

SCOTTISH BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY BRIEFING (1)

Three steps to make the next Scottish Biodiversity Strategy transformative

Scottish Government recognised in this year's [Programme for Government](#) that the climate and nature crises together "*are the greatest threats facing people and the planet*". Also, by leading the creation of the [Edinburgh Declaration](#) for subnational governments on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework Scottish Government emphasised the need for "strong and bold actions to bring about transformative change... to halt biodiversity loss." In designing the framework and strategic process to achieve this, there are three essential steps:

i. Learn from the experience of previous strategies

The first strategy [Scotland's biodiversity: it's in your hands](#) was published in 2004 with the vision that by 2030 Scotland would be recognised as a world leader in biodiversity conservation with everyone involved and benefitting. A new way forward was adopted in 2013 with [2020 challenge for Scotland's biodiversity](#). The objectives of the 2004 Strategy were still seen as still valid but a new plan was adopted to achieve the desired outcomes of the European Biodiversity Strategy for 2020 and the UN Aichi targets.

There were three-yearly reports to Parliament on progress but overall the first strategy did not achieve its intended outcomes. There was a long-term decline in Scotland's biodiversity as documented in the [State of Nature Report](#) and Scotland now ranks 28th from bottom out of 240 countries in the [Biodiversity Intactness Index](#). To build on these initial strategies and strengthen the next one it will be important to:

- Ensure that the strategy is backed by a **detailed implementation plan** with a clear timetable and specific and measurable actions so commitments like the National Ecological Network in the 2013 Strategy are openly monitored, progressed and implemented.
- The implementation plans are **fully costed** so that the scale of investment required is clear and provision can be planned in advance.
- There is **policy coherence** between the new strategy and other key strategies such as the National Strategy for Economic Transformation and the Infrastructure Investment Plan and the funding identified for biodiversity can be allocated in the [Resource Spending Review](#) and Scottish Budgets.

ii. Learn from other countries

Scotland should learn from the experience of other countries and draw on the many [National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans](#) that have been developed elsewhere. A good example is that in New Zealand - Scotland's partner in the [Wellbeing Economy Governments partnership](#) - where the [Biodiversity Strategy 2020](#) includes:

- Analysis of the problems nature faces including the **5 drivers of biodiversity loss** and the key gaps and **issues with the current system** and management approach.
- Emphasis on the **connection between nature and people** and **Nature-based Solutions** to health, economy and wellbeing.
- Input from the public and experts and a 160 page [companion report](#) on biodiversity including an overview of the state, trends and pressures and **what we learned from the previous strategy**.

- Consideration of opportunities to **improve the way we work** and that the challenges we face with the current biodiversity system, recognition that **nature is at the heart of the economy** and the need to work in partnership, commit to action, create connections and be flexible.
- An implementation framework with 13 objectives, each with **measurable and time-bound goals** for 2025, 2030 and 2050. The approach is built on collaboration, being **flexible and adaptive over time** and transparent monitoring.

iii. Get the participatory process right

The IUCN published a report in 2015 on [Societal participatory processes in the revision of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans](#) (NBSAP) which analyses societal participation in the process of NBSAP revision in ten developing countries and includes insights from Belgium, France, and Switzerland. The key messages and lessons learnt were:

- The process of deliberation, construction and implementation of NBSAPs should be both a **technical and a political undertaking**.
- Developing and implementing an NBSAP by using a participatory approach to its construction and delivery is not a given, it is a **choice and needs to be designed**.
- There is no one-size-fits-all approach to a successful participatory NBSAP process but there are certain elements that make for a truly participatory process and with a better chance of success in the long run, including:
 - a) **Collective definition** of “the problem to solve” and the ultimate goal of the process.
 - b) Knowledge and **information sharing** about the subject among participants and establishing a minimum level of awareness.
 - c) Institutions that choose to lead the process by establishing **partnerships with stakeholders and sharing responsibilities** have better chances of being recognised, respected and collectively owned.
- Biodiversity participatory planning requires a certain degree of **flexibility and adaptability** to trigger buy-in and ownership across stakeholders.
- **Communications and public awareness** strategies are of paramount importance for public policy planning and implementation and engaging all relevant stakeholders.
- Sufficient technical and **financial resources** have to be made available to allow for a truly participatory process.

The report contains the following recommendations:

- i. **Nurture political commitment:** political buy-in and support does not come automatically. It needs to be built.
- ii. **Foster partnerships:** NBSAPs should not only be built collectively but they should also be implemented collectively, with clear responsibilities.
- iii. **Measure progress and publicise success:** build in process milestones and indicators from the planning stages so that flexibility and adaptability of the plan can be improved.
- iv. **Communicate regularly:** have a proper communications strategy implanted in the design of the NBSAP itself and targeted communications must be done on a regular basis to keep momentum.

In Scotland the [Citizen's Assembly](#) could be convened to engage on the challenge of transforming biodiversity and would be a cornerstone of a participatory process.