

Consultation Title	<b>ECCLR Committee: Biodiversity Funding and Implementation</b>
Date	<b>29/11/18</b>
From	<b>Eleanor Kay Scottish Land &amp; Estates Stuart House Eskmills Business Park, EH21 7PB</b>
Telephone	<b>0131 653 5400</b>
Email	<b>Eleanor.kay@scottishlandandestates.co.uk</b>

Scottish Land & Estates is a member organisation that represents the interests of both land managers and land-based businesses in rural Scotland. SLE has members with interests in a variety of land uses and welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence on biodiversity funding and implementation. Farmers and Land managers play a vital role in improving biodiversity, securing natural resources and helping meet the challenges of climate change.

## **Summary**

---

The [2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity](#) (2013) considers the international Aichi targets agreed in the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010 and the [European Union Biodiversity Strategy](#) (2011). The 2020 Challenge updated the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy; [It's in Your Hands](#) (2004) and both documents constitute the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy sits within a broad framework encompassing global, EU, UK and Scottish conventions, legislation and policy.

Supporting stakeholders to engage in activities that help realise Scotland's Biodiversity targets is a worthwhile endeavour. Challenges exist in ensuring funding longevity and encouraging the uptake of schemes. Leaving the EU presents opportunities for better scheme design and increased local community and stakeholder engagement in the issue of increasing biodiversity. For targets to be realised a sense of ownership needs to be created in wider society, not just rural stakeholders. Whilst the goal of biodiversity targets must be fixed at a national level the routes to achieving them need flexibility at local levels.

## **1. The current funding context, outlook and impacts**

---

Key pressures faced by stakeholders are; funding uncertainty, contradictory schemes, complex applications, and limited availability of data to show positive impact. Scottish Government's Agriculture Champions recommended stewardship of the countryside be a key part of future policy. SLE supports this and believes a bottom up approach is most appropriate. Land managers need to be engaged with and supported to identify conservation goals. To ensure 'buy-in' to any scheme we need to ensure they understand the reasons behind any prescribed activity and identify simple result measures that indicate the target outcomes are achieved – encouraging stewardship. This is important for those actions contained within the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy which depend on the third sector.

### **Impacts of EU exit?**

Brexit brings both challenges and opportunities. Opportunities for new thinking and developing innovative approaches and ideas which will lead Scotland forward in sustainable rural growth. Scotland has the opportunity to design and set its own land use and agricultural

policies that suit the domestic context in the UK and in Scotland. To date support has been funded under the Common Agricultural Policy, typically via Agri-environment schemes and Less Favoured Area Support. Following the transition period in 2024 when these payments disappear, consideration needs to be given to how these assets 'public goods' can be maintained. The majority of legislation will be retained under EU (Withdrawal) Act or Continuity Bill. Due to shared natural heritage concerns (e.g. migratory species) leaving existing legislation could cause conflict and the EU may demand that the UK retains regulatory alignment. Any updates to the EU laws will not automatically be taken into domestic law, so a mechanism will be needed to review the changes and implement them where appropriate. The lack of oversight from the EU may also result in compliance issues. Monitoring and data quality will need to be maintained on leaving the EU to ensure direct comparison to previous information and international data. On leaving the EU, the current capacity to quality check and analyse data will be lost unless an agreement is made. There is concern that there will be a loss of expertise and access to comparative information should an agreement not be met, impacting reporting standards.

### **Issues for different types and levels of participant?**

Funding eligibility varies by scheme, limiting which groups can apply for funding slows the realisation of biodiversity targets. Support is often for small, single party projects as large projects are overburdened with bureaucracy which reduces uptake. Schemes also often lack awareness of regional differences. Current funding models exclude several potential 'providers' like communities, crofters and tenants. Biodiversity targets would be best achieved by including all potential providers.

## **2. Funding models and strategy**

---

A large amount of work has been done to appraise previous schemes both in Scotland and the rest of UK and Europe. It is important that the lessons learnt in these are considered when future schemes are designed. New models being discussed in Scotland include an updated version of LEADER programme more tailored to national and local priorities of Scotland. Expansion of capital support through sources such as publicly-funded loans. EU LIFE payments due to be made post March 2019 will possibly be made by Scottish Government.

### **How can funding be most effectively applied/prioritised?**

Scotland should not only be thinking about how biodiversity actions can be funded but also how they can best be targeted and achieved. A robust evidence base is required to ensure that outcomes sought can be achieved through the changes being implemented. A gap in terms of research expertise is identified when it comes to biodiversity, ecosystem health and services. Appropriate levels of funding are essential to encourage uptake of schemes, but ahead of this we need to be clear on the focus and purpose of payment and how we intend to achieve the desired outcome.

