

CROFTING COMMISSION BIODIVERSITY REPORT – JANUARY 2018

Section 1: Introductory information

a) Give an overview of your organisation's regulatory role.

The role of the Crofting Commission is to regulate crofting and to promote the interests of crofting, including keeping Scottish Ministers advised on matters relating to crofting.

b) Outline how biodiversity feeds into your organisation's decision-making structure, including any initiatives or groups in which your organisation and its staff, board members, etc. are active.

When making decisions on certain regulatory applications that will likely have a direct impact upon the natural environment, the Commission acts in accordance with nature conservation legislation and, where appropriate, will consult with SNH.

c) Include examples where staff and/or board members have promoted biodiversity initiatives.

The Commission solicitor has recently provided legal advice to the Commission regarding its responsibilities to promote biodiversity in so far as it is able to within the limitations of its statutory and regulatory remit.

Section 2: Mainstreaming

a) Identify the steps your organisation has taken to incorporate biodiversity measures into other areas of policy, strategies or initiatives.

The Commission recognises in its policy plan that the crofting system contributes the landscape, environment, ecology and biodiversity of the Highlands and Islands. It recognises that it can, where appropriate, help to enhance biodiversity through careful croft land (and common grazing land) management by tenants and owner-occupier crofters through its regulatory activities.

Section 3: Actions taken to improve biodiversity conservation

a) Identify any actions that your organisation has undertaken on the ground, on your own land or elsewhere as part of a contribution to a wider project and how these benefit biodiversity.

The Commission does not own any land and shares a building with other occupiers and so has limited opportunity to undertake any activities on the ground.

The Crofting Commission has and continues to collaborate with various stakeholders on Woodland Crofts, including the Woodland Crofts Partnership, SCF, Woodland Trust Scotland, Community Woodlands Association and the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust in order to develop greater understanding of the concept of woodland crofts.

It is recognised that this initiative has the potential to help connect individuals and communities with woodland and forestry in meaningful ways, whether for leisure purposes or for more practical purposes such as learning about woodland management and the contribution it can make to local economies. It is also accepted that sustainably managed woodland enhances biodiversity and provides an important habitat for various protected flora and fauna.

The next meeting of the Woodland Crofts Partnership is being facilitated by the Crofting Commission and will take place in January 2018

b) Include any partnership initiatives on biodiversity that you have been involved in: what these aimed to do, what actions have happened, what you believe the successes were and any plans for future or follow-up work.

The Commission has not been involved in any partnership initiatives on biodiversity, other than consulting with SNH in relation to a number of its regulatory activities on protected sites.

Section 4: Partnership working and biodiversity communications

a) Describe and illustrate your organisation's involvement in partnership working on biodiversity.

Please see above.

The Commission's solicitor represented the Crofting Commission on the RAFF Delivery Board – climate change group and contributed to such matters as peatland management and carbon capture.

The Commission has participated fully in all aspects of the RAFF delivery board meetings and has aligned its corporate and business plans with other RAFF members.

b) Describe any biodiversity communication that your organisation has undertaken to help raise awareness of and communicate about biodiversity conservation, including any partners that you worked with on communication and awareness raising activities.

The Commission has recognised its legal duty to promote biodiversity in its policy plan (approved 2017) so far as it is able to in terms of its limited statutory responsibilities.

c) Describe any training or learning activities that have been carried out internally or externally relating to biodiversity, for example, CPD seminars or attendance at external events ([SNH](#) sharing good practice or [Communicate conferences](#)).

Senior Counsel has provided legal advice on the Commission's duty to promote biodiversity. The Commission's solicitor has also recently (in 2017) provided advice to the Commission's Board about the importance of ensuring that the Commission complies not just with its duty to promote biodiversity, in so far as it is able to, but also with other applicable environmental legislation relating in particular to protected sites. A presentation was provided to the Commission's Board at which Board members fully participated.

d) Identify any opportunities that your staff are given to take part in practical action such as volunteering, e.g. with John Muir Trust, British trust for Conservation Volunteers, RSPB.

Section 5: Biodiversity highlights and challenges

a) Describe your organisation's main achievements for biodiversity over the reporting period and what you are most proud of (this can include processes, plans, projects, partnerships, events and actions).

The Commission's main achievement is in recognising the importance of complying with its duty to promote biodiversity (so far as it is able to in terms of its statutory remit) during the reporting period. Please see above.

b) Looking ahead, what do you think will be the main challenges over the next three years?

