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COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

SCOTTISH BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY CONSULTATION - WLC RESPONSE

REPORT BY HEAD OF OPERATIONAL SERVICES

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to advise the panel of officers' response to the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Consultation.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the panel:

- i) notes the context and significance of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and the scope of the Consultation
- ii) supports the submission of the officers' response detailed in Appendix 1 to the Scottish Government.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	Being honest, open and accountable; making best use of our resources; working in partnership
II	Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	<p>The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy will directly influence new statutory requirements and targets for nature restoration set out in the new Natural Environment Bill.</p> <p>The SBS will influence the direction of the new West Lothian Local Biodiversity Plan 2023-33.</p>
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	May influence a range of future council performance indicators, when the Natural Environment Bill is enacted
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	<p>Outcome 4 - We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities.</p> <p>Outcome 8 - We have the most efficient and</p>

effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment

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| VI | Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property) | There are no direct staffing or financial implications arising for the council as a result of the consultation itself. |
| VII | Consideration at PDSP | The response has been considered and approved by the Environment and Sustainability Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel. Some amendments to the response have been made since PDSP and these have been highlighted. |
| VIII | Other consultations | Consultation was undertaken with Planning Services |

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Background

The Scottish Government is seeking views on how we should tackle the biodiversity crisis through a new biodiversity strategy, which will drive the transformation required to change the way we use natural resources throughout Scotland. The Strategy is the starting point in a process which will lead into the development of rolling delivery plans and, through the introduction of a Natural Environment Bill in 2024, statutory nature restoration targets.

Previous Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and Updates

The 25-year Scottish Biodiversity Strategy created in 2004 still stands (It's in Your Hands). However, as the science progresses, more data becomes available and new targets are set (crucially, those in Aichi 2011) and a supplemental update was produced in 2013 called '2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity'. The 2020 Challenge sets out the major steps needed to improve the state of nature in Scotland. In 2015, Scotland's Biodiversity – a route map to 2020 was launched, focussing on key priorities for action. It sets out six 'Big Steps for Nature', strategic goals and priority projects needed to achieve each big step. In 2020, the Scottish Government produced a statement of intent for post-2020, establishing the goal for a new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to be produced after the UN COP15 – Convention on Biodiversity - in 2022 and to extend the area protected for nature in Scotland to at least 30% of land area by 2030.

COP15

The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, or COP15, is the latest meeting in which the nations of the world will come together to discuss the world's biodiversity. The first part of the meeting took place online in October 2021, where the Kunming Declaration was agreed. Through the declaration, nations committed to put the world's biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030. This included pledges to improve the effectiveness of conservation, strengthen environmental law, and reform financial incentives for protecting biodiversity.

The concluding part of COP15 is due to be held in Montreal in December 2022. Ahead of this, organisers have laid out key objectives for the meeting. Top priority is working towards an agreed global biodiversity framework, including discussions over biodiversity targets, finance and benefit sharing.

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

NPF4 is the new planning framework for Scotland - planning for the future, to 2045. It informs all new Local Development Plans. NPF4 prioritises action on climate change and the achievement of net zero, together with addressing biodiversity loss.

NPF4 intends to secure positive effects for biodiversity through development by requiring Local Development Plans to take further account of existing priority habitats and to discourage developments which would see these removed or damaged. In addition, NPF4 will require Planners to be more proactive in assessing biodiversity issues and seeking biodiversity improvements on a proposed development site.

Natural Environment Bill

The Scottish Government has committed to a Natural Environment Bill in its term. This will follow on from, and be informed by, the new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.

The Bill will:

- put in place key legislative changes to restore and protect nature, including, but not restricted to, targets for nature restoration that cover land and sea, and an effective, statutory, target-setting monitoring, enforcing and reporting framework
- contain targets based on an overarching goal of preventing any further extinctions of wildlife and halting declines by 2030, and making significant progress in restoring Scotland's natural environment by 2045
- contain targets that are achievable and challenging, reflecting the priority for early action. These are expected to include outcome targets that accommodate species abundance, distribution and extinction risk, and habitat quality and extent.
- cover key actions to deliver the targets, including an agreement to protect 30% of Scotland's land and seas by 2030, and highly protect 10%

The targets will drive action across Government, including farming and fisheries policies and legislation.

West Lothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)

The WLC Ecology and Biodiversity team is currently creating a new LBAP for West Lothian. The new LBAP will be a strategic document, outlining West Lothian Council's intentions and aspirations on implementing the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy at the Local Authority level. It will be used as a reference document to aid in protecting existing areas of high biodiversity value, protecting key species, assessing the appropriateness of development proposals, ensuring no net loss and indeed the enhancement of biodiversity throughout the area, together with nature-based solutions to help us mitigate and adapt to climate change.

D.3 Purpose and Scope of Consultation

The Scottish Government is seeking views for a renewed national Biodiversity Strategy, which is due for publication in 2022/3.

The Strategy will lead into the development of Delivery Plans and crucially, via the introduction of the Natural Environment Bill, statutory nature restoration targets.

The consultation forms part of an engagement process with a wide range of stakeholders who have an interest in Scotland's biodiversity, including land managers, environmental organisations, local authorities and other partners. The Scottish Government has so far held a series of workshops to scope out the detail of the strategy, develop ideas and test concepts. They now want to hear the views of a wider range of organisations and individuals to test and further develop their ideas.

The consultation document includes:

- The Evidence: a short section setting out the evidence of biodiversity loss both globally and in Scotland
- Our Strategic Vision: an overarching direction to the strategy
- How Will We Know When We Have Succeeded:
 - high level milestones for the strategy
 - an outline of the 'outcomes approach' developed to assist in practical actions to achieve goals
 - indicative outcomes for 2045 and 2030 milestones.
- Conditions for Success: what needs to be in place to ensure that the right outcomes are delivered

The consultation questions are designed to gain feedback on the ideas proposed so far.

D.4 Consultation Response – West Lothian Council's Position

Council officers broadly support the proposed Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, it's visions, and outcomes. However, as it stands, the current strategy document does not emphasise enough the urgency for action, omits some key elements and requires much clearer links with existing Climate Change policy and plans. The draft strategy also requires refinement, particularly considering the addition of qualifiers to the intended outcomes and visions, so that future implementations can be measured more effectively. Officers have taken the opportunity to answer the consultation questions from a Local Government perspective, whilst considering the implications the strategy poses in the wider context of land management.

E. CONCLUSION

West Lothian Council is dedicated to ensuring that the historic, natural, and built environment are valued and protected. The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy should assist the council in ensuring a healthy environmental legacy into the future.

It is proposed that the responses set out in Appendix 1, are supported as the council's feedback to the Scottish Government, for inclusion in their consultation analysis.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

[25-year Scottish Biodiversity Strategy - It's in Your Hands \(2004\)](#)

[2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity \(strategy update 2013\)](#)

[Scotland's Biodiversity – a route map to 2020 \(priority themes and projects\)](#)

[Scottish Biodiversity Strategy post-2020 – statement of intent](#)

[Natural Environment Bill Scotland](#)

[National Planning Framework 4](#)

[Conference of the Parties \(COP\) 15](#)

Appendices/Attachments:

Appendix 1: WLC response to Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Consultation

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APPENDIX 1

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION: SCOTTISH BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL - CONSULTATION RESPONSE

1. Using your own knowledge and the evidence presented, to what extent do you agree that there is a nature crisis in Scotland? Why do you think that?

