

Reforestation Scotland Response to Scoping a Strategic Vision for the Uplands

Where are the uplands?

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

We recommend the Land Capability Classification for Agriculture which already exists. Classes 5-7 would probably equate to the Uplands.

What benefits do the uplands provide to Scotland?

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

In random order- landscape, image of Scotland, wild products such as berries, wildness/remoteness, carbon capture (peat and forestry), fresh air, fresh water, recreation, hutting sites, tranquillity, forests (native & commercial), self-realisation, venison, other game, biodiversity offsetting opportunities, jobs for local people, rural communities, crofting lifestyle, retreat space, biodiversity, soil protection, timber, wood fuel, wildlife tourism, energy.

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

Carbon capture through peat, trees & scrub; flood mitigation, timber building materials, renewable energy- wood fuel, wind & hydro; room for species to move uphill; buffer zones; wild food production; a laboratory to study climate change; staycations as alternative to tourist travel.

What should an upland vision include?

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?

Upland land use in Scotland suffers from rigid sectoral thinking- commercial conifers v sheep v grouse moor v wildlife habitat v archaeology, etc. All sharp line divisions. A strategic vision would allow integration. Rather than a sharp dividing line- often a fence on the ground, an upland vision could allow for a blurring of edges, buffer zones between land uses in the way that good forest design already encourages. The other key issue is the scale of integration.

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

Reforestation Scotland puts people at the core of a vision for the uplands. We see more trees resulting in more opportunities for people and the development of a vibrant forest culture.

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

The dumping of nuclear waste, superquarries, etc.

How should the vision be developed?

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?

Existing rural communities. A roadshow going to community halls listening to viewpoints would be a good start. Reforesting Scotland has a vision for the role of future communities as well as the current ones.

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

If a non-sectoral integrated vision is to be developed, then sectoral interests need to be encouraged to take off their single interest hats. Perhaps people need to speak & listen as family members, community members, walkers, etc. rather than as sheep farmers, grouse moor managers and foresters. As people rather than land use interests.

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

A Scottish Government working group set up for the purpose, based on sustainable land-use, social, economic and environmental objectives.

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

All of the above + drawings.
Drawing taken from Green Manifesto for the Highlands, available from Reforesting Scotland.

11. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

This is a great opportunity for positive thinking about the Uplands.

Donald McPhillimy

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