



There are 4 parts of this document:

Part 1: land and seascape projects and their benefits

Part 2 jobs and skills in the natural heritage sector

Part 3: case studies of how recent land and seascape projects have delivered for nature and society

Part 4: Next steps

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**Executive summary:**

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have all come to realise how much we rely on nature to keep us sane and bring us moments of joy. Whether we have been watching birds from the window, walking through a park, or working in the garden, that contact with everyday nature has lifted our spirits and reminded us that a new normal is out there.

At LINK we have been working for 30 years to raise awareness of our environment and our reliance on a healthy environment that is resilient to change and able to support society and nature. Now is the time to cherish the contact with nature many of us forged and make sure it remains a golden thread in everyone's life as we move forward. In this sense, getting back to where we were pre-pandemic cannot be our aim. Pre-pandemic we were in a nature crisis and climate emergency.

Wellbeing, and measuring what matters, is fundamentally based on a healthy and resilient environment for all. This, in turn, means tackling climate and biodiversity emergencies must be a fundamental part of our recovery. We all recognise that the tragedy of COVID-19 and its impact has reflected the need for, and appetite for change; we now have a one-off opportunity that we cannot miss.

This opportunity is to seize the initiative on landscape scale projects that lock carbon away, that restore biodiversity and landscapes and that build, at the same time, opportunities in communities and business through skills, training and employment. This, as we all know, is the basis of much of Scotland's tourism industry. LINK members have always worked on large scale projects through building partnerships to roll out restoration and recreation projects that provide local jobs, build new skills, restore the environment and landscape and tackle the climate and nature emergencies. This is what LINK members do. And now is the time to invest in those projects. Often supported by European funds, these projects cannot now take place without significant input from Scottish players. These must include the Scottish and UK Government, SNH and the other environment agencies, National Heritage Lottery Fund, funding trusts and foundations, LINK members and their supporters, all working together with local communities. This is also an opportunity for Scotland's private investment sector to create new green funds. Some examples of what has been achieved through this approach in the past are below.

There is much more to do however. Here we outline an approach that invests in the skills and prospect of the people of Scotland hardest hit by the pandemic while investing in Scotland's environment to support a green recovery.

This is the first in a series of LINK green recovery briefings.

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## Part 1: Land and seascapes for a green recovery:

### Background:

The 2019 IPBES report<sup>1</sup> highlighted the vulnerability of our ecosystems globally and called for a local and global transformative change through the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of nature. One transformative change, proposed within the IPBES report, which crosses a range of policy areas and can offer significant progress towards resilient ecosystems is a Nature Network. This effectively manages and connects ecosystems and ecological processes between protected areas and through the wider landscape and, as a Nature Network, restores lost ecological connectivity. In 2019, the First Minister declared a climate emergency and linked it to the ongoing nature crisis and in 2020 the Scottish government called for ‘significant action... to restore the health and vitality of the natural systems that sustain us.’<sup>2</sup>

This significant action needs to be a step change in policy, focussed on natural solutions to climate change and biodiversity loss, which in turn have wide-reaching positive impacts on society and the economy. A Nature Network is a strategic, long term approach to manage, restore and enhance Scotland’s habitats and landscapes<sup>3</sup>. Its approach builds a nature friendly landscape, which is pervious to nature and provides life affirming wildlife and nature encounters to all people. The benefit of this approach is that as scale increases, benefits for nature increase at an even greater rate. A Nature Network is not a physical network like a path or hedgerow. It does however link the ecological processes that operate throughout the landscape, across managed landscapes and Protected Areas.<sup>4</sup> It will only be delivered through landscape scale projects working across the country, coordinated through planning policy.

