Increase funding for greenspaces and active travel.
9. Maintain and enforce robust environmental standards.
10. Create sustainable and fair food systems.
11. Reform agricultural support.

## Introduction

These are extraordinary times. For several months, Scotland has been in lockdown as unprecedented efforts have been rolled out across the nation to treat those affected by Covid-19 and to halt its spread. Attention has rightly focused on the public health crisis and treatment of the most vulnerable, but as governments begin to look to life beyond lockdown it is clear that the lockdown is having severe consequences for the economy, both globally and nationally. Livelihoods, particularly in hospitality, retail and tourism, are under threat and millions of jobs are at risk.<sup>1</sup> The Scottish Government forecasts an immediate downturn in economic activity of up to 33%<sup>2</sup>, while the Office for Budget Responsibility

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<sup>1</sup> International Labour Organization, 2020. *As jobs escalate, nearly half of global workforce at risk of losing livelihoods*. [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_743036/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_743036/lang-en/index.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Government, 2020. *State of the Economy: April 2020*. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/state-economy-april-2020/>

forecasts a downturn of 35% for the UK as a whole.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, current predictions from the Bank of England suggest that this will be the deepest economic recession in living memory.<sup>4</sup>

There are a number of paths the Scottish and UK Government could choose to embark upon to lead us out of this crisis. We must not repeat the mistakes of the 2007-08 financial crisis when massive government interventions supported the corporate sector while more than a decade of austerity measures have crippled the public sector, including environmental services, and driven up inequalities in our society.<sup>5</sup> However, we can learn from the recent past and choose an alternative path. A recovery that takes us back to the old ways of running the economy is not inevitable - it would be a political choice.

Welcome statements from the Scottish Government Ministers have signalled the intention that the economic recovery should be 'green'<sup>6</sup> but the next few weeks are critical for ensuring this rhetoric turns into reality. Before the Covid-19 pandemic swept Scotland, we were already facing nature and climate emergencies and the Government's Environment Strategy recognised that significant action was required.<sup>7</sup> This is still needed - a green recovery must stimulate national and local economies that work for people while delivering benefits for nature and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These issues are not separate to economic considerations - for example, Scotland's £6bn tourism sector<sup>8</sup> and £14bn food and drink sector<sup>9</sup> depend on a thriving environment. Our response needs to be a step change in policy, with tangible results within the next decade, as urged by international scientists and policy-makers<sup>10</sup>, and including natural solutions to climate change and reversing biodiversity loss with wide-reaching positive impacts on society and the economy.

Other countries are already beginning to lead the way in this. In New Zealand, a country with a population similar to Scotland's, the government is planning for a \$1.1bn investment to create 11,000 new environmental-based jobs focused on restoring nature, from regional environmental improvement projects to new funding to enhance biodiversity levels on public and private land.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Office for Budget Responsibility, 2020. *Coronavirus analysis*. <https://obr.uk/coronavirus-analysis/>

<sup>4</sup>Chaplain, C., 2020. *UK recession: Bank of England warns of worst recession on record in 2020*. *The i*. <https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/uk-recession-bank-of-england-worst-record-2020-economy-coronavirus-lockdown-2845697>

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, 2019. *Visit to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights*. <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/41/39/Add.1>

<sup>6</sup> Scottish Government 2019. *Climate Change Plan update*. <https://www.gov.scot/news/climate-change-plan-update/> AND Scottish Government, 2020. *Economy Secretary's statement 21 April 2020*. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-update-economy-secretarys-statement-economic-impact-covid-19-tuesday-21-april-2020/>

<sup>7</sup> Scottish Government, 2020. *The Environment Strategy for Scotland*. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2020/02/environment-strategy-scotland-vision-outcomes/documents/environment-strategy-scotland-vision-outcomes/environment-strategy-scotland-vision-outcomes/govscot%3Adocument/environment-strategy-scotland-vision-outcomes.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Scottish Government, 2018. *Tourism in Scotland: the economic contribution of the sector*. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/tourism-scotland-economic-contribution-sector/pages/2/>

<sup>9</sup> Scottish Government, 2020. *Food and Drink*. <https://www.gov.scot/policies/food-and-drink/>

<sup>10</sup> IPBES, 2019. *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*. <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/lec/about-us/news/why-citizens-assemblies-matter>

