

Rural Delivery Plan - vision, strategic objectives and key performance indicators

Overview

General Comments

Scottish Water plays an essential role in supplying drinking water and managing wastewater from rural communities across Scotland: investing sustainably to maintain and improve service to existing customers, as well as to provide additional capacity where required to allow communities to grow.

It is a longstanding and important principle of Scottish Water's charging that customers should pay the same price for the same standard of service, regardless of their location in Scotland. In part, this principle recognises that serving rural communities typically involves significantly higher costs, depending on factors such as geography and local water resources.

The increased risks of water scarcity or deteriorating raw water quality in a changing climate are inherently higher for smaller rural water supplies; and modest growth in absolute terms may be significant – and necessitate substantial investment – relative to the capacity of small treatment works and distribution systems. Many rural communities also experience significant seasonal peaks in demand, via tourism, which often coincide with times of highest water scarcity risk. These challenges can only be met on a sustainable basis by working in partnership with rural communities to protect and improve raw water supplies, value drinking water and use it wisely – mitigating the requirement for capital and carbon intensive investment, where better ways are available to achieve the desired outcome.

While drainage and waste water treatment can seem a less pressing concern in rural areas, they can be just as critical in enabling sustainable development, protecting the quality of the environment, managing flood risk and supporting flourishing communities. Again, there is particular need to look for opportunities to work with customers and consider nature-based approaches to reduce demand on traditional treatment processes.

Detailed Response

Specific Comments

Scottish Water also recognises that some rural communities have private water supplies; and a higher number have private drainage and waste water treatment arrangements. While Scottish Water is not routinely involved in these cases, similar considerations are likely to be relevant in enabling them to operate on a sustainable and affordable basis in a changed climate.

	Section 1 – A Vision for Rural Scotland
1.	Do you agree with the proposed vision for rural Scotland?
Yes	
2.	Do you wish to comment?
Rural communities' relationship with water should be recognised as an essential enabler of the vision – particularly in its economic, social and environmental dimensions.	
	Section 2 – Strategic Objectives for Rural Scotland
1.	Do you agree with the proposed strategic objective for agriculture, forestry, marine and land-based businesses? Proposed Strategic Objective: "To improve the sustainability and profitability in the agricultural, land-based and marine sectors."
Yes	
2.	Do you wish to comment?
Water-positive land management should be recognised as a dimension of both sustainability and profitability objectives, with potential to support the sustainable provision of rural drinking water supplies, improved flood risk management and broader environmental benefits.	
3.	Do you agree with the proposed strategic objective for economy and digital connectivity? Proposed Strategic Objective: "To support and promote an inclusive, innovative, productive, and sustainable wellbeing rural economy, providing direct benefits for local communities, revitalising them through the growth of the green economy, and delivering robust and inclusive access to digital infrastructure and services across rural Scotland."
Yes	

4.	Do you wish to comment?
No	
5.	<p>Do you agree with the proposed strategic objective for population, education and skills?</p> <p>Proposed Strategic Objective: "To support sustainable local communities by addressing population challenges in rural Scotland, to equip people with the skills, resources and education to develop a highly valued and adaptive workforce, and to ensure that workforce is supported to work through high quality, accessible and affordable childcare across rural Scotland."</p>
Yes	
6.	Do you wish to comment?
No	
7.	<p>Do you agree with the proposed strategic objective for social justice?</p> <p>Proposed Strategic Objective: "To address rural poverty and existing economic, social and environmental inequalities across rural Scotland, to empower local communities to ensure Scotland's natural capital is owned and used fairly, and that our rural communities can access high quality, affordable and accessible services and facilities that positively enhance their lives."</p>
Yes	
8.	Do you wish to comment?
<p>Sustainable and affordable access to drinking water is essential for all communities but can involve distinctive challenges and high costs in some rural areas. Greater awareness of water and improved water efficiency standards (especially in new developments) present opportunities to deliver a fairer outcome, even where naturally available water resources are limited.</p> <p>Consideration could be given to the idea of water neutral development, to encourage developers to minimise (treated) water use and support measures to offset the remaining impact of additional demand. This could play a part in making further non-domestic development (including accommodation) sustainable in areas where it</p>	

otherwise could have adverse impacts on service for communities or costs for all customers.

9.	<p>Do you agree with the proposed strategic objective for housing?</p> <p>Proposed Strategic Objective: "To improve access to high quality affordable and market housing to enable the people of rural Scotland to live, work and thrive."</p>
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Yes

10.	Do you wish to comment?
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Improving water efficiency standards and community awareness of the value of drinking water present particular opportunities in rural Scotland to improve the sustainability of water supplies in the face of climate change.

Consideration could be given to the idea of water neutral development, to encourage developers to minimise (treated) water use and support measures to offset the remaining impact of additional demand on rural water supplies at high risk of water scarcity.

Sustainable surface water management should also be recognised in rural, as well as urban, communities as important for the management of flood risk and protection of the water environment, while offering wider benefits.

