

# Scoping a Strategic Vision for the Uplands of Scotland

## Cairngorms National Park Authority and Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority response

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### Where are the uplands?

1. What broad characteristics should we use to define the uplands?

The uplands are characterised by: exposure to a tougher climate, higher rainfall, lower soil fertility, lower land capability and shorter growing seasons.

Using current available GIS datasets it should be possible to define this area on a map. The uplands cannot be categorised or mapped simply by altitude or latitude or historic classifications such as LFAs

It is important to be very clear that the uplands includes a *diverse* range of habitats and land-uses including agriculture, montane, open moorland, grasslands, forests, woods, wetlands and peatlands. The uplands are **not** limited to open, high altitude areas; to define them as such would immediately narrow and limit the scope of an upland vision.

### What benefits do the uplands provide to Scotland?

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

There is great potential for the uplands to provide *more* social, environmental and economic benefits. The vision should not focus on what the uplands offer now but on what they potentially could offer in the future to meet future pressures and needs.

For example:

- A diverse land use providing the space, landscape, habitat and species that draw in visitors and tourists from all over the world.
- High quality sustainably produced food provided by agriculture, sport and fishing.
- Timber, wood fuel and a wide variety of forest products from the forest industry.
- Opportunities for recreation and healthy living are also provided for both those living in and visiting these areas.
- Sporting industries providing a healthy burgeoning and recovering environment and to contribute to providing flood and climate regulation and high water quality.
- Sensitively designed and sited renewable energy generation opportunities.
- Communities engaged in and connected to landuse, management and ownership.

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

- Carbon storage through increased native woodland cover and peatland restoration.
- Small scale community renewable energy schemes.

- Sustainable grazing levels by all herbivores to achieve regenerating semi-natural vegetation and natural tree regeneration for greater biodiversity resilience against climate change impacts.
- Locally sourced timber and food.

### **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?

- Maximising the diversity of land use – to ensure communities can adapt to a changing climate and changing economics.
- Supporting local communities by protecting the environment, local employment opportunities and improving infrastructure, transport and communication links –the people of the uplands provide the links to the past present and future that will maintain the natural and cultural landscape.
- Maximising biodiversity – because it is fundamental to all future landuse choices that we have the full web of life to support the ecosystems upon which we depend.
- Avoiding monocultures – mistakes in the past with single species management have turned communities away from some land uses that could form an important part of the future mix.
- Ensuring new woodlands include a diverse mix of tree species – Better for biodiversity, as a guard against possible future disease outbreaks and also for the provision of local sources of bespoke timber.
- Ensuring landscape is always at the heart of decision making – a beautiful landscape synonymous with the uplands is fundamental for the tourism and recreation industry and providing access and recreation opportunities.
- Ensuring provision of local food, fuel, power and timber – with relatively poor transport links in the uplands it is all the more important that communities are able to be more self-sufficient.

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

Extraction from the land over the long term eventually requires replacement of nutrients and soil preservation. Excessive levels of extraction in some areas over centuries has caused damage that will take centuries to recover.

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

We are currently not aware of any.

### **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?

It is very important that a vision for the uplands is valued and bought in to by the people who live and work in the uplands and not seen as something produced from elsewhere. It is important to ensure communities in the uplands are aware of any consultation and get the opportunity to input. Since the vision for the uplands is so closely related to land use it is also vital that land managers and owners are engaged in it early on.

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

Rural land use partnerships should be promoted and used to develop the vision.

Given the importance of local community 'buy in', perhaps 'sign off' by locally elected councillors would provide a means of local democracy.

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

The process should not be led by any agency with a narrow remit and requires National leadership from the Scottish Government.

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

All of the above but with an emphasis on actions and mapping opportunities.

11. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

Above all the vision should be inspiring and dynamic; promoting opportunities for positive change where change is necessary and valuing the current aspects of the Scottish uplands that make them world renowned. The vision should address local community issues in the uplands as well as global issues such as climate change and sustainability. It should not be about preserving the status quo.

Our two National Parks provide great opportunities for trialling visionary approaches to developing diverse and more integrated landuse in the uplands. The role of the National Parks should feature within the overall strategic vision.

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