- We strongly agree that there is a nature crisis in Scotland and that this is intimately linked with the climate crisis. This is our conclusion, borne from the evidence presented and the following:
- [State of Nature \(Scotland\) Report 2019](#) shows that 49% of Scottish species have decreased in abundance since 1970 and 33% have decreased in distribution.
- Woodland cover in Scotland is now approx. 18.5% - below the EU average of 38% ([Scottish Government](#)). Only 1% of native pinewoods remain in Scotland ([Trees for Life](#)) due to climate, farming, grazing and historic commercial forestry, which has resulted in fragmentation, erosion and loss of biodiversity. **And Scotland's ancient woodland has been reduced to cover just 1-2% of the land.** ([Scottish Environment LINK](#)). Mature woodland cover is likely to decrease even further in less biodiverse areas, as it makes it easier for disease to spread when it takes hold - such as Ash Dieback Disease. The environmental implications and financial costs of this alone, on a national scale, are potentially enormous ([Woodland Trust](#)).
- Peatlands cover approx. 20% of Scotland's land area, but 80% of Scotland's peatlands are degraded ([WWF](#)), seriously compromising their ability to store carbon, to store water, to prevent erosion, and to support specialised plants and animals.
- Freshwater covers about 2% of Scotland's land area – with rivers and lochs containing 90% of the UK's surface freshwater. However, over 50% of Scotland's rivers and a third of lochs are in less than 'good' condition ([Scotland's environment web](#)) and recent news coverage about the extent of raw sewage overflows into water courses cannot be ignored, as recorded sewage spills increased by 40% from 2016 to 2020 ([The Herald](#)).
- It is probable that insect numbers have [reduced by 28%](#) (or more) in Scotland in the last 20 years.
- **In 2020 there was estimated to be an average 68% drop in mammal, bird, fish, reptile, and amphibian populations since 1970, which is frightening.** ([WWF Living Planet Report](#))
- **Recent research highlighting the ubiquity of high levels of PFAAs or 'forever chemicals' in rainwater throughout the world and their persistence in soils, with the potential of these to affect all life, is alarming.** ([Stockholm University](#))

2. What do you see as the key challenges and opportunities of tackling both the climate and biodiversity crises at the same time?

Challenges:

- Long-term, stable funding must be made available to local authorities to meet the ambitions of the strategy. The focus of funding needs careful consideration, as capital works are fundamental to making changes on the ground, but funding for local surveys and wider research is also required in order to monitor success and to adapt land management practices as necessary.
- The climate crisis is currently higher priority in the perception of the populous as a whole, so there is a tendency for the public / business / public bodies / landowners and managers to prioritise 'net zero' and carbon counting above all else - sometimes to the detriment of biodiversity and other ecosystem services (e.g. planting trees on peat).
- The immediate challenges are to raise awareness of biodiversity loss to at least the same level of priority as carbon emissions, to highlight the importance of the *multiple* benefits of natural systems and also to

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understand the role of terrestrial/aquatic ecosystems in regulating atmospheric methane, NO_x and other greenhouse gases, as well as CO₂.

- Climate change solutions include the establishment and development of a carbon economy and carbon markets - however, ensuring these are effective, fair and accessible is a challenge. Carbon offsetting is a very popular term which involves land use decisions, but the industry is still evolving and is not regulated as thoroughly as required to make meaningful change for the climate and biodiversity. There is also an element of confusion over the differing schemes and how these relate to current available grants for potential applicants which can put off landowners.
- The Biodiversity Mitigation Hierarchy (avoid damage, mitigate, compensate) needs to be mainstreamed into all societal decision-making systems and processes. Lessons can be learnt from the evolution of the carbon economy, however we must proceed with caution to ensure that the hierarchy is followed and biodiversity offsetting remains the option of last resort.
- Another challenge relates to land management/ ownership and connectivity of habitats. To make meaningful changes, restoring ecosystems at the landscape level is required with “buy in” from major land holders/ incentives available for landowners to make schemes more attractive. In particular, offering the appropriate subsidies/ opportunities for the farming community, particularly tenant farmers.