The main challenge will be applying some of the advice received on biodiversity in a meaningful way in the context of the Commission's regulatory work.

Section 6: Monitoring

a) What follow-up actions or monitoring have you undertaken to assess the impacts of the actions you have taken? How have you measured this? If you do not carry out any monitoring activities, please explain why.

The Commission has not carried out any monitoring activities because of the nature of its statutory remit, nor would it be appropriate for an organisation such as the Commission to monitor biodiversity in relation to any decisions that it has made.

b) Does your monitoring show any significant trends of highlight any areas of concern?

Please see above.

c) Have you added your data to the National Biodiversity Network Gateway (NBN) or Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS)?

No – please see above.

Section 7: Contribution to targets

Use the following tables to indicate the biodiversity targets to which your organisation has contributed. You may wish to insert additional targets from the [2020 challenge for Scotland's biodiversity](#) (the Biodiversity Strategy), the [Six Big Steps for Nature](#) or the [Aichi Targets](#).

Targets/key steps from Chapter 1 (Healthy ecosystems) of the "2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity"	Contribution to key step?	Justification
(1.1) Encourage and support ecosystem restoration and management, especially in catchments that have experienced the greatest degradation	[tick if yes]	[include project title or reference for relevant activity]
(1.2) Use assessments of ecosystem health at a catchment level to determine what needs to be done		
(1.3) Government and public bodies, including SNH, SEPA and FCS, will work together towards a shared agenda for action to restore ecosystem health at a catchment-scale across Scotland		
(1.4) Establish plans and decisions about land use based on an understanding of ecosystems. Take full account of land use impacts on the ecosystems services that underpin social, economic and environmental health		
Targets/key steps from Chapter 3 (Biodiversity, health and quality of life) of the "2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity"	Contribution to key step?	Justification
(3.1) Provide opportunities for everyone to experience and enjoy		

nature regularly, with a particular focus on disadvantaged groups		
(3.2) Support local authorities and communities to improve local environments and enhance biodiversity using green space and green networks, allowing nature to flourish and so enhancing the quality of life for people who live there		
(3.3) Build on good practice being developed by the National Health Service (NHS) and others to help encourage greenspace, green exercise and social prescribing initiatives that will improve health and wellbeing through connecting people with nature	Staff are encouraged to walk and cycle to and from work and use the facilities available at Great Glen House.	
(3.4) Increase access to nature within and close to schools, and support teachers in developing the role of outdoor learning across the Curriculum for Excellence		
(3.5) Encourage public organisations and businesses to review their responsibilities and action for biodiversity, and recognise that increasing their positive contribution to nature and landscapes can help meet their corporate priorities and performance		
Targets/key steps from Chapter 4 (Wildlife, habitats and protected places) of the "2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity"	Contribution to key step?	Justification
(4.1) Ensure that the management of protected places for nature also provides wider public benefits	Commission is not responsible for managing any protecting sites.	
(4.3) Integrate protected areas policy with action for wider habitats to combat fragmentation and restore key habitats		

(4.5) Involve many more people than at present in this work and improve understanding of the poorly known elements of nature		
Targets/key steps from Chapter 5 (Land and freshwater management) of the "2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity"	Contribution to key step?	Justification
(5.1) Promote an ecosystem approach to land management that fosters sustainable use of natural resources and puts biodiversity at the heart of land-use planning and decision-making	The Commission is only indirectly involved in any land management issues and, where its regulatory activities relate to protected sites, it will promote biodiversity in its decision making in so far as it is statutorily able to do so.	
(5.2) Ensure that measures taken forward under the Common Agricultural Policy encourage land managers to develop and retain the diversity of wildlife habitats and landscape features	The Commission has no role in approving any grants or subsidies related to CAP, such as SRDP, etc.	
(5.3) Support 'High Nature Value' farming and forestry	The Commission recognises the value of high nature crofting in its policy plan.	
(5.4) Put in place the management necessary to bring Scotland's protected areas into favourable condition and improve the ecological status of water bodies		
(5.5) Ensure that biodiversity and ecosystem objectives are fully integrated into flood risk management plans, and restore wetland habitats and woodlands to provide sustainable flood management		
(5.6) Restore and extend natural habitats as a means of building reserves of carbon and to help mitigate climate change		

(5.7) Provide clear advice to land and water managers on best practice		
Targets/key steps from Chapter 6 (Marine and coastal) of the "2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity"	Contribution to key step?	Justification
(6.4) Achieve good environmental status for Scottish seas		