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EMPOWERING RURAL AREAS IN MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE PROCESSES

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MAP POSITION NOTE

RURAL SCOTLAND AND RIVER DEE CATCHMENT

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Acronyms

ADMG	Association of Deer Management Groups
CalMac	Caledonian MacBrayne
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CCF	Climate Challenge Fund
CLLD	Community-Led Local Action
CMAL	Caledonian Marine Assets Ltd.
CNPA	Cairngorms National Park Authority
CPP	Community Planning Partnership
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DMG	Deer Management Group
DTSA	Development Trusts Association Scotland
EIP-Agri	European Innovation Programme Agriculture (DG Agri)
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FFCC	Food Farming and Countryside Commission
GGPTE	Greater Glasgow Passenger Transport Executive
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
HPCLT	Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust
LAG	Local Action Groups
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plan
LEADER	Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale (Links between the rural economy and development actions)
LLTNP	Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park
LLTNPA	Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority
MAP	Multi Actor Platform
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NPA	National Park Authority
NSA	National Scenic Area
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
RICIA	Rural and Island Communities Ideas into Action
RDP	Rural Development Programme
RLUP	Regional Land Use Partnership
RLUF	Regional Land Use Frameworks
RGPAS	Rural General Practitioner Association of Scotland
RTP	Regional Transport Partnerships
SAC	Special Areas of Conservations
SCVO	Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
SHERPA	Sustainable Hub to Engage into Rural Policies with Actors
SIMRA	Social Innovation in Mountainous Rural Areas
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPT	Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
SPTE	Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive
SSSI	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
SYP	Scottish Youth Parliament
UNCRC	United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Executive Summary

Governance includes the policies, rules and norms that guide human behaviour; who makes decisions, how decisions are made and carried out; who has the authority to act on those decisions; and who is accountable for actions and outcomes. The governance of rural areas in Scotland is multi-level, across topics and types of territories, and of specific topics and particular places. The combination of structures leads to a complex governance landscape comprising arrangements with different forms of: i) legal standing; ii) functions; iii) modes of operation; iv) resourcing; v) staffing; vi) territorial coverage; vii) ownership; and viii) remit.

The same geographic area can have multiple holders of rights leading to the operation of separate forms of governance. Some rights are retained by the Crown, through the Crown Estate Scotland which now directs income generated to the Scottish Government, some reserved to the UK Parliament, and others within the remit of Scottish Government and its agencies and public structures. The private and voluntary sectors also have significant roles in the governance of land and services in rural Scotland.

Amongst the consequences of the mix of several types of governance there can be a lack of clarity of responsibilities for the planning, management and delivery of services, sites, and authority and scope for forward planning. There is a risk of inconsistency in the attribution of responsibility and accountability leading to credit being claimed but criticism being avoided. There are also considerable cross-overs in representation with governance structures, such as nominations from one body to represent it and communities of place on an overseeing body of another type of organisation.

Opportunities are increasing for new forms of governance and inputs to decision-making, notably by citizens. Examples are citizen's panels and assemblies and participatory budgeting. There is also an increase in the type and number of social innovations in which reconfigurations of governance enable communities to take on responsibilities for societal well being. Examples are in the generation of renewable energy, managing natural capital, and the provision of social services. Other opportunities are under discussion where there is evidence of failure in service delivery (e.g. ferries).

The newest form of governance being rolled-out in rural areas is that of the pilot Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs) in which alternative governance structures are being evaluated and options for their governance and partnership at a regional scale. Successful implementation of RLUPs models could contribute to public policy aims of evolving a nature positive and wellbeing economy. An outcome of the pilot tests should guide the types of oversight required to ensure they are delivering to the communities of place and of interest, but not beholden to particular sectoral interests.press

Other strategic mechanisms, such as the adoption of the Place Principle, offer means of developing partnership working of citizens, businesses, civil society and policy for a given territory. However, a focus on the desires of current inhabitants and generations may not be consistent with national or international needs, recognition of which could be of a requirement that, to secure public funding for a vision, the plan output should be required to demonstrate it does not disadvantage future generations.

The current governance arrangements have come significant strengths, notably the emphasis on partnership working across place and theme. However, the diversity of such arrangements creates a complex governance landscape, with some complementary and some competing objectives and actions. One key challenge for public, private and voluntary sectors is to reconcile the multiple levels of governance of rural areas. This will benefit those who live, work or spend time in such areas.

Policy aims at international, EU and Scottish levels point to closer working between actors in science, society and policy for the planning and sustainable management of rural areas. Suitably designed and operated science, society, policy interfaces can provide effective forums and mechanisms for sharing understanding of the aspirations and needs of all sectors and actors, and co-development of knowledge and solutions to challenges facing rural areas.

1. Governance Structures of Rural Scotland

1.1. Governance and its Expression for Rural Scotland

By governance we refer to a framework for managing natural and human resources, organisations, territories, and people. Governance includes the policies, rules and norms that guide human behaviour; who makes decisions, how decisions are made and carried out; who has the authority to act on those decisions; and who is accountable for actions and outcomes (modified from the UN Environment Programme). The United Nations defines good governance as being "participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive, and follows the rule of law." The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) notes that "true test of 'good' governance is the degree to which it delivers on the promise of human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights." (OHCHR, no date).

The governance of rural areas in Scotland is multi-level, across topic and types of territories, and specific by topics and places. Some functions may not be within the formal remit of a structure, instead managed by another grouping under a shared understanding or informal agreement (e.g. waste recovery from public spaces undertaken through citizen initiatives). The combination of structures leads to a complex governance landscape comprising arrangements with, for example, different forms of: i) legal standing (e.g. statutory body, private business, community trust, voluntary organisation, designation); ii) functions (e.g. regulatory, administrative, strategic planning, operational processes); iii) modes of operation (e.g. actions on the ground; networking; sharing knowledge and plans); iv) resourcing (e.g. publicly funded, commercial income, donations, membership fees); v) staffing (e.g. elected members, appointed members, employees, volunteers); vi) territorial coverage (e.g. water catchment, National Park area, Biosphere); vii) ownership (e.g. owned outright, tenanted); and viii) remit (e.g. deer management, habitat protection, economic development).

Based upon the Scottish Government urban rural classification (Scottish Government, 2022), approximately 76,512 km^2 (97.1%) of Scotland's land area (78,789km^2) is rural. In 2014, the Land Reform Review Group (2014) estimated the area of public land, UK and Scottish Governments, to be 9,140 km^2 (11.6%), managed through public agencies (e.g. NatureScot, National Forest Estate, Ministry of Defence), the Crown Estate and local authorities. Each agency manages those lands in line with their individual priorities and remits. For example, the purpose of NatureScot owning or managing land, including nature reserves and National Nature Reserves, is where it can display the best of Scotland's nature and better connect people and nature. Equivalent purposes are set for the purchase and management of land by Forest and Land Scotland, Scottish Water, and all other public bodies.

Of rural areas, approximately 3% of land is owned by communities and 2.5% by NGOs and charities. In turn, although subject to some uncertainty in the definition of ownership, in 1970 approximately 1,180 land owners were responsible for 60% of Scotland's rural land, dropping to 963 by 2012 (Land Reform Review Group, 2014).

Different rights are associated with different forms of ownership and management. The same geographic area can have multiple holders of rights leading to the operation of separate forms of governance. For example, oil and gas rights are retained for the Crown under the Petroleum (Production) Act 1934, but administered by the UK Government and royalties and taxes accrue to the UK Treasury. Coal rights are retained by the Coal Authority, which reports to the UK Government, so legally the rights to coal in Scotland are held by the UK. Certain mineral rights are retained in the national interest (e.g. gold, silver, oil, gas and coal). Rights to gold and silver are held by the Crown, through Crown Estate Scotland, for almost all of Scotland, through the Royal Mines Act 1424. Exceptions are where ownership was transferred in ancient grants (e.g. Sutherland, South Kintyre, Figure App. 1). Revenue profit 'net revenue') goes to the Scottish

Consolidated Fund and transferred to the Scottish Ministers for further use. Capital remains the property of the Monarch to be reinvested in the Estate (Crown Estate Scotland, 2020).

The majority of Scotland's coastline is in areas defined as rural according to the Rural Urban Classification. Most of the seabed around Scotland's coast, to a distance of 12 nautical miles is owned by the Monarch 'in right of the Crown', and thus the responsibility of Crown Estate Scotland. Crown Estate Scotland awards and manages leases and other agreements to organisations to build offshore wind farms, organised as a 'leasing round'. The ScotWind leasing round in 2022, led to 17 projects being awarded rights to develop approximately 7,000 km² of sea space, with the potential to generate 25GW renewable energy. The value of the leases is approximately £700m. Crown Estate Scotland also provide direct grants to communities through its Community Capacity Grants to all communities located up to five miles from the coastline or within five miles of one of its rural estates. Suggestions have been made that resources generated from such sources, and those from oil and gas, should be income to a Scottish Sovereign Wealth Fund.

Energy policy is a reserved power of the UK Government. However, planning is a devolved responsibility which means that regulations governing the development of renewable energy, and associated environmental impact assessments and community rights are ones over which the Scottish Government has authority. National Planning Framework 4 (Scottish Government, 2023) provides Scotland's national spatial strategy, and incorporates updated Scottish Planning Policy. It sets out spatial principles, regional priorities, national developments, and national planning policy, covering topics identified in other SHERPA UK MAP Position Papers such as renewable energy; peatland and carbon rich soils; forestry, woodland and trees; rural homes and rural development (e.g. Miller *et al.*, 2020). It sets out six principles, one of which is 'Rural revitalisation', in which it states "We will encourage sustainable development in rural areas, recognising the need to grow and support urban and rural communities together."