Opportunities:

- As society has taken on board how immediate and serious the climate crisis is, there is hope that people will follow suit with the biodiversity crisis. There is an opportunity to highlight the ecosystem services provided by nature in order to link the two crises in ways that benefit both – measures that address both together must be prioritised.
- There must be many more and clear links, accessible to the lay reader, between the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy 2022-32 and the Second Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme 2019-24, which references previous Biodiversity Strategy updates and contains much overlap with the SBS, especially Outcome 5 which lists NatureScot’s [eight Adaptation Principles – Helping Nature Adapt to Climate Change](#) and has comprehensive biodiversity-related [sub-outcomes 5.1 and 5.2](#); the SBS also needs clear links with Scotland’s Climate Change Plan 2018 – 2032, as well as the Pollinator Strategy for Scotland 2017-2027, Scotland’s Land Use Strategy 2021-26, Scotland’s Forestry Strategy 2019-2029, The State of Scotland’s Soil (2011), etc.
- There are opportunities to raise awareness and increase education and community / citizen science through tackling the crises together – **everyone can contribute to a nature-rich future, even people living in urban environments.**
- Addressing biodiversity loss and climate change together offers additional opportunities for collaborative work with landowners at a regional scale.
- There are opportunities to raise the profile of grassland habitats as important ecosystems for biodiversity and climate change, as often these habitats have more diversity than woodlands, also with carbon storage potential.

3. Is the draft vision clear enough?

Yes No

Response:

- **No** – it is regrettably too vague at this time and does not convey the required sense of urgency. Also, abundance, which is as important as diversity, is not mentioned. The wording is counter to other policy (and previous iterations of the strategy) where we are looking at an ecosystem approach. It specifies certain factors such as plants, animals etc. but fails to mention soil, hydrology etc. here.

Suggested wording:

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- By 2045 we will have made the transformative societal changes required to bring our land, freshwater and seas back to functioning ecosystems – all known functional ecological niches will be filled and species will be thriving.
- Our natural environment of **soils**, plants, animals, insects, **fungi** and aquatic life will be richly diverse, **abundant**, resilient and helping to minimise the effects of climate change.
- An understanding of the benefits and importance of biodiversity will be mainstreamed throughout our society; everyone in every sector will recognise their role in the stewardship of nature in Scotland and they will put this at the forefront of all their decisions and practices.
Or
- An understanding of the benefits and importance of biodiversity will be mainstreamed; biodiversity will no longer be an ‘externality’ – preserving and enhancing natural assets will be factored in to all decision-making processes and actions throughout society.

4. Is the draft vision ambitious enough?

Yes **No**

Response:

- **No** – see suggested wording in 3 above

5. Do you have any suggestions for a short strategic vision which would form the title for the strategy?

- Life in Scotland – ensuring the health of people and the natural systems we rely upon
or
- Bringing Scottish Ecology to the forefront – tackling the dual crises of biodiversity and climate change through collaboration.

Rural environment

6. Do the 2045 outcome statements adequately capture the change we need to see?

Yes **No**

Response:

- **No** – Not fully. the statements need clarity and definition. How will the statements “substantial increase” and “markedly reduced” actually be measured? These terms need to be quantified and spelled out and not left open to interpretation.
- There needs to be recognition of Peatland habitat across the lowland environment as well as upland. Huge areas of peatland are under lowland areas which have been damaged and some are capable of restoration via a change in land use. In West Lothian we have many areas of peatland habitat in varying condition immediately adjacent to local settlements, which offer opportunities for education and engagement. There are a number of designated sites within West Lothian relating to lowland peatland habitat which carry statutory protection at the European (Blawhorn Moss SAC and Craigengar Moss SAC), National UK and Scottish, and West Lothian levels – under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. This also explicitly mandates Local Development Plans to include environmental policies - the most relevant and important for biodiversity protection being those of Local Biodiversity Site designations, of which at least 19 have a bog habitat component in West Lothian. We are working to improve the conditions of these sites to ensure that our peat bogs are acting as carbon sinks and not sources, and to protect areas of deep peat from development.
- Note, Section 4 a. should include ‘(including peatlands)’ within Soils bullet point for Rural environments as is done with the “Uplands” bullet point.
Or,
Consider changing the terminology of “Uplands (including peatlands)” to having a separate point for *Peat forming habitats* thus including importance of Lowland Raised Bogs.
- The obvious absentee on the Rural environment list is **Grassland (non-agricultural)**. There needs to be more focus on restoring and protecting our grassland habitats which have seen huge declines and are extremely important in terms of biodiversity. The general trend of woodland / increasing or restoring woodland

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has already got a high profile which potentially threatens the importance of undervalued important grassland ecosystems. often these habitats have similar or greater species richness and diversity than woodlands.

