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Dear Mr Wrighttham

Scoping a Strategic Vision for the Uplands

Thank you for seeking our views on your consultation about scoping a strategic vision for the Uplands. The associated information provides a very helpful framework to begin scoping this work and we have responded to some of the key questions you have raised below. We would be happy to discuss these comments and participate further in the development of this proposal as it progresses.

1. What broad characteristics should we use to define the uplands? Some possible approaches are summarised in the annex to this note.

We recognise the difficulty in identifying and gaining wide support for a consistent definition of the Uplands across Scotland. The annex provides a helpful overview of the relative advantages of different approaches and we consider these capture the primary methods that should be explored further, or perhaps, tested through piloting.

We also recognise that finer grained mapping is not always desirable, particularly in the context of strategic decision making. However, there are occasions where it may be necessary to be definitive about whether land is of an upland character (or not) – this will depend upon the nature of the vision and whether a map of any scale is included in support.

Should mapping be deployed in some way, our experience would suggest that translation between the map and what is meaningful on the ground can often be crucial, particularly in contexts where such information is used in decision making around land use change or allocating funding. As such, we would on balance favour the 'limit of enclosed farmland' approach, which as you have noted is generally meaningful on the ground and can make use of existing datasets. However, it may be that a combination of various approaches may be desirable, for example, layering together altitude, evidence of enclosure and land capability (amongst other factors).

As part of your analysis for developing any map of Upland areas, it may be helpful to investigate the information already contained within the [Historic Landuse Assessment](#) (HLA) – available at <http://hlamap.org.uk>. HLA is a spatial record of areas of land use today and, where evidence survives in the landscape, land use in the past. It may be that some of the land classification outputs from this mapping tool can aid in both the definition and

articulation of Upland areas. Should you wish to explore the use of the HLA and its underlying data further we would be happy to discuss this with you.

2. What are the key social, economic and environmental benefits that the uplands provide for Scotland?

3. How can upland land use help to prevent or reduce the impacts of climate change?

As highlighted in [Our Place in Time](#), the historic environment is a source of identity, culture and learning. At a general level, the historic record and cultural artefacts in Upland areas tend to be much better preserved than in Lowland areas simply because Uplands have been subject to less cultivation and development.

The Scottish Uplands, both in terms of the cultural material they contain and the stories of past and current generations living, working and visiting these areas, are incredibly valuable for a range of reasons. Understanding, appreciating and careful management of these areas will help us better understand our past and consequently prepare us for the future.

4. A strategic vision could inform decisions about the balance between different land uses in different parts of the uplands. What are the key choices that an upland vision should address, and why?

There is potentially a very wide range of choices that would come into play in determining land use in the Uplands, although most commonly these will be around agriculture, sport and recreation and new development (e.g. forestry expansion and renewable energy generation). It may be useful to review the two [Regional Land Use Pilots](#) that have recently been undertaken to draw upon the evidence they gathered as an indication for the common issues that arise and where choices need to be made.

It may also be helpful to review the [Environmental Report](#) that accompanied the Land Use Strategy 2 consultation, which we consider set out some helpful examples of different land uses and where competing priorities and interests may need to be reconciled.

5. Are there any other topics or issues that should be included in an upland vision, and if so why?

6. Are there any topics or issues that should be excluded from an upland vision, and if so why?

Any vision for the Uplands should be as inclusive as possible and we have no strong views about any particular topics that should be discounted at this stage.

7. Which stakeholders do you think it would be particularly important to involve, and how? Would particular approaches be needed, for example, to reach particular groups?

A vision for the Uplands should be a shared endeavour in which people, organisations and other interested groups work collaboratively. To do this better, we need to develop a common language and gain a clear understanding of what the choices are and how relevant information can be obtained to underpin important decisions.

As noted above, the recent Regional Land Use Pilots may provide useful insights into ways in which stakeholder participation can be successfully achieved. Wherever possible, existing networks of those working in and familiar with Upland areas will be crucial to informing a vision that all partners can subscribe to.

8. What are your views on the process that might be needed to bring together the key interests and develop a shared vision?

9. Who would be best placed to lead this process?

No comments.

10. What form should a vision for the uplands take (visual or descriptive, maps, diagrams or text?)

We would favour a brief text based vision that is supported by mapping and other information and guidance. We would also support clear guidance on how the vision should be incorporated into decision making and to what extent it would interact with and/or compliment Scottish Planning Policy, the Land Use Strategy itself and any associated/similar policy statements.

11. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

No comments

I hope this is helpful. Please feel welcome to contact me on 0131 668 8924 or by email (aldasair.mckenzie@hes.scot) should you wish to discuss this response.

Yours sincerely

Alasdair McKenzie
Heritage Management Team Leader

Historic Environment Scotland