Draft Environment Strategy

Scottish Government Consultation

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in Scotland. For information only England, Northern Ireland and Wales.

1. Executive Summary

The Scottish Government has launched a consultation on proposals for the Environment Draft Strategy, a forward-looking framework designed to guide Scotland's environmental policies and actions over the coming decade.

The draft strategy aims to address key environment challenges by setting out clear priorities and ambitious targets to protect natural habitats, enhance biodiversity, improve air and water quality, and promote sustainable resource use.

Feedback will help shape the final Environment Strategy, which will provide a coherent, accountable, and future-proof framework for environmental policy in Scotland.

Responses are due by the 29th of September 2025. Click here for further information and to submit your response. Click here to read the full Draft Environment Strategy.

2. Overview

The consultation sets out proposals for Scotland's Environment Draft Strategy, a national framework designed to coordinate action on the global crises of nature loss, climate change, and pollution. It aims to bring together existing policies, introduce new priorities, and ensure that Scotland's environmental actions deliver social justice, economic resilience, and improved wellbeing.

This initiative complements wider government programmes, including the Climate Change Plan update, the Circular Economy and Waste Route Map, and the Biodiversity Strategy and Delivery Plan.

Addressing the Limits of Current Approaches

While Scotland has made progress in emissions reduction and nature protection, current policy delivery can be fragmented and may not fully:

- Integrate climate, nature, and pollution action into all sectors of the economy;

- Address overseas environmental impacts linked to Scotland's consumption;

- Ensure that environmental change happens through a just transition that tackles inequality;

- Provide joined-up monitoring and accountability across government.

The Scottish Government notes that the Environment Strategy will offer a clearer, more coherent framework to address these gaps.

The Need for a National Environment Strategy

The report sets out a case for establishing the strategy to:

- Restore and regenerate biodiversity;

- End Scotland's contribution to climate change by 2045;

- Reduce pollution and waste;

- Ensure Scotland's global environmental impact is sustainable;

- Embed sustainable living and a thriving circular economy within planetary limits;

- Build resilience to global environmental risks;

- Ensure all transformations are delivered through climate and environmental justice.

The Scottish Government is seeking views on how best to structure delivery, particularly how to maximise synergies, avoid trade-offs, and involve communities and businesses.

Proposed Delivery Model

The draft strategy proposes that delivery should include:

- Clear pathways for each of the eight strategic outcomes;

- Alignment of sectoral policies (e.g. agriculture, energy, housing, transport) with environmental goals;

- Investment frameworks blending public and private funding;

- Stronger accountability through statutory targets and improved monitoring;

- International collaboration to reduce global impacts and support climate justice.

This model would work alongside existing plans and statutory duties, but offer a unifying direction across government.

When the Strategy May Apply in Practice

The consultation explores potential applications, including:

- Informing all new environmental legislation and funding programmes;

- Guiding investment decisions in nature restoration, low-carbon industries, and infrastructure;

- Supporting regulatory decisions in sectors with high ecological footprints;

- Shaping Scotland's international trade, development, and climate diplomacy.

While the strategy will guide public policy, it will also aim to enable individuals, communities, and businesses to make sustainable choices that are practical and affordable.

The draft Strategy is structured around two key elements: the Vision and Outcomes, and the Outcome Pathways, summarised below.

Vision and Outcomes

Vision:
One Earth. One home. One shared future.

Scotland's environment is restored and thriving, climate change is tackled, pollution is eliminated, and people enjoy a healthy environment that underpins a fair and prosperous society.

Eight Strategic Outcomes:
The strategy sets a shared direction for government, businesses, communities, and individuals through eight long-term outcomes:

Tackling Climate Change and Restoring Nature

- Scotland's biodiversity is restored and regenerated

- We have ended Scotland's contribution to climate change

- We minimise pollution and waste in our environment

- Scotland's global environmental impact is sustainable

Transforming Society and the Economy

- Scotland's society is transformed for the better by living sustainably, in harmony with nature

- Scotland's net zero, nature-positive, and circular economy thrives within the planet's sustainable limits

Cross-Cutting Outcomes for Resilience and Justice

- We build Scotland's resilience to climate change and other global environmental risks

- These transformations are achieved through a just transition and support climate and environmental justice

Progress towards these outcomes will be tracked through an updated Monitoring Framework with clear indicators, building on the high-level measures first published in 2021.