The benefits of implementing a nature network are wide reaching and life changing. It requires governments to work closely with stakeholders at national and local levels, from eNGOS, communities of interest, to local communities, communities of place. eNGOs bring vision, have specialist skills and knowledge; practical on-the-ground conservation capability and they are able to attract large-scale funding from philanthropic funds and the private sector, which can be used as match funding. They can also bring support from their memberships, including individuals and families embedded in local communities as well as those who may live elsewhere but are frequent or potential future visitors. Local communities bring levels of support for action to protect and restore their local environment which in turn benefits local businesses, community health and well being and resilience. Leveraging in large amounts of conservation spending offers the most efficient means of delivering large scale environmental enhancement and rural development and business opportunities at the same time. However, one of the main results of the COVID-19 pandemic has been that many eNGOs are using or plan to use financial reserves for operational continuity. In more usual times, they would use these reserves to underwrite landscape scale projects and take the financial risk of these projects. This cannot now happen. Without eNGO underwriting, these projects now need other stakeholders to step up to commit underwriting. This could be government and other new financial mechanisms such as the Scottish Conservation Finance Fund<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> 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](https://ipbes.net/system/tdf/inline/files/ipbes_global_assessment_report_summary_for_policymakers.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=36213)

<sup>2</sup> The Environment Strategy for Scotland: vision and outcomes: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/environment-strategy-scotland-vision-outcomes/pages/3/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.scotlink.org/publication/nature-networks/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.scotlink.org/publication/nature-networks/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/news/route-map-to-1-billion-for-nature-conservation-published/>



The speed and scale at which ecological restoration can take place, despite the urgency of the problem, has been limited by funding availability. Making time limited funds available would enable eNGO partners to deliver and scale up services and projects, including sustainable farming advice to benefit nature and food supply chains, habitat creation and enhancement, planning, surveying and monitoring, education and access, building people's health and well-being and improving natural capital, as part of economic and social resilience. Underwriting the financial risk on landscape scale projects enables this scale of projects to continue: without projects at this scale, progress towards climate and nature targets, within the timescales set by IPCC and IPBES respectively, cannot be met. Unless we act urgently and at scale, we cannot hope to *prevent the unravelling of the fabric of life on which all people and future generations depend*.<sup>6</sup>

### Examples of projects and partners:

These examples are drawn from a much longer list of projects in development that LINK members, with suitable resources, can implement and which once implemented, would contribute to a green recovery with benefits for society, nature and climate. Details are available from LINK.

**The Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest (ASR)** aims to work collaboratively to restore one of Scotland's most important habitats – coastal temperate rainforest. This habitat is globally rare and Scotland has some of the best remaining remnants in all of Europe, yet in Scotland the habitat is in urgent need of restoration and expansion to ensure its future. The Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest (formerly known as the Atlantic Woodlands Alliance) is composed of twenty organisations with a shared interest in the conservation and sustainable development of this habitat, which occurs along the west coast of Scotland from north Sutherland to south Argyll.

Scotland's rainforest can only be restored if it happens at scale, due to the persistence of invasive non-native species, especially rhododendron, and the need to eliminate negative herbivore impacts, especially intense browsing by deer. The partners within the Alliance are therefore working together to develop a number of landscape-scale projects to restore this internationally important habitat.

Two examples of these landscape-scale projects, which are ready to be delivered, are:

#### 1. Argyll's Atlantic Rainforest

This project, led by Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust (ACT), aims to expand and link rainforest fragments and improve their management to form bigger and better functioning ecosystems. This will enhance the rainforest's biodiversity while at the same time contributing to climate change mitigation and benefiting the community. The project focuses on demonstration sites in Mid-Argyll, and the aim is that it will act as a template for a larger-scale project embracing a wider partnership of ASR partners and sites.

The project will:

- Provide access to rainforest sites for communities from Argyll and beyond.
- Manage, expand and link up rainforest sites through working with our Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest partners.
- Build capacity – via a skills and enterprise hub and structured volunteer programmes, alongside a woodland health and wellbeing centre focusing on mental health and recovery.
- Gather and map data - building on the Habitat Map of Scotland to produce a mapped strategy for linking and expanding woodland clusters.
- Secure Natural Capital Investment – by engaging with businesses.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://ipbes.net/news/new-article-science-ipbes-global-assessment-authors>



ACT will build upon its wealth of experience and success in delivering habitat improvements, skills and training initiatives and outdoor health and wellbeing programmes through this project, opening programmes to new audiences including people from areas of rural deprivation.

From a green recovery perspective, the project will illustrate the opportunities of investment, enterprise and community involvement to achieve benefits across society, rural economy and the environment. It will provide a sustainable future route for securing investment, managing, expanding and linking rainforest clusters, and for communities to engage and benefit more from Argyll's Rainforest.

