



REPORT TO SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE – 25 AUGUST 2021

REGIONAL LAND USE PLANNING PARTNERSHIP – NORTH EAST REGION PILOT PROJECT

1 Reason for Report/Summary

- 1.1 To inform Members and seek their views on the Council's joint participation with Aberdeen City Council as a pilot region in response to the Scottish Government's proposal to establish Regional Land Use Partnerships. This Report will set out the scope, aims and objectives of the pilot project, the Council's role, future expectations and how it will contribute to the Strategic Priorities of the Council.

2 Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 **Consider and comment on the pilot project.**

3 Purpose and Decision-Making Route

- 3.1 In early February 2021 Aberdeenshire Council was advised by the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary that its Expression of Interest to participate as a Regional Land Use Partnership (RLUP) pilot region, submitted on behalf of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils, had been successful. The submission followed an invitation from the Scottish Government in mid-January 2021 to all future Regional Spatial Strategy Groupings in Scotland.
- 3.2 The enabling of Regional Land Use Partnerships had been a commitment in the Programme for Government in 2019/20, and this was reaffirmed in the 2020/2021 programme. The Scottish Land Commission (SLC) published recommendations for Regional Land Use Partnership implementation on 3 November 2020. One recommendation from the Commission was that in order to support synergies between the Indicative Regional Spatial Strategies (iRSS) and Regional Land Use Partnership objectives that this geographic scale should be adopted. The Scottish Land Commission Report is available to view at [Advice To Scottish Government on the Establishment of Regional Land Use Partnerships](#).
- 3.3 The Scottish Government is proposing to work with the pilot regions to test approaches to partnership governance that will best reflect local situations and priorities. This work will help inform future decisions on wider establishment of Partnerships across Scotland. It is hoped that once established, Regional Partnerships will help national and local government,

communities, landowners and stakeholders work together to find ways that optimise land use in a fair and inclusive way while meeting local and national objectives and supporting the journey to net zero.

- 3.4 There was limited opportunity to engage with Members prior to the submission being made. Engagement with Members to date has been by way of briefings via the Council's Ward Pages.

4 Discussion

- 4.1 Scotland's Land Use Strategy is a strategic document that sets out the Scottish Government vision for sustainable land use in Scotland and was first published in 2011. The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 places a requirement on Scottish Ministers to produce a Land Use Strategy every five years. The aim of the most recent and third National Land Use Strategy "Land use - getting the best from our land: strategy 2021 to 2026" is to make land use more understandable and accessible to everyone. It aims to support a shift in the way we think about land, to promote more inclusive conversations around how we use land and who should be involved in those decisions. Instead of the sectoral approach set out within the earlier strategies, it promotes an overarching more holistic approach on how sustainable land use in Scotland might look like.
- 4.2 The third National Land Use Strategy also identifies a number of platforms already available to take forward deeper conversations regarding sustainable land use. They highlight two in particular: the ongoing development of the new National Planning Framework; and the Regional Land Use Partnership pilots. The third [National Land Use Strategy](#) was published on 24 March 2021.
- 4.3 The aim of this Pilot Project is to establish a Regional Land Use Partnership Board or other representative body by the end of March 2022. Once the governance structure is established, the pilot will then focus on developing its Regional Land Use Framework by 2023. The Framework is expected to take a natural capital/ecosystem approach to identify at a landscape level potential land use changes with positive climate and environmental impacts. The Regional Land Use Framework is expected to play a vital role in meeting the ambitious climate change targets of the Councils as well as being beneficial for biodiversity.
- 4.4 There are five Regional Land Use Partnership pilot areas selected to participate in this project. In addition to the NE Region the four other pilot areas are:
- Cairngorms National Park
 - Highland Council
 - Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park
 - South of Scotland (Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Borders Councils)

