

Briefing on coherence in actor roles and responsibilities for achieving the objectives of land use policies in Scotland – JHI-C3-1

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1. Purpose of the briefing

This briefing summarises an academic paper, prepared in fulfilment of Deliverable 11 for the Land Use Transformations project (JHI-C3-1) within the Scottish Government's Strategic Research Programme (SRP) 2022-27. The paper assesses the clarity of definition and allocation of roles and responsibilities to multiple relevant actors involved in achieving the objectives of land use transformation policies. The analysis shows the extent to which Scottish Government policies call upon multiple actors to achieve their objectives, the roles expected of different actors, and the extent to which actors are called on to achieve the objectives of multiple policies. This is for the attention of Scottish Government analysts and policymakers.

2. Key messages

We analysed 66 land use transformation policies to:

- Assess the extent to which actors are involved in delivering policy objectives, and whether the roles and responsibilities expected of them are clearly defined.
- Identify concentrations of actors associated with multiple policies, and vice versa, which could indicate opportunities for coordination, or needs for it.

We found:

- Overall, very many actors are included in achieving the objectives of these 66 policies, and many work across multiple policy domains.
- The quantity of actors associated with a policy tends to increase when looking at roles with lower levels of responsibility and accountability for achieving policy

objectives. Greater numbers of actors tend to be associated with steering strategies than with primary legislation and instruments.

- Three Directorates - Agriculture & Rural Economy, Environment & Forestry, and Energy & Climate Change – are associated with particularly high concentrations of policies.
- Several strategies, particularly the 2021 Crofting Plan, 2018 Climate Change and 2019 Climate Adaptation Plans, the 2022 Biodiversity Strategy Consultation, and the 2021 Rural Development Programme have concentrations of actors associated with them.
- While roles and responsibilities are clearly defined in some cases, we found that there are gaps in how roles and responsibilities are allocated, particularly for actors associated with implementation at the ground level.
- We also found issues with unclear and non-binding definition of roles and responsibilities, as well as uncertainties around the potential for conflict, confusion, duplication, and actors' capacity to carry out the responsibilities expected of them.

This means that:

- While there are conducive conditions for actors to work together in a coherent way, there is still work to do.
- The creation or allocation of an actor with the primary role of coordinating actors across the policy environment may support actors to work together effectively. The well-connected actors we identified may be well-placed to take on this role.
- Clearer allocation of roles and responsibilities to actors doing ground-level implementation would be advantageous, since these actors are essential for land use transformation through implementing changes in land management practices.
- Systematic monitoring of coherence between actors, and its outcomes, may help to ensure that challenges are identified and addressed and that the outcomes of these policies truly work towards land use transformation.

3. Why do actors matter for policy coherence?

Land use transformations are necessary for meeting the multiple, often competing, environmental, social and economic demands placed upon land. Policy coherence is regarded as important for enhancing the effectiveness of policies that aim to achieve land use transformations, but it remains poorly-understood how such coherence may be achieved in practice. 'Functional coherence' – the clear definition, allocation and consistency of roles and responsibilities to multiple relevant actors is an important aspect of policy coherence. Functional coherence may support collective action and

complementary outcomes, as well as avoiding duplication, interference and gaps, in actors' efforts to achieve policy objectives.

4. Types of roles expected of actors in achieving policy objectives.

We identified 4 categories of actor roles in achieving policy objectives, based on interpretation of actor responsibilities documented in 66 Scottish Government policies associated with land use transformations. These are:

- *Owner of the policy* - actors (usually Directorates) with overall responsibility for development of a policy and accountability for achieving its objectives.
- *Making it happen* - actors with a mandate to ensure policy is implemented, including actions stated in policy documents to this end, but may not have developed the policy or have overall accountability for its implementation.
- *Helping it happen* - actors encouraged to voluntarily facilitate or collaborate on aspects of a policy, but not ultimately responsible for its overall management or successful implementation.
- *Affected/targeted by the policy* - actors whose practices and behaviours may be affected by a policy, and who may be encouraged to act in accordance with it, but do not have clear responsibility for its development and implementation.