Outcome Pathways

The draft framework proposes targeted pathways to achieve these outcomes, covering:

- **Nature:** Large-scale habitat restoration, marine protection, and measures to improve ecosystem health.

- **Climate:** Delivery of the 2045 net zero target, deep cuts to domestic and consumption-based emissions, and investment in low-carbon infrastructure.

- **Pollution:** Action to improve air and water quality, reduce plastic waste, and eliminate harmful pollutants.

- **Consumption and Trade:** Transition to sustainable food systems, textiles, and resource use, with a focus on reducing Scotland's overseas ecological footprint (nearly half of which is driven by imports).

- **Resilience:** Strengthening preparedness for climate risks, biodiversity loss, and supply chain shocks in food, energy, and other essentials.

- **Just Transition:** Ensuring the shift to a low-carbon, nature-positive economy is fair, tackling inequality and supporting good, green jobs.

- **Behaviour Change:** Supporting individuals, communities, and businesses to make sustainable choices that are practical and affordable, through advice, incentives, and infrastructure.

- **Global Responsibility:** Aligning trade, aid, and international partnerships with Scotland's environmental and climate justice commitments.

Each pathway is intended to align sectoral policies (e.g. agriculture, transport, housing, energy) with environmental objectives, supported by investment frameworks that blend public and private funding, and stronger accountability through statutory targets.

Impact Assessments

The Scottish Government have published a set of draft Impact assessments to evaluate the impact of the draft Environment Strategy on a range of matters. Views on the draft impact assessments and any feedback on other potential impacts, such as on health are welcome.

Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA)

The Scottish government commissioned Land Use Consultants to complete an SEA to evaluate the environmental impacts of the draft Environment Strategy. The report can be accessed [here](#).

Draft Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

A draft EQIA has been carried out to consider the potential impacts of the draft Environment Strategy on persons with protected characteristics. The Draft EQIA can be viewed in the "Related" section of the [Citizen Space page.](#)

Draft Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA)

As required by The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, the Scottish Government has prepared a draft ICIA to consider the impact of the draft Environment Strategy on island communities. The draft ICIA can be viewed in the "Related" section on the [Citizen Space page](#).

Draft Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment (FSDA)

The draft FSDA considers how the draft Environment Strategy can reduce inequalities caused by socioeconomic disadvantages. The Draft FSDA can be viewed in the "Related" section on the [Citizen Space page](#).

Draft Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA)

A draft CRWIA has been carried out to consider the potential impacts of the draft Environment Strategy on children's rights and wellbeing. The draft CRWIA can be viewed in the "Related" section on the Citizen Space page.

Draft Consumer Duty Impact Assessment (CDIA)

A draft CDIA has been carried out to consider the potential impacts of the draft Environment Strategy on consumers. The draft CDIA can be viewed in the "Related" section on the Citizen Space page.

Business Regulatory Impact Assessment (BRIA)

Due to the high-level nature of the draft Environment Strategy and the difficulty in assessing the impact of future policies referred to within the Strategy, it was decided that a final BRIA would not be completed at this point. However, because of the likely impacts of the draft strategy on businesses, they have engaged with businesses to gain a further understanding of potential impacts, in order to inform a partial BRIA. The partial BRIA can be viewed on the "Related" section on the Citizen Space page.

3. Consultation question

When you begin the consultation, some questions will have space below to expand on your answers, it is also recommended to read the full report and each individual impact assessment to give a well-rounded and informed view:

Vision and outcomes

Question 1: Do you agree with the vision of the Environment Strategy?

Question 2: Are there any outcomes that you feel should be removed, added or changed in the Environment Strategy?

Outcome pathways

Question 3: There now follows questions about the individual outcome pathways. Do you think that the outcome pathways considered together include the important policies, actions and future priorities to achieve the Vision? If not, what changes would you suggest?

Outcomes on biodiversity, climate change and pollution

Question 4: The pathways for the outcomes on biodiversity, climate change and pollution signpost to existing policies – how can we best address potential synergies and trade-offs across these outcomes? For example, how can we reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a way that also helps to restore biodiversity and minimise pollution?

Scotland's global environmental impact is sustainable

Question 5: What are the top priorities the Scottish Government should focus on to improve the environmental impact of Scotland's activities on other countries? – For example, this could include the impacts of producing the goods and services we import into Scotland, our exports of waste and our approach to international engagement.