- 4.5 Aberdeenshire Council took part in an earlier Land Use Strategy pilot that ran from 2013-2015, which was fully funded by the Scottish Government and focused on issues relating to rural land use change. The James Hutton Institute was a key partner in this project. During this project an online mapping tool was developed that specifically focused on woodland creation in Aberdeenshire in relation to six possible policy priorities: woodland expansion; prime land protection; reducing flood risk; improving water quality; woodland and landscape character; woodland and public access.
- 4.6 Participating in this new pilot will allow the Council to build on and update this earlier work and progress in a collaborative way towards the preparation of a Land Use Framework for the North East Region. In doing so it is hoped to address the key challenges of Climate Change and Biodiversity across the Region. Since the previous pilot was completed there has been significant progress in the development of decision support tools as well as data advancements that can help inform the preparation of a future Land Use Framework.
- 4.7 Work to date has enabled an agreed finalised project specification on which to move forward with the project. This agreed Scottish Government prepared Project Specification is attached as **Appendix 1** to this Report. The Scottish Government has committed time and resources to help progress the work of each Pilot Project. There is presently a financial commitment for this financial year (2021/22) but as yet no firm budgetary commitment to the work in future years. The Scottish Government has advised that the budget for future years will be agreed by them through its normal budgetary planning process.
- 4.8 The programme of work, as set out in the appended Project Specification, has three key steps to move forward within this financial year. **Step One** is to review existing groups and stakeholders to identify any gaps in participation. A key objective is work with active groupings and include these groupings in the engagement processes. The purpose of this initial step is to avoid the duplication of work already progressing within established groups. The challenge is to consider how best effective engagement and collaboration can be undertaken with established groups in preparing a future Regional Land Use Framework for the North East Region. **Step Two** will be to consider the best governance options for the Region in collaboration with the Scottish Government. **Step Three** will involve the appointment of Board Members in order to have them in place to guide the preparation of the Regional Land Use Framework by 2023. A parallel area of work throughout the above steps will be to identify appropriate decision-making support tools and necessary data to ensure that the Board or other decision-making body is effectively supported when preparing the Framework.
- 4.9 At the time of writing this Report current work around Step One is progressing. It is expected that by August work on the consideration of

governance options identified under Step Two will have been initiated. Any further progress/information will be updated verbally to Members at that time.

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

5.1 This project helps to deliver the Strategic Priorities and “Economy and Enterprise” within the Pillar “Our Economy” and “Infrastructure” and “Resilient Communities” within the Pillar “Our Environment”, aligning with the principles the right people, right places, right time, and climate and sustainability.

5.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation is agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial			X
Staffing			X
Equalities			X
Fairer Scotland Duty			X
Town Centre First			X
Sustainability			X
Children and Young People's			X
Rights and Wellbeing			X

5.3 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required because the reason for the Report is simply for the Committee’s consideration and comment. There will be no differential impact, as a result of the report, on people with protected characteristics and it does not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.

5.4 There are no financial, staffing or sustainability implications as a direct outcome of this report. Any improved action on climate change will have positive implications for sustainability. Scottish Government has provided a grant for this financial year and has offered additional support with tools and data development.

5.5 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level:

- ACORP005 as it relates to Working with other organisations, and partnership working in the Corporate Risk Register.

The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level:

- ISSR004 as it relates to Climate Change Directorate Risk Registers.

6 Scheme of Governance

- 6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this Report and their comments are incorporated within the Report. They are satisfied that the Report complies with the [Scheme of Governance](#) and relevant legislation.
- 6.2 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section S.1.1 (c) of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance:
- c. To promote awareness of the need for sustainability within the Council and wider community of Aberdeenshire.