We analysed policy documents associated with 66 Scottish Government policies to assess the extent to which relevant actors were assigned these roles in achieving policy objectives. We considered both government and non-government actors in each role.

5. Inclusion of relevant actors in achieving the objectives of land use transformation policies

Overall, a very high number of actors are included, with 257 actors identified as having some role in achieving the objectives of land use transformation policies in Scotland. This includes 20 actors as owners, 41 as making it happen, 208 as helping it happen, and 36 affected/targeted by policies¹. Many policy documents refer to multiple actors, as shown in Table 1, split across our categories of actor roles.

¹ The categories of actor roles are not mutually exclusive. There are instances of actors having more than one role in relation to a policy, or across multiple policies.

Table 1 - Number of policies with multiple actors referred to as having a role in achieving the objectives of our sample of 66 policies, split according to our categories of actor roles

Type of actor referred to	Policies with multiple owners	Policies with multiple actors 'making it happen'	Policies with multiple actors 'helping it happen'	Policies with multiple actors 'affected/targeted'
Government	22	28	33	4
Non-government	n/a	n/a	24	17
All	22	28	35	18

Many of the actors referred to in policy documents are connected to policies, and other actors, across multiple policy domains, as shown for the role of making it happen in Figure 1.

Making Happen (Gov and NonGov)

