

# Scottish Wildlife Trust

## Briefing

Progress towards National Planning Framework 3  
and the Scottish Planning Policy:

### Giving a clear steer towards creating quality places



#### Creating places where people want to live and do business

The Scottish Wildlife Trust believes that the creation of high quality places where people want to live their lives should be a priority of National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3) and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP).

The environment is the context for all activity, be it economic or otherwise, and any meaningful planning strategy or policy should facilitate and promote the provision of accessible, high-quality, biologically diverse and connected green infrastructure. 'Designing in' nature-rich and connected green (or blue) infrastructure across Scotland (which we would collectively call - a national ecological network), be it to benefit urban or rural communities, would bring health, social and economic advantages to Scotland.

#### Society depends on the benefits nature provides

The EU Commission recognises the vital role green infrastructure plays in adding to Europe's prosperity; a recent communication states that: *Human society depends on the benefits provided by nature such as food, materials, clean water, clean air, climate regulation, flood prevention, pollination and recreation.*<sup>1</sup>

And that: *the failure to protect our natural capital and to give a proper value to ecosystem services will need to be addressed as part of the drive towards smart, sustainable and inclusive growth - which is the EU's priority.*<sup>2</sup>

The Commission defines green infrastructure as: *a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services. It incorporates green spaces (or blue if aquatic ecosystems are concerned) and other physical features in terrestrial (including coastal) and marine areas. On land, green infrastructure is present in rural and urban settings.*<sup>3</sup>

In Scotland, it has been estimated that the total value of these 'natural services' (what we would call ecosystem services) is worth in excess of £21 billion to Scotland's economy per year.<sup>4</sup>

The Scottish Wildlife Trust believes that Scotland has the opportunity in NPF3 and SPP to lead the way in European planning by giving planners a clear steer towards enhancing and protecting Scotland's natural resources through planning for well-connected green infrastructure. We would like to see a national ecological network included in NPF3.

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission (2013) Green Infrastructure (GI) — Enhancing Europe's Natural Capital Brussels, 6.5.2013 COM (2013) 249 final

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>4</sup> UK National Ecosystem Assessment (2011) The UK National Ecosystem Assessment Technical Report. UNEP- WCMC, Cambridge

## Future proofing urban environments to the impacts of climate change

Adapting our urban environment to the impacts of climate change to ensure towns and cities remain 'liveable' will be a key challenge in the coming decades. So, delivering a national ecological network in an urban setting could provide a focus for the coordinated development of green infrastructure such as wildlife-rich greenspaces and parks, green roofs, tree-lined streets, cycle and walking routes and sustainable urban drainage systems. Incorporating these elements would help make the urban environment, in which more than 80% of Scotland's people live, more attractive to wildlife and at the same time provide natural 'free' services such as slowing water runoff, increased pollination, improved air quality and increased attractiveness of local neighbourhoods.

## Green infrastructure delivers social, economic and environmental rewards

The financial benefits from such nature based solutions- especially with the impacts of climate change looming- are not trivial: flood prevention could save the Scottish economy at least £32 million every year<sup>5</sup> and crop pollination is worth about £43 million per annum. Recent modeling of Glasgow's air quality has shown that air quality could be improved by planting more street trees to filter out harmful particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>)<sup>6</sup> thus reducing costs to the NHS and improving quality of life.

High quality outdoor space also contributes to health and wellbeing; a growing body of evidence shows that access to good quality urban greenspace is essential for physical activity,<sup>7,8</sup> positive mental well-being<sup>9</sup> and healthy childhood development.<sup>10</sup> Contact with nature has also been shown to reduce the severity of childhood Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.<sup>11</sup> In addition, it has been found that income related health inequalities are reduced by having easy access to high quality greenspace.<sup>12</sup>

In a rural setting, investing in green infrastructure by restoring peatlands and native woodlands could deliver multiple benefits such as locking up carbon, providing cleaner water, slowing water run-off in a catchment and increasing biodiversity.

Connecting rural areas to the urban hinterlands and into the heart of urban 'grey spaces' would make Scotland's landscapes more permeable to wildlife. Across Scotland, creating a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas would also help build on success stories such as the spreading south of the pine marten - which is now found in the Central Belt on a Scottish Wildlife Trust urban reserve in Cumbernauld - and gives people a greater chance of having special wildlife encounters.

Dr. Maggie Keegan, Head of Policy and Planning, Scottish Wildlife Trust  
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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>7</sup> Tanaka A., Takano T., Nakamura K., (1996) Health levels influence by urban residential conditions in a megacity. *Tokyo Urban Studies* 33: 879-945.

<sup>8</sup> Sugiyama T., Thompson C.W., (2007). Older people's health, outdoor activity and supportiveness of neighbourhood environments. *Landscape and urban planning*. Vol 83 (2-3) 168-175

<sup>9</sup> De Vries S, Verheij R A and Groenewegen P (2001). Nature and Health .The Relation between health and green space in people's living environment. Euro Leisure-congress Netherlands.

<sup>10</sup> Sadler et al (2010) Bringing cities alive: the importance of urban greenspaces for people and biodiversity. *Urban ecology* (ed. K.J. Gaston) Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

<sup>11</sup> UK National Ecosystem Assessment (2011) Page 386

<sup>12</sup> Mitchell R, Popham F (2008). Effect of exposure to natural environment on health and inequalities: an observational population study. *The Lancet*, Volume 372, Issue 9650, pp1655- 1660.