



The Land, Agriculture and Nature Delivery (LAND) Group

Terms of Reference

1 October 2026

Introduction

1. Scotland's land is iconic, unique and the foundation upon which we build our lives. However, this land is finite and fixed, yet the demands we make of it are not. These demands continue to increase – for the provision of food and drink, the production of timber, our net zero ambitions, renewable energy, nature restoration, building resilience to flooding and water scarcity, natural capital investment, infrastructure, housing, tourism and recreation.
2. Through the publication of Scotland's Fourth Land Use Strategy, the Scottish Government set out a direction, long-term vision and shared outcomes to take forward the understanding that land is a holistic, integrated and interacting system.
3. This system has been tasked with delivering ambitious goals and needs to be mindful of the interactions between land uses and targets, seek complementary policies and actions, and understand and respect the regionally diverse nature of Scotland's land. As land managers make choices about how to use their land, our ambition is for them to do this within a system that understands these shared goals and outcomes, and which seeks synergies and points of common interest.
4. The Land, Agriculture and Nature Delivery (LAND) Group has been established to help both the Scottish Government and stakeholders better understand this complex system.

Purpose

5. This multi-disciplinary group will provide a platform for holistic, strategic discussions regarding the overarching approach to land and its use in Scotland. It will offer advice on the interactions, tensions and benefits between sectoral policies, actions and associated delivery plans to meet our land use aspirations as part of Scotland's just transition. The Group will also explore opportunities to align land use with the broader economic growth ambitions of Scotland.
6. The Group will be supported by existing individual policy development and sectoral stakeholder engagement but will place emphasis on the collaboration and cross-pollination of policy interests crucial to enabling greater cohesion across the land-based system. The Group will be asked for advice on various topics (through meeting discussions), which will then be considered as part of the wider decision-making process.
7. Key policy areas of interest include agriculture, forestry, peatland, biodiversity, wildlife and species management and water (flooding resilience, water scarcity and quality).
8. If required this group could also provide the vehicle through which land use interests can be voiced in setting the direction of, for example, the Rural Renewal Bill, one of the new Government's 100 days' commitments

Roles and objectives

9. The LAND Group will be asked to consider land and land use as a collective whole in order to:
 - investigate and constructively challenge the cumulative effects of sectoral policies and their associated actions on the wider land use system;
 - identify and discuss the interactions between these policies and actions; and
 - provide an understanding of, and constructively scrutinise and advise on, how to address tensions, benefits and missed opportunities that result from these interactions.
10. Through the members' different perspectives, the Group will also seek to understand how development and delivery of land and land use policies and actions align with, or are counterproductive to, the wider strategic picture of "Scotland PLC" and the broader economic growth ambitions of Scotland.
11. In addition, the Group will be asked to discuss and assess the most suitable approaches to holistic monitoring and evaluation of land and land use.

Group membership

12. The LAND Group will be chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural Affairs, with support from the Director of Agriculture and Rural Economy and the Director of Environment and Forestry.
13. Membership will be by invitation. Standing members will include representatives from the following organisations:

Organisation	Primary interest	Secondary interest
Scottish Crofting Federation	Agriculture	Forestry, peatland, biodiversity, wildlife species and water
Scottish Environment LINK	Biodiversity, wildlife species and water	Agriculture, forestry and peatland
Scottish Land and Estates	Agriculture, forestry and peatland	Water policy, biodiversity and wildlife species
WWF Scotland	Biodiversity and wildlife species	Agriculture, forestry, peatland and water
National Farmers Union Scotland	Agriculture	Forestry, peatland, biodiversity, wildlife species and water
Confederation of Forest Industries	Forestry	Agriculture, peatland, biodiversity, wildlife species and water
Soil Association Scotland	Agriculture and water	Forestry, peatland, biodiversity and wildlife species
RSPB Scotland	Biodiversity and wildlife species	Agriculture, forestry, peatland and water

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Nature Friendly Farming Network	Agriculture and biodiversity	Forestry, peatland, wildlife species and water
Scottish Tenant Farmers Association	Agriculture	Forestry, peatland, biodiversity, wildlife species and water
Woodland Trust Scotland	Forestry, biodiversity and wildlife species	Agriculture, peatland, and water
Scottish Association Young Farmers Clubs	Agriculture	Forestry, peatland, biodiversity, wildlife species and water

14. In addition, the Group will include the Chief Scientific Adviser for Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture (CSA-ENRA), to provide strategic overview from a science and research perspective.
15. Further consideration can be given to the inclusion, as standing members, of representatives from areas such as energy, planning and rural communities, if the agenda or focus of the Group would benefit from these additional perspectives.
16. Along with the standing members, the secretariat may invite policy and public body leaders with relevant interests in the agenda topics to attend meetings.