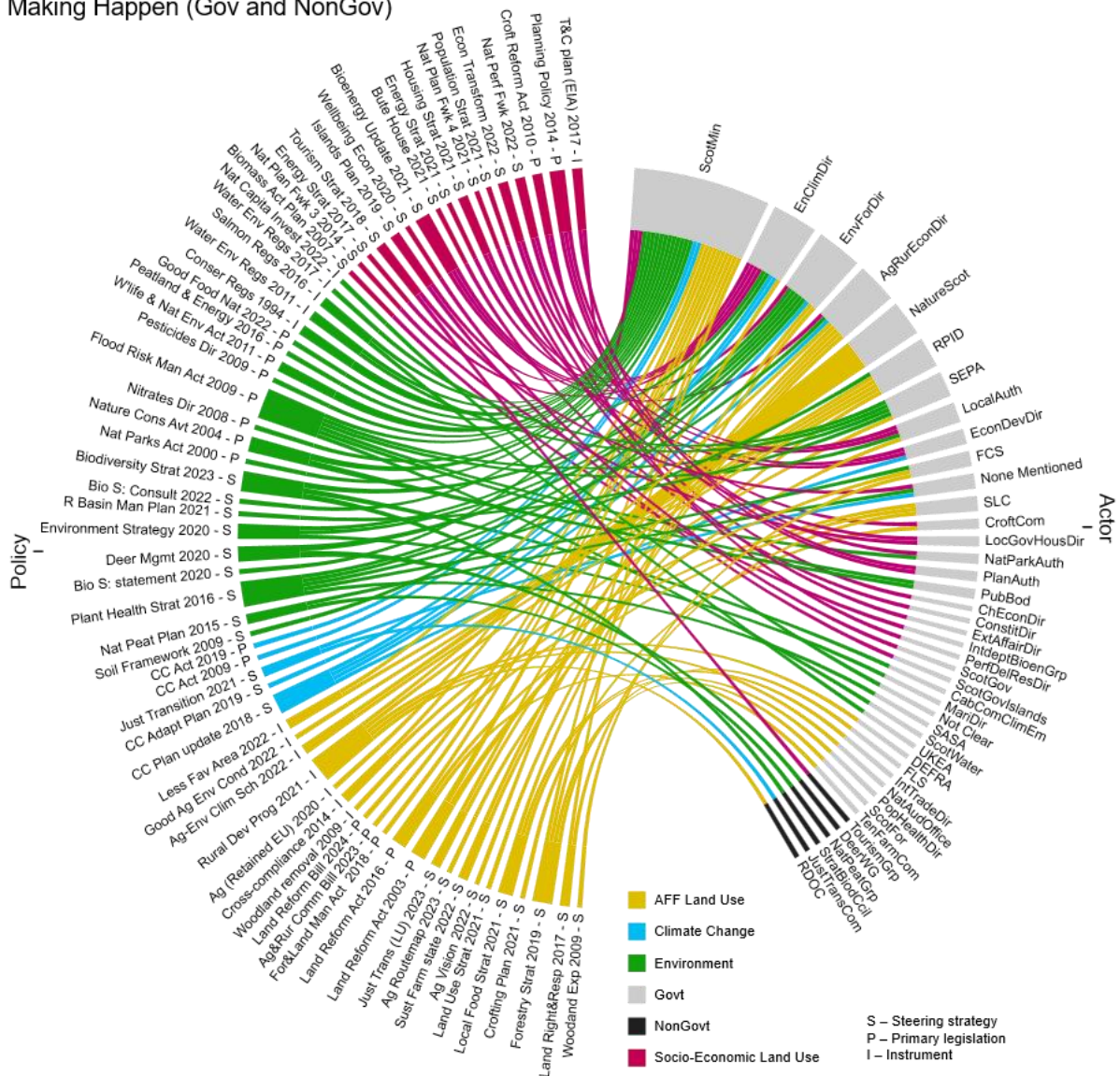


Figure 1 - Circos diagram showing policies connected to the actors they refer to as making it happen. Policies are colour-coded according to their policy domain, highlighting connections across domains. See Appendix for guidelines on interpreting the diagrams and for a list of policies and their abbreviations.

For example, the Energy & Climate Directorate works across the Environment, Climate Change, and Socio-Economic domains, and connects with both the Environment & Forestry Directorate and the Agriculture & Rural Economy Directorate on the 2018 Climate Change Plan, the 2021 Bioenergy Strategy, and the 2020 Environment Strategy. The high numbers of connections identified suggest a strong intention for including relevant actors in achieving the objectives of land use transformations policies in Scotland, as well as an awareness of the different actors that are well-placed to do so. This indicates conducive conditions for improving functional coherence exist.

The existence of many connections is encouraging. However, we found several gaps and challenges. For more than half of the policies, we were unable to clearly identify actors in the roles of making it happen and helping it happen. We also found surprisingly limited references to those owning, managing and living on rural land in the role of affected/targeted by the policy, with two thirds of the policies not clearly referring to actors in this role. There are notable differences in the number of actors referred to by different types of policy. References to multiple actors are more prevalent in steering strategies, and notably less evident in primary legislation and instruments. The aspirational nature of steering strategies could make them easier locations for encouraging actors to work together, but they have limited power for mandating actors to act. From our analysis, it was unclear whether actors are aware of the roles and responsibilities expected of them, or if they have the capacity, resources, or willingness to carry them out. It was also unclear if any conflicts or trade-offs existed in the roles and responsibilities expected of actors to achieve policy objectives.

6. Definition of actors' roles and responsibilities

For the most part, we were able to identify actors in each of our categories of roles, which provides evidence of roles and responsibilities being clearly defined. The total number of actors increasing through the categories, except for affected/targeted (though these actors were often broader classes of actors, such as farmers, businesses, etc). This suggests cascading hierarchies of authority, associated with different levels of responsibility for achieving policy objectives. This is clearly illustrated in the case of the Scottish Rural Development Programme in Table 2, below.