- Section 4.1.iv: Raised bogs are also part of mire systems in the uplands.
- The outcome statements “greater diversity of woodland species and woodland age structure” and “increased woodland cover and connectivity between woodlands” also apply in urban environments. Protection of existing trees and woodlands is also an issue in urban environments.
- The differences between woodland managed for different outcomes (e.g. timber, carbon, biodiversity, etc) should be acknowledged.

7. Are the 2030 milestones ambitious enough?

Yes No

Response:

- **No – Partially.** We partially agree with the ambitions but feel that grassland habitats are not well enough represented in the ambitions. Additionally, there needs to be more of a connection with Peatland habitat across both the lowland and Upland environments. Huge areas of peatland are under lowland areas which have been damaged and some are capable of restoration via a change in land use.

8. What are the key drivers of biodiversity loss in this outcome area?

- Improper land use/ land management practices
- Intensive management and pressures from industries
- A lack of incentives to make changes feasible

9 . What are the key opportunities for this outcome area?

- Incorporating and developing the environment industry for tourism
- Increasing the number of jobs in the sector and encouraging specialism in related fields to boost our dwindling taxonomists

10. What are the key challenges for this outcome area?

- Ensuring there are adequate incentives to make land use changes a possibility while balancing the need for food growing

Marine environment

11. Do the 2045 outcome statements adequately capture the change we need to see?

Yes No

Response:

- No – the statement needs clarity and definition.
- There is no clear definition of what “healthy” and “have recovered” actually means. What is this in relation to? Is this recovered to pre-industrial times? To which time period?

12. Are the 2030 milestones ambitious enough? Are we missing any key elements?

Yes No

Response

- No - as above, how will these factors be measured? What is the target defining as “improving” – by a scale of what factor? And “not significantly” as in terms of statistical significance or perceived significance?

13. What are the key drivers of biodiversity loss in this outcome area?

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- Extraction: over-harvesting and dredging/damage to the sea bed
- Climate change pressures and acidification/ pollution of the environment

14. What are the key opportunities for this outcome area?

- Coastal restoration projects and increasing the diversity of habitats through interventions
- Increased tourism as a result of restored marine environment
- Opportunities to safeguard more coastal habitats and create additional marine reserves

15. What are the key challenges for this outcome area?

- Fishing industry changes to practice particularly the banning of dredging and other destructive methods
- Balancing the increased population and desire to access the marine environment with providing a “safe place” for marine life to be left undisturbed.

Freshwater environment: rivers lochs and wetlands

16. Do the 2045 outcome statements adequately capture the change we need to see?

Yes No

Response:

- Statements need to have verifiers for the measures of “improving”, “significant”, and “recovery”
- We also need to see a step-change in the way that surface water and sewage are dealt with, in order to improve the ecological status of all waterways – with appropriate targets to ensure that change happens, and with accompanying methods and resources to enforce this.

17. Are the 2030 milestones ambitious enough? Are we missing any key elements?

Yes No

Response:

- They are not ambitious enough.
- The milestone “Catchment, river, lochs and floodplain restoration routinely accepted and used as a nature-based solution to climate impacts” misses the point that waterways *are* currently being used to alleviate climate impacts, as raw sewage is released into them when the drainage system can't deal with high rainfall events caused by climate change - this is an unacceptable 'solution' and the health of our natural freshwater systems (and sea) cannot be separated from our drainage system.
There has been much press recently reporting that raw sewage was deliberately discharged into Scottish watercourses over 10,000 times last year. The sewage released into the River Almond, for example, has not gone unnoticed and has resulted in the set-up of the River Almond Action Group in West Lothian. There needs to be ***much more emphasis*** on the role of green infrastructure (e.g. living roofs, raingardens, SUDS, etc.) as flood-prevention measures in developments, and a clear link to demonstrate how these measures help to protect the health of our freshwater systems. Not only can green infrastructure measures help to prevent local flooding by slowing water down, but this in turn can prevent the need to release raw sewage into watercourses. There also needs to be a well-defined requirement for these measures and well-defined limits to all pollution.