Local authorities require to notify Scottish Government on certain types of issues being considered. Amongst topics of relevance in rural areas are historic battlefields, commercial peatland applications, and most recently spaceport applications, the latter reflecting developments in Shetland, Sutherland and the Western Isles. For example, planning permission for renewable energy developments is the responsibility of local authorities and the Scottish Government. Developments below 50MW are determined by the local planning authority, whereas those above 50 MW are determined by the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit on behalf of Scottish Ministers. That creates the potential for conflict between authorities at local and Scottish levels.

Developers can appeal to Scottish Ministers against a decision of a local authority, and Scottish Ministers can call in a planning application if there is "genuine national interest at stake". Appeals can be made to the Scottish Court of Session on planning decisions by local or Scottish authorities, and the UK Supreme Court. Both development companies and community groups have had success in such recourses to appeal (e.g. powers of a strategic planning authority to require contributions from developers for funding investment in infrastructure; Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority (Appellant) v Elsick Development Company Limited (Respondent) (Scotland).

Planning and undertaking appeals require expert knowledge of the topic, the law and associated processes, and funding to take the process through to completion. Individuals and communities are unlikely to have such human and financial capital. Planning Aid Scotland provide tools and training for communities to engage in planning activities such as Community Action Plans, Local Place Plans, and provide advice to help citizens or communities with planning issues (advice service paid for by the Scottish Government). This helps communities with guidance as to when and what opportunities are available to have a say in planning matters. No equivalent is available for financial support without fund raising efforts.

Planning control responsibilities are also exercised by the two Scottish National Park Authorities (NPA). The two parks have responsibility for development planning, development management, and enforcement. Local Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA) prepare the local development plan, determines planning applications, and has responsibility for enforcement actions. The four local authorities which intersect the National Park do not have responsible for planning within the park boundary when a

development is also within their boundary. In the Cairngorms NPA (CNPA), the five intersecting local authorities determine planning applications within their area of responsibility, but must be consistent with the NPA development plan. The CNPA can 'call in' planning applications if they have relevance as determined by its Planning Committee. The governance of each of the NPAs comprises an executive overseen by Boards. The members of the Boards are directly elected by local constituencies (five each in the two NPAs), appointed by the Scottish Government (seven for the Cairngorms and six for LLTNP), and councillors nominated from the intersecting local authorities (seven for the Cairngorms and six for LLTNP).

The Scottish Government is committed to establishing a third national park, the prospective timetable of which is to be considering proposals by early summer 2023. No details have been published on the prospective governance arrangements of new national parks. Information about such arrangements may be associate with the submission of proposals for areas for designation as a national park. The type of question which may arise is in regard to the composition of the park board and whether it follows the same model as the existing national parks, or has a different balance between those who are directly elected, nominated from relevant local authorities and approved by Scottish ministers, or nominated by Scottish ministers.

The lowest formal level of governance is the Community Council, of which there are 1,512. These are set up by the local authorities, by statute, and are run by local residents to act on behalf of their area. It is the most local tier of elected representation (Community Councils Scotland, no date). However, they have limited powers to consult and requirements for organisations to consult them, and only approximately 1,200 of the Community Councils are active (Scottish Government, no date).

In recent years, forms of governance have emerged at community level, enabled by the Land Reform (Scotland) Acts 2003 and 2016, such as the National and Local Access Forums, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, and associated resources (e.g. Community Asset Transfer Scheme, Scottish Land Fund). These are for initiatives Scotland-wide not specific to rural areas. The newest form of governance, which cover predominantly rural areas, are the pilot Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs) (discussed in Section 2.2 and Appendix 1), which have different types of structure and leadership (e.g. local authority, National Park Authority, community group).

Arguably, there is a deficiency of political representation at the community level, such as the number of councillors per capita or per elector compared to other countries in Europe (Riddoch, 2020). Figures to compare across countries on an equal basis are not readily available. However, in 2008 Purdam *et al*. calculated that the UK has a significantly higher population per councillor compared to other countries in Europe with 118 in France, 209 in Austria, 256 in Sweden, 2,336 in Ireland and 2,603 in the UK. The outcome of applying Scottish guidelines for representation leads to between 1:813 and 1:5,785 electors per councillor (Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland, 2016) depending upon the proportion of a local authority area that is outwith towns and cities and taking account of a proportion of the area which is classified as deprived.

The natural and cultural heritage of Scotland's rural areas have reputations of global significance. Peatland occupies more than 20% of the land area, storing c.1,600 mt carbon, good management, and restoration of which is essential for mitigating GHG emissions. Rivers have outstanding habitats, providing world class fishing. The associated landscapes represent assets which are key attractions for overseas and domestic visitors.

The governance of natural and cultural assets lies within designated areas. These designations include some of international standing such as: six World Heritage Sites of the Antonine Wall, Heart of Neolithic Orkney, New Lanark, the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh, St Kilda and the Forth Rail Bridge; two biospheres at Wester Ross Biosphere Reserve (formerly Beinn Eighe) Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve; and Special Protection Areas, SPAs; Special Areas of Conservations, SACs. Many of the 1,422 SSSIs are also Natura 2000 sites.

Sites and areas designated for cultural heritage (e.g. historic battlefields, gardens and designed landscapes) come under the remits of public agencies such as Historic Environment Scotland, and NGOs such as National Trust for Scotland. The governance of other such areas and sites is that of the owner or tenant, subject to adherence to regulatory requirements or obligations (e.g. protecting historic buildings, guarding against contamination of soil, water, air).

Other public services report to the Scottish or UK Governments, organised by different geographies, aligned with local authority boundaries (e.g. education authorities) or extending across multiple local authorities (e.g. National Health Service Boards). Responsibilities for police, fire and rescue were consolidated into Scotland-wide authorities in 2013, with regional sub-areas.

Potential conflicts between remits arise where, for example, the geographic extent of two or more interests overlap. Examples include options for the delimitation of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (LLTNP) within which there are significant sources of public water supplies (e.g. Loch Katrine) which are managed by Scottish Water. At the stage of planning the national park boundary one option considered was to leave a 'hole' within the designated area so that the provision of water supplies for the Loch Katrine and adjacent catchments were not compromised by the remits of the national park. The final designation accommodated the issue through agreements on processes.

The governance of natural resources is often implicit rather than explicit. For example, soil is a key public good through its storage of carbon and underpinning the production of food and a healthy ecosystem. It is a feature of several policy areas, notably environmental protection (such as habitat, biodiversity, landscape, heritage protection, etc.), water, climate change, pollution, waste, land use and planning, and land ownership. Responsibility for managing soils lies with whoever has the relevant rights including privately run farms, estates and forests, industrial sites, and public and third sector organisations. It may not be directly mentioned in the primary legislation, but noted instead in supporting 'instruments' (McKee, 2018).

A different relationship between responsibility and ownership of natural resources is that of deer and their management. The report of the Deer Working Group (Pepper *et al.*, 2020) explains the status of wild deer in relation to ownership in Scotland, which is of being owned by no-one until rendered into possession by being killed or captured (referred to in Scots property law as *res nullius*), but the right to kill or capture is owned. This is also the case in at least 7 other EU countries (e.g. Germany), whereas in at least 10 EU countries (e.g. Italy) wild deer are *res communis* which means they are owned by the entire community (i.e. nation).

Deer Management Groups (DMGs) have been established for the conservation and control of deer in Scotland, comprising geographic groupings of estates and other landholdings that "share access to a discrete population or herd of deer that is managed as a common resource" (Association of Deer Management Groups). DMGs cover the majority of the area of upland and lowland Scotland, with forty four in the upland occupying 42.1% of Scotland's land area, and a further ten lowland areas with partial coverage by DMGs (Figure App Fig. 2). The lowland DMGs work alongside a Lowland Deer Network Scotland which notes the importance of understanding deer behaviour in semi-urban contexts, and the scope for using the visibility of deer as an educational opportunity.

A joint project, Finding the Common Ground, has been set up by the Association of Deer Management Groups (ADMGs) and Scottish Environment LINK. The aim is to improve relations across the deer sector in upland Scotland and "find shared solutions that will support the implementation of the Scottish Government's actions in the light of their response to the Deer Working Group recommendations of Pepper *et al.* (2020) "The ADMG notes that 'for decades, relationships between some of the groups involved in upland deer management have been characterised by low trust and conflict. If we are to genuinely navigate the changing priorities for upland deer management, we urgently need to understand, and then address, the barriers to workable relationships."

Amongst the consequences of the mix of several types of governance, some examples of which are outlined above, can be a lack of clarity of responsibilities for the planning, management and delivery of services, sites, and authority and scope for forward planning, and weak uses of evidence based decisions. There is also a need for governance mechanisms that enable challenges to what is posited as 'common sense' to management actions but which may have a limited basis in evidence. What is taken as common sense or well-based at one point in time (e.g. stream dredging) may not be appropriate in light of new thinking or scientific or practice knowledge emerges (e.g. stream habitat creation and management). A lack of clarity complicates the attribution of accountability and the identification of who and how has responsibility for tackling challenges arising. It may also lead to overlaps at various levels of governance, particularly when new ones emerge, whereby responsibility is taken at one level in one area of the country and another somewhere else, including the level of subsidiarity of roles. The outcome of the pilot RLUPs may provide insight to strengths of approaches at various levels of governance.