This is a three year project submitted to NHLF with an overall cost of £1,130,941. While the Expression of Interest was accepted by NHLF in March 2020, that funding stream has been halted due to Covid, which has in turn put this entire project on hold.

## **2. Saving Morvern's Rainforest**

This project, led by RSPB, focuses on habitat enhancement and restoration of the Morvern peninsular – chosen due to its importance for rainforest habitat and because the peninsula is one of the most defensible and practical areas in Scotland for large scale rhododendron eradication. The creation of local jobs and tourism benefits is a crucial part of the project. There is also a commitment to apply the learnings from this work to rainforest habitat management elsewhere in Scotland and further afield.

The project will:

- Create a shared vision for the restoration and enhancement of Morvern's Rainforest using an ecological network approach that helps us plan and target conservation action
- Eradicate *Rhododendron ponticum* from key areas, the wider landscape and buffer zones around these sites that pose a risk of reinvasion
- Inform and provide support for appropriate grazing management that allows woodland restoration and creation
- Support woodland creation and expansion that improves the resilience of the woodland network
- Inspire people living in and visiting Morvern to care about and for this internationally important habitat through a programme of interpretation, citizen science and arts activities – e.g. by working with schools and the community on cultural stories, songs, poems, artworks that showcase the rainforests; installing rainforest interpretation and a trail to provide access in a sensitive way and holding a rainforest festival.
- Work in partnership with Morvern Community Woodlands, if the Killundine community buy-out is successful, to deliver joint social & conservation outcomes
- Contribute to the 'green recovery' – by providing rural jobs (e.g. employing and training a works team to carry out rhododendron eradication and other practical management tasks); deploying structured volunteering training placements to upskill local young people; and facilitating native tree planting, including the establishment of a tree nursery, involving local people.

This £4 million project has been submitted as a bid to EU Life in July 2020. If successful 60% of funds will be available to deliver the work involved, but we are required to find 40% match. Support from government would not only deliver rural jobs, training, forest habitat expansion to help address climate change and species loss, but would help lever additional support from Europe towards this worthwhile project.



### **Joining the Dots for Nature:**

This is a partnership project between Soil Association Scotland, Buglife Scotland & Plantlife Scotland to create thriving resilient landscapes which restore nature, climate and health. A well-developed project concept paper has been produced. The partnership was on the verge of submitting an Expression of Interest to National Lottery Heritage Fund and progressing the concept with Scottish Natural Heritage and other key stakeholders just before lockdown and closure of EOIs to NHLF.

Farmed land has a very important role to play in creating a nature network. However, farmed land is often the weak link in the chain of ecological connectivity and joined-up action for wildlife and the environment. Agriculture is also a principal driver of habitat loss and fragmentation and decrease in biodiversity and ecosystem service health.

Joining the Dots for Nature will support work which builds on existing programmes (e.g. Buglife Scotland's B-lines project) and national, regional and local priorities. The project will facilitate practical management work and nature and climate friendly farming practices to build healthier and bigger well-connected habitats (joining the dots for nature) across farmed landscapes benefitting wildlife (especially priority species), protecting ecosystems services and providing opportunities for more people to connect with nature. It would also provide training and work opportunities through the proposed Citizen Conservation Apprenticeships. Joining the Dots for Nature has been designed with best practice approaches to underpin and drive its delivery. The project will:

- Use the ecological coherence (EcoCo) protocol: to identify the best opportunities for habitat restoration at landscape scale and for people to connect with nature
- Use a co-design model: to agree shared objectives and ensure co-ownership of Joining the Dots for Nature projects
- Use an outcome-based approach: to give land managers more responsibility and flexibility to deliver integrated benefits for farming and biodiversity
- Be climate smart: to take account of opportunities for climate change mitigation and adaptation and reduce the impact of climate change on food production, people and wildlife
- Work with influential organisations and people: to mainstream and embed Joining the Dots for Nature principles and practices across Scotland
- Provide a robust evidence-base: to inform policy making and best practice

**Achievements:** Joining the Dots for Nature will increase: biodiversity including priority species, ecological connectivity and ecosystem health; knowledge and skills for nature and climate friendly farming; area of farmed land put under long-term sustainable management; carbon storage capability of landscapes; sustainably produced food; people actively participating in citizen science; opportunities for people to connect with nature - delivering health and well-being benefits; and inclusive training and work experience opportunities through the Conservation Apprenticeships.

