

## **Response from Stirling Council – Planning Service – Planning and Policy Team**

Note:- These responses relates to the Stirling Local Development Plan area only, i.e. excluding that part of the administrative area of Stirling Council within the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. In turn the SLDP covers two distinct geographical areas. The area to the north extends to 221 sq. km and comprises Glen Lochay and the shores, slopes and hills/plateau east of Glen Ogle and between Loch Tay and Loch Earn. The southern area extends to 825 sq. km and contains the City of Stirling, other towns and villages, the surrounding countryside and 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.*

With reference to the annex a definition based on land use or capability seems most appropriate, e.g. land lying above the limit of enclosed farmland. Within the Stirling LDP area the Council concurs the boundary is fairly obvious on the ground, and readily distinguishes, both visually and functionally, uplands from lowlands, including within the hills of the Central Belt that have prominent features of the southern part of the LDP area, (e.g. Western Ochils, Braes of Doune and Fintry, Gargunnoch and Touch Hills)

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

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

As set out in supporting information the Council concurs with the view that uplands are a nationally significant resource supporting an extensive range of economic activities (such as agriculture, forestry, tourism/recreation and renewable energy) that help sustain local community and economic vitality, especially in the northern part of the LDP area. Environmental benefits are also extremely high, including European, national and local nature conservation designations and national and local landscape designations. Appropriate land use management also contributes towards the mitigation of the effects of climate change, reduction of flood risk and water quality improvements.

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

Opportunities include:- i) responsible management of peatlands and other carbon rich soils to prevent unnecessary release of carbon and, ii) as a location for renewable energy projects (wind and hydro), subject to local planning policies and acceptable landscape and environmental impacts.

### **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?*

As with the Land Use Strategy for Scotland 2016-2021 the upland vision would have to be long-term and support sustainable land uses that deliver multiple benefits. It would also have to recognise and accommodate the diversity of the physical, human and economic 'geographies' of upland Scotland.

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

A key consideration is the relationship of the uplands to the economic and social sustainability of the communities they serve.

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

Nothing obvious at this time.

**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 inclusive nature of an upland strategy would require the involvement of a wide range of public, private, NGO, third sector and community stakeholders. Effective engagement with communities would be particularly important, though it is likely the most effective opportunity for engagement is when the vision is refined and focussed at a more regional scale, possibly by progressing with regional land use partnerships and the development of regional land use frameworks.

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

To ensure effective engagement any upland strategy would clearly benefit from alignment with financial support mechanisms such as the Scottish Rural Development Programme and Forestry Grant Scheme.

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

To ensure balance and proper integration with other national outcomes and plans, policies and strategies it is considered the Scottish Government should lead the process.

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

Appropriate mapping to define the extent of land covered by the strategy accompanied by text and diagrams.

*11. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?*

Would the development of an upland strategy by default lead to a distinct national lowland rural/urban land use strategy?