1.2.   Representation in Governance Structures

The democratic structures of the UK and Scottish Parliaments and local authorities do not have specific requirements or criterion of membership from any sector of society (e.g. age, geography, background). Individuals can be nominated for election irrespective of gender, ethnic origin, or sexual orientation. There are 59 members of the UK Parliament from Scottish constituencies (as of 2023) and 128 members of the Scottish Parliament.

The minimum age for voting and standing in the UK elections is 18 and in Scottish elections is 16. Otherwise, there are a limited number of structures which explicitly represent their interests. One example is the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) was instigated in 1997. Its origins are the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), signed in 1991, which established respect for the views of the child, and freedom of expression. Its members map onto those of the constituencies of the Scottish Parliament. The SYP meets twice a year, with members of its 10 committees engaging with those of the Scottish Parliament. One committee is dedicated to Transport, Environment and Rural Affairs.

The Equality Act 2010 sets out eight protected characteristic which cover the rights of citizens based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. However, the specific concerns or needs of groupings within society can be underheard or overlooked. For example, there is no specific legislative protection for rights of people who pursue a travelling lifestyle. The Scottish Government race equality action plan 2017-21 sets out steps to protect rights of minority ethic groups (e.g. gypsy travellers). However, topics such as camping on unauthorised sites can lead to tensions between the travellers, residents, land owners and the providers of services (e.g. cleansing, sanitation, water).

The characteristics of good governance, as identified by the United Nations, of transparency, responsibility, accountability, participation and responsiveness to the needs of people. One aspect of needs relates to characteristics rural Scotland of changes in its population by season, due to:

i)   Seasonal workers for different time periods through the year (e.g. spring to early autumn for hospitality and tourism; late summer and autumn for seasonal agriculture workforce, December to March for winter sports)
ii)   Tourists throughout the year but with visitor levels varying by place and time of year.
iii)   Owners of second homes, either letting properties or using them for vacations at times of the year.

The seasonal nature of a proportion of the rural population means that demands for accommodation and public and private services vary through the year, and with stakeholders, including some with voting or other forms of rights of representation, being present for only some of the time. That has implications for the governance of rural areas and the services required or which they provide and host. For example, visitors (seasonal or daily) create pressures on rural areas, placing additional demands on disaster management

(e.g. wildfires) and the governance of their management (e.g. public conveniences, waste collection). Such questions of governance can create tensions between public, private and voluntary bodies, and citizens.

Of the 32 Scottish local authorities, 4 are predominately city areas (Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen). Interactions between these larger urban areas with rural surroundings are reflected in governance structures which tend to reflect the population size, geography and history of the evolution of the local authority structures in each area. For example the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) was formed in 2006, with the current structure having responsibilities for most forms of transport across 12 local authority areas, and a Board of which councillors from each of those local authorities are members. The geographic areas covered by the SPT includes the urban centre of Glasgow City, and remote rural areas such as much of Argyll and Bute and the islands within that authority.

The origins of the SPT can be identified in the role of Glasgow Corporation's public transport, replaced in 1972 with the Greater Glasgow Passenger Transport Executive (GGPTE) to co-ordinate public transport in the Clyde Valley. In turn the GGPTE was replaced by the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive (SPTE) under the new local government structure of Strathclyde Regional Council. In 1996 the SPTE was replaced by the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority (SPTA), under new local government structures in 1994. As these arrangements changed so certain responsibilities were inherited or reassigned with associated changes in governance of several types of services.

There are another six such passenger transport partnerships which are responsible for the planning and delivery of regional transport developments around Scotland. These are Shetland Transport Partnership (ZetTrans); Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS); North-East of Scotland Transport Partnership (NESTRANS); Tayside and Central Scotland Transport Partnership (TACTRAN); South-East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN); and South-West of Scotland Transport Partnership (Swestrans).

Currently, one aspect of transport within rural areas under considerable strain is ferry services. Statements by local authority representatives, ferry user groups and citizens indicate severe difficulties and consequences for a lack of resilience in the provision of services to island communities, and pointers to difficulties linked to the complexities of their governance.

The ownership of the ports, harbours and ferries around Scotland lies with Caledonian Marine Assets Ltd. (CMAL). It is the Statutory Harbour Authority, owning 16 ports and harbours in the Firth of Clyde and around the Hebrides, within which areas it also owns and leases properties and port infrastructure at 10 other locations. However, not all harbours or ferry landings are owned by CMAL, with some owned by the relevant local authorities. CMAL also owns 37 ferries of which 32 are leased to CalMac Ferries Ltd for the routes it operates to the islands and peninsulas of the west of Scotland, and five ferries are leased to Serco Northlink Ferries for routes to Orkney and Shetland.

The principal provider of ferry services in the west of Scotland is CalMac Ferries Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of David MacBrayne Ltd, which is wholly owned by Scottish Government Ministers. CalMac is the UK's largest ferry operator, operating 29 routes to over 50 destinations, and one of the largest transport operators in Scotland. Orkney, Shetland and Highland Councils operate ferry services (e.g. Corran Ferry, Highland Council; Orkney Ferries Ltd. run by Orkney Council; and ferry services run by Shetland Islands Council). A small number of private ferry operators also own and run services around Scotland, such as Western Ferries between Gourock and Hunter's Quay, Pentland Ferries from Gills Bay Caithness to St Margaret's Hope Orkney.

Ferry users are represented on its Ferries Community Board. There are also regional stakeholder groups as mechanisms for consultations with users and public agencies of the ferry network. Three such groupings are: Clyde, Kintyre and Islands Ferry Stakeholder Group; Argyll, Lochaber, Skye and Small Isles; and, Hebrides (Barra, Uist, Lewis and Harris). A civil society group, formed to represent users and communities in Mull and Iona (Mull and Iona Ferry Committee) was formed, is represented on the relevant ferry stakeholder groups, and has been exploring options for community run ferries and routes.

The use of the word 'partnership' in the titles of more recent structures, such as those of the transport groups, reflects an evolution towards increased collaborative work across institutions and between governance structures. However, there is a risk that the word is used for presentation with limited evidence of improvement in ways of operation. Partnership working needs to work within, not only between, organisations to reduce risks of plans and actions which are internally inconsistent. The Christie Commission (2011) on the Future Delivery of Public Services recommended "*substantial reform of how we deliver our public services is required – both in terms of the general approach taken to the provision of services, and to the wider governance and organisation of public service.*" It observed that, based upon the evidence available at the time, there was insufficient emphasis on outcome based approaches. One area of recommendation of the Commission was the reorganisation of Community Planning structures in Scotland. As noted by Scottish Government, "*Community planning is about how public bodies work together, and with local communities, to design and deliver better services that make a real difference to people's lives.*" It should provide a focus for partnership working that targets specific local circumstances. Amongst the recommendations of the Christie Commission was that "*Community planning partners should develop and extend arrangements at a more local level (that is, more local than the local authority area) which facilitate public engagement and participation in shaping priorities, and in the design and delivery of service.*"

The resultant Community Planning Partnerships (CPP) are the services that come together to take part in community planning, of which there are 32 in Scotland, one for each council area. The focus of each CPP is expressed through its Local Outcome Improvement Plans, as per the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. The priorities of each CPP reflects those of most significance locally (e.g. Aberdeenshire includes Connected and Cohesive Communities, Health and Wellbeing, and Reducing Poverty).

A diverse range of NGO voluntary groups also have a focus on rural areas, such as the Scottish Rural Action or have extensive coverage across rural areas as well as urban areas (e.g. Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, SCVO; Scottish Women's Institutes; churches and faith groups; youth groups). These have their own governance structures, some part of national or international frameworks (e.g. some faith and youth groups), and others are specific to Scotland (e.g. SCVO).

Scottish Rural Action, set up in 2013 with charitable status since 2018, collaborates with member and partner organisations to achieve a vision for rural Scotland of "vibrant and connected rural and island communities which have control over their future, and which contribute to building a society that is inclusive, just and sustainable." It organises the Scottish Rural Parliament which is a grassroots democratic assembly, bringing together people who live and work in rural and island Scotland to debate the issues that matter. It participates in the European Rural Parliaments, is a member of the European network of rural parliaments, and a partner in the European Rural Community Alliance. As such it provides a link through to issues of relevance across Europe. Skills Development Scotland note that the rural parliament "is a long-term, grassroots-driven process to amplify the voices of rural and island people; and to help mobilise rural and island communities in partnership with civil society and government."

Scottish Rural Action is working towards a concept of rural movement for Scotland, of which there are twenty-five across Europe. Such a movement is a civil society led network, the purpose of which is to maximise "opportunities for rural and island sustainability and wellbeing and to address persistent structural and intersectional inequalities that impact on rural and island communities." The networks should operate across levels of governance at local and national (Scottish) levels, and with government and its agencies.

