

## *Developing Landscape Indicators*

### *Draft Findings - SLA Working Group 4*

#### **Summary**

Landscape indicators allow us to measure the type, condition, and uses made of our landscapes, and are therefore essential to developing appropriate policies and legislation. We currently have a useful suite of landscape indicators at the national level, but we need these to be reproduced at a regional and local level to help inform the work of the Regional Land Use Partnerships.

We also need to develop the language we use in describing the relationships people have with land and land use. Alongside, the more quantifiable measures, we need to capture how people value their landscapes.

Finally, landscapes are the basis for many public ambitions – from nature recovery, recreation, identity, culture, and economy – and communities talking about their landscapes can be the beginning of conversations about how these ambitions can be met.



St Abbs (the National Trust for Scotland)

#### **Introduction**

We're all familiar with the idea that what gets measured, gets managed. This is often seen as a double-edged sword, that we might overlook what is important simply because we cannot easily measure it, or that we become focused on chasing after targets and forget that our measurement is only one part of a much richer and more complex picture.

But we also know that public policy debates revolve around measurement – of outputs, of results, of opinions. These are the data that identify where there are shortcomings, where markets are not performing, and where public intervention is expected.

The management and enhancement of our landscapes has not been prominent in our public policy debates in Scotland in recent decades. Is this due to a lack of data, a lack of reliable indicators, or a perceived lack of relevance to people?

## Existing indicators

Working Group 4 of the Scottish Landscape Alliance has discussed these questions. Our initial analysis focused on the current and planned landscape measures from NatureScot.

| Current NatureScot landscape indicators   | NatureScot landscape indicators in development   |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Natural Heritage Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N2 Built development</li> <li>• N3 Visual influence of built development</li> </ul> <p><b>Landscape Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LLQ1 Area of National Landscape Designations</li> <li>• LLQ2 Perceived Naturalness of Land Cover in Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN)</li> </ul> <p><b>Public Perception</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LPP1 Public Perception of Scotland's Landscape</li> <li>• LPP2 Public Perception of Local Landscape</li> </ul> <p><b>Land Cover</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LLC1 Land Cover</li> </ul> <p><b>Built Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LBD1 Extent of Built Development</li> <li>• LBD2 Visual Influence of Built Development</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban Greenspace – derived from OS maps – 54% of urban Scotland is greenspace</li> <li>• Local Landscape Areas – derived from Spatial Hub – 502 LLAs cover 33% of Scotland</li> <li>• Vacant and Derelict Land – derived from Spatial Hub</li> <li>• Climate-related Landscape Change – both direct results and those due to adaptation measures</li> <li>• Design Quality of Built Environment – being assessed by pilot field survey</li> </ul> |

The group also discussed complementary measures, such as historic environment datasets, and measurements of public perceptions of the environment.

The working group has been in agreement that we need to measure the things that are there, particularly where these form part of an organisation’s statutory responsibilities, but that we shouldn’t simply count something just because it is easy to count. The group recognised that the variety of datasets was also an opportunity to play with them and to use them more creatively.

While maintaining these datasets, there was also a desire to make a break from simply monitoring the physical elements, and to better understand how landscapes are being valued.

## How landscapes are valued

Discussions about landscape give us an opportunity to think about people as consumers of the natural elements of landscape. Landscape is the coming together of the historic and natural environment, although there can still be quite a divide in terms of built or urban, and natural landscapes. The Scottish Landscape Alliance recognises that we need to break down barriers between different policy silos, and that this can be done through identifying the mutual benefits arising from well-managed landscapes. In terms of measurement, we needed to find a way of capturing these overlaps and showing the value of more consciously managing landscapes.

Science has moved on considerably and we think differently now about the multiple benefits of nature, including the ongoing human interaction with landscape. The value of landscape can be seen

in two ways: how people appreciate landscapes; and how landscapes sustain and provide us with benefits (e.g., ecosystems services).

An alternative approach suggested would be to begin with what people value and then look at developing datasets so that we are measuring the right things. We are good at measuring the physical, but less good at saying why it matters. As a result, the tangible may be overvalued and the intangible undervalued.

The development of a common language that people can understand was thought important by the working group. There was mention of the Danish term *hygge* (comfortable, warm surroundings) which had gone from not being understood a few years ago but was now in common usage. Similarly, stewardship and wellbeing have gained more prominence in public policy. In New Zealand, when discussing landscape and infrastructure, a word is used for both land and responsibility capturing how these are interrelated - *whenua* meaning both “land” and “placenta” where the land is mother to the people. Another term used is *tūrangawaewae*, literally a place to stand, but capturing a sense of belonging and empowerment.

*“Land is central to our identity as people of Aotearoa New Zealand – it is our tūrangawaewae, our place to stand. This country’s unique landscapes connect us culturally and emotionally to the whenua (land) we call home.”*

#### **New Zealand Ministry for the Environment/Manatū Mō Te Taiao, *Our Land 2021***

The working group agreed we needed a better vocabulary to describe why landscapes matter and express their value to people.

