

## People and the environment

**This section covers the interactions between people and the environment – the impacts we have on the environment, and how the environment affects us.**

Our environment provides a wide range of benefits, such as the air we breathe, the food we eat and the water we drink, as well as the many materials needed in our homes, at work and for leisure. A lot of what comes from the environment, and its chemical, physical and biological components, is taken for granted. For example, nature can prevent flooding by storing water, it can keep our environment clean by processing pollutants, and it can provide enjoyment, inspiration and a place to socialise. The environment is often managed to extract or create products that can be sold – sometimes at the expense of other benefits that are equally important.

Our cities and towns, historic surroundings, recreation opportunities and many aspects of our health and well-being are shaped by the environment.

### State

Almost 70% of Scotland's people live in urban areas. The majority of these people rate their neighbourhood as a "very good" place to live. However, health inequalities in Scotland are stark, and improving the quality of the environment will help to reduce these inequalities.

Taking part in outdoor recreation is of great benefit to our health and well-being. As well as providing opportunities for outdoor activities and generating income, Scotland's unique environment makes a valuable contribution to our quality of life, cultural identity and education.

Progress is being made to reduce waste and increase recycling in Scotland; the amount of waste produced has reduced by 40% since 2005 (mainly due to reductions in the amount of industrial and commercial waste), recycling of household waste has doubled since 2004.

However, we still send a lot of waste to landfill and we need to further reduce the amount of waste we create if we are to protect the environment and conserve our valuable resources.

### Challenges

The overarching challenge is to achieve a sustainable balance between short-term needs and maintaining or enhancing the quality of our environment for future generations.

### Response

Managing the environment in ways that provide desired benefits can sometimes reduce its ability to provide others, but by managing the environment well we can greatly improve our quality of life.

## People and the environment Topic

### Benefits and uses

[Benefits from the environment](#) - We all depend on a wide range of essential benefits provided by the environment for our day to day existence, including the air we breathe, the food we eat and the water we drink. By managing the environment well we can greatly improve our quality of life.

[Cities towns and greenspace](#) - Most people in Scotland live in its towns, cities and city regions. A good-quality urban environment is a substantial factor in people's health and well-being.

[Historic environment](#) - Scotland's historic environment includes thousands of historic buildings and monuments, many of which are unique and irreplaceable. They attract millions of visitors every year and generate income and jobs.

[Recreation](#) - Scotland's natural and historic environment provides many opportunities for outdoor activity and attracts millions of visitors a year, generating £2.6 billion of expenditure.

### Environmental management

[Energy](#) - Energy in Scotland is changing and will continue to do so as we strive towards a low carbon future.

[Land use strategy](#) - Scotland's land provides us with a wealth of benefits, such as food, timber, clean water, energy, and a space for recreation. However, we still demand more. The Land Use Strategy addresses how we can sustainably manage our land to ensure we get the most from it.

[Waste](#) - Waste is produced by households and businesses. Progress is being made to reduce waste and increase recycling in Scotland, providing environmental and economic benefits.