Table 2 – Actors in each category of role for the Scottish Rural Development Programme

Scottish Rural Development Programme	Actors
Owner	Agriculture and Rural Economy Directorate
Making the policy happen (gov)	Agriculture and Rural Economy Directorate; National Audit Office; RPID; DEFRA

Making the policy happen (non-gov)	Rural Development Operational Committee ²
Helping the policy happen (gov)	NatureScot; Scottish Forestry; Local authorities; Highlands and Islands Enterprise; Scottish Enterprise; SEPA; Islands Authorities
Helping the policy happen (non-gov)	Scottish Land and Estates; Scottish Crofting Federation; Environment LINK; Local Action Groups; CONFOR; Community Woodlands Association; Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations; National Trust for Scotland; Scottish Rural Network; NFUS; Highlands and Islands Agricultural Support Group; Farming Opportunities for New Entrants
Affected/targeted by the policy (gov)	None mentioned
Affected/targeted by the policy (non-gov)	Farmers; crofters; land managers; communities; forestry sector

However, it was rare to be able to populate every category for a specific policy, particularly at the levels of helping it happen and affected/targeted by the policy. For helping it happen, we were unable to clearly identify government actors for 28 policies and non-government actors for 42 policies. This was especially difficult for the affected/targeted category, as shown in Figure 2, where 37 policies are connected to the categories ‘not clear’ and ‘none mentioned’, most notably in the climate change, environment and socio-economic domains. This is surprising, and a cause for concern, as clarity around the responsibilities of those affected/targeted are ultimately necessary to ensure policy implementation results in real changes on the ground.

² Committees may contain a range of government and non-government representatives. Hence, we chose to categorise these as non-government actors.

7. Opportunities for coordination

As part of this analysis, we looked for actors responsible for coordinating others to work together to avoid redundancy and gaps, and encourage complementarity, in achieving policy objectives. In so doing, we did not find evidence of any actors taking on or being assigned the responsibility of coordinating actors across policies or policy domains. However, we identified instances where many policies are connected with certain actors, and where many actors are associated with particular policies.

As shown in Table 3, there are 3 Directorates and 3 public agencies who are notably connected with many policies, sometimes across multiple roles.

Table 3 - Examples of well-connected actors across different categories

Actor	Number of policies as Owner	Number of policies as Making it happen	Number of policies as Helping it happen	Number of policies across multiple roles
Agriculture & Rural Economy Directorate³	28	8	1	8 (owner & making it happen)
Environment & Forestry Directorate³	26	8	0	9 (owner & making it happen)
Energy & Climate Change Directorate³	17	9	1	9 (owner & making it happen); 1 (owner & helping it happen)
NatureScot	1	6	15 ⁴	1 (making & helping it happen)
SEPA	1	5	17 ⁵	0
Scottish Forestry	0	1	6	0

Three Directorates – Agriculture & Rural Economy, Environment & Forestry, and Energy & Climate Change – have the role of owner across particularly high concentrations of policies. This is illustrated in Figure 3.

³ In each of these cases, the policy document mentioned ‘Scottish Government’ in general terms and/or used first person language when talking about implementation, and we thus inferred this to mean the directorate that owns the policy are also responsible for making it happen.

⁴ In two of these cases, NatureScot were mentioned as both making it happen and helping it happen.

⁵ In one of these cases, SEPA were mentioned as both making it happen and helping it happen.