### **Cairngorms Connect:**

Cairngorms Connect<sup>7</sup> is the biggest habitat restoration project in the UK, encompassing 60,000ha of forest, floodplain, moorland and mountains within the Cairngorms National Park. The four partners are RSPB Scotland, Forestry and Land Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and Wildland Limited.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://cairngormsconnect.org.uk/>



Together, they share a bold 200-year vision to restore habitats and natural processes, through activities such as native forest restoration and expansion, floodplain restoration, blanket bog and bog woodland restoration, and engagement with local communities and visitors.

This pioneering project has the potential to deliver on a wide-ranging number of objectives as part of a green recovery, including substantial gains for nature through restoring ecosystems, contributing to climate targets, supporting sustainable economies and improving wellbeing. Cairngorms Connect has a total funding shortfall of around £2.4 million, which would fund a range of sub-projects, including a comprehensive traineeship programme (at a cost of c.£700k).

## **Riverwoods**

Riverwoods is an ambitious initiative, launched in early 2019, to create a network of riverbank woodlands supporting healthy and resilient river systems across the whole of Scotland. Riverwoods is a partnership project led by the Scottish Wildlife Trust, whose Steering Group includes Scottish Natural Heritage, SEPA, Tweed Forum, Confor, James Hutton Institute, University of Edinburgh's Centre for Sustainable Forests and Landscapes, Woodland Trust Scotland, Scottish Forestry and Scottish Water. Other stakeholder organisations involved in helping to shape the project and the associated blended finance opportunities include National Farmers' Union Scotland, Forest Carbon and Abundance Investment. The project brings together a wide range of partners to identify where riparian woodland can be better managed and lost woodland corridors recreated. Riparian woodland is particularly important to biodiversity because of the complex interactions between species where land meets water. Trees help stabilise river banks and prevent erosion, which in turn helps improve water quality. Trees also provide shade, which helps regulate water temperature, while falling leaves and insects provide an important food source for fish and other aquatic animals. Healthier fish populations in turn support other wildlife such as ospreys. In addition, greater connectivity enlarges habitat, allowing species to move more freely through the landscape to find food or shelter, and increasing resilience to external pressures.

As well as providing benefits for biodiversity, riparian woodland provides a host of benefits to people. In the fight against climate change, riparian woodland not only helps lock up carbon in trees and soil but also provides improved flood resilience for local communities, reductions in water treatment costs and water cooling effects that help salmon fisheries and the whisky industry.

Riverwoods is a 'Spotlight Project' within The £1 Billion Challenge<sup>8</sup> that is being used to help develop a new model of blended finance in Scotland and that can be used to fund landscape-scale initiatives that deliver positive outcomes for biodiversity alongside other benefits with a financial or economic return. Blended finance projects traditionally combine private investment with support from government, grantmakers or philanthropists. The main opportunities in development for Riverwoods include voluntary payments for nature-based carbon credits, a Riverwoods Land Fund using Conservation Covenants, and the development of a Riverwoods Bond. The latter would allow investors to provide upfront capital that is paid back over time using a combination of contractual payments and levies from beneficiaries, blended with government and/or philanthropic support.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/news/route-map-to-1-billion-for-nature-conservation-published/>





## Part 2: skills and job creation in the natural heritage sector:

### Background:

As more young people identify climate change as the defining issue of their generation, more are seeking careers that will have a positive environmental impact and can adapt most easily to the new 'green requirements' that are needed in the labour market<sup>9</sup>. In 2018, a survey conducted by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) of 1,000 young people aged 18-24 revealed climate concerns and "exciting opportunities" are driving young people towards careers in the green economy<sup>10</sup>. Green jobs are central to sustainable development and can respond to global challenges of environmental protection, economic development and social inclusion.

A 2020 survey carried out by the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) asked 1,008 UK students between the ages of 15 and 18 for their views on environmental issues and careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths). The survey found that around one-quarter (23%) are keen to pursue a career in the green economy such as renewable energy or with an environmental NGO that is working directly to combat climate change and the nature crisis. Furthermore, Brita Professional asked 1,000 Millennials (born in the early 1980s) and Generation Z (born in the mid 1990s) young people about their views on corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the workplace<sup>11</sup>. An overwhelming 86% said that they would stay at an organisation longer if it stated how it was reducing its environmental impact. Nine in ten also believed that organisations should be incentivising sustainable behaviour in the workplace.