General governance

Relationships with ministers

17. Other ministers with a portfolio interest will have an open invitation to attend meetings of the LAND Group. Invites, agenda and relevant papers will be provided in advance of all meetings.

Relationship with other groups

18. The intention of this group is not to remove stakeholder engagement at a policy level. The very detailed nature of individual policy development will still require this interaction. For example, groups such as the Agriculture Policy Development Group (APDG) and the National Biodiversity Forum (NBF) will remain key to ongoing policy development in those areas. Their work, and that of other similar groups, will support the discussions of the LAND Group.
19. Where appropriate, the Group will engage with other sources of expertise to strengthen the understanding and conversations around the cumulative value of Scotland's land to its people. This may include relevant Scottish Government advisory bodies such as the Committee on Climate Change, the Poverty and Inequality Commission, the Fair Work Convention and the National Strategy for Economic Transformation Delivery Board.

Meetings and papers

Meeting attendance

20. As the LAND Group is advisory in nature and does not exercise decision-making powers, no formal quorum is required for meetings. Members are encouraged to participate regularly, or to nominate a suitable representative where appropriate.
21. Although there is no requirement to be quorate, the LAND Group will normally seek attendance from a majority of member organisations. Meetings may proceed with fewer attendees where the Chair is satisfied that the discussions will remain balanced and representative of the land use areas under consideration.
22. Where attendance is felt to be insufficient to support effective consideration of a particular item, the Chair may defer discussion of that item to a future meeting, or seek views through correspondence.

Timescales, frequency and location of meetings

23. The LAND Group will meet three times a year, with additional, interim meetings held on specific topics where necessary. These regular (tri-annual) meetings will alternate between being fully in-person or fully online. Interim meetings, if required, will be either in-person or online, as deemed appropriate.
24. Meetings will be hosted by the Scottish Government. It is anticipated these will last no more than two hours, unless otherwise agreed.
25. Apologies should be notified to the secretariat in advance of each meeting.

Papers

26. The secretariat will issue papers between three and five working days before each meeting.

Meeting notes

27. Draft minutes will be circulated to the LAND Group members no later than seven working days following the meeting.
28. Attendees will be asked to approve the draft minutes or offer amendments via correspondence within ten working days of the minutes being circulated. Approval will then be noted formally at the next LAND Group meeting, after which the minutes will be published on an appropriate Scottish Government website, with links circulated to relevant SG stakeholders.

Terms of engagement

Conditions

29. Any advice or recommendation to the Scottish Government will be documented in the published minutes. As far as possible, this should be reached by a consensus agreement, failing which the Group should indicate that consensus was not possible and provide options for consideration.
30. It is expected that all members will be mindful of the different approaches each member may have, listen carefully to understand, and be tolerant of different views and perspectives, even if they do not agree with them. It is expected that members will treat each other, and officials providing support to the board, with respect, courtesy and dignity at all times.
31. Discussions will be held under Chatham House Rules, allowing members, when out with the Group, to reference information from discussions within Group meetings without identifying the member(s) who made any particular comment. The minutes will be drafted to reflect this.

Support to the LAND Group

32. The Group will be supported by a secretariat of SG officials. The secretariat will manage the flow of information to and from the Group, respond to stakeholder queries and provide updates to stakeholders as required. They will also arrange meetings of the Group, issue agendas and papers and take minutes. It is anticipated that AI transcription tools will be utilised where appropriate to assist with note taking.
33. There is an expectation that LAND Group members will disseminate the work of the Group to their respective organisations and sectors.

Remuneration and expenses

34. Membership of the Group is on a voluntary basis. Members will not receive any remuneration for participation.

Review of Group

35. The lifetime of the Group, its terms of reference and its membership can be reviewed at any time to ensure it remains relevant and fit for purpose. However, it is proposed that an initial review take place in 2028.

Terms of reference agreed at the LAND Group meeting of: