

# CONSULTATION

## Response Document



### **National Planning Framework: Position Statement (Scottish Government)**

19 February 2021

# Introduction to CIEEM

The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), as the leading membership organisation supporting professional ecologists and environmental managers in the United Kingdom and Ireland, welcomes the opportunity to comment on this consultation.

CIEEM was established in 1991 and has over 6,000 members drawn from local authorities, government agencies, industry, environmental consultancy, teaching/research, and voluntary environmental organisations. The Chartered Institute has led the way in defining and raising the standards of ecological and environmental management practice with regard to biodiversity protection and enhancement. It promotes knowledge sharing through events and publications, skills development through its comprehensive training and development programme and best practice through the dissemination of technical guidance for the profession and related disciplines.

CIEEM is a member of:

- Scottish Environment Link
- Northern Ireland Environment Link
- Environmental Policy Forum
- IUCN – The World Conservation Union
- Professional Associations Research Network
- Society for the Environment
- United Nations Decade on Biodiversity 2011-2020 Network
- Greener UK
- Irish Forum on Natural Capital (working group member)
- National Biodiversity Forum (Ireland)
- The Environmental Science Association of Ireland

CIEEM has approximately 600 members in Scotland who are drawn from across the private consultancy sector, NGOs, government and SNCOs, local authorities, academia and industry. They are practising ecologists and environmental managers, many of whom regularly provide input to and advice on land management for the benefit of protected species and biodiversity in general.

**This response was coordinated by our [Scotland Policy Group](#).**

We welcome the opportunity to participate in this consultation and we would be happy to provide further information on this topic. Please contact Jason Reeves (CIEEM Head of Policy and Communications) at [JasonReeves@cieem.net](mailto:JasonReeves@cieem.net) with any queries.

## General Comments

We are pleased to see in the position statement that there is a real emphasis on addressing climate change and targets towards achieving net zero. Whilst the urgency of addressing the global emergency of climate change is recognised, less weight appears to be given in this position statement to the dual emergency of biodiversity loss. As with the climate targets, we would like to see clear targets related to biodiversity and mechanisms in place so that changes are measurable.

NPF4 should encourage the adoption of nature-based solutions, where appropriate, to address the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis in tandem. This will require encouraging landowners and land managers to manage the land in a way which works with nature to deliver multiple benefits and ecosystems services. For detailed recommendations on nature-based solutions in urban and rural areas see CIEEM's Call for Ideas [response](#).

Positive effects for biodiversity is a generic term. We look forward to seeing the proposals of how this will be assessed so that it is measurable, allowing change to be detected and analysed in a consistent and transparent way. Biodiversity Net Gain and the underlying approach that enables status and change to be evaluated aligns well with the assessment of positive effects for biodiversity.

Alignment with the Infrastructure Investment Plan is to be commended. The Infrastructure Bill adopting the term 'green infrastructure' is a positive step to capture that infrastructure must go wider than how infrastructure is typically viewed.

The ambition of a well-being economy is also prevalent throughout which we support along with the proposals to engage people and communities in the planning process. The concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods as the overarching concept is central for all development going forward. The Dasgupta review<sup>1</sup> outlines many actions that can simultaneously enhance biodiversity and deliver economic prosperity.

### **Consultation Questions**

#### **1. Do you agree with our current thinking on planning for net-zero emissions?**

We are very supportive of the ambitions to achieve a net-zero Scotland by 2045 and meet the interim emissions reduction targets of 75% by 2030 and 90% by 2040 and the recognition that an urgent and radical shift in our spatial plan and policies is required.

##### **1.1 Nature-based solutions.**

The role and potential of nature-based solutions in addressing the climate and biodiversity crises is not given enough weighting. We recognise Scottish government support and funding for woodland creation and peatland restoration and we welcome recent announcements of continued funding for these initiatives<sup>2</sup>. However, there should be stricter guidelines on what operations can take place on peatland (e.g. severe limitations on peat extraction – no further granting of licenses for extraction for horticultural use and phasing out existing licenses).

Similarly, Scotland's Forestry Strategy must not only support ambitious national targets for increasing woodland cover, but also encourage much higher proportions of native broadleaved woodland, following the principle of the "right tree in the right place". In addition, measures to encourage natural regeneration, not just planting, should be at the centre of any plans.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-the-economics-of-biodiversity-the-dasgupta-review>

<sup>2</sup> ] <https://blogs.gov.scot/rural-environment/2020/07/20/peatland-action-fund-open-for-new-applications/>

The protection of existing woodlands as important ecosystems for carbon sequestration and retention, and statutory protection of all ancient woodland must be also be ensured. Mature trees must have similar protection to veteran trees, recognising the important ecosystem services they provide. In England, development is only considered on Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland sites (ASNW) if it is of ‘wholly exceptional’ purpose. Scotland needs to meet a similar, if not much greater standard. Considering the high biodiversity and fragility of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland sites and remnant soil features of Planted Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland sites (PAWS etc), these habitats should be exempted from development. This also has benefits for carbon sequestration and wider ecosystem services e.g., ancient woodland fungi and micro-organisms.

Opportunity mapping and modelling should be used to identify optimum land type and area scale, which can then be implemented as part of a strategic plan. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has warned that some types of Nature-based Solutions, such as afforestation, could have adverse effects on other Sustainable Development Goal areas including biodiversity and food security if appropriate scale and land type are not considered fully<sup>3</sup>.

A focus on nature-based solutions is fundamental to (a) reducing existing emissions and (b) restoring the biodiversity that is crucial for properly functioning ecosystems and hence aiding in stabilising climate change. As outlined, in the position statement it is increasingly recognised that the impacts of climate change may be best tackled at a strategic scale – i.e., managing flooding through upland management, and capturing carbon through tree planting and strategic peatland restoration. Nature-based solutions are not just for rural areas, nature-based solutions can also provide ecosystem services for urban areas – providing resources, regulating environments, creating habitats, and generating social and cultural activities as outlined in the CIEEM briefing paper on Using Nature-Based Solutions to Tackle the Climate Emergency and Biodiversity Crisis<sup>4</sup>.

As it states in the report, it is estimated that around a third of the global mitigation effort needed to deliver the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement could be achieved through nature-based solutions, so we would like to see much greater emphasis on nature-based solutions. Although we also recognise that they must not replace action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the sources.

## **1.2 Transport**

Although we agree with the statements in the integrating transport and land use section, we would like to see clear funding strategies rather than vague statements such as “we will

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<sup>3</sup> IPCC (2019) *Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems* [P.R. Shukla, J. Skea, E. Calvo Buendia, V. Masson-Delmotte, H.- O. Pörtner, D. C. Roberts, P. Zhai, R. Slade, S. Connors, R. van Diemen, M. Ferrat, E. Haughey, S. Luz, S. Neogi, M. Pathak, J. Petzold, J. Portugal Pereira, P. Vyas, E. Huntley, K. Kissick, M. Belkacemi, J. Malley, (eds.)]. In press.

<sup>4</sup> CIEEM (2020) *Using Nature-Based Solutions to Tackle the Climate Emergency and Biodiversity Crisis*. Available at: <https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Nature-Based-Solutions-designed.pdf>

seek to promote” in the full document. Achieving net zero will require fundamental changes in how communities are planned, built and operated in Scotland. Facilitating low carbon transport (including the aviation sector) and lifestyles is essential. Communities where people live close to places of work, food production, education and leisure, and decentralisation of essential utilities are fundamental. The 20-minute neighbourhood approach underlies Scottish National Outcomes.

Further investment in public transport and active travel options is also needed. A large-scale shift away from private car transport in our towns and cities is required, diverting space away from the car and instead to the bicycle, bus, tram etc. New housing developments which are being built on former ‘green belt’ as our towns and cities grow, should be required to include creation of safe, segregated active travel routes into city / town centres.

### **1.3 Facilitate design solutions and innovation**

New homes should be energy efficient, using Passivhaus principles, and large-scale new housing developments should be required to include low carbon heating systems. In addition, opportunities for micro electricity generation should be investigated. Any development should be built with improved public transport links with de-carbonised public transport in mind which would need to be incentivised by low-cost travel.

