



Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) – Our role in the planning system

Introduction

SNH are a non-departmental public body that looks after Scotland's nature and landscapes for the benefit of Scotland's people. We are funded by the Scottish Government and accountable to them for what we do.

Our main role in the planning system is to provide advice to local and national government, developers and other stakeholders on the potential impacts of development on nature and landscapes. We advise on the importance of these impacts and (where possible) how they can be avoided or minimised.

Development Management

For some types of planning application, SNH are a statutory consultee. This means Planning Authorities have to consult SNH where a development proposal might affect a [Site of Special Scientific Interest](#) or a [Natura site](#) (such as e.g. Loch Leven), or where large-scale developments are proposed within [National Scenic Areas](#) (such as e.g. Glen Coe). In addition, Planning Authorities have to consult SNH where a proposal requires an [Environmental Impact Assessment](#). SNH is now the licensing authority with respect to certain [protected species](#). This means that in some cases, developments that will affect protected species can't go ahead without a licence from us, even if the proposal has planning permission.

In general however, planning authorities should deal with local natural heritage issues and the more routine casework without consulting SNH and there is a range of guidance on our website that can help. In making decisions, we expect planning authorities to give due consideration to biodiversity and landscape in line with their own development plan policies and their own statutory duties.

Development Planning

We are a 'key agency' in terms of strategic and local development plans. This means we have a specific duty to cooperate with planning authorities when development plans are being prepared. Our focus is on helping planning authorities to put in place spatial plans and policies that protect and enhance key natural assets. As part of this, we advise on how [Strategic Environmental Assessments](#) and [Habitats Regulations Appraisals](#) can be used to make more sustainable plans that deliver better places for people and nature.

Related links:

[Service Statement for Planning and Development](#) - what Planning Authorities can expect from SNH in relation to planning and development proposals.

[SiteLink](#) - easy access to data and information on key Protected Areas across Scotland

[Renewable Energy](#) - guidance, policy and good practice

[Protected Species](#) - advice for planners and developers

[Green-networks and Development Planning](#) - guidance and good practice

[Landscapes](#) - good practice, policy, guidance, assessment techniques and other resources