Owning

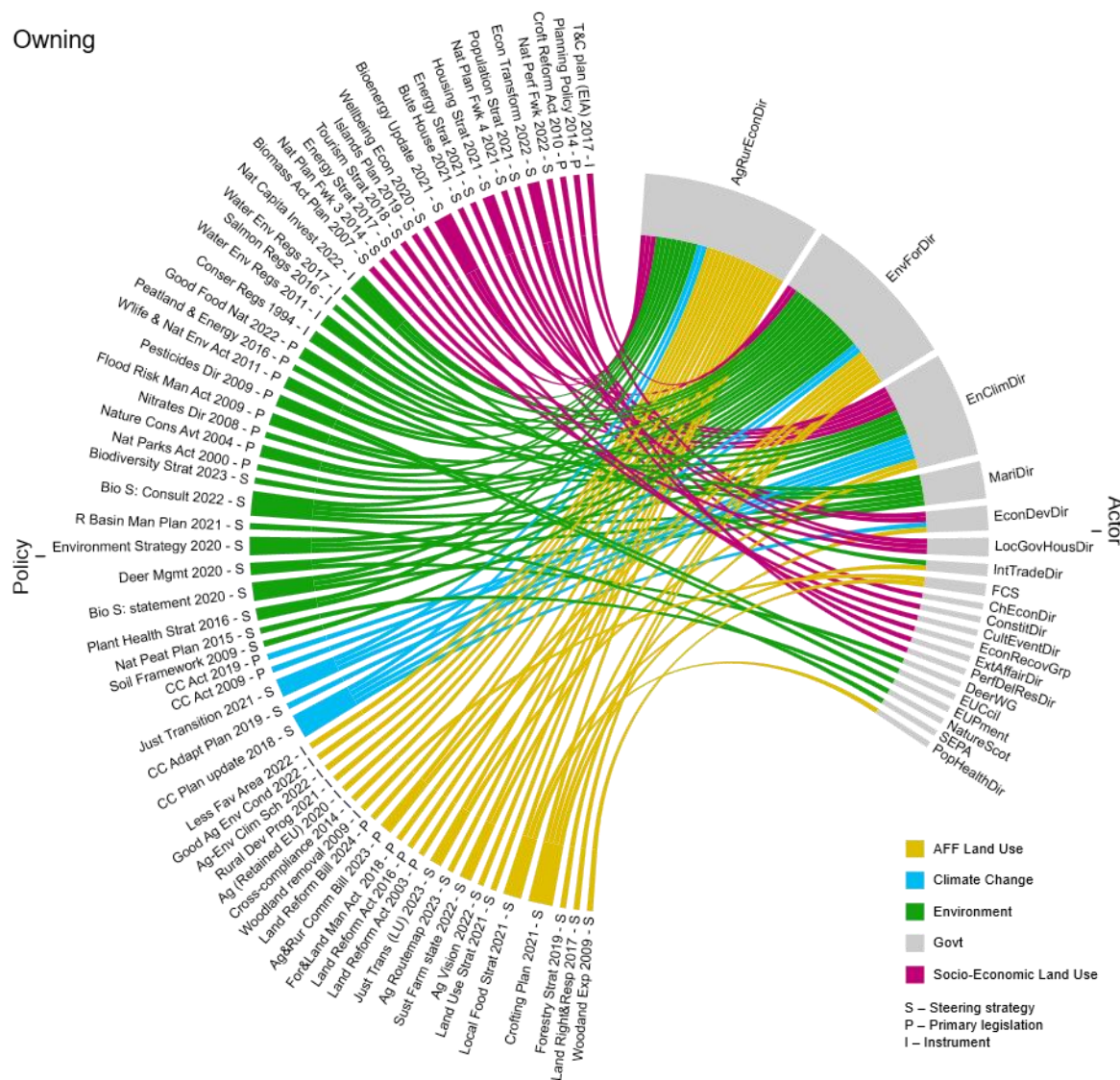


Figure 3 - Circos diagram showing policies connected to the actors they refer to as owners, highlighting concentrations of policies associated with the AgRurEconDir, EnvForDir, and EnClimDir. Policy domains are colour coded. See Appendix for guidelines on interpreting the diagrams and for a list of policies and their abbreviations.

From Figure 3, we can also see concentrations of four-or-more owners associated with the 2021 Crofting Plan, 2018 Climate Change Plan, and 2022 Biodiversity Strategy Consultation. There are also concentrations of actors ‘making it happen’ around the 2021 Rural Development Programme, the 2016 Plant Health Strategy, and the 2009 Flood Risk Management Act. There are concentrations of actors ‘helping it happen’ associated with the 2021 Crofting Plan, 2018 Climate Change and 2019 Climate Adaptation Plans, and the 2015 National Peatland plan.

