



Title: NatureScot: Progress towards a Green Recovery

Date: 26 August 2020

Purpose:	Discussion paper briefing the Board on what we are doing to influence Scotland's economic recovery from the Covid19 pandemic.
How does this link with our corporate priorities of improving biodiversity or delivering nature-based solutions to climate change	We want Scotland to pursue a green path out of this pandemic. Investing in natural capital and nature-based solutions can drive inclusive economic development and can be the most cost-effective way of generating economic activity that will make our communities sustainable and more resilient.
Summary:	Gain support from the Board on how we are influencing a green recovery from Covid-19
Actions	Board to offer further suggestions where we might do more in terms of engagement and influence.
Recommendations:	Board is asked to support our approach and explore what other contributions we could make.
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Purpose

1. To brief the Board on what we are doing to influence Scotland's economic recovery from the Covid19 pandemic.

Background

2. The Scottish Government commissioned the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (AGER) to report¹ (June 2020) on the significant action required to mitigate the economic recession. The report majors on the need to develop a resilient and wellbeing economy with an unequivocal focus on climate change, generating strong growth and quality jobs. The report recommends a four capitals approach, with natural capital as one of the essential and inter-dependent building blocks. It calls for transformational change and recommends that climate change should be a 'thread through every policy'.
3. We submitted evidence to the AGER, Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee (ECCLR) and the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee (EEFW). We set out the definition of a green recovery; the rationale for a green recovery; and identified 10 key areas for action including on green finance, nature-based solutions, transformative land use, urban infrastructure, nature-based tourism, marine management, active travel, youth employment, community capacity and natural capital.
4. Scottish Government published their [Economic Recovery Implementation Plan](#) (Aug 2020) in response to the AGER report. This stresses the need for action across all of society if we are to succeed in making the recovery as swift as possible, and emphasises the needs for a jobs-focused recovery.
5. There are marked changes in public behaviour around engagement with nature. Our commissioned research¹ helps us understand outdoor visit behaviour and engagement with nature during initial Coronavirus lockdown. In Scotland we saw an increase in the number of people visiting the outdoors to enjoy nature and stay healthy with 34% of Scots getting a daily dose of nature, (22% pre-lockdown), and 71% heading outside at least weekly. (Up from 59%).
6. Green recovery is gaining traction in Scotland and globally, amongst the public, politicians and government officials. In order to help gain that traction, we have engaged with;

¹ [Enjoying the outdoors: Outdoor visit behaviour and engagement with nature in Scotland during the Coronavirus lockdown](#) – SNH Commissioned Research July 2020

7. The Just Transition Commission (JTC), who published [Advice for A Green Recovery](#) (July 2020). They call for an economic recovery consistent with Scotland's climate ambition, but with an increased emphasis on equity. They identify four hotspots which merit particular attention:
 - i. Young people – disproportionately impacted
 - ii. Patterns of transport and behavioural change
 - iii. The accelerated transition in the oil & gas sector, and
 - iv. The disproportionate impact on some rural areas – due to their heavy reliance on tourism

8. The Climate Emergency Response Group ([CERG](#)) published [Eight Policy Packages for Scotland's Green Recovery](#). These include City and Town Infrastructure Transformation Programme; Rural jobs creation programme; Green Enterprise Support; Unlocking private investment with greater policy certainty; Green Future Skills and Expanded Capital Investment Stimulus.

9. Additional evidence comes from a range of sources we have engaged with, e.g. the [UK Commission on Climate Change](#), Stakeholders such as [SCDI](#), the [Scottish Wildlife Trust and Scottish Environment LINK](#) have all expressed support for a green recovery, with [over 80 organisations](#) including the Church of Scotland, Jubilee Scotland, the Poverty Alliance, the Royal Scottish Geographical Society and Community Energy Scotland are 'calling for a Just and Green Recovery in Scotland'.

Next steps

10. We will continue to work with Scottish Government, EELG partners and other key stakeholders to communicate and set out the evidence for investing in natural capital as one of the pillars of a green recovery.

11. We have commissioned work to provide an initial assessment of the nature-based jobs required to reach Scotland's net-zero target. This will report in autumn 2020 and help to provide the evidence base on the employment and skills needs for the nature sector. While we can't finalise an influencing plan for this assessment until we see the results, we hope it can support positioning of NatureScot – and natural capital - as a strong contributor to the Green Recovery.

12. The PfG will be announced in early September, the Infrastructure Investment Plan in October and the Climate Change Action plan in December. These all provide good opportunities for us to inform and influence Scottish Government and stakeholders on the mechanisms to address the climate emergency and biodiversity as an essential part of reframing our economy as we emerge from Covid 19.

13. The arena in which we operate is a congested space, and particularly so when considering climate change and the green recovery. The call to 'build back better' has encouraged many to articulate their vision of what 'better' looks like. NatureScot is no different, though fully aware of the importance of our relationship with the Scottish Government.
14. Nonetheless, to ensure we retain the trusted adviser role to a whole range of agencies, we will continue to work with partners to build support, and in media and social media channels, to set out our vision for nature-based solutions for climate change and a nature-rich Scotland in 2030.
15. Realistically though, a limited selection of stakeholders, reflecting the limited resource available is essential and has been identified. The next step is the development of an influencing plan and the deployment of the Chair, CEO and possibly Board members to engage with those stakeholders on this topic.
16. We are keen to explore our strategy with you and the extent to which you feel able to support the influencing exercise.

Recommendations

17. The Board is asked to support our approach and invited to offer further suggestions where we might do more in terms of engagement and influence.