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Date 10 June 2021

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - Regional Land Use Partnership (RLUP) Pilots: Project Specification:
North East Region (Scottish Government, 19 April 2021)



Regional Land Use Partnership (RLUP) Pilots: Project Specification: North East Region

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1. Introduction

1.1 The First Minister declared a Climate Emergency in April 2019, and recognises the twin environment crisis. The Scottish Parliament has since passed new and ambitious [climate change emissions reductions targets](#). This includes reducing emissions by 75% by 2030 and reaching net-zero by 2045. The [Climate Change Plan was updated](#) in 2020 to outline how the Scottish Government plans to achieve those targets. The plan covers all sectors in Scotland, and land use, land use change and forestry is a significant part of that. The UK Climate Change Committee has commented that the capacity that our land has to deliver nature-based solutions to climate change, including through increased tree cover and restoration of degraded peatland, is unique within the UK. Our landscape and natural environment is one of our greatest national assets and has a vital role to play in meeting our ambitious climate change targets, and benefitting biodiversity. The [Post-2020 Biodiversity Strategy Statement of Intent](#) was published by the Scottish Government this year outlining our broad approach to addressing biodiversity loss in Scotland. Scotland's [Environment Strategy](#) was also published in February 2020, which sets out a vision for Scotland's environment, providing an overarching framework to bring existing strategies and plans together and identify new strategic priorities and opportunities. It will help guide us as we protect and restore Scotland's natural environment and strive to live within our planet's sustainable limits. In doing

this, we will support the wellbeing of people in Scotland and strengthen our economy.

1.2 Scotland's Land Use Strategy is a strategic document that sets out the Scottish Government vision for sustainable land use in Scotland and was first published in 2011. The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 places a requirement on Scottish Ministers to produce a Land Use Strategy every five years. [Scotland's third Land Use Strategy](#) was published in March 2021. The aim of this third Strategy is to make land use more understandable and accessible to everyone, supporting a shift in the way we think about land, to promote more inclusive conversations around how we use land and who should be involved in those decisions. It moves away from the sector by sector approach (of the last two strategies) towards an overarching holistic picture of what sustainable land use in Scotland could look like.

1.3 Our land use change objectives include significant support for forestry expansion and peatland restoration. The 2020-2021 Programme for Government announced an increased woodland creation target of 18,000 hectares per year by 2024/25, with funding to support doing so. Scottish Forestry and Forestry and Land Scotland will also work with investors, carbon buyers, landowners and market intermediaries to increase private investment in new woodlands with the aim of increasing the woodland carbon market by at least 50% by 2025. On peatland restoration, in 2020 we announced a £250 million ten-year funding package to support the restoration of 250,000 hectares of degraded peat by 2030. This will be supported by research being done to map the location of land that offers the greatest emissions savings potential and to understand its current use and tenure to inform targeted action.

1.4 Agricultural change is also vital in meeting our land use climate change targets. In the CCPu, we committed to exploring options for land use change to optimise uses beyond traditional farming and food production to multi-faceted land use. This would include forestry, biomass production, and peatland restoration and management. In addition, there may be advice provided for farmers and crofters who wish to step back from agricultural businesses and utilise the opportunity to consider alternative land uses or alternative agricultural uses.

1.5 Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs) are one mechanism to help achieve Scotland's climate targets through land use change. In 2020, we reaffirmed our commitment to support the emergence of RLUPs from 2021 and for Regional Land Use Frameworks (RLUFs) to be developed by 2023. Each RLUF will identify opportunities for land use change at a landscape level to tackle the twin climate change and environment crises. The RLUFs should take a broad natural capital approach to land use change that facilitates the delivery of wider environmental goals as set out in the SG 2020 Environment Strategy and socioeconomic benefits, alongside the delivery of climate change targets. We will work with pilots to develop our approach to RLUPs which enables national and local government, land owners, stakeholders and local communities to work together to find ways to optimise land use in a fair and inclusive way - meeting local and national objectives and helping achieve Scotland's climate change targets.