18. What are the key drivers of biodiversity loss in this outcome area?

- Pollution – point source (spillage / sewage outfall) and diffuse (agricultural run-off)
- Invasive species E.g. signal crayfish in rivers/streams; Giant hogweed/ Japanese knotweed/ Himalayan balsam on riverbanks, etc

19. What are the key opportunities for this outcome area?

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- Legislative change – to include measures that reduce run-off and control freshwater pollution
- Taxes on run-off into the drainage system from properties (e.g. Stormwater Fees in the US)
- Making explicit the links between interventions in one environment that can impact upon another environment, for example how urban development interventions (e.g. green/blue roofs) can improve freshwater health (e.g. reducing sewage in rivers/sea)

20. What are the key challenges for this outcome area?

- Substantially limiting the run-off of excess water from all infrastructure into combined sewers.
- Making changes to our drainage systems, to cope with climate change events/ increased usage.
- Control and enforcement of pollution from all sources along each water course and into the sea.
- Control of invasive species along watercourses: mapping existing INNS and implementing controls/treatment (sometimes required consistently over several years)

Coastal environments

21. Do the 2045 outcome statements adequately capture the change we need to see?

Yes No

Response:

- The first statement does not read well and is unclear. The statement could also benefit from qualifiers to boost the outcome intentions. Similarly, statement two would benefit from a qualifier on what “recovered” means.

22. Are the 2030 milestones ambitious enough? Are we missing any key elements?

Yes No

Response:

- Yes- we agree. However, there could be an addition of Sand dune environment, which are not strictly Machair or Saltmarsh.

23. What are the key drivers of biodiversity loss in this outcome area?

- Increasing coastal erosion and development

24. What are the key opportunities for this outcome area?

- Soft-engineered measures to prevent/alleviate coastal erosion
- Training and careers in green options
- Potential to innovate and become leaders in coastal management through natural coastal defence mechanisms such as increasing salt marsh habitat, creation of tidal lagoons, natural flood defence

25. What are the key challenges for this outcome area?

- Coastal erosion measures that are hard-engineered continually taking priority over soft-engineered (or green infrastructure) options, due to skills/knowledge deficit, funding and time constraints

Urban environments – towns and cities

26. Do the 2045 outcome statements adequately capture the change we need to see?

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Yes No

Response:

- What exactly is meant by ‘nature-rich’ and ‘green infrastructure’ – it has to be very clear to everyone what this actually means.
- By 2045, Blue-green infrastructure should be seen as the “norm” rather than an afterthought.
- The Mitigation Hierarchy needs to be made explicit; it needs to be clear to everyone that existing, mature blue/green infrastructure (trees, woodland, hedgerow, bog, heath, watercourses, etc) with its associated fauna, needs to be safeguarded and form the framework for new development, which should fit into this blue/green framework - not the other way around. For the sake of biodiversity and the climate, the standard should be that new blue/green infrastructure solutions enhance what is already there, not replace it.
- Soil conditions are as important in urban settlements as in the rural environment. Soil sealing and compaction of soils are problems in urban environments. Compaction is required for ensuring buildings, roads, etc are at less risk of settlement, but if it is extensive over new development sites it can also inhibit plant root growth, which increases the risk of plants dying and strong winds uprooting trees. Compaction across gardens and open spaces, together with the inability of vegetation to flourish, results in excessive water run-off, which overloads the drainage system and can cause flooding.
- As previously stated, the links between issues in the urban environment and consequences elsewhere should be highlighted – e.g. *soil compaction/sealing* in urban environments resulting in excess run-off overwhelming the drainage system and hence *raw sewage* being released into rivers/sea.