In its vision for a rural movement, Scottish Rural Action argue it will provide a stronger and more coherent approach to "maximising opportunities for rural and island sustainability and wellbeing, and addressing persistent structural and intersectional inequalities that impact on rural and island communities." Halhead (2005) observes that such movements provide "a network and voice for rural areas, their people and the many organisations working for rural development." Atterton *et al*. (2022), in their review of rural movements, recommend that a Scottish rural movement should have a "clear identity and clarity of purpose related to networking and knowledge sharing".

To be effective, new structures require consensus of all stakeholders (e.g. citizens, communities, business, existing public authorities). Such structures would include a rural movement, RLUPs, and new groupings constituted for the governance of community-led initiatives such as renewable energy, woodlands, and peatland restoration.

Citizen participation in public discourse and decision-making is enshrined in the Aarhus Convention (UNECE, 1998). This is reflected in several areas of Scottish Government policy, notably Principle 7 of the Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement 2022 (Scottish Government, 2022a) which states "there should be meaningful collaboration and community engagement in decisions about land."

Numerous mechanisms are in place, or being designed, to support such participation and wider community engagement, and to advise and guide communities towards relevant resources (financial, operational). One mechanism which has become increasingly commonly used to facilitate citizen input to a given topic is Citizens Panels. Involve, a UK public participation charity, define a citizens panel as a "demographically representative group of citizens regularly used to assess public preferences and opinions" (Involve, 2022). The Scottish Parliament and other public bodies have set up such panels to consider topics such as climate change (Scotland's Climate Assembly, Andrews *et al.*, 2022).

Scotland's Climate Assembly was set up under the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 (2019). The Assembly comprised 106 citizens, convening on seven weekends between November 2020 and March 2021. It deliberated information provided by experts on the question *How should Scotland change to tackle the climate emergency in an effective and fair way?* They produced a set of recommendations for action which were then laid before the Scottish Parliament (23 June 2021). As per the requirements of the Act, Scottish Ministers published a statement of their response in December 2021. The Assembly met again on Saturday 22nd February 2022 to consider the government response, provide feedback, and further actions.

Citizens' Panels with rural, island and urban communities, were also used to understand citizens' views and acceptability in the development of Scotland's second National Transport Strategy (NTS2) and the draft policies and measures for its delivery (Transport Scotland, 2019). Such panels are being used by the Scottish Parliament with respect to its operations, and on health and social care.

A further important structure in which citizens have a direct say is that of directing funding to purposes of their choice within set parameters. One such approach is that of participatory budgeting which is a democratic process in which citizens decide directly how to spend part of a public budget. The Scottish Government has an aim of citizens having a direct say in the investment of local authority funds in communities, with at least 1% of local government mainstream budgets allocated by participatory budgeting (Scottish Government, 2021a). The National Participatory Budgeting Strategic group identified sixteen priorities, one of which (Priority 2) proposes that links between the Scottish National Performance Framework, community empowerment and participatory budgeting are made more explicit. It identifies the benefits of participatory budgeting in tackling cross-cutting issues "such as climate justice with a focus on a Just Transition with opportunities for participation in tackling climate change". The increased adoption of frameworks and processes, and authority to direct resources to a proscribed set of options, provides a basis of increased citizen roles in components of governance.

1.3. Smart Villages and Community-led Initiatives

The smart village concept is one which is being advanced in the EU within its [Long-term, Vision for Rural Areas](), and one element of which is to tackle climate change 'through the dissemination of best practices and the provision of guidance to access EU funding to consolidate the green transition.' Key parts of the funding of the EU LTVRAs will be through the future national Rural Development Programmes (2022-27).

The [ENRD (no date)]() identify the importance of Local Action Groups (LAGs) "in bringing people together, aggregating demand, mobilising voluntary labour and creating the business case for investments in broadband and other forms of connectivity." They argue that governance structures are required to ensure coordinated support for LEADER/CLLD Smart Villages across policies and sources of funds. In Scotland, [Smart Village Scotland]() is an economic and community development project comprising a network of connected smart villages, guided by [GrowBiz](). The network aligns very closely to the evolution of initiatives in the European Union under its Smart Villages banner. Smart Village Scotland use a broad definition of 'village' to include clusters of villages (e.g. [Meigle and Ardler](), Perthshire).

Slee (2018) notes that from the Scottish smart villages, "communities with both the cohesion and capacity to engage in community-led place making and to draw down public support are able to make profound differences to the wellbeing of their citizens." Slee (2018) also identifies three requirements for smart villages of: i) a group of committed activists at community level, with the aspiration and skills to make a difference; ii) a supportive architecture of policies which can be drawn down to help fulfil those aspirations; iii) spatial targeting to ensure that the already smart villages do not use their smartness to capture ever more of the public and charitable funds that are on offer. Concomitantly, mechanisms are required to monitor and alert policy-makers to villages or communities that are without the human and social capital to develop community-led placemaking and risk being left behind. Procedures for approving and disbursing of public funds can be barriers for small community-led projects for which the requirements for applying and managing funds are disproportionate to the amount sought.

The characteristics of Smart Villages align closely to the concept of social innovation, contributing to shaping and accelerating development trajectories in social and socio-ecological transitions (Haxeltine *et al.,* 2017). Beneficial outcomes include better social relations, enhanced self-organisation and resilience of communities, and improved skills (Ravazzoli *et al.*, 2021). Social innovations contribute to building new practices, networks and governance arrangements, some formal (e.g. Development Trusts, e.g. [Fintry Development Trust]()), others informal (e.g. volunteer groups), and several linked through networks (e.g. [Scottish Communities Climate Action Network]()). They also reflect some of the needs of rural movements identified by Halhead (2006), notably for sustainable means of resourcing rather than relying on voluntary labour.

In the EU that will be reflected in the National CAP Strategies, to align with the overarching aims of the Rural Development Programmes 2021-2027 (e.g. innovation, solutions that are sustainable from economic, environmental, and social perspectives, and involving rural communities in the design of interventions and structures that facilitate social innovation in rural areas). In the Scottish Rural Development Programme the closest alignment to the CAP is through the Community Led Local Development (CLLD) for which £11.6m was allocated for financial year 2023/24. Of this, £8.6m was to LAGs and £3m through the [Rural and Island Communities Ideas into Action]() (RICIA).

Numerous such initiatives have been taken in Scotland, some in response to support and funding from Scottish Government, notably the [Climate Challenge Fund (CCF)](), National Lottery, and European Union supported mechanisms through the Scottish Rural Development Programme. Several such initiatives are specifically related to tackling climate change, or contribute to mitigating climate change (e.g. renewable energy) representing an aim or co-benefit of their principal operation (e.g. supply of fruit and vegetables).

From the analysis of social and economic outcomes and institutional forms, Slee (2020) provides evidence of the positive benefits of building social capital and developing community resilience, and of 'greater engagement with GHG reducing behaviour'. That finding is supported by the evidence from [Irvine *et al.*]()

(2020) in relation to the CCF, who note the benefits of building community capacity to embed a legacy of continued bottom-up change which can also support larger-scale policy intervention.

From the findings of 13 in-depth case studies across Europe, which included 3 in Scotland (Lochcarron, Braemar and Huntly), Ravazzoli *et al.* (2021) showed the high importance of locally available expertise of relevance, flexibility of people's schedules to be able to participate in events in evening or weekends, and financial resources to cover personal costs (e.g. travel), and locally available human capital for actors in social innovations to take the roles of innovator, follower, and core group (Secco *et al.*, 2019).

A change in the policy landscape and support has been provided by the Land Reform Act, Community Empowerment Act, and funding mechanisms (e.g. National Forest Land Scheme; Scottish Land Fund; Community Asset Transfer Scheme) and organisations (e.g. Community Land Scotland, Scottish Land Commission). Across Scotland there is a broad range of well established community led initiatives and social innovations. Lessons learnt in one social innovation can be scaled out following locally specific development pathways (Kluvánková *et al.*, 2021). Ravazzoli *et al.* (2021) provide empirical evidence of the 'stabilizing effect that empowers local and regional stakeholders to further engage in social innovation initiatives'. These are aided by peer-to-peer learning, and through networks of interested actors within the area directly associated with the innovation. They could also include members of communities of interest depending upon the context and circumstances of the activity. Examples of such initiatives are:

i) Blackhaugh Community Farm, Spittalfield, is community managed, following an ethos that combines inclusion and sustainability goals. Taybank Growers Cooperative, an example of which was a project secured through the Climate Challenge Fund. The project (The Wheat We Eat) was designed to help people to source local and ecologically produced wheat and flour and learn about the impact of food on climate change. Its actions include planting trees, production of vegetables, fruits, and herbs. Its characteristics are similar to those of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).

ii) Portmoak Community Woodland (Portmoak and Kilmagad) was purchased with funds raised by the local community, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is managed by the Woodland Trust and the local community through a steering group. A second woodland has since been purchased, at Kilmagad, and a peatland restoration project funded by Peatland Action.

iii) The Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust (HPCLT), comprises partner organisations which works to connect woodlands across Highland Perthshire from Schiehallion to Loch Tummel.

Increasingly, communities are identifying opportunities to take the lead in several types of initiatives, the benefits from which may not be apparent to, or valued by, public or private sector organisations. Smallscale, community-led, projects can provide key social and functional links to the smaller number of larger, landscape or territorial level, projects. These types of initiatives in Scotland have similarities to some of the 10 shared goals of the EU LTVRA, notably that of rural communities and stakeholders which are engaged in multi-level and place-based governance.