1.6 RLUPs were first proposed by the Scottish Government in the 2016 Land Use Strategy (LUS) following the two pilots carried out in Aberdeenshire and the Scottish Borders from 2013 – 2015. The pilots each had specific aims concerning land use, but both demonstrated the benefits of working collaboratively to achieve local

objectives. The [evaluation](#) concluded however, that further work is required with respect to implementation and framework development. Whilst we fully recognise the vital role that the 2013 pilots provided, the SLC recommended that RLUPs are established in line with the new Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) areas, which are significantly bigger in scale than the two areas used in the earlier pilots. The Scottish Government is keen to test a collaborative approach to governance and implementation options with the set of volunteer pilot regions, before a potential wider roll-out across Scotland. Since then the Scottish context has developed. The first Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement was published in 2017 and the Planning Act was passed in 2019. Both of these influence Scottish Government objectives for land use, and since the Climate Emergency was declared in 2019, there is now a focus on utilising RLUPs to support delivery of Scotland's climate change targets.

1.7 The Scottish Land Commission (SLC) were asked to provide advice and recommendations to the Scottish Government on establishing RLUPs. On 3 November 2020 they published their [final report](#), which covers purpose, geography, governance, and implementation. Final decisions on the recommendations will be a matter for the new Government. The SLC advice nevertheless provides a strong basis for us to take forward pilots to further develop our approach to Partnerships.

1.8 To meet the Programme for Government commitment to have RLUPs emerging by the end of 2021, Ministers have decided to pilot RLUPs in five regions across Scotland. The Scottish Land Commission recommended that RLUPs be established in line with Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) groupings of planning authorities. While retaining the option of allowing different RLUP areas in the future, we recognised the benefits of alignment. It will reduce duplication and help align planning and land use decision making, while linking with wider regional work on economy, growth deals and transport. With the support of SG planning colleagues, we invited expressions of interest in becoming an RLUP pilot region from the existing indicative RSS Network. Subsequently, all five areas who submitted an interest have been selected to be a pilot region. The pilot regions cover a good spread of land uses in Scotland (e.g. urban, peri-urban, arable, upland peatland and forestry) and have a range of experience of partnership working while also being committed to land use change to support Scotland's climate change targets. The pilot regions are:

- Cairngorms National Park;
- Highlands Council Region;
- Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park;
- North East Region (Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Councils); and
- South of Scotland (Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Borders Councils).

1.9 The Scottish Government will work with the pilot groups to trial approaches to establishing RLUPs, their governance and methods of regional and local stakeholder engagement. This will help develop more detailed options on form and function to inform future decisions on wider establishment of Partnerships. This draft project specification outlines SG's key expectations for and details of the project to be undertaken by each RLUP pilot region.

2. Aims, Objectives and Scope

2.1 The aim of the RLUP pilots is to test the practicalities of different ways to establish RLUPs. They will test governance options and partnership working on a regional scale to help understand how to:

- establish a partnership structure able to deliver a collaborative approach to land use change decision-making involving national and local government, land owners and managers, communities and stakeholders;
- outline in a Framework (RLUF) how to use a natural capital approach to identify and agree upon current and potential land use changes across the region that support the delivery of Scottish Government's climate change targets and other environmental objectives, including improving biodiversity;
- signpost public and private funding opportunities for land owners and managers, or community groups.

2.2 We envisage that this will take place over three phases of work, although later stages may be amended by the incoming government. Each phase will progress the project, ultimately achieving the above aims. The dates are deadlines that allow us to meet the 2020 Programme for Government commitments, and are not prescriptive. An RLUP that is able to, can move more quickly than outlined below.

Phase 1	March 2021 to March 2022	The first phase of the project is for the pilot regions to undertake the development of the required governance, and to build the appropriate stakeholder relationships that will enable RLUPs to function. It is envisaged that this work would allow RLUPs to emerge during the 2021 calendar year.
Phase 2	March 2022 to end 2023	The second phase is for the RLUP regions to develop their Regional Land Use Frameworks (RLUFs).
Phase 3	2023 Onwards	Once the RLUP structures and RLUF are developed, the Partnership will be active. In this phase the focus will be on delivering the objectives in the Framework by making collaborative land use change decisions in the region. This phase is not detailed in this project specification as it is out of scope. The findings from the monitoring and evaluation will inform any future activity of the RLUPs.

