

# Scottish Natural Heritage

## LANDSCAPE INDICATOR

December 2016

### LLC1 Land Cover

This indicator monitors land cover. Our diverse land cover contributes to Scotland's distinctive landscapes and sense of place. The aim of the indicator is to provide a baseline against which future change can be measured.

All mapped land covers can be monitored at Level 1 (see table below), and using further datasets then we can monitor land covers in more detail. For example, within this land cover indicator, woodland, forest and other wooded land is currently being monitored using the National Forest Inventory.



Glen Feshie © Lorne Gill/ SNH

### Evidence

EUNIS Land Cover Scotland (ELCS), a generalised land cover map, appropriate for use at national and regional scales, was completed using a Geographic Information System (GIS) in early 2015. It is a raster product, the pixel size or minimum unit being a 10m x 10m square. Each EUNIS pixel can be traced to its source dataset. That serves as an audit trail and enables non-standardised legacy data to be kept in use, as required by the INSPIRE Directive. For the first time we are able to describe our land cover in terms that are understood throughout Europe.

Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) data is the principal source for more detailed woodland cover: National Forest Inventory (NFI) and the 2014 Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS) <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/datadownload>

### Assessment

Based on the EUNIS Land Cover Scotland (ELCS) map the Level 1 Habitat Classes are as follows:

Code	EUNIS Level 1 Class	Km <sup>2</sup>	%
F	Heathland, scrub and tundra	20,001	25.0
E	Grasslands and lands dominated by forbs, mosses or lichens	18,874	23.6
G	Woodland, forest and other wooded land	14,245	17.8
D	Mires, bogs and fens	9,603	12.0
I	Regularly or recently cultivated agricultural, horticultural and domestic habitats	6,497	8.1
J	Constructed, industrial and other artificial habitats	3,345	4.2
K	Montane habitats	2,870	3.6
C	Inland surface waters	2,497	3.1
A	Marine habitats	1,171	1.5
H	Inland unvegetated or sparsely vegetated habitats	401	0.5
B	Coastal habitats	391	0.5
X	Habitat complexes	148	0.2
<b>Total</b>		<b>80,044</b>	<b>100</b>

**TREND** N/A: baseline data

**DATA CONFIDENCE** Low to High<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Low to High depending on habitat

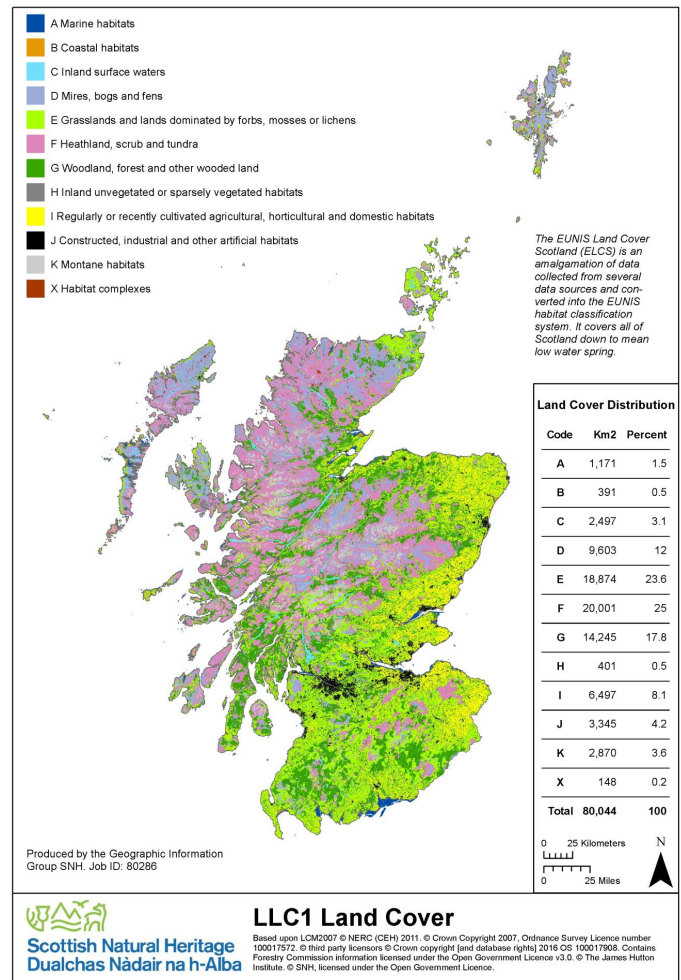


## Commentary

The map shows the land cover of Scotland by one of twelve habitat classes, including *constructed, industrial artificial habitats* (4.2% of Scotland's land cover). The main class of land cover in Scotland is heathland, *scrub and tundra* (25%) closely followed by *grasslands and lands dominated by forbs, mosses or lichens* (23.6) and then *woodland* (17.8%) and *mires, bogs and fens* (12%).

Scotland has a very low percentage of woodland cover compared with other countries in Europe, although it has increased over the last century. In 1900 only 5% of Scotland was covered in forest, but this has increased to roughly 18%. The Scottish Government expects to create 100,000ha of new woodland by 2022, equivalent to an average of 10,000ha per year, and agree targets for subsequent years by 2020<sup>2</sup>.

Owing to changing land cover capture methods although we can re-map Scotland's land cover in the future a direct comparison will not be available. We will, however, be able to see a general direction of travel of the land cover of Scotland across the decades. In time, we hope to compare land cover change against landscape character at a regional scale.



EUNIS Land Cover Scotland . © Crown copyright and database rights [2016]. Ordnance Survey 100017908. To see a larger map [click here](#)

## Source data and updates

The SNH briefing note [Biodiversity - EUNIS Land Cover of Scotland](#) provides more detailed information on how the ELCS was produced.

Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) data is the principal source for more detailed woodland cover: National Forest Inventory (NFI) and Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS) <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/datadownload>

## UK indicators

Land cover and woodland cover are monitored across the UK ; The Centre for Hydrology and Ecology Produce Land Cover Map (LCM) <http://www.ceh.ac.uk/services/information-products>

The National Forest Inventory is a UK wide dataset. The NWSS is specific to Scotland, presenting a snapshot of woodland in 2014, and complements the NFI <http://forestry.gov.uk/inventory> .

## References

EUNIS Land Cover Scotland (ELCS) <http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A1622468.pdf>

Inspire (Scotland) Regulations 2009

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Government/PublicServiceReform/efficientgovernment/OneScotland/INSPIRE>

Scottish Forestry Strategy <http://scotland.forestry.gov.uk/supporting/strategy-policy-guidance/forestry-strategy>

<sup>2</sup> SG RPP2 Low Carbon Scotland: Meeting the Emissions Reduction Targets 2013-2027, page 209

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Environment/climatechange/scotlands-action/lowcarbon/meetingthetargets>

<http://snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/looking-after-landscapes/landscape-monitoring-programme/>



# Annex 1: EUNIS Land Cover Scotland

