

23 June 2025

## **New Charter establishes management principles for Scotland's landscapes to balance the needs of people and nature**

**Scotland's Landscape Alliance (SLA)**, a coalition of 60 organisations straddling many different sectors of Scotland's economy and society has today released a refreshed Charter. This promotes understanding of the critical contribution Scotland's landscapes make to our lives.

**Scotland's Landscape Charter** builds on the European Landscape Convention and updates a previous iteration of the Scotland's Landscape Charter, setting out a vision and framework that will enable competing demands on landscapes to be balanced for the benefit of people and nature, both now and for future generations.

The new Charter arrives 25 years on from the creation of the European Landscape Convention in 2000. It is based on an overarching vision that, as a nation, we will all cherish our landscapes and recognise them as a vital resource, fundamental to our prosperity and wellbeing and that we will play an active part in decisions that affect them.

In support of this vision there are three fundamental principles:

- **Collaboration** between sectors and organisation to achieve a joined-up approach;
- **Dynamic** management of landscapes, taking account of changing needs, circumstances and challenges;
- **Diversity** in our landscapes alongside good planning, thoughtful design and active collaboration to positively manage change is key to resilient landscapes for the future.

Those who are responsible for decision-making, owning, using and managing land, be they policymakers, planners, landowners, communities or businesses across Scotland, are being urged to adopt the vision and framework the Charter provides.

The **Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon** has endorsed the Charter as well as the support and oversight that was provided by NatureScot, the Scottish Government agency which protects and promotes Scotland's natural heritage.

In her letter of support, the Cabinet Secretary stated: "The Charter helpfully highlights the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change and points to landscape considerations being a key element in decision making if we are to achieve our ambition of a net zero and nature positive Scotland."

**Rachel Tennant, Co-Chair Scotland's Landscape Alliance** said: "Scotland's landscapes define who we are as a nation and sustain and support us as people.

“Landscapes have always been shaped by social, economic and technological developments. However, the pressing global crises of climate change and biodiversity loss are now recognised as key factors accelerating the pace of this change.

“Our landscapes are evolving as a consequence of competing demands and these significant threats, but they also need to be subject to positive and constructive change as a result of our response to them.

“This charter is about promoting awareness of the critical contribution of the landscape to all our lives and to promote the action required to maximise the many benefits they bring now and for the future.”

**Diarmid Hearn, Interim Director of Conservation & Policy at the National Trust for Scotland**, one of the founding organisations within Scotland’s Landscape Alliance, added: “The original Charter was drawn up in 2009 in response to the 2000 European Landscape Convention (ELC), the first international treaty dedicated to the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe, which was ratified by 32 countries. Scotland was a signatory through the UK Government in 2006. The ELC emphasises the dynamic nature of all landscapes and the central role of people in recognising their value and securing their good stewardship. It continues to provide the basis for Scotland’s approach to landscape, recognising that all landscapes matter and they provide an essential shared resource from which everyone should benefit.

“The new Charter continues Scotland’s commitment to the principles enshrined in the ELC, providing continuity of commitment and purpose while recognising the scale of change over the past ten years especially.

“Everywhere we live in Scotland, be it urban, suburban, rural or beside our seas and rivers, faces the existential threats posed by climate change and biodiversity loss, as well as the economic impacts resulting from this and political and geopolitical events of recent times.

“If we are to thrive, then we need our landscapes to thrive too – they define us, our heritage and our diversity they affect our wellbeing, both mentally and physically, we rely on them for food, jobs and trade, and they are critical to positively protect and enhance biodiversity and the historic environment as well playing a key role in meeting the challenges of climate change

“The unavoidable truth is that we must take care of our landscapes and this means a collaborative, cross sectoral and a forward looking, thoughtful approach to how we design, plan and positively manage change in our landscapes. We need to work with communities of place and interest to deliver functional, resilient and dynamic landscapes and to make better choices for people and nature.”

**Nick Halfhide, Chief Executive of NatureScot** said: "NatureScot warmly welcomes the new Landscape Charter. Scotland's landscapes embody our cultural heritage and history, our recreational activities, the country's fascinating geology and its vital habitats and species. NatureScot works passionately to encourage landowners and communities to value and understand these, protect them, and to work with us in the national mission to halt the biodiversity crisis and restore nature in our lifetime.

"The new Landscape Charter rightly celebrates the achievements of a range of inspiring projects, many of which are initiatives that NatureScot has been proud to support.

"They shine a light on what is possible when organisations and communities work together, with creativity and compassion for the landscapes which sustain us. We hope the new Charter will inspire more of this."