2. Position of the Multi-Actor Platform

2.1.   Strengths and Needs for Governance

Section 1.1 provided an overview of selected organisations with responsibilities that cover resources or functions in rural Scotland. It illustrates an extensive range of types of governance and associated structures based on geography (e.g. Catchment partnerships; Local Biodiversity Partnerships), service type (Rural General Practitioners Association of Scotland and associated groupings), and topic (e.g. National Rural Mental Health Forum). Cross-overs in representation on different groupings mean that, in addition to delivering within their own remits, they **facilitate contact between levels of governance, across topics and**

between geographic areas of Scotland, including adjacent groupings with equivalent responsibilities. Selected examples of such groupings or partnerships are:

- Local Biodiversity Partnerships – There are 28 biodiversity partnerships, each of which has its own Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP), and the distinct plans of each of the two National Parks.

- Catchment partnerships – Waylen *et al*. (2019), identify four examples of such formal partnerships are the River Dee Catchment Partnership, the Tweed Forum, Spey Catchment Initiative, and the River South Esk Partnership. The SHERPA UK MAP Dee Catchment is affiliated to the Dee Catchment Partnership. That partnership was founded in 2003 to provide a collective drive to develop an agreed management plan for the river, to be at the heart of every partner's activities.

- Fisheries Trusts – There are 25 fisheries and rivers trusts in Scotland. These are environmental charities which promote conservation and evidence-based management of fisheries, undertake environmental monitoring and improvement actions, and raise awareness and educate the public about the aquatic environment.

- Grazing committees – These committees have certain responsibilities for managing the land designated as common grazings, of which there are over 1,000, covering approximately 500,000 ha. Common grazings are areas used by several crofters and others who hold a right to graze stock on that land. Membership of the grazing committees comprises crofters who are elected from others with a stake in a particular area of grazing. Their remit includes making local grazing regulations which they administer but which need approval by the Crofter's Commission. Grazings Committees are the point of contact for parties with proposals for economic development on the Common Grazings, and only they can take up a proposal on part of a common grazing other than grazing or woodland, examples of which are plans for wind turbines.

Such institutional arrangements or partnerships have characteristics consistent with the definition of governance adopted in the Paper, and good governance as defined by the OHCHR. They are **examples of effective governance structures which provide core functions within rural areas across several of the different forms highlighted in Section 1.1**. However, they need to maintain awareness of contemporary evidence relevant to their remits and use that to inform their strategic planning and operational decision-making.

Evidence suggested governance frameworks (top-down, bottom-up, hybrid) need to provide coherent approaches to progressing towards sustainability. For example, Nelson *et al*. (2019) researched the governance of transport in Scotland, reporting it as having excessive layers of governance, leading to challenges for making decisions. They concluded that improvements in governance of strategic transport issues hinge on closer integration between spatial planning and transport planning processes." Munoz-Rojas *et al*. (2015) analysed the spatial patterns of governance in north-east Scotland. They provided evidence of the spatial consequences of the gaps between urban and rural planning, and on the prospective delivery of certain public goods with respect to different types of land tenure. They show that the relationships between different levels of governance structures tend to be thematic (e.g. networks of conservation designations) or aligned within administrative areas. There appears to be a **need for a high-level mapping of governance frameworks onto policy aims to identify gaps in approaches for the same geographic areas, and of approaches which are poorly aligned or contradictory.**

In 2022, at the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) (the CBD's governing body), world leaders adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which includes the targets of restoring 30% of degraded ecosystems by 2030, and reducing tenfold the risk and rate of species' extinction by 2050. To achieve this goal, Dasgupta (2021) argues that it will require a mix of several types of regulatory and voluntary approaches. Planning new protected areas (terrestrial and marine) will require reinvigorated cooperation between parties, as evidenced by public discussion over the prospective implementation of Highly Protected Marine Areas in Scotland. **A challenge remains to identify the process and implementation of**

dialogue between communities, institutions and production sectors in rural Scotland (e.g. fisheries, aquaculture, energy, tourism).

Dasgupta (2021) also proposes a rethink of policy levers to transform economic systems to incentivise sustainable decision-making through new fiscal incentives (e.g. repurposing subsidies); removing financial barriers (e.g. providing dedicated credit lines) for sustainable practices; and the involvement of Indigenous people and local communities. With the complexity of governance structures in rural Scotland, there is potential for levers to have competing consequences, particularly if a place-based focus is at odds with the aims of higher levels of governance.

New forms of governance are emerging in which rural communities are taking responsibility for organising aspects of local transport (e.g. car sharing, electric vehicle hubs). One component of that governance is in implementing the logistics of planning the availability of vehicles, at times of most need for most people, whilst also catering for those with limited alternatives. **The organisation of such a service would be aided by access to calculators which could reconcile requirements of geographic siting of resources with respect to demand and popular destinations (e.g. health, education and retail services).** The provision of such tools would provide opportunities for research teams and new services by micro-businesses.

Wilson *et al.* (2022), in a review of business and university collaboration, identified the need for anchor organisations around which existing and new partnerships can be built. Such organisations are place-based with a mission inherently bound up in the local area. These have had central roles in the development and implementation of plans for the future and are not dependent upon the success of a given initiative. Local authorities, universities and research institutes often fulfilled such a role in the development of proposals for support through City and Regional Growth Deals. These Deals are **examples of where aligning funding streams and transferring investment from national to local governance could contribute to enable the delivery of person-centred, place-based integrated support,** as envisaged in the National Strategy for Economic Transition (Scottish Government, 2022).

New opportunities can be anticipated for rural areas as public policy evolves towards proposals for a nature positive economy. The examples of governance in rural Scotland should position it well to align with the description of UNEP (2021) as "regenerative, collaborative and where growth is only valued where it contributes to social progress and environmental protection". **New economic governance mechanisms should be characterised by measures or arrangements of different scope and scale (from local to global) to facilitate partnering of public, private and civil society stakeholders. They should ensure that participation is embedded in processes, deliberation, and cooperation structures.**

Understanding the opportunities which could emerge from a nature positive economy, and the introduction of new governance structures (e.g. RLUPs) or scaling out existing types of structures (e.g. Community Development Trusts), requires investment in the relevant human and social capital. **Actors throughout value chains should be involved at early stages of planning to understand the actions which are needed on the ground** (e.g. designing and implementing nature based solutions; renewable energy developments).

In a study of forest governance in Scotland, Sharma *et al.* (2023), observed a need for more flexible arrangements and structures between governments and private institutions. They propose an approach based upon "glocalization" in which problems are tackled locally according to the specific needs of the place and communities, but are of a global domain. To support the goal of protecting 30% of all land, inland waters, and oceans, beyond reforms of economic and fiscal incentives there is **a need for effective local governance and benefit-sharing to ensure local communities can be assisted in participating in the local economy of protected areas**. There is also **a need for safeguards to protect against loss of income or other benefits which are provided areas which are subsequently designated.**

Practicalities of achieving high level policies aimed at enhancing public goods are likely to be topics taken up by rural movements. In Scotland, such a rural movement is likely to be a coalition of multiple movements which needs to reflect the diversity in circumstances of rural areas across the country. Within Scotland there are differences in regional identities such as those with traditions regarding language (e.g. Gaelic) and dialects (e.g. Doric), territorial histories, and contemporary pressures and opportunities. Such a movement needs to recognise the availability of natural, human, and financial resources of some areas to achieve objectives that are less easily attained by other areas. It should **ensure there are 'safety nets' for those areas which may only be able to evolve at a slower pace.**

Governance infrastructures such as the Scottish Rural Parliament and a prospective rural movement can be expected to be to the fore at times when rural areas are under pressure such as due to extreme events or circumstances (e.g. weather, pandemic). The Scottish Government guidance on resilience and the structures and regulatory duties in place (Scottish Government, 2016). These guidelines note the "importance of involving the community in its own recovery", and of helping "the community to help itself in the event of an emergency in a way which complements the activities of responders."

Local evidence of the impacts of Storm Arywn (November 2021), illustrated how public, private and third sector groups take responsibilities for aiding citizens, businesses, and services in need. New groupings formed in response to circumstances not experienced in the living memory of most citizens (e.g. lockdowns or quarantining relating to COVID-19), tackling a shared problem with innovations in communications and the provision of support. These societal challenges also provided **evidence of weaknesses in governance**. For example, **gaps required to be filled where there was a lack of clarity regarding authority to act** (e.g. knowledge of households requiring assistance with provision when in COVID quarantine), or where **rules were overly reliant on technological solutions** (e.g. use of internet and mobile communications for reporting problems and obtaining advice in places where outages of domestic electricity prohibited their immediate use or over periods of several days). The approach strategy should be refined such that **risk governance reflects a 'whole of society effort'** in which businesses, civil society organisations, individuals and the public sector respect the shared ethical norms, principles and values of society (OECD, 2020).