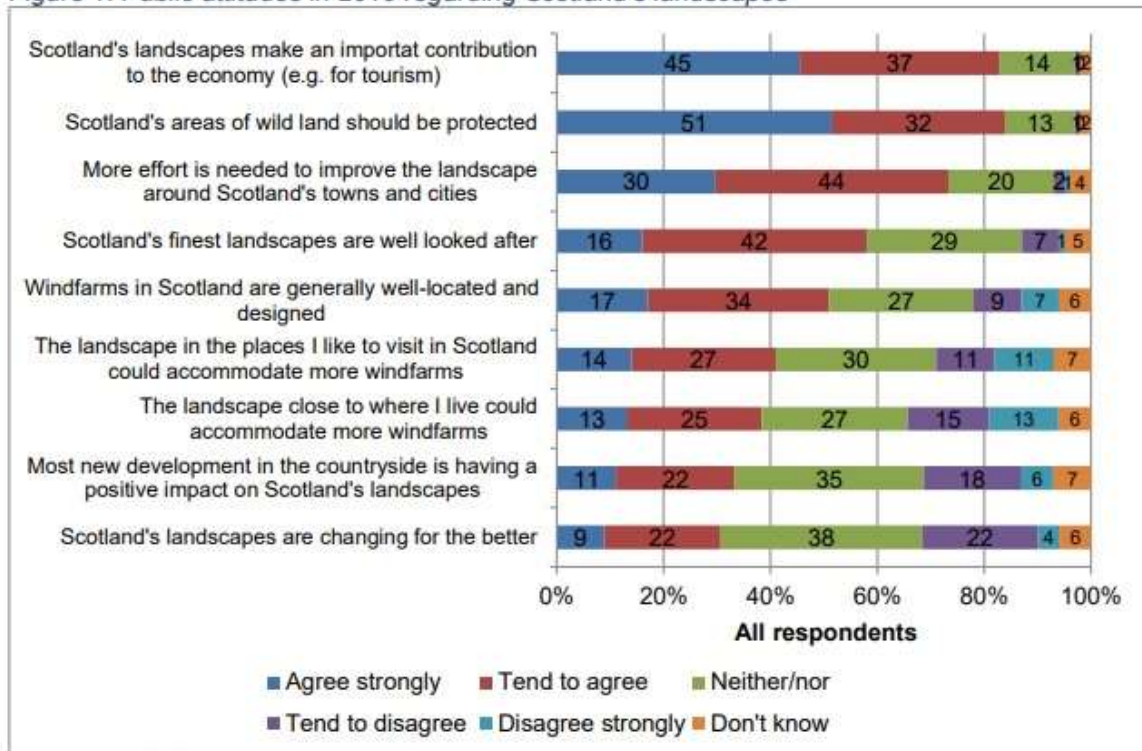
### **Public perceptions of landscape**

The working group agreed that we needed to connect-up across the different discussions. To think about different areas of focus and what people value about the environment. This would feed into the wellbeing/healthy planet agenda. The message about “look after the planet and it will look after us” is getting across much more. Responses to lockdowns were seen as evidence of people connecting to local places, really valuing places and spaces. Wellbeing was also a good way of tying things together, with the systems and processes that help to provide the physical elements that support ecological habitats, also supporting spiritual and mental wellbeing.

There were discussions around how existing public perception indicators are measured. One example suggested was using the Scottish Household Survey to ask people about their local landscape: Is it getting better? Do you have a chance to be involved in local landscape decisions? Is Scotland’s landscape looked after well enough? While these national surveys wouldn’t give a local picture, they could be used as a trend indicator.

NatureScot has made use of its recurring *Nature Omnibus* to ask a representative sample of the Scottish population questions about their attitudes to Scotland’s landscapes. This helps give us a picture of perceptions at a national level, though a different research method would be needed to get down to perceptions at regional and local level.

Figure 1: Public attitudes in 2019 regarding Scotland's landscapes



Source: Scottish Nature Omnibus, Question 19

The working group also made a distinction between the tangible and the intangible. What matters to people can go beyond the physical features of the landscape – this could be a perception or an association. The working group agreed that we needed to find the relationship between what people valued and what is tangible, and then these more intangible elements would emerge from the discussion.

It was also noted that how we interpret the results can be as important as the measure itself.



Glencoe (the National Trust for Scotland)

## National and local measurement

The working group agreed that measurement on a regional level rather than simply a national level, as at present, would be more insightful. Landscapes are hugely varied, and the perceptions and priorities of communities might vary significantly too.

There was a discussion around the area/catchment that should be considered, and it was highlighted that when discussing climate change adaptation, the scale used was the water catchment area. However, for the Land Use Strategy and the Regional Land Use Partnerships, although water catchment might make ecological sense, rivers are often boundaries between local authority areas, and it was local authorities who are leading on the Regional Land Use Partnerships.

Local authorities also lead on Special Landscape Areas which bring together the natural and cultural environment. As communities develop Local landscape Plans may also contribute to landscape management through the relevant Local Development Plans.

The Scottish Government commitment to a new National Park is also an opportunity – or challenge – to combine local and national appreciation of landscapes.

## Conclusions

The existing physical indicators for landscape are recognised as a good starting point, and for public agencies a necessary one. But for better landscape management, the working group identified three areas for development:

**Better measurement of landscape condition** down to regional and local level, to help inform land use decisions at the appropriate level;

**Developing our vocabulary** to better capture why landscapes matter to people and help us understand the intangible values of our landscapes, as well as their more readily measurable physical features; and

**Engaging with communities** on land use decisions using landscape as the prism – people respond to landscapes, and within those conversations are the seeds of many other discussions, about economic use, nature, access, recreation, and culture.



Culross village (the National Trust for Scotland)