### **1.4 Deliver infrastructure to reduce emissions**

We agree that progressing Scotland’s achievements in renewable energy production and decarbonising our energy systems should continue in pursuit of the goal of achieving net zero. Scotland has been at the forefront of renewable energy developments and there is great potential to build on this especially with the transferable skills and expertise that exist in Scotland through the oil and gas sectors. It is important to develop an appropriate mix of types of renewable energy generation together with storage and transmission.

Projects must be subject to appropriate and thorough Environmental Impact Assessments to minimise and mitigate negative effects of renewable energy schemes on natural capital. A national assessment of where renewable energy schemes can be installed with minimal environmental damage should be undertaken and then built into Regional Spatial Strategies and Regional Land Use Frameworks.

Substantial gains have been made in the process of de-carbonising our energy system. This should remain a focal point in our goal of achieving net zero. However, increased attention should be facilitated through NPF4 to de-carbonising our heating systems through the development and widespread adoption of sustainable heating systems. New and existing technologies for heating our homes and businesses should be actively promoted. District renewable heating schemes have great potential. In many rural areas in Scotland, localised community-based renewable energy production has created local jobs for the construction, operation and maintenance of such infrastructure as well as creating revenue to invest back into community projects.

## **2. Do you agree with our current thinking on planning for resilient communities?**

We support all the points raised in the ‘You told us’ section.

We are pleased to see an approach to neighbourhood planning that includes natural networks and sustainable travel. People should feel involved and empowered through the planning process. Local people should be aware of their local development plan with ample opportunities to input into their development and revision. Planning decisions should be at the heart of communities with Citizen Assembly engagement in planning decisions. Providing quality greenspace in planning can create a sense of pride in the local area. Sense of pride will encourage local residents to care for their area and hold Local Planning Authorities to account if not cared for.

To make places more inclusive, diverse, vibrant, resilient and empowering we should ensure equitable access to greenspace (both in terms of amount and quality), sustainable transport routes and blue-green infrastructure. Greenspaces should be connected and provide a green 'highway' to all areas of the town or city. More localised services and people enabled and empowered to use active forms of transport such as walking or cycling; and inter-community travel facilitated by low carbon public transport. We support the 20-minute neighbourhood concept and the vision of how it is described.

### **Enhance and expand natural infrastructure**

We are pleased to see that the aim is to strengthen policies so that blue and green infrastructure are not an added benefit but an integrated requirement for future planning and development.

### ***Biodiversity net gain***

NPF4 provides a crucial opportunity to implement a requirement for developments to deliver biodiversity net gain (BNG). BNG is a stepwise approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. This is essential as simply replacing habitat losses from development does not address the decline in area and quality of habitats which has happened over time and resulted in the levels of species loss reported in the State of Nature report. CIEEM has produced a briefing on 'Biodiversity Net Gain in Scotland'<sup>5</sup> which provides further detail, as well as producing the first UK principles on delivering BNG, together with the Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA) and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA)<sup>6</sup>. Further guidance has now been published to help professionals and UK industry address this challenge and to achieve 'Net Gain' targets for biodiversity<sup>7</sup>.

To ensure effective implementation of BNG and then wider Environmental Net Gain, Local Authorities would need access to competent ecological expertise and advice (preferably in-house) and funding. We feel, based on our professional expertise, that a minimum 10% net

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<sup>5</sup> CIEEM (2019) *Biodiversity Net Gain in Scotland*. Available at: <https://cieem.net/resource/biodiversity-netgain-in-scotland-briefing>

<sup>6</sup> CIRIA, CIEEM, IEMA (2016) *Biodiversity Net Gain: Good practice principles for development*. Available at: <https://cieem.net/resource/biodiversity-net-gain-good-practice-principles-for-development>

<sup>7</sup> CIRIA, CIEEM, IEMA (2019) *Biodiversity Net Gain: Good practice principles for development, A Practical Guide*. Available at: <https://cieem.net/resource/biodiversity-net-gain-good-practice-principles-for-development-apractical-guide>

gain should be required, possibly with an overall 20% gain on developments in each Local Authority area, achieved by incentivising developers to maximise BNG.

