

**AYRSHIRE JOINT PLANNING STEERING GROUP  
12 JANUARY 2012**

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**Land Use Strategy Action Plan**

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**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To advise the steering group of the publication in December 2011 of the Land Use Strategy Action Plan. This document focuses on delivering the proposals which are contained within the Land Use Strategy. The preparation of a Land Use Strategy is a requirement under Section 57 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

**BACKGROUND**

2. Published in March 2011 the Land Use Strategy for Scotland – established a strategic framework and proposals for getting the best from Scotland’s land resources. The strategy recognized that to achieve sustainable land uses across Scotland would rely in the future on many individuals and bodies both in the public and private sector and third sector working together in partnership to deliver multiple benefits from the use of land and to maximize future opportunities. The content of the strategy and the implications for the planning system was the subject of a paper to the steering group in May 2011.
3. The published Action Plan establishes how the Government will deliver the thirteen proposals within the strategy and also highlights how the key tasks will be achieved during the initial 5 year life span of the strategy. The document also comments on the need to “mainstream” the Principles for Sustainable Land Use”, refer Annex 2, which are articulated in the strategy when making plans and taking significant decisions about the use of land. A commitment to prepare an annual progress statement is also given. This will record and monitor progress against the delivery of the Proposals.

**PROPOSALS**

4. Of the thirteen proposals (Refer to Annex 1) about half have direct relevance to the work undertaken by the Steering Group or by Local Authorities in general through their partnership involvement. These include :

***Proposal 4 - Encouragement of land based businesses to take actions that reduce land based green house gas emissions and that enable adaptation to climate change threats and opportunities.***

Relevant deliverables identified include maximizing opportunities for on-farm renewable generation; increasing woodland creation to 10,000 hectares per annum; implementation of RBMP's, including action on reduction of diffuse pollution; implementation of Flood Risk Management Plans.

***Proposal 7 - Identify more closely which types of land are best suited for tree planting in the context of other land-based objectives, and promote good practice and local processes in relation to tree planting to secure multiple benefits.***

Relevant deliverables identified include, the development of Forestry & Woodland Strategies by local authorities.

***Proposal 8 - Demonstrate how the ecosystem approach would be taken into account in relevant decisions made by public bodies to deliver wider benefits, and provide practical guidance.***

Relevant deliverables include case studies, incorporating an ecosystem approach as a core methodology (including statutory plans); building natural capital through the development of the national ecological network.

***Proposal 9 - Develop a methodology to take account of changes in soil carbon for carbon accounting purposes; improve understanding of potential benefits from conservation and management of carbon-rich soils; and deliver measures to help secure long-term management of all land-based carbon stores.***

Relevant deliverables include the identification of pilot areas for peat land restoration and ensuring planning safeguards are in place.

***Proposal 11 - Develop the land use aspect of the Climate Change Adaptation Framework to support communities as they adapt to change.***

Relevant deliverables include promoting health & wellbeing by development of core path networks to provide opportunities for everyday journeys and recreation; improving monitoring of flood risk and providing better information that land management and river restoration can make to managing flood risk; promoting co-ordinated and catchment focused decision making; recognizing the threat posed by climate change to historic and built environment; changes to permitted development rights for replacement of surface water hard surfaces; awareness of impacts of climate change on landscapes and the integration of adaptation measures within development plans; supporting development of woodland expansion and habitat and green networks; investigating the role of forestry in sustainable flood management

through catchment scale integrated land use studies; strengthening biodiversity; assessing vulnerable coastlines and promote adaptive coastal management to work with natural processes; promote a network of wetlands in catchments as a means of increasing resilience to climate change.

***Proposal 12 - Identify and publicise effective ways for communities to contribute to land use debates and decision-making.***

Relevant deliverables include providing information on current statutory, and where appropriate non-statutory, opportunities for communities to contribute to land use related plans and decisions (*examples include planning for forestry and renewable*).

## **CONCLUSION**

5. It is apparent from the above that local authorities have a great deal of potential for leading and facilitating, particularly through the planning system, the proposals and outcomes articulated by the Land Use Strategy. However, this potential comes at cost and this will need to be recognised by the Scottish Government and adequately supported and resourced through various government bodies if the benefits are to be fully realized. The delivery of the Proposals will require the development of broad partnerships working at all levels. At a time of limited resources the work programme established by the Joint Planning Steering Group within Ayrshire demonstrates that an already significant contribution is being made by the Ayrshire authorities in delivering a number of the actions within Ayrshire.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

6. The Steering Group is asked to note the publication of the Land Use Strategy Action Plan.

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## Annex 1

### Proposals in the Land Use Strategy

The Scottish Government will:

- 1.** Publish an action plan following publication of the Strategy.
- 2.** Provide an annual progress statement on the Land Use Strategy.
- 3.** Align land use regulations and incentives with Land Use Strategy Objectives.
- 4.** Further encourage land-based businesses to take actions that reduce land-based greenhouse gas emissions and that enable adaptation to climate change threats and opportunities.
- 5.** Use the Land Use Strategy Objectives to influence negotiations on CAP reform.
- 6.** Use demonstration projects to determine the best means by which land use and land management practice can contribute to climate change objectives.
- 7.** Identify more closely which types of land are best for tree planting in the context of other land-based objectives, and promote good practice and local processes in relation to tree planting so as to secure multiple benefits.
- 8.** Demonstrate how the ecosystem approach could be taken into account in relevant decisions made by public bodies to deliver wider benefits, and provide practical guidance.
- 9.** Develop a methodology to take account of changes in soil carbon for carbon accounting purposes; improve understanding of potential benefits from conservation and management of carbon-rich soils; and deliver measures to help secure long-term management of all land-based carbon stores.
- 10.** Investigate the relationship between land management changes and ecosystem processes to identify adaptation priorities.
- 11.** Develop the land use aspects of our Climate Change Adaptation Framework to support communities as they adapt to change.
- 12.** Identify and publicise effective ways for communities to contribute to land use debates and decision-making.
- 13.** Provide a Land Use Information Hub on the Scottish Government website.

## Annex 2

### Principles for Sustainable Land Use

- a)** Opportunities for land use to deliver multiple benefits should be encouraged.
- b)** Regulation should continue to protect essential public interests whilst placing as light a burden on businesses as is consistent with achieving its purpose. Incentives should be efficient and cost-effective.
- c)** Where land is highly suitable for a primary use (for example food production, flood management, water catchment management and carbon storage) this value should be recognised in decision-making.
- d)** Land use decisions should be informed by an understanding of the functioning of the ecosystems which they affect in order to maintain the benefits of the ecosystem services which they provide.
- e)** Landscape change should be managed positively and sympathetically, considering the implications of change at a scale appropriate to the landscape in question, given that all Scotland's landscapes are important to our sense of identity and to our individual and social wellbeing.
- f)** Land use decisions should be informed by an understanding of the opportunities and threats brought about by the changing climate. Greenhouse gas emissions associated with land use should be reduced and land should continue to contribute to delivering climate change adaptation and mitigation objectives.
- g)** Where land has ceased to fulfil a useful function because it is derelict or vacant, this represents a significant loss of economic potential and amenity for the community concerned. It should be a priority to examine options for restoring all such land to economically, socially or environmentally productive uses.
- h)** Outdoor recreation opportunities and public access to land should be encouraged, along with the provision of accessible green space close to where people live, given their importance for health and well-being.
- i)** People should have opportunities to contribute to debates and decisions about land use and management decisions which affect their lives and their future.
- j)** Opportunities to broaden our understanding of the links between land use and daily living should be encouraged.

