



Stop Climate Chaos Scotland

Land Use Strategy for Scotland 2016 -2021

January 2016

Introduction

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) is a diverse coalition of organisations in Scotland campaigning together on climate change. Our members include environment, faith and international development organisations, trade and student unions and community groups.

SCCS is working to ensure Scotland plays its fair part in tackling climate change and that the commitments set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 are achieved, including targets to reduce emissions by 42% by 2020 and 80% by 2050.

One of the main challenges facing the Scottish Government is how to deliver our country's climate commitments, through to 2020 and beyond. Scotland's Land Use Strategy (LUS) is a requirement of the Scottish Climate Change Act and is a key way to strategically deliver emissions savings in the rural land use sector and Scotland's food sector.

Until now, the full potential for the LUS to drive change and secure emissions reductions has not been realised. Clear leadership from Scottish Government is essential if rural businesses and the food sector are to become low carbon, climate-proof and sustainable.

We want the Scottish Government to commit to regional LUS plans and to publish an ambitious LUS Action Plan containing strong policies which deliver emissions reductions throughout the land use sector: agriculture, forestry and peatlands.

Q 1a Do you think that the Vision, Principles for Sustainable Land Use and three long term Objectives are still fit for purpose?

Yes.

Q 3a *Is the relationship as set out in the draft Land Use Strategy 2016 – 2021 clear?*

No. The relationship of the LUS to the other 'SG National Plans, Policies and Strategies' shown in the diagram on page 14 is not clear. In the diagram it is shown to have an equal footing. However, the LUS should have more influence over some land use policies, e.g. the SRDP or how the RPP3 land use measures are prioritised.

The Scottish Government must ensure that its policies are coherent across all sectors. Policy coherence can ensure all government departments and teams consider the wider impacts of their policies through a climate justice lens, avoiding contradictory policies that could have a negative impact on carbon emissions or other environmental indicators.

Q 5 *How could the content of the current Scottish Forestry Strategy be updated to better reflect the Objectives and Principles of the Land Use Strategy and other key priorities?*

SCCS wants to see the Scottish Government, along with Forestry Commission Scotland and others, deliver on 'Low Carbon Scotland: Report on Proposals and Policies' (RPP2) target of

planting 10,000ha of trees per year in order to increase carbon storage and sequestration through habitats. However, we want this to be achieved in as sustainable a way as possible. Woodlands and forests should be planted and managed sustainably, delivering and optimising multiple environmental, social and economic benefits.

The Scottish Forestry Strategy should be updated to reflect the LUS objectives and principles and aim to achieve the RPP2 target and more.

Q 6a *Do you consider that there could be advantages in having a single policy statement about land which deals with ownership, use and management?*

SCCS agrees that a single policy statement would be advantageous to highlight that everyone in Scotland must act if we are to meet our ambitious emissions reduction targets and that whatever the system of land ownership, land owners and managers have a responsibility to achieve emissions reductions from land use.

Q 9a *Do you think that regional land use frameworks could be useful to inform regional/local land use decision-making?*

Rural land use patterns differ significantly between regions of Scotland. To achieve emissions reductions, each region must develop regional and local land use plans. The LUS must influence land use priorities and policies and their translation into action on the ground.

SCCS want Government to commit to regional LUS plans and to publish an ambitious LUS Action Plan containing strong policies which deliver emissions reductions throughout the land use sector: agriculture, forestry and peatlands.

Q 9b *Which aspects of this approach do you think require further development?*

A regional approach must support the setting of appropriate regional greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets based on land uses and potential for land use change. Targets must drive real positive change rather than regions being given a free reign to effect only minimal change.

Q 11 *Do you have any suggestions on other potential measures to encourage climate friendly farming and crofting?*

The agriculture and related land use sector was responsible for 23.4% of Scotland's total emissions in 2013¹. Agriculture accounts for 59% of Scotland's emissions of methane and 88% of its nitrous oxide, both of which are far more potent greenhouse gases than carbon dioxide. The Scottish Government wants to be a leader in green farming² but, if we are to meet the 2050 emissions reduction targets, significant change will be needed regarding how we produce, process and choose food.

