

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

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.
 - *Of the approaches listed in the Annex the definition “land lying above the limit of enclosed farmland” is probably the one easiest to reach broad agreement on and is easy to see on the ground. However such a definition does risk excluding areas that are upland in nature but sit within enclosed farmland. A purely geographical approach may be too simplistic and exclusive. The definition should be clearly defined at the start of the strategy/vision. If the vision is developed on an area/regional basis as suggested below then examples of lowland/upland areas can be given for each region.*

What benefits do the uplands provide to Scotland?

2. What are the key social, economic and environmental benefits that the uplands provide for Scotland?
 - *Supporting a range of species and habitats, some of which are rare in a European context*
 - *Recreation: this covers a range of activities including walking/climbing and hunting.*
 - *Tourism*
 - *Water – provision and regulation*
 - *Nutrient cycling*
 - *Farming*
 - *Forestry*
 - *Carbon storage*
 - *Renewable energy – wind, hydroelectric schemes*
 - *A sense of wilderness*
 - *A place to live in small rural communities*
 - *A sense of belonging for small rural communities*
3. How can upland land use help to prevent or reduce the impacts of climate change?
 - *Carbon storage through peat and in some cases through woodlands depending on the type of soil the woodland is planted on*
 - *Wind power – turbines*
 - *Hydroelectric schemes*

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?
 - *One strategy or balance between different land-uses will not be appropriate across the whole of Scotland. The balance between different land uses in the uplands will vary in different parts of Scotland. Splitting the uplands into regions (6-10 regions) and looking at the different land-uses and priorities in each of these regions might be a way forward.*

- *If choices are to be made, first of all any conflicts or trade-offs between choices need to be identified. It may be that in some regions there aren't conflicts or that an agreement can be reached.*
 - *The vision should not be split into sectors (forestry, peatland, farming, conservation) but should be integrated across sectors.*
 - *The vision needs to be linked to the lowlands - in terms of land holdings that spread across lowlands and uplands*
 - *The vision needs to be linked to the lowlands - in terms people living in the lowlands but using the uplands – either indirectly for water/power or directly for recreation or in terms of how they value the uplands even if they don't directly 'use' them (a sense of knowing the uplands exist).*
5. Are there any other topics or issues that should be included in an upland vision, and if so why?
- *Rewilding – what do we mean by it?, do we want it?, what is the place of local communities in a rewilded landscape?*
 - *Reintroductions – are there any specific species we should consider reintroducing? Or do we definitely not want any reintroductions – should we prioritise conserving the species and habitats that we have?*
 - *Habitat restoration – which habitats should we prioritize restoration for?*
 - *The balance between habitats – if a particular habitat type should be increased, e.g. woodlands – which habitats should it replace?*
 - *Agri-environment schemes - what are they going to be post Brexit? Can we use the same money but to greater benefit for the environment?*
 - *Land abandonment – currently happening – do we want this to continue?*
 - *Aging farming population*
 - *Rural communities and facilities – how to improve them*
 - *What can be done to achieve the vision? How is the vision going to be implemented?*
6. Are there any topics or issues that should be excluded from an upland vision, and if so why?
- *Topics should only be excluded if they are clearly outside the scope of the vision, otherwise it could cause unnecessary conflict between stakeholders. It is thus very important to be clear about the purpose of the strategy – see point 7*

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?

The scope of the strategy needs to be very clear on

- *Who the vision is for*
- *What the vision aims to do – is it about land-use or about climate change – mixed messages in introduction.*
- *How the vision will be used*

Once the above is answered it will be easier to refine who should be consulted but the list is potentially huge: landowners, public, businesses, NGO's, people who use the uplands for recreation but don't live in the uplands, farming, forestry..... If people are missed off the list and not consulted this could cause problems

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

- *If it is going to be done it needs to be done, and to be seen to be done, properly with sufficient resources*
 - *It needs agreement from a range of sectors that a developing this vision will be useful*
 - *It will be time consuming and the deadlines for the construction of the vision should be realistic*
9. Who would be best placed to lead this process?
- *An independent panel of people from a wide range of stakeholders*
 - *If developed on a regional basis then local stakeholders from each region would ensure greater 'buy in' from local people.*
 - *SNH or government departments will not be seen as neutral, although they should set up the remit of the group and contribute to it*
10. What form should a vision for the uplands take (visual or descriptive, maps, diagrams or text)?
- *All of the above*
11. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?
- *The Scope needs to be very carefully defined otherwise there is a risk of the vision causing conflicts between different sectors within the uplands*
 - *Need buy in from different sectors that developing such a vision is a useful process*

In answering this scoping document it is unclear

- *Who the vision is for*
- *What the vision aims to do*
- *How the vision will be used*

These key questions need to be very clear before the vision is developed otherwise people will misunderstand it , and the strategy could cause unnecessary conflict between upland stakeholders

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