These concentrations could both indicate areas where actors could be encouraged to work together (and may already be doing so) and highlight areas where coordination may be most needed to ensure multiple actors, and multiple policy objectives, are working together effectively. Assigning an actor the primary role of coordinating actors across the policy environment may therefore be advantageous.

8. Conclusion

We analysed how actors are expected to work together to achieve the objectives of 66 land use transformation policies. Overall, we found that very many actors are expected to contribute to achieving these policy objectives, and in some cases their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. However, there are gaps and challenges in terms of clearly defining and allocating roles and responsibilities, especially to those working to implement policies at the ground level. Clearer allocation of roles and responsibilities, and monitoring of their outcomes, may help ensure coherence challenges are managed and that policy outcomes truly work towards transformation. Allocating an actor with responsibility for coordinating actors across the policy environment may support this.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix

a. Policies and their abbreviations

Policy	Abbreviation	Policy	Abbreviation
Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (2022)	Ag-Env Clim Sch 2022	Just Transition - A Fairer, Greener Scotland: Scottish Government response (2021)	Just transition 2021
Agricultural Reform Route Map (2023)	Ag routemap 2023	Proposed new Land Reform Bill (during 2023)	Land reform bill 2024
Agriculture (Retained EU Law and Data) (Scotland) Act 2020 - analysed through the help of the policy memorandum	Ag (Retained EU) 2020	Less Favoured area Support Scheme (2022)	Less Fav Area 2022
Agriculture and Rural Communities (Scotland) Bill (2023)	Ag&Rur Comm Bill 2023	Local Food strategy (2021)	Local food strat 2021
Delivering our Vision for Scottish Agriculture: Proposals for a new Agriculture Bill (2022)	Ag vision 2022	Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement (2017)	Land Right&Resp 2017
Biodiversity strategy: consultation (2022)	Bio S: consult 2022	Land Reform Act (2003)	Land Reform Act 2003
Scottish Biodiversity Strategy post-2020: A statement of intent. (December 2020)	Bio S: statement 2020	Land Reform Act (2016)	Land Reform Act 2016
Scottish biodiversity strategy to 2045 - Tackling the nature emergency (2023)	Biodiversity Strat 2023	Land Use Strategy (2021)	Land Use Strat 2021
Bioenergy Update (2021)	Bioenergy update 2021	Interim Principles for Responsible Investment in Natural Capital (2022)	Nat Capita Invest 2022
Biomass Action Plan (2007)	Biomass act plan 2007	NatureScot's Scotland's National Peatland Plan (2015)	Nat Peat Plan 2015
Scottish Government and Scottish Green Party Shared Policy Programme: Working Together to Build a Greener, Fairer, Independent Scotland (aka The Bute House Agreement) (2021)	Bute house 2021	National Performance Framework (2022)	Nat Perf Fwk 2022
Climate Ready Scotland: Second Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme 2019-2024	CC Adapt Plan 2019	National Parks (Scotland) Act (2000)	Nat Parks Act 2000
Update to the Climate Change Plan 2018-2032	CC Plan update 2018	Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act (2004)	Nature Cons Act 2004