Relatively new approaches for facilitating the direct involvement of citizens in policy discourse and decision-making offer promising means of the characteristics of governance of rural areas more closely aligning with the UN definition of good governance. In their evaluation of Scottish Parliament citizen's panels, members of parliamentary committees reported a particular strength was that they represented "a different way of trying to capture … information", and "a view from the public" about "what they want", which deliver instrumental benefits (e.g. Scottish Parliament's Citizens' Panels on Primary Care) (Elstub *et al.*, 2019). **Such approaches should be increasingly mainstreamed, together with direct prioritising of resources (e.g. participatory budgeting) to guide investment in rural areas in line with nature positive and wellbeing concepts.**

Research into, and monitoring of, the socio-economic and biophysical characteristics of rural Scotland (e.g. Demographic change in the Sparsely Populated Areas of Scotland (1991-2046); Copus and Hopkins, 2018), and research resources supported by the EU Horizon Europe and Scottish Government Strategic Research Programme (2022-27) provide mechanisms for co-constructing visions of future land uses (e.g. Virtual Landscape Theatre; Wang *et al.*, 2016). Such data and tools are used to inform debate and planning by the public, private and third sectors and citizens. Increasingly, such data and tools are being made available for open use in line with obligations for Open Data and Open Science. These data also have requirements for governance in relation to their provision, accessibility, maintenance and uses. As more data become available, and capabilities for their use expands across types of stakeholders, so their good governance become more important. Issues of confidentiality, cyber-security, ethics all needs to be taken into account. Consideration should be given to the **governance and access to data, with principles established for identifying what data are public or private goods, and reporting at multiple levels** (local, regional, national) (also noted by the MAPs in Miller *et al.*, 2020).

2.2.   Recent Interventions and Actions

As noted in Section 1.1, existing governance structures within rural areas reflect the significance of factors such as land ownership and tenure, resources, and services. In various combinations two or more of the public, private and voluntary sectors are represented in these structures although not always as equal partners (e.g. observers rather than members).

New governance structures are being formed or emerging, with tackling climate change and reversing the loss of biodiversity as triggers and opportunities. The Programme for Government (2021/22) and Scotland's 3rd Land Use Strategy (Scottish Government, 2021b) committed the Scottish Government to creating Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs) as part of its strategy for tackling climate change. These are emerging governance "partnerships facilitating natural capital led collaboration on regional land use changes to help Scotland's just transition to net-zero, involving local and national government, communities, land owners, land managers, and wider stakeholders." One of their aims, by 2023, is to inform development of Regional Land Use Frameworks (RLUFs) by using 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, such as improving biodiversity."

In February 2021, five pilot RLUPs were announced as:

- Cairngorms National Park (National Park area)
- The Highland Region (subsequently with a focus on North-west Sutherland)
- Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park (National Park area)
- North East Region (Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Council areas)
- South of Scotland (Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Borders Council areas).

The aim of the pilots is to test the practicalities of different ways to establish RLUPs, and options for their governance and partnership working at a regional scale. The pilot RLUPs are built on different institutional arrangements with local councils or National Park Authorities as the lead organisation, which are responsible for administering the £50k grant allocated to each RLUP for 2021/22 (see Appendix 1).

The Regional Land Use Partnerships could provide a further stimulus for civil society led initiatives, and the broadening of the community base for actions towards climate neutrality. They should have a role in linking national land use objectives with the characteristics of each area, and with local communities. The Scottish Land Use Strategy (Scottish Government, 2021b) notes that the pilot Partnerships will enable the testing of "governance options and partnership working on a regional scale to understand how best to work collaboratively", and adoption of structures that meet regional and local requirements, and that facilitate and signpost funding opportunities for land owners, managers and community groups.

Public policy is beginning to recognise measures of economies that are wider than financial and economic. A cultural shift is taking place at global, EU and Scottish levels towards wellbeing and nature positive economies as concepts for rebalancing the limitations of GDP for measuring wellbeing. The Environment Strategy (Scottish Government 2022b) has several Outcomes Pathways, one of which relates to *Our thriving, sustainable economy conserves and grows our natural assets.* It confirms the commitment to the Leaders' Pledge for Nature (2020) by Scotland's First Minister, including to protect at least 30% of terrestrial areas and seas and restoring land outside protected areas by 2030. The commitment also includes a just transition to a net zero, nature-positive economy, which includes the creation of new opportunities for nature-based businesses and jobs, spreading the benefits of a just transition to rural and island economies. However, commitment that does not avoid debates about implementation where site level plans and changes may be

at variance to the aims of the policy (e.g. debate over development of the Energy Transition Zone in south Aberdeen).

The Scottish Government (2022c) National Strategy for Economic Transformation reaffirms a commitment to a wellbeing economy, under three ambitions (fairer, wealthier and greener), and a programme of actions. It proposes a framework for linking sectoral with regional strategies (e.g. 8 Regional Economic Partnerships; 12 City Region and Growth Deals; Place Plans, such as for Arrochar, Tarbet & Ardlui in Argyll and Bute), and its net zero and environment strategies.

One guide for the implementation of the policy of a wellbeing economy is following the Place Principle. This recognises that "place is where people, location and resources combine to create a sense of identity and purpose and are at the heart of addressing the needs and realising the full potential of communities." The Principle is that places are shaped by the way resources, services and assets are directed and used by the people who live in and invest in them; and that there is a joined-up, collaborative, and participative approach to services, land and buildings, across all sectors within a place (Our Place, no date). One stated aim of the use of the Place Principle is to "overcome organisational and sectoral boundaries". Its use was approved for use by the Scottish Government (February 2018) with a commitment to work in partnership with the Scottish local authorities for its implementation.

To aid implementation of the Place Principle, Public Health Scotland developed the Place Standard Tool. It provides a means of enabling participants to assess the physical environment (e.g. buildings, streets, public spaces and natural spaces in a place; and the social environment such as the relationships, social contact and support networks that make up a community). This tool is open for anyone to use, but also has a formal step which can register to set up and manage a Place Standard Group, enabling them to create assessments and compare results between groups, contributing to a governance structure for capturing information and its subsequent use. To make effective use of outputs from the adoption of the Place Principle implies a need for coherent governance for the provision of services within a territory with an open definition of its geography and an expectation of a high level of collaboration across sectors. However, there is a risk of it being used to focus on the desires of current inhabitants and generations. There merit in its use for purposes of securing public funding for investment being accompanied by a requirement that the place plan should not disadvantage future generations.

The Place Principle enables communities take the lead in developing visions for their areas. This may be triggered by a gap in the existing provision, or discontent of citizens, businesses and civil society with the circumstances of their area. In situations where the public and private sectors, and existing institutional arrangements are insufficient or do not exist, civil society and community-led initiatives can intervene, fill a gap and fulfil a need. This is reflected in the definition of social innovation developed by the H2020 SIMRA project of 'the reconfiguring of social practices, in response to societal challenges, which seeks to enhance outcomes on societal well-being and necessarily includes the engagement of civil society actors" (Polman *et al.*, 2017). Across Scotland there is a broad range of well-established social innovations, several of which have direct roles in contributing to approaches of the use of land in transitions towards climate neutrality.

Social innovations have benefited from policy support from in the form of the Land Reform Act, Community Empowerment Act, and associated funding and mechanisms (e.g. National Forest Land Scheme; Scottish Land Fund; Community Asset Transfer Scheme) and organisations (e.g. Community Land Scotland, Scottish Land Commission). However, they rely on voluntary contributions by citizens, their representatives or third sector organisations. The governance of such initiatives varies, and evolves over time particularly if resources require to be owned or managed (e.g. community assets, finances), or employees taken on. Slee (2020) describes how these can evolve and three principal forms of governance structures of community development trust, cooperative or community benefit society, and a shared ownership model.

Development trusts are community-owned and led organisations. Their aim is to "create social, economic and environmental renewal in a defined geographical area, creating wealth within that area and keeping it there." (Development Trusts Association Scotland). The Development Trusts Association Scotland has 368

member Trusts, representing many but not all such trusts in Scotland. The Association provides "information, expert help and light touch support in areas such as governance, organisational development, financial planning and reporting, asset transfer and community ownership, staffing and community shares." Examples of community trusts or equivalent structures are the Braemar Community Limited (renewable energy), Newcastleton Community Trust (greenspace, petrol stations), Fintry Development Trust (renewable energy), Lochcarron Community Development Company (woodlands), Huntly Development Trust (travel hub, heritage, renewable energy, town refurbishment), and Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn. (Crofting/agriculture, land buy-out, tourism). All such Trusts have the authority and structures to plan and act within their defined remits, all for community well-being.

Social innovations have emerged to provide humanitarian support for migrants from conflict zones. Conflicts in Ukraine, Syria and Afghanistan have led to an emerging group of displaced peoples, many relocated in rural areas. Progressively, structures have been developed that provide guidance and support to those displaced and those involved in the delivery of services (e.g. accommodation, health and education) such as the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine). Some predominantly rural local authorities have specific integration strategies (e.g. Aberdeenshire).

A unique, national, social innovation is one which emerged from research by Change Mental Health and Scotland's Rural College revealing a significant gap in knowledge of how people with mental illness experience their day to day lives across rural Scotland. Subsequently, the National Rural Mental Health Forum was formed in 2017, now comprising a network of over 230 organisations from third, private and public sectors. The Forum works to improve mental health support in rural Scotland, through building resilience in communities and workplaces, raising awareness, tackling stigma, and furthering research and informing policy. An action of the Scottish Government Mental Health Strategy (2017 to 2027) (Scottish Government, 2017) is to "support the further development of the National Rural Mental Health Forum to reflect the unique challenges presented by rural isolation." The Forum fills a gap in the public and private sectors in relation to support for mental health in rural areas, through its monthly information sessions, and is emblematic of characteristics of good governance as per the OHCHR of delivery on human rights.