3. Phase 1: Regional Land Use Partnership Structures

3.1 The initially funded objective is the establishment of a set of five pilot structures over the course of 2021, of which the North East Region is one. The scope includes working with SG to:

- Determine who the relevant stakeholders are in the region and building relationships with them.
- Develop a suitable stakeholder engagement plan to enable collective and integrated working.

- Detect and evaluate partnership and collaborative working arrangements already in place in the region, and determine how the RLUP pilot will work alongside these.
- Establish a suitable governance structure for the RLUP pilot (including, for example, a governance or policy board) that ensures accountability and transparency.
- Decide how members of the governance structure will be chosen and , and carrying out this process to appoint members.
- Draft a terms of reference for the Board / governance structure that outlines how the RLUP will function.

3.2 To ensure effective evaluation of the project, we will also monitor and review lessons learned as the pilots are implemented. More detail on this is in [section 13](#). This information will be used to inform decisions on any wider roll out of RLUPs from 2022. This evaluation will proceed in parallel with the pilots in order that lessons and learning are available to be used at the earliest opportunity.

4. Phase 2: Regional Land Use Frameworks (RLUFs)

4.1 Once the RLUP structure is established, the core objective for the pilot is the production of a suitable RLUF for their region by end 2023, at the latest. The RLUF must be developed in a collaborative way, engaging stakeholders throughout the process. Each RLUF will include:

- How the RLUP objectives align with SG objectives on climate change and the environment, including biodiversity, and wider as appropriate- for instance water quality and air quality. This includes objectives set out in publications such as the Land Use Strategy, the Climate Change Plan update, the Environment Strategy, and the recent Biodiversity Statement of Intent.
- How the RLUP will link their objectives with wider initiatives, such as the Just Transition, and Green Recovery.
- How the RLUP will align with other regional initiatives, such as Regional Spatial Strategies, Regional Economic Partnerships and City Deals.
- The specific aims and objectives for land use change in the region, taking into consideration all the key land uses in the region, whether urban or rural.
- How the RLUP will work with the RLUPs Coordination Network.
- How the Board (or alternative governance structure), existing partnerships in the region, and wider stakeholders will be involved in the process.
- Confirming how land use opportunities will be assessed, decisions made, and evaluation of the results carried out.
- How data and evidence (including mapping) will be used to enable a natural capital approach to decision making. This includes helping provide clarity of opportunities and constraints for land use change in the area.
- How the RLUP will signpost land owners, managers or communities to appropriate funding to enable the land use changes to be taken forward.
- How changing circumstances will be taken into account, and how frequently the RLUF will be updated to ensure its validity.

5. Governance

5.1 It is critical that appropriate governance is established for the RLUP pilots. The most suitable governance structure will depend on the specifics of the region and their individual requirements. Pilots should consider whether they have existing arrangements that could be augmented, for example through the inclusion of representatives with relevant sector expertise and from communities. The pilots' proposed arrangements will be agreed with SG.

5.2 The Scottish Government will be establishing a pilots coordination group to support collaborative working and sharing of best practice across the pilot regions. It will ensure that there is a level of consistency between the pilots (for example in the adoption of a natural capital approach), and that their aims align with national objectives such as climate change targets. This network will include access to an online Knowledge Hub where information can be easily shared.

5.3 At this stage, there are no plans to place RLUPs on a statutory footing.

6. Methodology and Timing for Phase 1

6.1 The pilots should be established in a way that works best for their region, whilst also adhering to good governance and engagement principles. Pilots need to follow the broad principles set out above, but SG is keen to explore alternative methods and pilots may take their own approaches to developing outputs and engaging with stakeholders. We will work collaboratively and in a flexible way to achieve this.