However, youth unemployment is estimated to increase by 600,000 across the UK<sup>12</sup>. The effects of COVID-19 on employment will hit young people the hardest as unemployment rates rise across the economy. A green recovery from COVID-19 should see increased education and skills provision for young people which could link to the new green jobs needed to promote the sectors of the economy likely to deliver on social, economic and climate justice. Up to 60 million new jobs in the green economy could potentially be created by 2030<sup>13</sup>. If properly managed, green growth can provide an opportunity to address the youth employment challenge while simultaneously preserving biodiversity and increasing climate resilience.

Other countries are leading the way. 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>14</sup>. Scotland is renowned world wide for its landscapes and nature, which is all the more reason why investment in nature to support thousands of people with jobs and which will pay dividends for generations to come by giving nature a helping hand should be a central part of the Scottish Government's green recovery strategy.

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<sup>9</sup> Sustainability, "Greening" the Youth Employment – A Chance for Sustainable Development, 2015

<sup>10</sup> BEIS, Views on the green economy: survey of young people, October 2018

<sup>11</sup> Brita Professional, A sustainable workplace for a sustained workforce, 2019

<sup>12</sup> Resolution Foundation, Class of 2020, Education leavers in the current crisis, 2020

<sup>13</sup> Decent Jobs for Youth

<sup>14</sup> New Zealand Government, Department of Conservation, 2020. Press release. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/news/mediareleases/2020-media-releases/investment-to-create-11000-environment-jobs-in-our-regions/>



**LINK role:** LINK members have a series of landscape scale projects, a selection of which are above, that if launched and delivered provide the opportunity and demand for trained jobs in natural heritage across Scotland, as well as tackling the climate emergency and nature crisis. Matching these opportunities with training providers and coordinating a new programme, developed iteratively with Regional Land Use Partnership Plans as they develop, would bring multiple benefits.

**Training provider role:** some LINK member bodies already run training programmes and a partnership approach, which accesses the experience in setting up and running traineeships and skills projects with different age groups will be crucial to success. These organisations, working with partners like TCV, have the potential to bring together the landscape scale projects above with paid traineeships of between 12 – 36 months, alongside shorter resident ‘hit team’ approaches to build transferable skills amongst smaller groups of individuals with more complex needs to support them to move closer to the labour market.

### **Projects and partners:**

**Soil Association’s Landscape Leadership** - developing leadership skills needed to make transformative environmental change at a landscape scale.

Implementation: The primary objective of this project is to build natural capital across managed landscapes, address climate change and biodiversity loss, and deliver inclusive economic and social benefits. A pilot of this project has already been undertaken and funded through charitable donations. The delivery of the pilot was interrupted by covid-19 restrictions and will now complete in October 2020.

The pilot phase of this project has brought together a group of ten participants. They represent a diversity of ownership with diverse aims for their landscapes and are united in their desire to restore climate and nature for Scotland’s future generations. The group collectively manages over 80,000 acres of land and hopes to bring about positive environmental change at the biggest possible scale. As this pilot has progressed we have gathered stories to turn into case studies of changes that have been made even before completion of the programme.

The pilot programme is being delivered through a series of overnight sessions in different inspirational locations, interspersed with coaching support. Over this time participants move from having vague goals and aspirations about the management of their landscapes, identified at recruitment, to a robust action plan at the end of the last session. Each session has a different theme, and each has inspirational stories of change at scale and how it was achieved. Between sessions participants work towards a Landscape Action Plan: to balance economic, social and environmental priorities within the landscape they manage; to engage with communities and stakeholders; and to take into account the wider political context they operate in. Personal development throughout the project develops their strategic and leadership skills to effectively deliver these plans. Leadership coaching between sessions helps participants turn their aspirations into deliverable goals with milestones.