27. Are the 2030 milestones ambitious enough? Are we missing any key elements?

Yes No

Response:

- The wording of the 2030 milestones is vague and not ambitious enough. The opportunities are currently present and could be implemented sooner and more expeditiously.
- Protection of existing species and habitats as a necessity needs to be made explicit
- The issue of urban soils and soil compaction is missing.

28. What are the key drivers of biodiversity loss in this outcome area?

- A lack of standard legislative conditions which set a minimum standard/ percentage of including biodiversity measures to schemes.
- Expansion of development and all the infrastructure required for new developments, if not planned with ecology and biodiversity as a high priority from the very beginning, and all the way through to occupier management
- Pollution – air, water, pesticides (inc weedkiller), run-off from roads
- Invasive species (including garden escapes) and diseases

29. What are the key opportunities for this outcome area?

- To engage with the public - so they know what the issues are, why certain species or habitats need to be protected, what kinds of green infrastructure are available and what these measures can do
- To further promote the existence of native species in the urban landscape
- To promote and implement progressive green infrastructure in new developments **and the retrofitting of greenery on existing infrastructure where appropriate, by highlighting existing popular and successful innovations in this area, such as living roofs on bus stops ([Guardian Sept 2022](#)).**

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- To put Scotland's building industry on the map as leaders of sustainable development through the requirement of standards like Building With Nature

30. What are the key challenges for this outcome area?

- A lack of knowledge/ specialism in environmental planning across public sector. A lack of this position and that of strategic environmental professionals within Local Authorities.
- Planning – ensuring that appropriate ecological surveys are carried out timeously to meaningfully inform development plans; ensuring that developers adhere to their plans; ensuring that all required species protection / mitigation plans are implemented; ensuring that occupiers are engaged, made aware of and encouraged to 'buy in' to what should be a progressive landscape strategy in terms of biodiversity conservation/ enhancements
- A current lack of concrete legislation, with definitive targets, requiring developers by law to take account of existing biodiversity and to ensure a net gain in biodiversity.
- Overcoming negative perceptions of new technologies, such as green roofs and rainwater harvesting (for example – assumptions that they're all too expensive / require too much maintenance / they leak).
- Redefining what a 'garden' or 'open space' is i.e. that it doesn't have to be on the ground and doesn't have to have a short lawn in it

Across our land and at sea – overall health, resilience and connectivity

31. Do the 2045 outcome statements adequately capture the change we need to see?

Yes No

Response:

- There need to be clearer qualifiers to the terms: "increasing resilience", and "diverse" in terms of what/ when? etc.
- Nature Networks and the 30x30 agreement/commitment need to be explained and integrated into the Strategy. The Leaders' Pledge for Nature also needs to be explained at the beginning of the document.
- The role of designated sites should be acknowledged, including Local Biodiversity Sites/ Local Nature Conservation Sites.
- The impact of widespread, devastating pests and diseases, such as Ash Dieback and Bird Flu, should be clearly acknowledged - the impact that these *are currently having* on Scottish ecology and the impact of measures which need to be taken to prevent/mitigate/manage widespread disease in future, as new diseases / vectors evolve and migrate with climate change.

32. Are the 2030 milestones ambitious enough? Are we missing any key elements?

No and Yes

Response:

- No, the response is not ambitious enough. Yes, there are missing elements - these are regarding interlinking strategies and policies and making them accessible for the lay reader.

33. What are the key drivers of biodiversity loss in this outcome area?

- Continued inappropriate and unsustainable land use
- Pests and diseases

34. What are the key opportunities for this outcome area?

- Identified opportunities and creation of more protected habitats through expansion of existing networks and designated sites.
- Working with landowners/managers/developers to ensure that they understand all the natural systems at work on their land, how these fit in with the wider landscape, the concept of ecosystem services and the need to preserve and enhance biodiversity, and the impacts of their land management beyond their landholdings.

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- The Second Scottish Climate Adaptation Programme 2019-24 states that “Through national mapping of the plant hosts and vector species associated with these [pest and disease] threats, it will be possible to better understand their potential distribution under different climate scenarios, and this information can be included in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.”