6.2 The methodology to establish the pilots this year therefore, will vary depending on the needs of the region, however we expect a broad three step process will be undertaken in 2021.

6.3 **Step one** – Identifying existing structures and groups within pilot areas, key stakeholders, areas for development and any gaps. We estimate this will take up to two months depending on how established partnership working is in the region.

6.4 **Step two** – Preparation of options for approach to governance of pilot, structure and processes, in collaboration with the Scottish Government and key stakeholders and in line with general expectations as laid out in this project specification. The SG plans to facilitate these decisions as required. This may include working through options at the Coordination network meetings or with the academic advisory group, detailing key policy considerations, and providing useful contacts. During this stage, the pilot region will also scope their current and future needs for data and evidence. The final option will be selected and the plan implemented for establishment. We estimate this will take up to four months, depending on the experience of the region.

6.5 **Step three** – Establishment of the governance structure and recruitment/appointment the relevant members. We anticipate this will take up to three months.

6.6 Following completion of these three steps, the RLUP will be established and can begin the process of developing a RLUF (Phase 2). The details of how this is done will depend on regional needs, but must take into account the requirements in

section [Error! Reference source not found.](#) above. Completion of the RLUF will be ongoing until it is completed, at the latest, by 2023.

7. RLUP Pilot Geographies and Land uses

7.1 The pilot geographies projects follow the indicative Regional Spatial Strategy (iRSS) groupings, and should encompass the full geographic area of the region. The pilot may however, want to focus on a particular part of their region to begin with if that is a regional priority for the iRSS area, particularly if they cover a large geographical area. These geographic regions do not align with environmental regions, such as river catchments or landscape character assessment areas. Pilots should consider how they can work across RSS boundaries with other stakeholders where this is critical to ensuring an ecologically coherent approach.

7.2 The pilots should cover as representative a range of land uses as possible in order to enable an integrated natural capital approach. The inclusion of as broad a range of land uses as possible will assist policy integration and build credibility for the final RLUF. Those covering a significant area of land – such as agriculture, opportunities for peatland restoration, forestry or on-shore wind – should be included. If the local authority intends to exclude any major land use this should be discussed and agreed with SG prior to commencement.

8. Diversity

8.1 The RLUP pilots should endeavour to have a diverse and inclusive governance structure, including members who are able to contribute from a wide range of perspectives and, to the extent possible, reflect the diversity of the pilot region. This aligns with Scottish Government aims on diversity and equality.

9. Structure and Stakeholder Engagement

9.1 Pilots will need to establish a clear understanding of the relationship with other regional initiatives and existing governance and delivery structures. Setting out this relationship clearly at the outset will avoid duplication or confusion. Where regional strategic approaches already exist for particular land uses and policy outcomes, the RLUF should articulate the relationships. Examples of these approaches include the indicative Regional Spatial Strategies, Regional Economic Strategies, and River Basin Management Plans, although others may exist. It is important that the pilots do not cut across or undermine the work of existing regional and local initiatives and partnerships but seek to involve these from the outset; building and learning from existing work and utilising local knowledge and experience wherever possible.

9.2 A representative range of local stakeholders should be involved in the RLUP pilot structure, and in the development of the RLUF. The scale of land use change required to meet our climate targets is significant and will require buy-in and understanding from local people and communities as well as land owners and managers. RLUPs have a role to play in supporting the behavioural and cultural change needed. The form of on-going stakeholder involvement will vary depending on the location and the nature of existing relationships, however it is anticipated that pilots will establish stakeholder forums or a series of working groups using a deliberative co-design approach to development and decision making, and key

stakeholders will be included as part of the governance structure. For instance, in an area with significant areas of farmland, we would expect farmers to be represented. We would also expect relevant eNGOs and groups such as LEADER to be involved, as well as local communities and sector experts.