**Alison Turnbull, Director of External Relations and Partnerships, Historic Environment Scotland** said: "We welcome the refreshed Scottish Landscape Charter and its timely call to action.

"At Historic Environment Scotland, we recognise that landscapes are not only shaped by our past but are vital to our future. The Charter's vision aligns closely with the strategic priorities set out in 'Our Past, Our Future' – Scotland's national strategy for the historic environment and our 2025-28 corporate plan 'Heritage for All'—ensuring that Scotland's historic environment, including its diverse landscapes, is protected, celebrated, and sustainably managed in ways that benefit people, places, and nature.

"We are proud to support this collaborative approach to managing change and building resilience across all of Scotland's landscapes."

**Hamish Trench, Chief Executive of the Scottish Land Commission** said: "We are pleased to support Scotland's Landscape Charter. At a time of significant land use change, the principles it sets out will help ensure a wide range of voices can shape the way Scotland's landscapes evolve and the benefits to people, locally and nationally."

**Jim MacDonald, Chief Executive of Architecture and Design Scotland** said: "As Scotland's national design champion, we believe in the power of design to improve people's lives. Good design can help create places which help achieve net zero, support opportunities for all and make the best use of our resources.

"We know collaborative design is vital for shaping our buildings and places. We were delighted that our Principal Landscape Architect, Daniel McKendry, played an important role in shaping Scotland's Landscape Charter, embedding the crucial message of place and partnership for Scotland's future, benefiting both people and nature."

The development of Scotland's Landscape Charter is supported by funds raised by players of People's Postcode Lottery through its Postcode Earth Trust.

The new Charter is accompanied by [six case studies](#) from different settings across the country showing how the framework can be applied and the kinds of positive outcomes that can be achieved.

They include [new visitor and energy infrastructure on the Isle of Canna](#) in the Inner Hebrides, The [Hamiltonhill Claypits](#) in Maryhill, Glasgow which has created a community and nature haven on the site of canal-side industry and [Climate FORTH](#), a 215 km<sup>2</sup> landscape climate resilience project ranging from Stirling to the Forth Bridges.

The SLA are asking all those who engage in decisions and activities that affect our landscapes to support the Charter's vision and three underpinning principles through their ongoing work. An invitation to submit case studies of best practice is open to local government, businesses, landowners, energy providers, communities and

professionals. The case studies be published on the SLA website thereby enabling the of example of best practice and demonstrating what be achieved through the active application of the Charter principles.

To ensure the charter is promoted and actively used, an initial [action plan](#) for implementation will be created in the coming months and updated on annual basis. This will include an event to be held on 30 October 2025 to advance its development and subsequent updating.

The SLA's members and supporters are committed to working to bring key stakeholders together and providing a positive influence on the development of future policy and legislation.

## ENDS

For further information, please contact Jim Whyteside on 07889 456779 or via [jwhyteside@nts.org.uk](mailto:jwhyteside@nts.org.uk)

**Images** can be downloaded from: <https://www.flickr.com/gp/133918740@N04/J06iw595M7>

## Notes for Editors

1. A copy of Scotland's Landscape Charter can be downloaded from [here](#).
2. More information about the Scotland's Landscape Alliance and its membership can be found at: <https://www.scotlandslandscapealliance.org/>
3. **Videos** have been produced on the following Case Studies which can be [downloaded from here](#):
  - [Isle of Canna Visitor and Energy Infrastructure](#)
  - [Hamiltonhill Claypits, Maryhill](#)
  - [Climate FORTH](#)
  - [Interview with Rachel Tennant, Co-Chair of Scotland's Landscape Alliance](#)
1. NatureScot has indicated the importance of landscape to key Scottish Government objectives:
  - They have a key role in meeting the challenges of climate change as we strive to reduce our harmful emissions, generate clean energy, retain stored carbon and focus on creating strong, resilient communities.
  - They provide the physical foundation for our lives; where our natural and historic environments meet and where we live, work, learn and play. When well-managed, landscapes positively influence our health and wellbeing and livelihoods.
  - They are essential to our nation's economic success both directly, in terms of the resources which underpin farming, forestry, many industries and community wealth building; and indirectly through its impact on quality of life and access to a healthy environment which attracts people to live, work in and visit Scotland
  - They are an integral part of our national and community identity, creating a sense of place and belonging; they embody our heritage and present a lived landscape

reflecting our shared past and its historic material imprint, our culture, and connection to the land through its capacity to inspire

- They can be managed to positively protect and enhance biodiversity and the historic environment, increase their resilience, supporting nature, wildlife, and healthy soils through proactive management and good design.