Programme participants must all have the capacity to make, or to influence, change at a landscape scale. They should all have the desire to want to make positive environmental change. This work needs to embrace diversity and be inclusive, bringing in new voices to find innovative solutions, and to have confidence in a shared vision. We want to work with a mixture of different types of owners (i.e. private, community, NGO), who use land in different ways. We adopted the ISM theory of change to develop this programme; working to change individuals, the organisations and communities that they work within, and the wider policy and legislative environment.





In the future, this approach would fit alongside the Citizen Conservation Apprenticeships and Regional Land Use Partnerships and Plans (above).

**Measuring impact:** The delivery of Landscape Action Plans will deliver change on the ground. To measure impact we will contact participants at set intervals (i.e. 6 months, 12 months) to identify how they are implementing their plan, getting details and figures that illustrate the scale of change. This will also allow us to identify barriers that have made change more difficult, and categorising these within an ISM (Individual, Social, Material) framework will provide evidence of material change that is needed.

In addition to the post-programme evaluation we will survey participants throughout the programme to gauge how effectively the programme is delivering the short term outcomes that should lead to identified longer term nature, climate, and sustainable development outcomes.

**Citizen Conservation Apprenticeships:** Matching TCV Training programmes to LINK member landscape scale projects (above):

**Implementation:** eNGOs host and build vital landscapes skills for the future through large scale projects across the country. Many conservation projects lend themselves to skill sharing and building and can be undertaken safely while adhering to social distancing, in the open air, with relatively low finance requirements compared with traditional hard infrastructure projects. TCV, while not a LINK member, has experience in coordinating large scale trainee programmes of this type.

There is potential to scale up the approach already developed with Natural Communities programme: TCV's Natural Communities Programme, 2011 – 2017, was funded by Heritage Lottery Fund's 'Skills for the Future'. The programme aimed to increase community environmental engagement skills within the conservation sector. It achieved this by training 35 individuals over 4 years to develop and use skills to engage communities in understanding, valuing and conserving their natural heritage. Natural Communities worked with 24 partner organisations to develop their capacity to engage communities and over 49,000 volunteers from a range of communities to improve their connection to nature in more than 200 green places across the UK. Through the programme TCV have developed the Natural Communities Approach: a practical and flexible methodology for engaging everyone to enjoy, understand, value and care for the green places around them. By scaling this approach up to run across a series of landscape scale projects (above), paid traineeships would be coordinated centrally and flexibly given that projects are likely to be developing at different speeds. This ensures both a degree of consistency and that key skills are built in that are valuable for a wide range of sectors. The audience for these traineeships would be 18 – 30 year olds, usually motivated graduates / further education leavers (although targeted more widely) who are expected to be adversely impacted by the current and ongoing drop in employment opportunities in hospitality and tourism for example. The Resolution Foundation estimate over a million young people in the UK will have severely compromised life-time opportunities<sup>15</sup>. The focus of the Citizen Conservation Apprenticeships therefore is to focus on preventing motivated and engaged young people adding to the long term unemployed numbers in the next few years because of a lack of opportunity.

**Impact:** Young people are more employable for wide range of sectors. Environmental charities are able to undertake a variety of conservation work with associated impacts, targeted by an independent board, ideally through Regional Land Use Partnerships.

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<sup>15</sup> [Class of 2020: Education leavers in the current crisis](#). Resolution Foundation, May 2020



**Community Food Hubs: Nourish and Soil Association:** Growing the local food economy, improving everyone's access to local, agroecological and healthy food with benefits for jobs, health, climate and nature.

The COVID-19 crisis has sharply exposed the fragility, weaknesses and inequalities in our current food system. Creating greener, fairer and more resilient local food systems, which increase everyone's access to healthy and sustainable food, will be vital for a green recovery and social renewal – supporting local jobs and businesses, reducing inequalities and disadvantage, increasing food security and growing demand for local and environmentally-friendly food.

**Implementation:** This is an ambitious Scotland-wide proposal which would be delivered at local authority level through an integrated programme of job creation and training, business support and development and investment funding<sup>16</sup>. Each local authority area will produce a local food development plan agreed by the local authority, third sector, food businesses and key stakeholders e.g. Community Food Associations. The focus will be on creating shorter, greener and ethical supply chains which connect local food producers (farms, urban growers, social and community enterprises etc.) with local consumers; and using the power of public procurement to catalyse development of local supply chain networks across different geographies<sup>17</sup>.

**Impact:** Creating living-wage employment and high-quality training opportunities are a key part of the initiative and will be essential to building a valued, skilled and innovative workforce - supporting the sustainable growth of local food supply chains and food systems to deliver inclusive economic, environmental and societal benefits.

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### **Part 3: Case studies of benefits brought to people and planet through large scale environment projects.**

#### **Case study 1: Dornoch Environmental Enhancement Project (DEEP):**

This is a 10 year partnership project between Glenmorangie, Heriot-Watt University and Marine Conservation Society to establish a self sustaining reef of 4 million native oysters by 2024. Overfishing during the last century removed the 10,000 year old native oyster populations in the Dornoch Firth. Improving water quality in the Firth, key to which was an anaerobic digester installed in 2017 to improve the discharge from the Distillery, alongside shell reef structures and translocated oysters aim to re build oyster populations. Restored and growing oyster beds will improve water quality, store carbon in the seabed and provide nursery areas for juvenile fish and shellfish, including commercial species.

#### **Case study 2: Path building: Schiehallion**

The John Muir Trust realigned the Schiehallion path in the early 2000s and continues to look after the mountain path to the rocky ridge. Looking after the path provides key benefits in terms of reducing landscape impact and protecting fragile landforms and habitats. The area is now part of the Heart of Scotland Forest Partnership and in autumn 2019 a new low-level easy access path was installed with funding from the Scottish Rural Development Programme's Improving Public Access Fund. This path links land of Forestry and Land Scotland, local community group - Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust and the John Muir Trust. It is a good example of how landscape scale working has enabled a project to be developed which is of benefit to both the local community and visitors. The benefits of the partnership and projects like this include walking and access routes

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<sup>16</sup> A national Local Food Investment Fund should be resourced through public and private funding

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.soilassociation.org/shortening-supply-chains-roads-to-regional-resilience/>



that local communities can use for their own physical and mental health and that local businesses can use to offer bespoke outdoor experiences. Volunteer and local school involvement in building and maintaining paths is also a benefit in providing training, skills building and experiences to enthuse the next generation of the benefits and opportunities of the outdoor industry.

### **Case study 3: Machair LIFE**

Machair LIFE was a four-year project that ran from January 2010 to June 2014 and aimed to secure the immensely important conservation value of the unique machair habitat of the Western Isles while also demonstrating that traditional crofting practices have a sustainable future. It was run by a partnership made up of the RSPB, SNH, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and the Scottish Crofting Federation. It was strongly supported by the crofting community on the islands, and made significant progress either in addressing the challenges that need to be tackled if crofting is to survive and flourish on the machair, or in showing how these challenges can be addressed in the future.

### **Case study 4: Whale and Dolphin Conservation Shorewatch project**

Marine data are often lacking. WDC have trained up hundreds of volunteers to conduct 10-minute land-based watches from 25 sites around the Scottish coastline. Since 2005, more than 50,000 watches have been conducted and eighteen species of whales and dolphins have been identified. The network contributes valuable data to marine planning and provides like-minded community networks that empower and focus community efforts on marine awareness and conservation.

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## **Part 4: Next steps**

LINK member bodies all share a vision where Scotland's environment is connected, restored and resilient. Our society and wellbeing have nature at their heart, benefitting people, communities and the planet<sup>18</sup>. We are working together to deliver effective action on the ground that works towards the nature crisis, the climate emergency and provides Scotland's communities with resilience as part of the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, we cannot do this alone. The projects we list here all rely on our stakeholders and funders supporting the vision that together, when implemented, these can all achieve the objectives of Scotland's Environment Strategy to transform Scotland for the better and for the benefit of future generations<sup>19</sup>. More than that, we rely on our leaders committing to doing everything they can achieve their vision in the Environment Strategy and to demonstrate leadership appropriate to the most beautiful country in the world (Rough Guide 2019). We are ready to help.

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This briefing represents the collective view of LINK's [Green Recovery Group](#) and [Fundraisers Forum](#).

### **Further information:**

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Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with 40 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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<sup>18</sup> [https://www.scotlink.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/LINK\\_Strategy\\_Document-5.pdf](https://www.scotlink.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/LINK_Strategy_Document-5.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/environment-strategy-scotland-vision-outcomes/pages/2/>