9.3 SG would expect a period of consultation to take place on the draft RLUF.

10. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

10.1 As the producers of the RLUF, the involved local planning authorities will be responsible for completing and funding the SEA. There is likely to be an opportunity to integrate the SEA process into the development of the RLUF. RLUP pilots will have an opportunity to utilise the SEA expertise within the SG Environmental Assessment Team to help develop an approach to the SEA that limits duplication. The level and type of support required is the choice of pilot region, but it is envisaged that this could take the form of supported meetings to discuss and develop the approach to the SEA as the work and RLUF progress.

11. Funding for RLUP Pilots and Land Use Change Projects

11.1 The Scottish Government has committed modest programme funding within the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform portfolio budget to enable the RLUP pilots to be established in 2021. We propose providing £50,000 to the North East region in financial year 2021/22 (year one funding). This funding is intended to cover the specific costs associated with the scope of this project. This will include liaising with SG as the project develops; working to identify and engage with key stakeholders, such as carrying out workshops and facilitating community meetings; resourcing a secretariat function for the RLUP pilot governance process.

11.2 Future budget decisions in following years will be a matter for the new Government. It is recognised that ongoing funding will be needed if pilots are to deliver RLUFs by 2023, and that wider and longer term roll out will require further resources. The pilots will provide valuable input into the cost/benefit assessments that will be needed to inform longer term decisions.

11.3 Ministers have decided that RLUP pilots will not have a role in directing public funding.

11.4 As set out in the recent Climate change Plan update, the scale of investment needed requires significant private as well as public sector investment. RLUPs will be able to signpost to existing public and private funding opportunities for land owners and managers, or community groups. Additionally, the Scottish Government is keen that pilot regions explore ways of leveraging in private sector funding to enable land use changes on the ground, for example developing private funding streams or making use of existing private funding schemes.

12. Natural Capital, Data and Evidence

12.1 The pilots should adopt a broad natural capital approach, looking at our land as an asset that we need to protect and enhance so that it can continue to deliver a wide range of ecosystems service benefits such as food production, emissions reduction, carbon sequestration, climate adaptation, improved biodiversity, and support for health and wellbeing through access to nature, into the future. One

element of this approach will be the identification of the potential for nature-based solutions for climate change within the region such as woodland expansion, peatland restoration, natural flood management and greenspaces to reduce air pollution.

12.2 The Scottish Government is currently assessing existing data sources against the future data needs for land use policy, including RLUPs and the Land Use Strategy (LUS). We intend to work with the pilots to develop a toolkit that will include land use data highlighting potential areas for land use change that are beneficial for the climate and other relevant objectives, such as biodiversity or water management.

12.3 In addition, the SG and pilot regions will work together to establish if there are wider data or evidence needs, for example for Geographic Information System (GIS) Mapping. As part of the project development SG will explore the need and potential for additional support to be provided either for individual pilots or at national level

12.4 The RLUP pilots will be expected to utilise existing evidence on regional land use, and land use change where appropriate and possible. The RLUP Academic Advisory Group will also be able to provide an academic understanding of specific topics as the projects progress. SG will establish this in due course.

13. Evaluation

13.1 Evaluation of the pilots will run concurrently with the development of the pilots. A specification for this work will be developed and funded by SG. The pilot regions will be expected to provide assistance where required to enable the evaluation to be completed. The details of the planned evaluation will be shared at the Coordination Network once developed, but will follow the same three phases as outlined in section [2](#): Aims, Objectives and Scope.

14. Scottish Government Support

14.1 We are keen to offer the pilots with support in establishing their RLUP structure and meeting their aims, as well as providing an oversight function. There are a number of areas where this could be utilised, such as:

- making connections across regional boundaries, with regional structures of the Scottish Government and partner agencies e.g. RPID, Forestry Land Scotland, NatureScot, SEPA and Scottish Forestry;
- ensuring alignment with planning colleagues and the fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) as it develops;
- biodiversity policy support;
- natural capital policy support;
- data and evidence support; and
- Strategic Environmental Assessment support.