



The planning system & how to get involved

The planning system aims to guide land use and development, in the wider public interest. Decisions on planning applications are mostly made by local authorities (i.e. Councils) but also by National Park Authorities and the Scottish Government.

The Scottish Wildlife Trust believes the planning system needs to be well informed, organised and implemented in a way which ensures Scotland's biodiversity is adequately safeguarded and enhanced. We believe that the planning system should act as a guardian for biodiversity and actively support and promote its conservation, enhancement, restoration and expansion.

A primary function of the planning system should be to 'further the conservation of biodiversity' as stated in section 1 of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004. In delivering the biodiversity duty, planning bodies and office holders should take particular account of legally protected species, national and local Biodiversity Action Plan priority species and habitats, internationally (Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, Ramsar sites) nationally designated sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves) and locally designated sites (Local Nature Reserves and Local Nature Conservation Sites or LNCs). It is also important to recognise that much of Scotland's most valuable biodiversity is found outside statutory and non-statutory sites. The planning system must ensure that important biodiversity in the 'wider countryside' is afforded the same protection as designated sites. There should be a presumption against development in any area of identified biodiversity interest or where a legally protected species is present.

The planning system should be a strategic and spatially-based process which identifies and protects biodiversity at multiple scales, encompassing; species, habitats, wildlife networks and regional-scale ecosystems. The strategic approach should aim not just to protect rare, threatened and priority species and habitats, but also ensure that the natural functioning of ecological systems is enhanced. Particular attention should be given to encouraging the connectivity and defragmentation of semi-natural habitats. Developments which fragment semi-natural habitat networks in rural areas and areas of greenspace in urban and peri-urban areas should not be permitted.

Where a development is approved, the planning system should ensure that all opportunities are taken to mitigate against damage to existing biodiversity interest through the retention of key wildlife features and

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creation of new wildlife habitats. The design of new developments should also seek to maximise connectivity of semi-natural features to benefit both biodiversity and public access.

The design of new developments should seek to integrate and maximise biodiversity at both building unit and site scales through the application of sustainable design and construction methods and materials. Scotland's planners, policy makers and practitioners should champion innovative and creative approaches to the design of developments that ensure space for wildlife and a better quality of living space for people.

The Scottish Wildlife Trust policy on the Planning System can be found [here](#).

How the planning system works and when you can get involved

Essentially, the three main parts of the planning system are:

Development plans which describe how places should change (including allocating areas of land for different types of development) and outline the policies used to inform planning decisions.

Development management which is the decision-making process for planning applications.

Enforcement is to monitor that development is carried out correctly and to take action if development happens without permission or if planning conditions have not been met.

Two guides to Scotland's Planning System that you may find useful are available from the Scottish Government [here](#) and from Planning Democracy [here](#). Planning Aid for Scotland (PAS) also has a useful glossary of common planning terms [here](#).