35. What are the key challenges for this outcome area?

- Encouraging positive changes with Scotland’s Landowners/managers working collaboratively across multiple landholdings/owners.

36. To what extent will these outcomes deliver the Vision? What might be missing?

- If adopted changes are made, the outcomes could deliver the vision. However, the vision lacks clear definition on its outcomes and objectives by not stating qualifiers. With a lack of qualifiers, we run the risk of failing to meet the outcomes through lack of measurable change.

37. What evidence and information should we use to assess whether we have delivered the Vision?

- As described above and throughout, qualifiers should be set for the outcomes, what are we aiming for? What ecological time period/ level of diversity/abundance can we feasibly learn to accept with increasing pressures. Evidence collected could take the format of determining abundance of habitats, their condition and any trends noted with species and diversity.
- There has been no mention of priority habitats or species **in the Strategy**. Although landscapes and ecosystems add up to more than the sum of their parts, the health of these systems is indicated by the status of habitats and species within them. Therefore, there needs to be a clear link to the science in order to monitor and evaluate the success of the Biodiversity Strategy. National policy/strategy has acted as a clear guide for targeted action on habitats and species in the past, with a clear thread between global agreements or European directives and local actions. A focus on landscapes, ecosystems and networks is good, but Scotland already has a Land Use Strategy and the Biodiversity Strategy should no doubt be the place to state aims with regard to priority habitats and species too.

The conditions for success

38. Have we captured the key enabling factors which are essential in order for our strategy to be successful?

- There has been no mention of the role of Local Biodiversity Action Plans – putting national strategy into action at the local government level. These are key SBS delivery mechanisms, and it would strengthen the powers of Local Authorities to realise the national Strategy at a local level if these mechanisms were acknowledged.
- **The critical strengthening of powers under existing legislation is required, for example the application and enforcement of Tree Preservation Orders in order to protect ancient woodlands.**
- The protections of designated green spaces and semi-natural areas safeguarded through Local Development Plans cannot continue to be overturned by the national Planning and Environmental Appeals Division, where these are contrary to the critical targets and agreements made at the Climate Change COP26 and the upcoming Biodiversity COP15.

39. Are there good examples of enabling conditions in other strategies we could learn from?

It should be made clear that the comprehensive Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review (2021) states that in order to pursue a sustainable future, we must:

- reduce our demands on the biosphere (avoid degradation, including legislative restrictions on extraction and pollution)
- enhance the supply of natural capital (conserve what already exists; invest, expand and improve the quality of protected areas; better land-use/marine spatial planning; invest in nature-based solutions)
- reduce consumption (including diet, energy, material goods)
- restructure production (invest in research and development; dedicate land use to restoring the land and promoting multiple ecosystem services; improve crop yield; reduce waste by enforcing standards for re-use, recycling and sharing)
- restructure supply chains and trade (embed environmental considerations along entire supply chains; use of trade agreements; use of environmental taxation; review subsidies)

Data label: Public

- (vi) limit populations (through increased health, investment in family planning and education)
- (vii) change measures of economic progress (measure inclusive wealth, not GDP; engage in Natural Capital Accounting; use measures of productivity that account for the use of, and impact on, Nature)
- (viii) transform our institutions and systems (invest in nature; empower citizens; connect with nature; use consumer demand to influence producers and suppliers; improve access to greenspaces; weave nature into education from nursery to university)

40. Can you set out how you think any of the proposals set out in the consultation might help to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations? Can you provide any evidence which informed your conclusions?

- Transparency is key to fostering good relations with the public and other sectors, as well as necessary in order to build on our collective knowledge. The strategy document notes that that factors which have limited the success of previous strategies need to be identified. However all the issues outlined are external to the strategy and still rather vague. It would be useful to also outline where the key objectives/outcomes of the 2004/2013/2015 strategy and updates have been met and progress made. If there are gaps or shortfalls these should be clearly acknowledged in the new strategy, together with how they will be addressed as we move forward. For example: Are national organisations working better together now? Has monitoring, reporting, observation recording and data sharing improved? And how are each of the recognised drivers of biodiversity loss being addressed?