2.3. Recommendations from the MAP

2.3.1. Recommendations for future rural policies

As proposed by Dasgupta (2021), there is a need for more coordinated actions of intergovernmental organizations, governments across levels of governance, businesses, communities, and citizens for tackling society-wide challenges such as climate change and the loss of biodiversity.

The portfolio of governance structures with remits that apply to rural Scotland cover where and how people live, work and spend recreational time. All of these elements were discussed in the vision for rural areas of the Rural Scotland and Dee Catchment MAPs (Miller *et al.*, 2020). The various forms of existing governance and those emerging have their own strengths and weaknesses, about which one can expect differences in opinion amongst interested parties.

The examples of the forms of governance described in Sections 1 and 2 have a range of levers they can deploy and means of influencing with the aim of delivering on their remits and achieving their objectives. Broadly, they can be categorised as: Infrastructure based (e.g. investing in public transport, recycling systems), Information based (e.g. skills development, capacity building, certification and ecolabelling), Economic and financial (e.g. low emissions zone charges, subsidise electric bikes), Regulatory (e.g. due diligence, public procurement, statutory targets). A challenge for central governments (i.e. UK, Scottish) is to whether the levers with which different levels and forms of governance are equipped are most appropriate for contemporary circumstances, and what levers should be made available to new and emerging forms of governance.

Some governance frameworks and arrangements in rural Scotland have inherent weaknesses. The diversity of bodies responsible for biophysical or socio-economic areas leaves scope for gaps in responsibilities to become apparent when faced with unpredictable circumstances and times of stress (e.g. extreme weather events; COVID-19). During such times of stress there is evidence of benefits which accrued through collaboration between public, private and third sectors in the interests of a shared sense of common good.

Investment in natural capital is likely to be of increasing interest to the public, private and third sectors. This reflects combined implications of public policy for mitigating climate change, reversing the loss of biodiversity, and empowering communities. Funds for green finance, impact investing and crowdfunding are likely to continue to increase in significance in rural areas, and for which appropriate governance structures are required. Regulations and governance structures will be required to remain contemporary as new finance models are designed and offered.

The RLUPs offer prospects of bringing to bear multiple perspectives on the potential changes in land use in given regions. To be effective, new governance structures such as the RLUPs require acceptance by all types of stakeholders (e.g. citizens, communities, businesses, existing public authorities), and for all aspects of their governance to be clear and unambiguous. Not all the RLUP pilots will be progressed into a fully operational status, and other areas are likely to be invited to express an interest in becoming RLUPs. However, they need time to prove the approach can work and reflections on which models of governance are most effective in different circumstances.

Specific recommendations for steps to improve governance in sectors of rural Scotland are:

i) A high-level mapping of governance frameworks onto policies with the aim of identifying, a) gaps in delivery of public goods, and b) approaches operating in the same geographic areas which are not complementary and consequently need a plan for resolution.

ii) Aligning funds from different sources for coherent approaches to ensuring just transitions to net zero GHG emissions and identifying options for future uses of rural land.

iii) Streamline governance structures to reduce the complexity across Scotland.

iv) Mechanisms for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as part of professionalising all levels of governance including the provision and receipt of advice.

v) The RLUP concept should be given sufficient time, and more resources, to enable their structures to evolve and fine-tuned to function in ways that are appropriate to the different types of areas and existing governance structures covering the five pilot areas.

vi) Plans for the mainstreaming of participatory budgeting should be accelerated. Sources of funds available for participatory budgeting structures and processes should be extended to include levies on large scale developments in rural areas (e.g. large scale renewable energy developments), and in directing options for Section 75 Agreements of planning.

vii) Updating resilience planning for the governance of infrastructure and natural and human resources critical to the safety, quality of life, and the connectivity of rural areas in the face of malicious and non-malicious risks. This should include reviewing the terms of 'community insurance' to reduce potential barriers to actions.

viii) Mechanisms for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as part of professionalising all levels of governance including the provision and receipt of advice (i.e. those giving the advice, and those being advised), and peer to peer support.

ix) Building platforms for sharing knowledge to inform more agile responses to tackling challenges facing rural areas, and accelerating learning and the adjustment of policies, rules and norms.

x) The encouragement and support for developing smart villages should be accompanied by mechanisms for monitoring and alerting policymakers of those communities which do not have the human and social capital required to develop community-led placemaking and run the risk of being left behind.

2.3.2. Recommendations for future research agendas

The review of governance of rural Scotland with respect to managing its natural and human resources, and with visions for its future identified gaps in knowledge and topics of research. The findings of contemporary research in the Scottish Government Strategic Research Programme (2022-27), Horizon Europe, and UKRI research programmes will contribute to addressing these gaps.

Particular topics for research and questions which were identified are:

i) What is the relevant level of subsidiarity for levers of policy that can instigate or manage change in rural areas? The aim is to understand what impacts certain levers could have on achieving public policies such as the Climate Action Plan (Scottish Government, 2022d) and the Scottish Land Use Strategy (Scottish Government, 2021b).

ii) What evidence is there of the types of impacts and consequences of different forms of participatory governance? The aim is to understand what benefits accrue from participatory governance (e.g. sense of ownership of decisions or outcomes), and unintended negative consequences (e.g. due to poor governance structures or mechanisms).

iii) What are the implications of different forms of governance (e.g. tenure, public/private partnerships) on natural resource management, with a particular emphasis on natural capital and mitigating and adapting to climate change? The aim is to gain insights to how structures such as the Regional Land Use Partnerships can inform, guide or direct investment in natural capital.

iv) Are some types of governance structures more appropriate for islands and island communities, and how can their impacts be assessed? The aim is to understand unique characteristics associated with island environments and ways of life.

v) What changes in governance would be required for the operation of nature positive and wellbeing economies? For example, what governance structures are most appropriate for community-led initiatives to draw upon green finance for investment in green jobs. The aim is to understand what governance arrangements may need to change for policy aims of nature positive economies to be achieved as envisaged in the report by Dasgupta (2021) (e.g. under the forthcoming Scottish Environment Strategy).

vi) Does local control of media (e.g. content, production, broadcasting) lead to different outcomes of rural futures? The aim is to understand whether or how governance of media, such as metropolitan control, may impact upon the debates and narratives of issues that affect rural areas, and the weight allocated to evidence used in decision-making?

vii) What role does the provision of services in Gaelic and languages other than English have in the governance of rural areas? The aim is to understand whether increasing support for, and use of, Gaelic and other languages other than English would enhance human and social capital, levels of participation and inclusivity, and norms of human behaviour in rural areas.

Evaluations such as those identified require to be undertaken independently and objectively. This recognises the need for assessments to be credible, with no influences from those sponsoring or directly involved in initiatives who may have vested interests in the findings, or those who may seek their discrediting.

3. Conclusions

A key challenge for public, private, and voluntary sectors is to reconcile the multiple levels of governance of rural areas. These governance structures continue to evolve with new ones proposed and emerging, to go alongside those which exist (some for centuries) or are taking on new responsibilities. They need to reflect contemporary requirements and be flexible for adapting to rapidly changing contents in the public, private and third sectors.

Rural areas are part of the solutions for tackling climate change as highlighted in the Higgins Report into a Robust, Resilient Wellbeing Economy for Scotland (Higgins *et al.*, 2020). Their residents should benefit from the premium products, creative spaces, natural and social assets as well as those who visit. Governance structures, new and existing, should provide means of supporting actions in rural areas. The mainstreaming of recently introduced mechanisms, such as participatory budgeting, which are being tested for tackling climate change, should be accelerated.

New opportunities arising from increased understanding of the potential and roles of green jobs and natural capital should increasingly be utilised to provide communities with the potential for new income streams and strengthening or revitalising dimensions of rural areas. The concept of innovation hubs that focus on specific aspects of natural capital, such as multi-functional peatland restoration, woodland expansion, and nature-based solutions more broadly. They can be exemplars of collaborative working between business, civil society and policy, providing a focus for the creation of new jobs, skills, and income for communities. Their monitoring provide opportunities for research, citizen science, and the generation of Open Data. Such hubs could offer contemporary dimensions of a territory's identity and sense of place.

Understanding the complexities of the governance of resources, institutions and services in rural areas is key to developing policies and practices that can tackle challenges faced by citizens, communities and businesses, and enhance the opportunities for work and life. Such an understanding requires research on different aspects of rural governance, including a recognition that there may be direct and indirect influences of governance on people, place, and resources.

In most cases, governance structures require to be stable and long term in nature. New and emerging opportunities for developing community resilience and prosperity, such as investment in natural capital and nature-based solutions, have significant lag times in achieving their intended impacts and outcomes. The development of such solutions should be eligible for support mechanisms (e.g. through RDP, Peatland Action, or equivalent funding mechanisms) that provide sufficient time for an income stream to develop as an output from suitable financial models. The types of financial models offered (e.g. private or blended investment in natural capital assets) should be designed to have a low barrier to community-led uptake with a level of risk that is clearly understood and within a governance structure suited to it being taken on. Such a structure is likely to require professional skills from business, science, and practice domains.

In the main, policy aims at international, EU and Scottish levels point to closer working between actors in science, society, and policy for the planning and sustainable management of rural areas. Increased reliance on the voluntary sector and societies places obligations on them for the good governance of their structures, ensuring probity and processes that are auditable. That requires increasing the knowledge and skills of local actors and professionalising the training and mentoring to support civil society groups. Organisations such as the Food Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC) provide a charitable body of independent information and knowledge to help with actions on-the-ground that are to the benefit of citizens, farming and the environment, as well as delivering safe and nutritious food in an equitable manner.

