

Nature in brief

2: A National Ecological Network



A National Ecological Network is an ambitious, practical, long term vision for enhancing Scotland's natural assets and linked to this, the social and economic prosperity of its rural and urban communities.

The future of Scotland's wildlife depends on the actions we take now and to meet the 2020 biodiversity targets to halt the loss of biodiversity and degradation of ecosystem services, Scotland will need to go further than conserving species and protecting sites across a fragmented landscape. We will need a stronger focus on **'reweaving the wondrous diversity of life around us.'**¹

Ecological networks are nature's highways - connecting directly or ecologically, habitats and green and blue spaces - which allows species to move more easily across the landscape, decreasing the likelihood of species extinctions, increasing genetic exchange and thereby improving ecosystem health and resilience in the face of climate change.

Physical elements can be large or small - from urban green roofs, tree-lined streets and cycle ways to restored lowland raised bogs, protected areas and landscape scale conservation projects.

Ecological Networks do not hinder development rather, they should be seen as making **a positive contribution to the quality of people's lives and the 'liveability' in both urban and rural landscapes.**

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¹ Edward Wilson (1992) The Diversity of Life, Harvard University Press

What the Scottish Government can do:

- **Stick to its commitments** to deliver the Convention of Biological Diversity's 20 Aichi targets in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy
- **Ensure a National Ecological Network becomes a national development** in National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3)
- **Embed the principles of a national ecological network** into NPF3, the revised Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) and the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS)
- **Ensure SPP** supports habitat restoration, ecological connectivity and creation
- **Support 'greening' of Pillar I** of the Common Agricultural Policy
- **Develop a National Ecological Network opportunity map** for the whole of Scotland and use this to help target agri-environment spend, new developments and large scale ecological restoration projects
- **Develop a suite of high level Ecosystem Health Indicators** at national and regional level which will provide an annual 'report card' on the health of Scotland's natural environment
- **Ensure Architecture and Placemaking Policy** explicitly makes the connection between quality architecture / placemaking and the natural environment