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Policy

# Biodiversity

Directorate: [Energy and Climate Change Directorate](#)Topic: [Environment and climate change](#)[Choose section](#)

## Overview

Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth, and is essential for sustaining the ecosystems that provide us with food, fuel, health, wealth, and other vital services.

We set policies for protected nature sites that help preserve terrestrial and marine habitats and the animals that are supported by them.

## Actions

We are supporting biodiversity by:

- progressing the goals and objectives set out in the [Scottish biodiversity strategy and delivery plan](#)
- promoting the sustainable management and protection of [soils](#)
- preserving the [Natura 2000](#) network of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)
- preserving [Sites of Special Scientific Interest](#) (SSSIs)
- preserving [Ramsar sites and nature reserves](#)
- preserving [marine biodiversity](#)
- promoting and administering [agri-environment schemes](#)

## Background

Our biodiversity policy is underpinned by the [Scottish biodiversity strategy to 2045](#) and the [Scottish biodiversity delivery plan 2024-2030](#).

We aim to protect and restore biodiversity, support healthy ecosystems, connect people with the natural world, and maximise the benefits of a diverse natural environment and the services it provides, contributing to sustainable economic growth in Scotland.

To do this we must tackle key pressures on biodiversity, including [climate change](#), [invasive non-native species](#) and habitat fragmentation.

We, together with NatureScot have established a Scottish Biodiversity Programme to oversee and coordinate all current and planned activity on biodiversity. The Programme will work to secure a common understanding of priorities and an agreed approach to delivering them. Read [more information on the Scottish Biodiversity Programme](#) on the NatureScot website.

## Protected nature sites

We set policies for protected nature sites that help preserve terrestrial and marine habitats and the animals that are supported by them.

Protected nature sites include:

- [Sites of Special Scientific Interest \(SSSIs\)](#)
- the [Natura 2000](#) network of SACs and SPAs
- [Ramsar sites](#)
- [nature reserves](#)
- [Marine Protected Areas \(MPAs\)](#)

NatureScot hosts a [list of all protected areas in Scotland](#).

Scotland's protected areas network is considered largely complete, although it's likely some additional sites will require consideration in order to implement the UK's SPA review of 2018.

The [Scottish Rural Development Programme \(SRDP\)](#) provides support for a range of incentive-based management activities tailored to the needs of designated sites in Scotland, to ensure they are managed appropriately. Appropriate management can be compelled under statute if necessary.

## International conventions

Scotland has signed up to a number of international conventions relating to the conservation of our environment, which are known as Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).

Examples include the protection of wetlands of international importance ([Ramsar Convention](#)) and the protection of species and habitats of European importance ([BERN Convention](#)).

Another of our significant international obligations is the [Convention on Biological Diversity \(CBD\)](#). At the Convention, 20 global [Aichi targets](#) were set to be achieved by 2020, which will help us to focus on creating a greater variety of life within Scotland.

## **Biodiversity duty reporting**

Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, all public bodies in Scotland are required to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 requires public bodies in Scotland to provide a publicly available report every three years, on the actions which they have taken to meet this biodiversity duty.

Guidance on what actions to take, and how to report on the Biodiversity Duty is available on the [NatureScot](#) website. [Templates](#) to assist with biodiversity duty reporting are available on this site. A list of biodiversity duty reports produced by public bodies for 2105-2017 is available at the [NatureScot](#) website.

## **Bills and legislation**

As there are many different human activities which can impact on biodiversity, there are many other pieces of legislation relevant to the topic. The following list includes some key examples, but is not exhaustive.

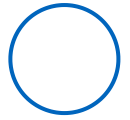
- [Nature Conservation \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#)
- [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981](#)
- [Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#)
- [The Conservation \(Natural Habitats Etc\) Regulations 1994](#)
- Legislation relating to [Environmental Impact Assessments](#)
- [Marine \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#)
- [Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009](#)
- [The Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017](#)

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