### **What should the role of Scottish Government and SNH be?**

As a general point, we urge that consideration to achieving biodiversity outcomes looks beyond working in silos. Collective actions and partnerships need to be encouraged and offer good governance mechanisms. To fully realise Scotland's ambition to halting and reversing biodiversity loss it will be necessary to improve existing measures and/or introduce other ways of encouraging management which safeguards and promotes biodiversity. In addition to policy instruments such as regulation, evaluation, facilitation and subsidies, other mechanisms such as private and community initiatives which also influence biodiversity will need to be considered

Scottish Government needs to ensure that regulators are able to take a more constructive and flexible approach to the implementation of environmental schemes. Flexibility within

schemes ensures the right management actions are undertaken in the right area, recognising that different management might be required across different parts of land at different times. Wildlife knows no boundaries and it is essential that future schemes seek to encourage farmers and land managers to work together at a landscape approach. It is unlikely that biodiversity conservation goals will be met by solely protecting particular habitats or species or designating certain areas for management. A landscape scale approach is essential, many biodiversity concerns in Scotland such as declines in upland birds require action from multiple land managers to provide the range habitats needed. An approach demonstrated by the recently formed Working for Waders initiative.

Experience shows that biodiversity needs to be integrated and mainstreamed into policy across different sectors. Clear linkages need to be made with Scotland's national strategies which are key delivery tools in achieving target outcomes. The Land Use Strategy (and regional land use partnerships) required by the Climate Change (Scotland) Act also provide an opportunity to pursue policy integration and to focus more explicitly on the complementarities and conflicts, the trade-offs and priorities and objectives, organisational capacities and assessment procedures.

There needs to be a policy which incentivises farmers and land managers to ensure they can continue to fulfil the important roles they play. It should be recognised that land managers need long-term support, advice and guidance. The wealth of historic knowledge on their land and the landscape in which they work should be utilised for a more common-sense approach to scheme design. Giving stakeholders a voice early in the design and piloting of schemes would ensure they are accessible and achievable, this will increase final scheme uptake and subsequent impact.

In addition, there needs to be an advice service or services that give landowners and land managers help in developing and implementing new approaches to land management. Helping them understand the importance of biodiversity to their businesses and society is also necessary – there needs to be a clear link between payment and result which will help focus land managers on owning and understanding the results and management actions, rather than simply following a set of prescriptions.

Specialist knowledge and support for the duration of a scheme are essential for ensuring that the right management is being undertaken from application through to complete implementation. Organisations such as the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) have been instrumental in bridging the gap between different government organisations and land managers providing practical specialist advice on how to manage land with a view to improving biodiversity

### **Role of local authorities and models such as City Deals?**

The national ambition of biodiversity targets can only be realised with coordinated local action. Every area of Scotland will be able to deliver slightly different targets which on the whole would achieve a national target. Local authority must consult with their stakeholders to ensure a joined-up approach to target realisation. A flexible approach at local level will make national targets more achievable.

#### **Examples in other countries.**

Payments for ecosystem services and biodiversity are not new, both long standing projects and newer pilots exist and can offer a wealth of knowledge and data for designing a suitable scheme. Some examples include;

- Costa Rica- Payments for ecosystem services
- Republic of Ireland- Hen Harrier Project
- England- North Yorkshire Moors Project for Countryside Stewardship Scheme

Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) are in place in the 28 EU member states too. Further afield, the New Zealand Government offers various national funding options for different environmental initiatives, such as Nature Heritage Fund that provides incentive for ecosystem conservation on private land, helping meet the cost of protecting areas of high ecological value.

### **3. Linkages to current policy and international context**

---

Scottish Environment LINK, a coalition of Scotland's leading environmental charities are spearheading the Fight for Scotland's Nature campaign for a new Scottish Environment Act, stressing the need to continue to align Scotland's environmental legislation with the internationally recognised EU principles. It presses the need for improved support and funding, with clear environmental targets to mitigate climate change and ensure robust ecosystems and sustainable use of natural resources.

As highlighted in the 'Scotland's Biodiversity A Route Map to 2020 Second Annual Progress Report - 2016/17' good progress has been made towards 2020 has been made. While overall delivery progress of the Route Map is summarised as being good, it is also recognised that this on its own is not enough to meet the Scottish Government ambitions set out in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. In addition, the international Aichi targets highlight that Scotland needs to address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society.