

Scotland's third Land Use Strategy

CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Confor (www.confor.org.uk) is the not-for-profit organisation for the UK's sustainable forestry and wood-using businesses. It has 1,500 member companies, representing the whole forestry and wood supply chain.

Scotland's third Land Use Strategy will update the 2016 strategy. It aims to be more accessible, and rather than bringing forward new policy proposals it brings together policies that affect land use in a strategic framework. Following this consultation a strategic document will be published in March, after which a detailed delivery plan will be consulted on and developed.

These are Confor's answers to key questions in the consultation:

Do the vision and objectives (below) need updating? – No.

“A Scotland where we fully recognise, understand and value the importance of our land resources, and where our plans and decisions about land use will deliver improved and enduring benefits, enhancing the wellbeing of our nation.”

- *Land based businesses working with nature to contribute more to Scotland's prosperity*
- *Responsible stewardship of Scotland's natural resources delivering more benefits to Scotland's people*
- *Urban and rural communities better connected to the land, with more people enjoying the land and positively influencing land use*

In the last Strategy policies and proposals were listed based on policy areas such as agriculture, forestry and natural capital. We are proposing to structure the new Strategy around a series of conceptual landscapes to illustrate the effect of policies on the ground. Are the landscapes an effective way to communicate policy? – Yes, it will encourage integrated land use.

Are Climate Change, Biodiversity and Communities the right crosscutting themes? – These are good but the strategy also needs to support green long term investments as set out in Scottish Government's Programme for Government in September 2020, including sustainable production of the materials we need to live and thrive: food, fibre and energy.

Does this demonstrate that the Scottish Government is taking steps to help deliver sustainable land use? – The categories marginal land, upland, and semi-natural landscapes need some work to achieve the aim of giving a wider audience an effective understanding of the range of types of land in Scotland, and the roles we wish them to play as a society. All landscapes are 'semi-natural' to some extent. 'Marginal' can imply anything from non-arable to intact nature, and it also implies a value-judgement – what is 'marginal' for farming may be 'central' for forestry or biodiversity. Potential forestry land and the Flow Country peatlands shouldn't be in the same category.

Are there any particular impacts you can think of on young people of the Land Use Strategy? – A key part of a Land Use Strategy with a higher public profile will be promotion of careers in land use. It should showcase the opportunities for land use careers to contribute to Scotland’s climate change targets; food, wood and energy production; and nature conservation, through a wide range of professional roles with many entry levels. It should forecast the number of roles which will be required over the time of the strategy, and incorporate policies, including links with education policies, to attract a talented and diverse workforce to fill them.