<sup>11</sup>New Zealand Government, Department of Conservation, 2020. Press release. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/news/media-releases/2020-media-releases/investment-to-create-11000-environment-jobs-in-our-regions/>

**Scottish Environment LINK members have ideas for a green recovery that sustains livelihoods and protects nature. Below are 11 ideas for how Scotland can, in the months ahead, start a transition to a net-zero economy which protects and restores nature, increases our wellbeing, while building a sustainable economy.**

### **1. New policies must satisfy five key tests**

The Scottish Government will have many crucial decisions to take in the coming months about what a post-pandemic green recovery will look like. Already an expert Advisory Group on Economic Recovery has been established to consider measures to support different regions and sectors of the economy, while guiding the “transition towards a greener, net-zero and wellbeing economy.”<sup>12</sup> It is expected that a package of policies will eventually emerge from this process.

**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. 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.

### **2. Launch a large-scale investment programme to rebuild the economy and meet climate and nature targets**

The best way to stimulate the economy and ensure improved wellbeing is a large-scale programme of investment to protect and restore nature and at the same time achieve climate change targets<sup>13</sup> - often described as a Green Deal. At the EU level, elements of its Green Deal published in late 2019 have been made central to its green recovery plans, including renovating existing buildings, investing

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<sup>12</sup> Scottish Government 2020. *Advisory Group on Economic Recovery*. <https://www.gov.scot/groups/advisory-group-on-economic-recovery/>

<sup>13</sup> University of Oxford, 2020. *Building back better: Green COVID-19 recovery packages will boost economic growth and stop climate change*. <http://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2020-05-05-building-back-better-green-covid-19-recovery-packages-will-boost-economic-growth-and>

in renewables and hydrogen, transitioning to low emission transport and establishing a circular economy.<sup>14</sup> Others appear to be missing.<sup>15</sup>

**The Scottish Government should identify the key domestic projects and programmes and ensure a mix of public and private investment flows.** The programme should be designed to create skilled jobs across rural and urban areas, including coastal areas, through landscape restoration projects, green technologies and renewables sectors, and the circular economy. This should also include building Scottish supply chains for major new investments.

### 3. Invest in a Nature Network for Scotland

One of the most effective responses is a Nature Network; a strategic, long-term approach to manage, restore and enhance Scotland's terrestrial and marine habitats and landscapes. Its approach builds a nature friendly landscape and seascape, where nature can move and thrive and provides life affirming wildlife and nature encounters to all people. A Nature Network is not just a physical network like a path or hedgerow. It links the ecological processes that operate throughout the landscape, across managed landscapes and Protected Areas.<sup>16</sup>

Scotland's 2019 Planning Act sets a new direction for planning in Scotland: to manage the development and use of land in the long term public interest, defined as contributing to sustainable development, and to achieving the national outcomes, which integrate economic, social and environmental ambitions.<sup>17</sup> A Nature Network is a key element of Scotland's infrastructure and can be delivered through the forthcoming National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). A Nature Network across Scotland represents an investment in a wide-reaching natural solution with benefits for today's climate emergency and nature crisis, as well as a thriving and resilient country.<sup>18</sup> At sea, implementation of Marine Spatial Planning Partnerships could help deliver this.

**The Scottish Government can kickstart a Nature Network with investment in catchment scale habitat restoration and linkage projects.** This would deliver not just ecological benefits but also economic and social benefits through job creation, upskilling and community involvement. Scotland's eNGOs comprise a ready network of skilled practitioners and volunteers to coordinate delivery which would provide continued financial security to eNGOs who are currently looking at severe impact on ability to continue operating over the next 12 months.

### 4. Invest in Nature-Based Solutions to Climate Change

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<sup>14</sup> Euractiv, 2020. *LEAKED: Europe's draft 'green recovery' plan* <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy-environment/news/leaked-europes-draft-green-recovery-plan/>

<sup>15</sup> European Environment Bureau, 2020. *'Future of Europe at stake' as EU lines up billions of Euros for green recovery.* <https://meta.eeb.org/2020/05/26/future-of-europe-at-stake-as-eu-lines-up-billions-of-euros-for-green-recovery/>

<sup>16</sup> LINK, 2020. *Nature Networks briefing.* <https://www.scotlink.org/publication/nature-networks/>

<sup>17</sup> Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2019/13/contents/enacted>

<sup>18</sup> LINK, 2020. *National Planning Framework 4 - Call for Ideas.* <https://www.scotlink.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/LINK-NPF4-response-FINAL.pdf>

The global climate and nature emergencies are deeply and inextricably linked together. Measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions must also contribute to halting biodiversity decline. 'Nature-based solutions' help to meet climate emission targets while building resilient ecosystems. The concept is now in common use around the world, with global thinking developing on identifying sound principles for nature-based solutions<sup>19</sup>. LINK believes they must be a vital part of climate action and must operate alongside rapid fossil fuel phase-out; they must protect and restore multiple ecosystems on land and sea; they must work with communities and build people's capacity to adapt to climate change; and they must sustain and enhance biodiversity.

**Scotland has an unprecedented opportunity to lead the way in delivering nature-based solutions to the climate emergency.** Managing carbon in soils is a key challenge and peatland habitats are now recognised as among the most important global soil carbon assets. Investing in activity to stop peatland degradation and restore them to good ecological health will deliver direct carbon benefits while building the resilience of the unique wildlife communities in these habitats.

Similarly, woodland creation, delivered strategically and in the right places can provide many ecosystem benefits beyond carbon absorption, flood water management, timber and woodland resilience. LINK members urge the Scottish Government to prioritise the protection and restoration of existing trees and woodland including ancient woodland, alongside expansion plans for native woodland, including our globally important but threatened Celtic rainforest habitat.

In the marine environment, saltmarshes, kelp forests and seagrass beds must also be restored and protected for fish stocks, storm protection and biodiversity. This could be done by investment in strategic, large-scale habitat recovery in Marine Protected Areas; prevention and management of damaging activities; improving carbon storage of marine sediments; and supporting biodiversity and food chains. Scotland's new Biodiversity Framework from 2020 should take account of the range of opportunities for habitat restoration.

Projects such as these have the potential to deliver new jobs and skills, particularly in more remote and rural communities. Investment in woodland creation and restoration, for example, can deliver green jobs through work in forestry operations, wildlife management and tourism. Restoring and expanding ancient and protected woodlands also presents job opportunities in areas such as collaborative approaches to reduce grazing pressure and control invasive species. New Zealand, a country with similar population characteristics as Scotland, has in the wake of lifting its lockdown launched a new NZ\$1.1 billion investment in regional environmental projects that will create 11,000 new jobs.<sup>20</sup>

## 5. Prepare a new Economic Strategy which delivers a just, circular and decarbonised economy

Before the current economic downturn took hold, the climate and nature emergencies already required that the objectives and priorities of Scotland's economic policy be changed to align with

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<sup>19</sup> University of Oxford, 2020. *Nature-based Solutions to Global Challenges*. <https://www.naturebasedsolutionsinitiative.org/>

<sup>20</sup> New Zealand Government, Department of Conservation, 2020. Press release. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/news/media-releases/2020-media-releases/investment-to-create-11000-environment-jobs-in-our-regions/>

climate targets and ambitions to restore nature. LINK members believe that Scotland's Economic Strategy is not directing sufficient investment into the just transition to a zero-carbon economy that benefits nature. Programmes to support low-carbon or circular economy initiatives have to date been a minor part of total government support for investment in the productive economy. Without a requirement to contribute to decarbonisation set at the highest level, most other programmes by default either work in the opposite direction or at best make no contribution to resolving the climate and nature emergencies. The wellbeing of all of Scotland's communities must also figure more prominently in Scotland's plan for its economy.

The pace and scale of change needed require a radically different and more ambitious approach - **a new Economic Strategy must deliver a just transition to a decarbonised economy with much lower resource footprints, which will substantially reduce inequalities and protect nature**, putting environmental and social objectives at the core of economic policy. It should also incorporate a Just Transition Strategy which guides a programme of investment on a sector by sector basis, delivered either by the public sector or by private enterprises under its guidance and regulation.

A new Economic Strategy must set out the purpose of economic policy. This must be to shape economic activity such that wellbeing is improved and inequality reduced, within the carrying capacity of the planet. To be within the carrying capacity, our economy needs to be net-zero with sustainable footprints, reduce pollution, restore biodiversity loss and be compatible with the Environment Strategy's vision and outcomes.

## 6. Require companies receiving public funds to contribute to a just transition

Many countries around the world are making environmental improvement a precondition of government support. For example, the French government has imposed requirements on flight operators to reduce emissions as a condition of support<sup>21</sup> and the Scottish Parliament set a precedent when it passed legislation banning public subsidies being given to companies registered in tax havens.<sup>22</sup>

In Scotland, all government spending should promote decarbonisation and restoration of nature alongside its specific objectives. All public bodies should be given guidance about how to do that, for example through sustainable procurement. In particular, **government support for businesses, especially those in high emitting sectors like energy, must be conditional on those industries contributing to a Just Transition away from fossil fuels.**

This commitment should be backed up by sectoral Just Transition plans, which aim to protect jobs and support the workforce while driving decarbonisation and nature restoration and moving toward a circular economy. Bailouts should not be given to deliver short term strategies to boost shareholder profit or return to 'business as usual'.

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<sup>21</sup> Business Green, 2020. *Air France coronavirus bailout package to demand steep emissions cuts.*  
<https://www.businessgreen.com/news/4014617/air-france-coronavirus-bailout-package-demand-steep-emissions-cuts>

<sup>22</sup> The Guardian, 2020. *Scotland bans Covid-19 support to firms based in tax havens.*  
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/may/21/scotland-bans-covid-19-support-firms-tax-havens>

Regulation and licensing of economic activities is another example of how government and its agencies can pursue the vital objectives of environmental sustainability and social justice. SEPA's One Planet Prosperity sets out the general case for doing this. Examples of where this approach could be used include the planning system, Marine Scotland's licensing of energy projects; licensing of taxis and regulation of public transport; and regulation of the housing rental market.

## 7. Build a Circular Economy

At the core of our impact on the environment is the sheer quantity of raw materials extracted to feed our demand for new products and the pollution produced from processing them. We need to reorientate our economy to one that is more circular and uses less material. This means taking a systems approach, designing out pollution and waste, making much better use of the materials already in use, and regenerating natural systems. A recent Scottish poll shows very strong public support for this.<sup>23</sup>

Efforts to address the overconsumption of virgin materials need to be driven by data about our material (and other) footprints.<sup>24</sup> Without this overview, any efforts risk being piecemeal and much of our economy will continue on its damaging trajectory. **A Circular Economy Bill is needed to set the framework to drive our economy to one that is more circular with legally binding targets and a coordinated, national plan.**<sup>25</sup>

In the meantime, the Scottish Government should use all of its existing powers to the utmost, including new 'producer responsibility' schemes, to follow on from the Deposit Return scheme for drinks containers. It should lead on commissioning research that comprehensively examines the supply chains and footprints of our economy to reveal where these are unsustainable, vulnerable, or socially or environmentally harmful. Where problems are identified, Government needs to lead through a strategy, implementation plan and investment.

For example, the construction sector has a large carbon footprint and is responsible for about half of all of Scotland's waste so needs attention.<sup>26</sup> There needs to be a presumption in favour of reusing and repurposing existing buildings, and supporting construction procurement and design that embodies circular principles, including planning for long-term maintenance, re-using components.

People want to be able to get products repaired.<sup>27</sup> Government and local authorities need to consider whether households have access to adequate repair, re-use and recycling services and facilities. By working in partnership with sharing, repairing and re-using platforms and social enterprises,

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<sup>23</sup> In a recent LINK poll (undertaken by Survation, soon to be published) 87% agree with the statement 'In Scotland we should use raw materials more wisely and waste less'. People also think that the Government should take an active role with 78% agreeing with the statement that 'The Government should introduce a target and a plan on how to reduce the amount of raw materials used'.

<sup>24</sup> For more information on reducing our material footprint, see LINK briefing: <https://www.scotlink.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/CE-Bill-call-for-Aug-19-logos.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> LINK, 2019. *Developing Scotland's Circular Economy: proposals for legislation*. <https://www.scotlink.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/LINK-CE-consultation-response-Dec-2019-1.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> SEPA, 2018. *Waste from all sources*. <https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/500273/waste-from-all-sources-summary-document-and-commentary-text-2018.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> In a recent LINK poll (undertaken by Survation, results to be published soon) 91% agreed with the statement 'Government should make sure that people have access to repair and re-use services as well as recycling services.'



government, both national and local, can ensure that households have access to these services needed for a circular economy. Public procurement across all public agencies must be aligned with the circular economy with the material and other footprints a key criteria of purchasing decisions.

