

FCS response to SNH’s scoping a strategic vision for the uplands
Responses to key questions:

Where are the uplands?	
<p>1. What broad characteristics should we use to define the uplands? (some possible approaches are summarised in the annex to the SNH note)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Altitude could be used as the key and credible characteristic. However, it is not necessary to use a single threshold for all parts of Scotland; this could be determined using other key characteristics of the uplands. • Should be based on measurable criteria (e.g. climatic, elevation and soils) and not descriptors. • Broad characteristics of mountains, moorland, forests, lochs/sea lochs and coast. • The uplands is the character of entire landscapes; to north-west Scotland and some islands, right down to sea level. • Centre for Mountain Studies may be able to contribute to where/what the uplands are. • Should consider and be consistent with other approaches (e.g. Scottish Wildlife Trust, Forest Research). • Needs to allow for changes with influences, such as climate change.
What benefits do the uplands provide to Scotland?	
<p>2. What are the key social, economic and environmental benefits that the uplands provide for Scotland?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic: sporting, tourism (e.g. wildlife tourism), agriculture, forestry, fishing, energy (and the employment of people this brings). • Social: employment, maintaining fragile rural communities, community ownership (contributing to community empowerment via ownership and/or management of assets (e.g. community forestry)), landscape, public access, health and well being from seeing, being in and knowing the uplands are there. • Environmental: landscape, biodiversity, water, carbon sequestration. • Large enough to accommodate species that range far or require access to multiple habitats or need to be free from regular human disturbance (e.g. Golden Eagle). • A clear distinction should be made between notional values (including those made for environmental and social outputs) and the harsh reality of Scotland’s PLC’s hard cash constraints.

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<p>3. How can upland land use help to prevent or reduce the impacts of climate change?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits of woodland creation, including productive and native woodlands, and conserving existing woodlands, especially under continuous cover management systems. • Carbon storage in forest and peatlands • Land management for slowing surface and below ground water flows downstream. • Provision of renewable energy • Large landscape scale upland habitats to mitigate downstream effects. • Promotion of land uses that are at least carbon neutral. • Develop the potential of upland areas to be carbon sinks in the future. • Consider the potential future impacts of climate change on the uplands; how that may impact / affect future land use / land use balance (e.g. predictions that farming may go further up the hill).
<p>What should an upland vision include?</p>	
<p>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?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strategic vision should recognise the options for economic use of the uplands (livestock farming, sporting, forestry, energy) and try to articulate how public benefits (including landscape, access, nature conservation and climate change) can be maximised. • It should be clear about the benefits of land use choices. For example, for carbon capture and climate change mitigation benefits, wooded landscapes have greater potential than open moorland landscapes. • Upland areas should focus on society/public interests and promote access/benefits for the majority not the minority. • Consideration of land uses that have the potential to enhance economic potential and make a positive contribution to land use balance. • Short term benefits should be of lower priority than longer term ones, especially those that help to mitigate future climate change impacts.
<p>5. Are there any other topics or issues that should be included in an upland vision, and if so why?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of the trends and changes to the uplands say over the last 20 years, as background to inform the future direction of travel.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance between delivery of benefits and concepts of landscape quality. • Recognition that current upland areas are not necessarily the result of achieving their natural climax of species and habitats (i.e. loss of natural woodland) nor are they perfect and cannot be ‘improved’. • Some habitats in the uplands are degraded and their recovery is expensive or unachievable. These should be clearly recognised and habitat changes encouraged where the new use is of greater benefit: to reduce impacts of future climate change, to increase public use or benefit, to reduce negative impacts on other habitats, species etc. • The effective management of pests and diseases – both of trees and other plants – without which any vision for the uplands could be impacted. • An appreciation of the cultural development and attributes of upland areas, to place the landscape in context with its people.
<p>6. Are there any topics or issues that should be excluded from an upland vision, and if so why?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It should exclude any spatial planning that seeks to prescribe the balance between landuses. This is better done at the local or regional level. Trying to do this would lead to polarised positions rather than the desired integration of land uses. • Use of land for military training or defence.
<p>How should the vision be developed?</p>	
<p>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?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially, everyone who lives, invests, plays, visits and works in the upland area. • Generally, the process should be inclusive and conclusive and provide clear direction. • Owners, land managers, sporting/agricultural tenants and crofters. • Local communities especially all those who make a living from the area. • Community groups that have an interest in an upland area, whether for access, pursue an activity or who live in the area. • Special interest groups who contribute to positive outcomes through their involvement (therefore excluding all that cause harm or pursue or support illegal activities). • Representatives of main landuses and public benefits e.g. CONFOR, Woodland

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	<p>Trust, SWT, RSPB, SGA, Energy sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCS (FES experience in sustainable land management could be useful here). • Scottish Government Plant Health Service, Scottish Tree Health Advisory Group. • Scottish Enterprise.
<p>8. What are your views on the process that might be needed to bring together the key interests and develop a shared vision?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will require clear commitment and involvement from Scottish Government to provide whoever is leading the process the authority to get engagement from all with an interest and avoid some specialist or large and vocal groups from dominating the process. • Requires a regional process and good facilitators (for example, the Regional Forestry Forums could provide a forum for workshops). • Summits to enable fractional interests to understand the vision in a wider context. • Consensus may be difficult to achieve so the process should be both thorough and placed within a fixed timeframe. • Clear guidance will be needed before the process begins on what the visions is to achieve and provide a framework for making sensible decisions.
<p>9. Who would be best placed to lead this process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent consultant who has experience in multiple land uses and no vested interest in one area. • Centre for Mountain Studies.
<p>10. What form should a vision for the uplands take (visual or descriptive, maps, diagrams or text)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All learning styles should be considered. • The vision should be descriptive and succinct text in 'plain English'. • Maps and visual presentations/perspectives should be incorporated as appropriate. • Information on how to achieve any vision and priorities for action/delivery.
<p>11. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research should be carried out on similar strategic visions in other countries (such as Norway) and the subsequent social/environmental/economic consequences of adopted policies. • The process should not be rushed.