In turn benefit will be gained from leveraging the perspectives and knowledge of local actors when defining needs for skills, education and training (e.g. the land use apprenticeships currently being designed by Skills Development Scotland). Those skills should cover requirements for a nature positive economy (e.g. digitalisation of natural capital assets, drones for monitoring peatland restoration) and managing and

administering civil society groups (e.g. accounts, procurement). This would also be in line with the National Strategy for Economic Transition (Scottish Government, 2022c) and its stated aim of developing empowered leaders needed, with delivery capabilities and governance skills.

High quality, authoritative and respected scientific evidence and practice knowledge have significant roles in the good governance of rural areas (UNEP Environmental Governance Subprogramme). It underpins evidence-based planning, decision-making and implementation of processes that manage and account for natural economic and human resources. Suitably designed and operated science, society, policy interface, such as the Scottish Government SEFARI Gateway, can provide effective forums and mechanisms for developing shared understanding the aspirations and needs of all sectors and actors, and co-development of knowledge and solutions to challenges facing rural areas.

4. Acknowledgements

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Annex 1 Regional Land Use Partnerships

Five pilot Regional Land Use Partnerships were set up in February 2021. They have different types of structure and leadership to test an aim of which is to test the practicalities of different ways to establish RLUPs, and options for the governance and partnership working on a regional scale.

For the Cairngorms pilot RLUP, the draft National Park Authority Partnership Plan for 2022-27 notes that the RLUP "as a decision-making partnership for governance" will "utilise the existing Cairngorms National Park Authority board, with technical assistance from the Cairngorms Upland Advisory Group (CUAG) and other Cairngorms forums as required." It plans to prepare specific Terms of Reference for the "CUAG involvement in the RLUP pilot to avoid any potential conflicts of interest." It also notes that the Plan "is the Strategic Regional Land Use Framework and Regional Spatial Strategy for the National Park".

For the North-east Region a new structure is being developed for the RLUP Pilot Board. As of early 2022, the process being taken forward was to: i) progress non-political appointments to the RLUP Pilot Board; ii) agree that political appointments to the RLUP Pilot Board shall be on a politically proportionate basis; iii) develop the governance arrangement and Terms of Reference of the Board (from Aberdeenshire Council, Report to the Infrastructure Services Committee – 20 January 2022).

The South of Scotland pilot RLUP aims to have a "tripartite model of government/land use sector/community representation, locally representative and democratic." Information on appointments is not yet available.

The Highland Region pilot RLUP is under the auspices of Highland Council, with the North West 2045 Group providing a forum for stakeholder and community engagement, and mechanisms for developing visions in which natural capital approaches form a part.

A prospective rollout of further RLUPs is planned for 2023, although there is also an option of drawing to a close any of the pilot RLUPs.

Annex 2 Maps of Examples of Governance Arrangements

Maps follow of the geographic coverage of three selected examples of governance arrangements, responsibilities, or rights: rights to gold and silver, Deer Management Groups, pilot Regional Land Use Partnerships.
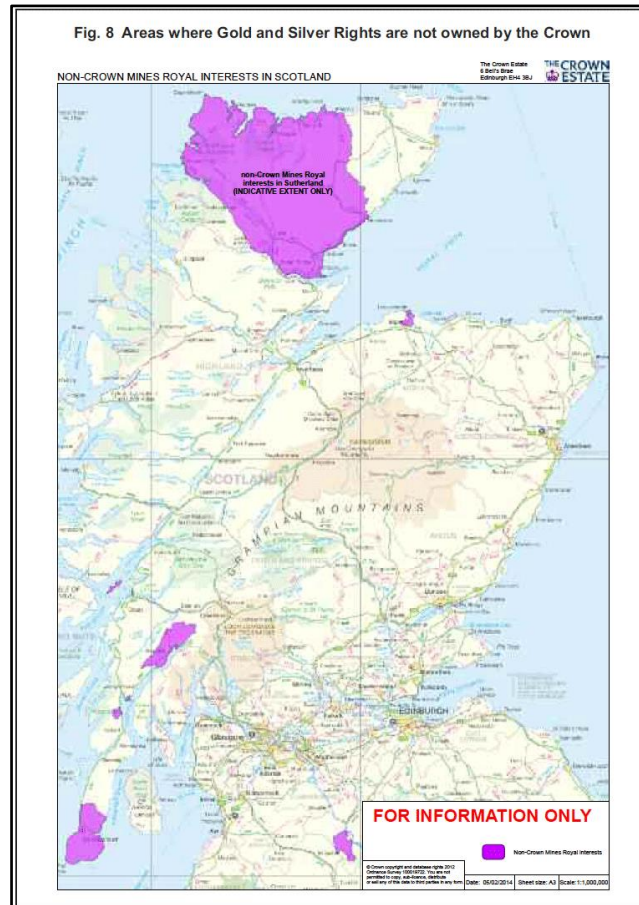

Figure App. 1. Areas where the rights to gold and silver are not held by the Crown. (Source: The Crown Estate, cited in Land Reform Review Group, 2014, page 55).
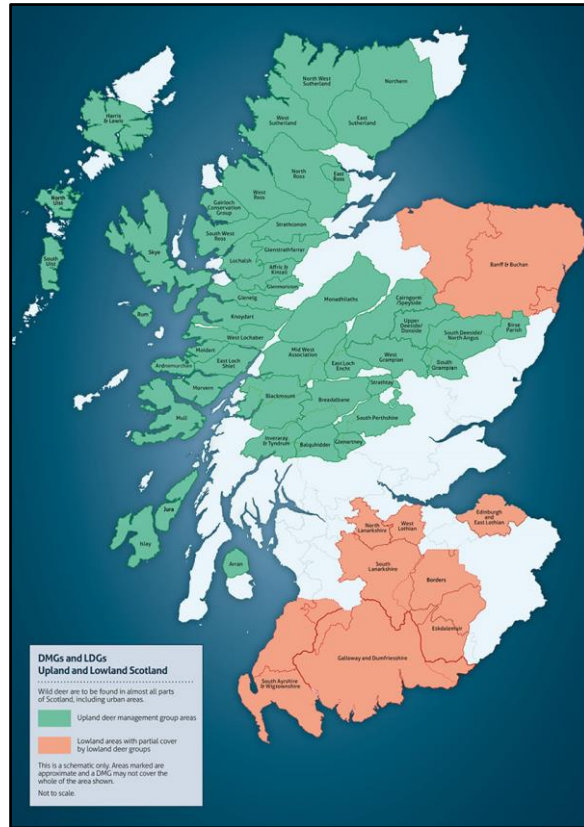
Figure App. 2. Coverage of Deer Management Groups in Scotland (upland and lowland) (Source: Association of Deer Management Groups).
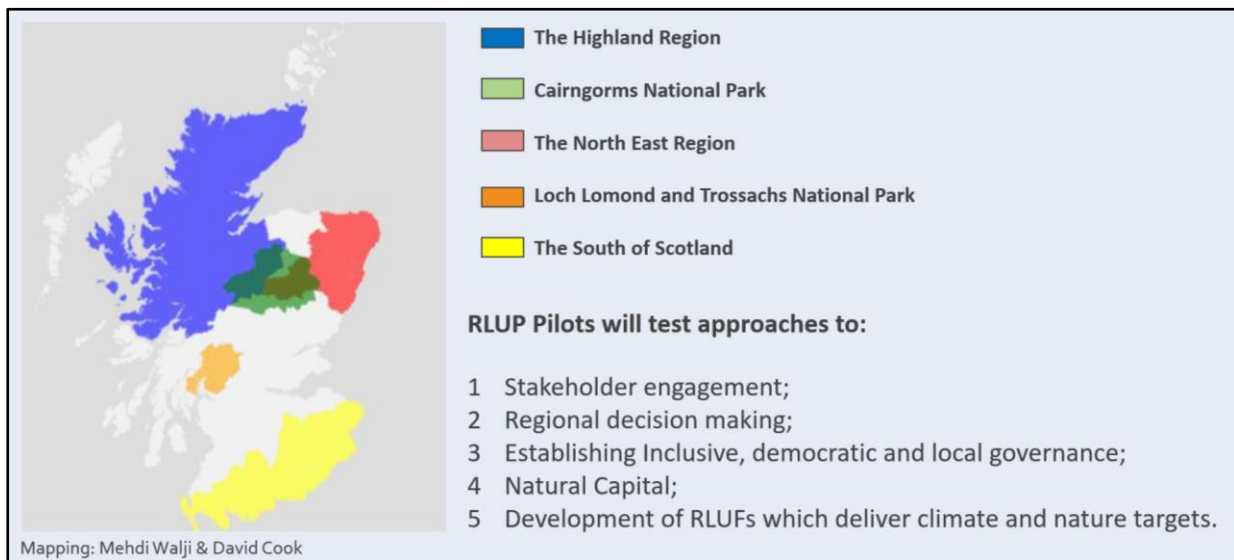

Figure App. 3. Pilot Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUP) (Source: Source: Scottish Government briefing on Regional Land Use Pilots). [Note, the geographic extent of the pilot in Highland Region is a sub-area of that represented).