Many of the factors that we highlighted in our Call for Ideas response are included in the potential policy section. We look forward to contributing to the consultation in the autumn when the detail in how these measures will be achieved will be outlined.

### **3. Do you agree with our current thinking on planning for a wellbeing economy?**

Access to nature and fostering nature connectedness has been shown to have significant impacts on mental and physical health<sup>8</sup>.

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of local places for people's health and wellbeing. Spatial planning policy shapes local neighbourhoods, with significant impacts on the health and wellbeing of both current and future residents. The 20-minute neighbourhood approach underlies Scottish National Outcomes.

#### **Promote sustainable resource management**

We would like to see further detail and strategic policies related to peatland preservation and restoration. The measures outlined (phasing out the use of horticultural peat, investment in the restoration of peatlands and restricting development) are essential. There should be stricter guidelines on what operations can take place on peatland e.g., severe limitations on peat extraction and approved developments must be restorative in nature e.g., paludiculture enterprises. Damaging practices such as repeated muir burning should be actively discouraged due to the multiple disbenefits they bring (e.g., carbon release, biodiversity loss, increased run-off and associated flood risk). In any case, burning should adhere to NatureScot's Muirburn Code, which states that "burning should not take place on peatland, except as part of a habitat restoration plan approved by NatureScot", recognising the ecosystem services it provides.

### **4. Do you agree with our current thinking on planning for better, greener places?**

The mechanisms for securing positive effects for biodiversity from development are unclear and there is no information on how it will be measurable. As outlined previously, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is an internationally recognised and implemented stepwise approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. There are comprehensive guidelines surrounding BNG with well-established case studies. Principles for wider Environmental Net Gain are soon to be published by CIEEM, which will assist in the development of policies. These tools, and the underlying approach that enable status and change to be evaluated, aligns well with the assessment of positive effects for biodiversity. We are concerned by the statement *'We are developing ambitious new proposals which deliver positive outcomes for biodiversity from development without the need for overly complex metrics, and will consider how they can support wider approaches*

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<sup>8</sup> CRESH: Centre for Research on Environment, Society and Health (2019). Green spaces and Health. <https://www.hutton.ac.uk/research/projects/green-health>

*to natural infrastructure'*. Many industries, such as SSEN, Network Rail, have already adopted the BNG approach and metrics successfully in Scotland.

As well as statutory and non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation, connecting habitat should be equally protected as the value of ecological networks will be increasingly important with changes in climate and necessary to minimise effects of associated shifts in species ranges. A national nature/ ecological network is a useful concept here.

We welcome the statements surrounding Vacant and Derelict Land. Regeneration of vacant or derelict land (VDL) and buildings, should be incentivised over greenfield development in NPF4. Brownfield sites should be prioritised in development, subject to Ecological Impact Assessment on a site by site basis as brownfield sites can also provide important habitat. Vacant and derelict land (VDL) sites could all be assessed for their current and future biodiversity potential using biodiversity net gain metrics, to aid in identifying VDL sites that could be re-purposed for use as part of blue and green infrastructure networks. For example, VDL can be converted to allotments which are in high demand in most areas or, in some areas, may be incorporated as part of a green network and allowed to regenerate naturally through ecological succession resulting in a great resource for invertebrates to thrive.

Aligning the strategy with the Land Use Strategy and identifying opportunities to align emerging Regional Spatial Strategies with future Regional Land Use Partnership Frameworks makes sense. However, the existing Land Use Strategy lacks ambition and needs to be significantly improved.

We welcome the emphasis on a place-based approach while recognising that some developments are very important for the country as a whole.

**5. Do you have further suggestions on how we can deliver our strategy?**

**6. Do you have any comments on the Integrated Impact Assessment Update Report, published alongside this position statement?**

**7. Do you have any other comments on the content of the Position Statement?**

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