## 8. Increase funding for green space and active travel routes

The Covid-19 pandemic has underlined to many people the importance of being able to access green spaces from home. To lead a healthy, active lifestyle, individuals must have access to an environment which provides opportunities for healthy living where they want to spend time. Everyone in Scotland should have this access to high quality green space. These vital areas should not be taken for granted and this pandemic has highlighted the importance of having such access, but also the lack of access for many communities.<sup>28</sup>

The Infrastructure Commission for Scotland has highlighted the value of investing in green spaces (as part of wider investment in 'green infrastructure') to support healthy living and increase amenity value in areas of multiple deprivation.<sup>29</sup> Investment in infrastructure to support outdoor recreation in rural areas also brings great benefits, particularly in supporting sustainable tourism activities. The Commissioners suggest high quality green spaces and marine or coastal environments should be considered alongside more traditional forms of infrastructure. A green recovery must similarly consider the role of greenspace, marine and coastal spaces for improving local areas for people and nature.

The imperative to embed the return of nature to our towns and cities while increasing active travel and outdoor recreation should not be missed. Attention has been drawn to the links between Covid-19 and air pollution. Pollution from traffic causes and exacerbates many of the long-term health conditions which leaves people particularly vulnerable to the virus. The short-term improvements in air quality we've seen during the period of restrictions will not be continued, unless we change our transport system. **Local authorities must be given greater funding to invest in infrastructure for active travel or leisure purposes and create high quality and accessible greenspaces, particularly in low-income neighbourhoods.** The reshaping of our towns and cities in this way will have long-term benefits to public health and to local economies. A study by Sustrans found that in the UK 12.7 jobs are supported or sustained for every £1million of investment in sustainable transport infrastructure.<sup>30</sup>

## 9. Maintain and enforce environmental standards

As the economic response to the pandemic is rolled out, it is vital that strong environmental regulations remain in place.

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<sup>28</sup> Environment Journal, 2020. *Coronavirus lockdown highlights need for green spaces in housing developments.* <https://environmentjournal.online/articles/coronavirus-lockdown-highlights-need-for-green-spaces-in-housing-developments/>

<sup>29</sup> Infrastructure Commission Scotland, 2020. *Phase 1: key findings report*, p.70. [https://infrastructurecommission.scot/storage/238/ExecutiveSummary\\_160120.pdf](https://infrastructurecommission.scot/storage/238/ExecutiveSummary_160120.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> Sustrans, 2017. *Active Travel and Economic Performance.* <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/media/4472/4472.pdf>



It is therefore essential that the Scottish Government continues its commitment to “maintain alignment with EU law in devolved areas after EU exit” and also to “maintain the role of environmental principles and effective and proportionate environmental governance after EU exit.”<sup>31</sup> As part of a robust response **Scottish Ministers must bring forward legislation to embed environmental principles into Scots law.**

These principles will, however, only be as strong as the mechanisms that enforce them. From the end of 2020, the oversight roles of the European Commission and Court of Justice will no longer apply in Scotland. **To ensure environmental principles and regulations are upheld on the ground, an independent, well-resourced environmental watchdog must be established to deliver these functions from the end of the EU transition period.** Common frameworks should be agreed between the four nations of the UK to ensure respective national watchdogs can collaborate on shared problems, recognising that environmental impacts cross borders.

## 10. Create sustainable and fair food systems

As the pandemic began to unfold in the UK, securing essential food was many people’s first response. It has raised questions about the resilience of our food supply chains and people’s access to food. Even before the crisis, the 2018 Scottish Health Survey showed that 9% of adults experienced food insecurity in the preceding 12 months.<sup>32</sup> The flexibility and sustainability of our food systems must be given consideration as part of a green recovery.

The response to the pandemic has shown the potential in linking local communities and food producers. Embedding these changes in our food production and supply system could be a key boost to the UK’s £200bn food and drink market<sup>33</sup>, for smaller producers and local consumers in particular. For example, convenience and smaller food stores are often connected to local networks of suppliers, from bakeries to butchers and fishmongers, supporting more jobs per shopping basket. Farmer and producer markets also build local networks. Measures to ensure a greater proportion of food production is organic would also increase the need for more farm workers.<sup>34</sup> Other opportunities lie in expanding market gardens in peri-urban settings and in supporting small scale processors and retailers. Furthermore, community growing projects not only produce food and teach care for the environment, but produce social cohesion, educate children and increase community resilience.