¹ Scottish Government - Scottish Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2013.
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/06/1939/314105>

² Scottish Government (2015). The Future of Scottish Agriculture. A discussion document.
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00479616.pdf>

The 'Farming for a Better Climate' (FFBC) initiative is a weak measure as it relies on voluntary uptake. Whilst it has a role in training and influencing farmers, its monitoring must be improved in order to allow evaluation and attribution of its emissions reduction benefits. In addition to FFBC and market-driven measures, SCCS wants to see a strategic approach to encouraging low-carbon farming. The LUS must have a role in making this happen. We want to see:

- Policies to require regular soil testing and fertiliser management planning by all farmers,
- Adoption of fertiliser efficiency measures by all farmers,
- Uptake of precision farming technology and equipment, including through the provision of zero-interest loans,
- Scottish Government introducing policies which promote a circular economy in agriculture with respect to use and recycling of nutrients – in order to minimise waste and pollution,
- Promotion of organic farming and agroecology systems and techniques which contribute to low-carbon farming and climate-proof farming.

Q 15a *Do you think that a strategic vision could be useful for the uplands?*

Yes. SCCS would like to see a vision for the uplands which seeks to maximise peatland restoration, much of which is in the uplands.

Q 15b *Do you have any comments on this proposal?*

Peatlands ecosystems, in their natural state, sequester carbon from the atmosphere and lock it away in peat. Scotland's peatlands hold 1,620Mt of carbon – equivalent to ten times the carbon stored in all of the UK's forests³.

Scotland holds 60% of the UK's deep peat soils and over 80% of the UK's blanket bog. Blanket bogs have been damaged through past land management practices, such as draining, burning, grazing and afforestation. Of Scotland's 1.8 million ha blanket bog, only 30% are currently in good condition. In a damaged state, peatlands gradually lose carbon and only restoration activities can return them to a secure and increasing store of carbon.

ClimateXchange put abatement benefits from peatland restoration in the range of 0.6 to 8.3 t CO₂e/ha/yr². Therefore, restoring 600,000ha could abate in the region of 0.36 – 5Mt CO₂e per year. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s commonly cited figure of 2.7Mt CO₂ is a mid-range figure³.

SCCS wants to see the LUS and an LUS Action Plan drive forward peatland restoration and management. We want to see an acceleration in the rate of restoration, the number of projects and the amount of funding available. The clear RPP2 proposed target for 21,000ha peatland restoration per year must become a policy target (as a minimum), in order to drive commitment.

Q 16a *Do you agree that the Land Use Strategy indicators are still fit for purpose?*

³ [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcin048.pdf/\\$FILE/fcin048.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcin048.pdf/$FILE/fcin048.pdf) - 150 Mt CO₂ in UK forests

SCCS would like to see an indicator introduced showing greenhouse gas emissions from rural land use. This is vitally important in understanding the types of land use change, management activities and policies which benefit a positive emissions balance for Scotland. It should show both emissions from land activities and sequestration by land use.

***Q 17** Are there any other activities that you think we should be undertaking to achieve better understanding and application of the Principles or delivery of the Strategy?*

The LUS must not omit to influence the use of coastal land and its management. Too often improving management and planning of the coasts fall between land management policies and marine policies. 'Blue carbon' – the carbon stored by coastal and marine habitats - was identified in the RPP2 with a view to understanding more about how to optimise the carbon stored and sequestered by these habitats.

SCCS would like to see the LUS influence the coasts in order to optimise the multiple benefits of coastal land use and management, especially with a view to reducing emissions, maximising carbon storage and helping to reduce the impacts of climate change and sea level rise.

For more information, please contact:

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Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) is a coalition of organisations campaigning on climate change, including environment, faith and development organisations, trade and student unions and community groups.
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