

Scoping a strategic vision for the uplands – key questions for discussion

River South Esk Catchment Partnership response

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.

A possible first preference as a suitable means to defining the uplands would be by using upland vegetation cover. This would be followed by, climate and land capability classes and finally The consideration of uplands as land lying above the limit of enclosed farmland

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 no particular order;

Carbon storage

Natural Flood Management

Refuge for species with range changes due to climate change

Overall national species diversity (in healthy, functioning upland habitats)

Diverse cultural identity

Diverse land use practices

Niche tourism activities e.g. mountain biking, wildlife watching, hill walking

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

Increasing tree cover in appropriate places e.g. contour planting and appropriate riparian planting can increase the permeability of soil reducing run off and peak flows. This can aid in natural flood management in downstream areas of a catchment.

Agro forestry encourages mixed land use and this can also reduce run off and can provide microclimates that are of benefit to livestock and native species facing variable, extreme weather.

Increased natural ecological coherence will aid climate change adaptation and all land use practices should where possible contribute positively to this.

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?

The vision should address;

Healthy upland ecosystems, functioning in as near a natural state as possible, will provide the balance needed for species and habitats to flourish.

Healthy ecosystems will provide human inhabitants with the ecosystem services we depend on from upland areas, more so when these systems function in as healthy state as possible.

We should be bold, recognising that both the needs of biodiversity and humans are not presently being met.

Management practices we have employed over the last century have not always been sustainable and do not support the uplands functioning to their full potential.

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

Learning from countries with healthier ecosystems? Can we manage our countryside like our neighbours e.g. Norway. Healthy no's of birds for sport but living in healthy forest settings and functioning peat lands existing where the naturally would alongside wet woodland?

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

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?

Landowners, NGOs,
Ecosystem services approach to focus on multiple benefits for all.
A focus on the economic development potential of various land management practices e.g. agroforestry, ecotourism diversification.

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

Is the CNPA Nature Plan vision what we should be aiming for?
Focus on future that fulfils everyone's objectives
SGP and nature exchanges e.g. Arch network etc. – Education that informs land managers those other/non – traditional methods may work well in Scotland

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

Partnership approach and action plan delivery ideally led by NGO's or area officers employed by regional groups, alternatively rotating voluntary secondments within partnership membership.

10. What form should a vision for the uplands take (visual or descriptive, maps, diagrams or text)?
Where we are now – where we want to be – how to get there – maps, illustrations, action plan

Should a vision not focus solely on how we picture our uplands in the future e.g.

In 2040 our uplands are healthy functioning ecosystems. They allow species and habitats to flourish and support the diversification of economic opportunities in rural communities. The visible improvement of ecosystem health has increased climate change resilience. Healthy uplands provide refuge for species vulnerable to climate change and can reduce the impact of severe weather events in communities far beyond their reaches.

Where we are now, where we want to be (vision) and how to get there are all important. Should this baseline data inform the basis of action plans and strategies? Maps and illustrations are fantastic when you have the resources to secure the data and then use i.e. e.g. Land Use Strategy pilot data and CNPA peatland maps. Will the resources be there for developing regional mapping opportunities?

11. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?
n/a