Currently, however, food policy is fragmented, with different government departments creating separate and sometimes contradictory strategies according to diverse policy goals. This prohibits clear leadership which businesses and communities can respond to. **Introducing a Good Food Nation Bill,**

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<sup>31</sup> Programme for Government, 2019. p.32. [The Government's Programme for Scotland 2019-20](#)

<sup>32</sup> Scottish Government, 2018. *Poverty and Income Inequality Statistics, Chp 5 Diet*. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-health-survey-2018-summary-key-findings/pages/7/>

<sup>33</sup> Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD), 2018. <https://www.igd.com/articles/article-viewer/t/uk-food-and-grocery-market-to-grow-148-by-282bn-by-2023/i/19052>

<sup>34</sup> Soil Association, 2006. 'Organic Works: Providing more jobs through organic farming and local food supply' [https://www.soilassociation.org/media/4946/policy\\_report\\_2006\\_organic\\_works.pdf](https://www.soilassociation.org/media/4946/policy_report_2006_organic_works.pdf)

**as consulted upon by the Scottish Government in 2019,<sup>35</sup> can put us on the path to sustainable food production and consumption.** It creates a multi-pronged and coordinated, whole systems approach to halving the environmental impact of food which recognises the interconnections between production and sustainable nutrition.

## 11. Reform agricultural support

Globally, food production and consumption are key drivers of habitat loss and wildlife declines.<sup>36</sup> In Scotland, agricultural food production influences three quarters of the land area and has a significant influence on the environment, in some cases positive and in others negative. Farming practices can work with nature and, where it does, it builds resilience in local communities, protects nature, produces local products and business opportunities. Conversely, production and harvesting practices can also have direct negative impacts on biodiversity, for example through removal of native woodland or hedgerows, disruption of habitats through drainage or poor soil management. Such negative impacts can also be indirect, by impacting broader ecosystems which affect habitat function and species richness.<sup>37</sup>

The current land management support system - to date set by the Common Agricultural Policy - both fails to support farming in nature-rich areas adequately; fails to support action to meet climate targets; fails to address negative impacts on land; and fails to minimise the severe financial hardships that some Scottish farmers face, particularly those in remote areas. It disproportionately supports the more agriculturally productive land, leaving the majority of farmers and crofters on Scotland's less favoured areas (about 85% of Scotland's agricultural land) unable to break even financially without farm subsidies. This is despite the huge potential that these farmers have to deliver nature- and climate-friendly food production - especially agro-ecological farming on the 40% of Scotland's agricultural land that is classified as 'high nature value'.

A truly sustainable farming regime is one that produces good quality, nutritional food in a way that also conserves, regenerates and restores the natural resources on which production is based and delivers a whole range of public benefits, from carbon sequestration to attractive and accessible landscapes. It improves the health and future prospects of our soils by adopting different techniques and prevents air and water pollution by reducing the use of pesticides and artificial fertiliser. It minimises harmful greenhouse gas emissions and is resilient and adaptable in the face of climate change.

**Agricultural support must be reformed to prioritise activities that enhance biodiversity and reduce emissions while growing good quality, nutritional food.**

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<sup>35</sup> A Bill was being drafted but the Scottish Government has signalled its intention to now not bring this forward due to the current public health crisis. Many stakeholders consider this Bill remains essential if progress is to be made in relation to Scottish food policy. <https://www.scotlink.org/files/documents/LINK-Good-Food-Nation-Consultation-response-April-2019.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Maxwell, S.L., Fuller, R.A., Brooks, T.M. & Watson, J.E.M. (2016). Biodiversity: The ravages of guns, nets and bulldozers. *Nature* 536: 143-145

<sup>37</sup> WWF, 2018. *Living Planet Report*. [https://wwf.panda.org/knowledge\\_hub/all\\_publications/living\\_planet\\_report\\_2018/](https://wwf.panda.org/knowledge_hub/all_publications/living_planet_report_2018/)

**This response represents the collective view of LINK's [Green Recovery Group](#). Members may also respond individually in order to raise more detailed issues that are important to their particular organisation.**

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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