Question 6: Do you have any further views on how the pathway outlined in the draft Strategy can help achieve the outcome "Scotland's global environmental impact is sustainable"?

<u>Scotland's Society is transformed for the better by living sustainability, in harmony with nature</u>

Question 7: To what extent do you agree/disagree that societal changes, including in our lifestyles and behaviours, are needed to help tackle the nature, climate and pollution crises?

Question 8: Do you have any further views on how the pathway outlined in the draft Strategy can help achieve the outcome "Scotland's society is transformed for the better by living sustainably, in harmony with nature"?

<u>Scotland's net zero, nature positive and circular economy thrives within the planet's sustainable limits</u>

Question 9: To what extent do you agree/disagree that a just transition to a net zero, nature positive, circular economy is needed to support Scotland's role in tackling the nature, climate and pollution crises?

Question 10: Do you have any further views on how the pathway outlined in the draft Strategy can help achieve the outcome "Scotland's net zero, nature positive and circular economy thrives within the planet's sustainable limits"?

<u>We build Scotland's resilience to climate change and other global environmental risks</u>

Question 11: Do you agree/disagree with the approach set out in the pathway for the outcome "We build Scotland's resilience to climate change and other global environmental risks"?

<u>These transformations are achieved through a just transition and support climate and environmental justice</u>

Question 12: do you agree/disagree with the approach set out in the pathway for the outcome "These transformations are achieved through a just transition and support climate and environmental justice"?

<u>Questions on the impact assessments</u>

Question 13: Do you have any views on whether there are likely to be any positive or negative environmental impacts from the draft Environment Strategy that have not been identified in the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)?

Question 14: is there anything in the draft Environment Strategy which should be added or changed to strengthen positive impacts or lessen any negative impacts on people with protected characteristics?

Question 15: Are there any positive or negative impacts on protected groups (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) that have not been identified in the draft Equalities Impact Assessment?

Question 16: Are there any other protected groups, which have not been identified in the draft Equalities Impact Assessment, that will potentially be positively or negatively impacted by the Environment Strategy?

Question 17: Are there any positive or negative impacts on island communities that are different from the impacts on mainland areas from the draft Environment Strategy, that have not been identified in the draft Islands Communities Impact Assessment?

Question 18: Are there any positive or negative impacts on groups experiencing socio-economic disadvantage (such as income, low wealth or area deprivation) from the draft Environment Strategy that have not been identified in the draft Fairer Scotland Duty?

Question 19: Are there any positive or negative impacts from the draft Environment Strategy that have not been identified in the draft Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment?

Question 20: Are there any positive or negative impacts from the draft Environment Strategy that have not been identified in the draft Consumer Duty Impact Assessment?

Question 21: Are there any positive or negative impacts from the draft Environment Strategy on businesses that have not been identified in the partial BRIA?

Question 22: Do you have any further views on the partial BRIA?

Question 23: Are there any other positive or negative impacts on areas such as health in the draft Environment Strategy that should be considered?

4. APSE Comment

APSE encourages our members to engage with the contents of Draft Environment Strategy, as has been outlined earlier this strategy is set to complement wider Scottish Government programmes including the Climate Change Plan update, the Circular Economy and Waste Route Map, and the Biodiversity Strategy and Delivery Plan. These are also areas which APSE has engaged with during APSE Network meetings and/ or providing consultation responses on behalf of our membership.

Given the latest Scotland emissions targets recently announced which require a fall in emissions by an average of 57% over the next five years and by 69% by 2035, when comparing to 1990 levels, to meet the challenges of reduced emissions these targets will require the adoption of innovative approaches at pace. APSE's annual seminar which took place on the 10 -11 September in Glasgow looked at local placemaking in terms of cleaner, greener and more resilient neighbourhoods providing inspiration for how Scottish local authorities can utilise existing and new powers as part of their journey to more sustainable neighbourhoods, continuing the conversations around this and other environment and climate focused consultations.

The Draft Environment Strategy and other Scottish Government Programmes are discussed at APSE Scotland's Network meetings, for more information on upcoming Network dates please click here and for information on past presentations and discussion topics please click here

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Networks are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE network meetings and would like to be added to our list of our contacts for your service area please email enquiries@apse.org.uk

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- Renewables and Climate Change
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- Sports and Leisure Management
- Vehicle Maintenance and Transport
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