

Scotland's Biodiversity: Progress to 2020 Aichi Targets, Interim Report, 2017

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) set 20 global targets, known as the Aichi Targets in October 2010, to be met by 2020. SNH published an interim report in 2016 which covered 13 of the 20 targets and has now published this latest report covering all 20 targets.

There are a number of areas where Scotland is progressing well with mainstreaming biodiversity, including work to increase public awareness and engagement, and embedding biodiversity values through the development of policy and practice on Natural Capital. However, there appears to be a time-lag in terms of translating these ambitions into changes in practice and clearly influencing decision-making across key sectors of government and society.

The report notes that the areas of work that have proved most challenging relate to direct pressures on biodiversity. Although positive changes in sustainable management, pollution reduction and protection of ecosystems vulnerable to climate change are underway, there is still more to do, with the development of improved metrics and focused action on a range of pressures planned and being implemented.

There has been good progress in safeguarding biodiversity with the designation of marine and terrestrial protected areas now exceeding the international target. Further work is required to identify additional actions for certain groups of species, including seabirds, waders, upland birds and specialist butterflies. The development of a Scotland priority species indicator and metrics for genetic diversity will contribute to this work. Ambitious targets for native woodland planting and restoration have yet to be met, with further work required on implementation of deer management plans.

Improved collation of data and data management are ensuring decisions are informed by evidence, and that information is shared and accessible. However, more work is required to improve data recording, fill gaps and to assess ecosystem functions.

The Interim report notes that there has been a decline in public sector spending on the environment of 24% since 2010. However there are many other funding streams and non-monetary contributions to biodiversity conservation that are not currently accounted for in this target reporting. There is work required to develop the metric for financial resources to ensure it better captures the investment in biodiversity across Scotland.

The Interim report presents Accounts for each Target, with each Account comprising a combination of information and data, mostly at Scottish level, though a few are collated at UK level. The five-point scoring system produced by the CBD is shown in Figure 1 below is used to summarise progress against each Target. This assessment of progress was undertaken by relevant experts within and outwith Scottish Natural Heritage. The SNH Scientific Advisory Committee provided quality assurance and expert advice throughout the development of the Target Accounts and assessments.