Climate Change Act (2009)	CC Act 2009	Nitrates Directive: The Action Programme for Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (Scotland) Regulations (2008)	Nitrates dir 2008
Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act (2019)	CC Act 2019	National Planning Framework 3 (2014)	Nat Plan Fwk 3 2014
Conservation (Natural Habitats, and c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended in Scotland) (Habitats Regulations)	Conser regs 1994	National Planning Framework 4 (2021)	Nat Plan Fwk 4 2021
Crofting: national development plan (2021)	Crofting plan 2021	Peatland and energy: Draft policy statement (2016)	Peatland & Energy 2016
Crofting Reform (Scotland) Act 2010	Croft Reform Act 2010	Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive 2009/128/EC	Pesticides dir 2009
The Common Agricultural Policy (Cross-Compliance) (Scotland) Regulations (2014)	Cross-compliance 2014	Scottish Planning Policy (2014)	Planning policy 2014
The management of wild deer in Scotland: Deer Working Group report (2020)	Deer Mgmt 2020	The Scottish Plant Health Strategy (2016)	Plant Health Strat 2016
Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation (2022)	Econ Transform 2022	A Scotland for the future: opportunities and challenges of Scotland's changing population (2021)	Population strat 2021
Scottish Energy Strategy: The future of energy in Scotland (2017)	Energy strat 2017	River Basin Management Plan for Scotland (2021-2027)	R Basin Man Plan 2021
Scotland's Energy Strategy Position Statement (2021)	Energy strat 2021	The Conservation of Salmon (Scotland) Regulations (2016)	Salmon regs 2016
The Environment Strategy for Scotland: vision and outcomes (2020)	Environment strategy 2020	Scottish Soil Framework (2009)	Soil framework 2009
Sustainable and regenerative farming - next steps: statement (2022)	Sust Farm state 2022	Scottish Rural Development Programme (2021-2024)	Rural Dev Prog 2021
Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act (2018)	For&Land Man Act 2018	The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations (2017) Schedule 1 + schedule 2	T&C plan (EIA) 2017
Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019-2029	Forestry Strat 2019	Tourism in Scotland: the economic contribution of the sector (2018)	Tourism Strat 2018

Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act (2009)	Flood Risk Man Act 2009	Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act (2011)	W'life & Nat Env Act 2011
Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAECs) (2022)	Good Ag Env Cond 2022	The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations (2011)	Water env regs 2011
Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act (2022)	Good Food Nat 2022	The Water Environment (Miscellaneous) (Scotland) Regulations (2017)	Water env regs 2017
Housing to 2040 (2021)	Housing strat 2021	Towards a Robust, Resilient Wellbeing Economy for Scotland: Report of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (2020)	Wellbeing econ 2020
The National Plan for Scotland's Islands (2019)	Islands plan 2019	The Scottish Government's Rationale for Woodland Expansion (2009)	Woodland Exp 2009
Just Transition Land Use and Agriculture (2023)	Just trans (LU) 2023	The Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal (2009)	Woodland removal 2009

b. Abbreviations of common terms in actor names

Term	Abbreviation	Term	Abbreviation
Agriculture/agricultural	Ag	Group	Grp
Advisory/adviser/advice	Adv	Institute	Inst
Association	Assoc	Industry	Ind
Biodiversity	Biod	International	Intl
Cabinet	Cab	Leadership Group	LG
Climate change	Clim Chg	National	Ntl
Climate	Clim	Network	Ntwk
Committee	Comm	Organisation	Org
Conservation	Consv	Partnership	Pship
Council	Ccl	Programme	Prog
Development	Dev	Regenerative	Regen
Directorate	Dir	Resilience	Resil
Economic/economist/economy	Econ	Scotland/Scottish	Scot
Environment	Env	Service	Serv
Federation	Fed	Society	Soc
Government	Gov	Working Group	WG

c. Interpreting the Figures

To help visualise the analysis, we used Charticator⁶ to generate ‘Circos’ diagrams. These should be interpreted as follows:

- Each diagram shows a type of actor role and the actors we categorised into it.
- The diagrams show the number of actors associated with each policy, as well as the number of policies associated with each actor. Policies are shown on the left and actors on the right of each diagram.
- Connections between policies and the actors they refer to are indicated by lines connecting the two sides of the diagram. The thicker the line, on either end, the higher the number of connections associated with that policy/actor.
- Actor and policy names have been abbreviated, and a full list of names and abbreviations can be found in a) & b), above.
- Different types of policy are denoted by the letters: S (Strategy), P (Primary Legislation), or I (Instrument).
- Policy domains are represented by the colours: yellow (agriculture), green (environment), purple (socio-economic), and blue (climate change).

⁶Charticator is an online interactive chart creation tool:
<https://donghaoren.org/charticator/index.html>