11.	<p>Do you agree with the proposed strategic objective for health and social care?</p> <p>Proposed strategic objective: "To build on access to robust health and social care across rural Scotland and improve the health and wellbeing of those in our rural communities."</p>
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Yes

12.	Do you wish to comment?
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No

13.	<p>Do you agree with the proposed strategic objective for environment and climate change?</p> <p>Proposed strategic objective: "To contribute to national action to address the threat of climate change and to restore nature, alongside seizing the economic opportunities and community benefits from a circular economy and the just transition to net zero."</p>
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Yes	
14.	Do you wish to comment?
The important contribution that rural communities and land managers can make to climate change mitigation, nature restoration, care for water resources and flood risk management should be recognised – firstly for its importance in enabling rural communities themselves to continue to flourish in a changed climate; and secondly for its potential importance to other communities within downstream catchments (and across Scotland in terms of carbon and nature objectives).	
15.	Do you agree with the proposed strategic objective for transport? Proposed strategic objective: "To improve access to a sustainable, inclusive and safe transport system in rural Scotland."
Yes	
16.	Do you wish to comment?
No	
17.	Do you agree with the proposed strategic objective for culture, arts and language? Proposed strategic objective: "To support culture, including the arts, cultural heritage, the historic and natural environment and Scotland's languages, which all form a crucial component of the identity of rural communities throughout Scotland."
Yes	
18.	Do you wish to comment?
No	
19.	Do you have any further comments on the proposed strategic objectives?
No	
Section 3 – Key Performance Indicators	

1.	<p>For the agriculture, forestry, marine and land-based sectors, which of the below data indicators should be scored as high priority, medium priority or not appropriate for inclusion in the Rural Delivery Plan?</p> <p>Please score each one either High Priority, Medium Priority or N/A</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural and forest area under environmental management schemes • Scottish Gross Value Added (GVA) by sector: Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sector • Scottish Gross Value Added (GVA) by sector: Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sector • Sustainability of Fish Stocks • Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Scotland by Territorial Emissions: Agriculture • Area of woodland creation • Value of agritourism per annum • Average farm income, income by farming sector and from diversified activity • Number of new entrants into crofting • Number of crofters who are resident and actively using their croft <p>N/A</p>
2.	<p>Do these adequately measure what success should look like in this area?</p> <p>Yes/ No/Partially</p>
	N/A
3.	Do you wish to comment further?
	N/A
4.	<p>For economy and digital connectivity, which of the below data indicators should be scored as high priority, medium priority or not appropriate for inclusion in the Rural Delivery Plan?</p> <p>Please score each one either High Priority, Medium Priority or N/A</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential broadband coverage by service type/download speeds • Business openings and closures • Youth unemployment rate • Economic inactivity • Secure employment • Involuntary non-permanent work • Gender, disability and ethnicity pay gaps • Employer provided training • 4G geographic coverage

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registered businesses in Scotland High growth businesses 	
N/A	
5.	Do these adequately measure what success should look like in this area? Yes/No/Partially
N/A	
6.	Do you wish to comment further?
N/A	
7.	For population, education and skills, which of the below data indicators should be scored as high priority, medium priority or not appropriate for inclusion in the Rural Delivery Plan? Please score each one either High Priority, Medium Priority or N/A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population by age, mid-year estimates Population growth (annual percentage change in population) The proportion of 16- to 19-year-olds in Scotland participating in education, training or employment Establishments that have a skill-shortage vacancy Percentage of all school leavers in positive destinations at 9-month follow-up Percentage of settings providing funded Early Learning and Childcare achieving Care Inspectorate grades of good or better across all four quality theme Percentage of pupils achieving expected Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Levels by Urban Rural Classification and stag Childcare costs – Annual household spend on childcare as a percentage of annual income % of day-care of children services that offer a service during school holidays – Care Inspectorate % of day-care of children services that are open before, during and after school hours – Care Inspectorate 	
N/A	
8.	Do these adequately measure what success should look like in this area? Yes/No/Partially
N/A	

9.	Do you wish to comment further?
N/A	
10.	For social justice, which of the below data indicators should be scored as high priority, medium priority or not appropriate for inclusion in the Rural Delivery Plan? Please score each one either High Priority, Medium Priority or N/A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relative poverty - Proportion (%) of people in each category who are in relative poverty Relative child poverty - Proportion (%) of children in each category who are living in households that are in relative poverty How easy or difficult people find it to afford transport costs Housing costs as a percentage of earnings Level of fuel poverty Perceptions of influence over decisions affecting local area How the household is managing financially Number of assets, number of community groups, area and percentage of land area in community ownership 	
N/A	
11.	Do these adequately measure what success should look like in this area? Yes/No/Partially
N/A	
12.	Do you wish to comment further?
N/A	
13.	For housing, which of the below data indicators should be scored as high priority, medium priority or not appropriate for inclusion in the Rural Delivery Plan? Please score each one either High Priority, Medium Priority or N/A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Build Housing Completions Proportion of rural households rated EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) C or above Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP) Completions by local authority area for 2021-22 Proportion (%) of all dwellings that are second homes Proportion (%) of all dwellings that are short-term or long-term vacant homes 	

14.	Do these adequately measure what success should look like in this area?
Partially	
15.	Do you wish to comment further?
It may be appropriate to record proportion (%) of homes that are short-term lets, in addition to those that are second homes.	
16.	For health and social care, which of the below data indicators should be scored as high priority, medium priority or not appropriate for inclusion in the Rural Delivery Plan? Please score each one either High Priority, Medium Priority or N/A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of care experience • Self-assessed general health • Healthy life expectancy (males) • Healthy life expectancy (females) • Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) score • Experience of out of hours healthcare • Rating of health, care or support services • How easy it is for people to contact their General Practice in the way they want • Balance between caring and other things in their life • Supported to continue caring 	
N/A	
17.	Do these adequately measure what success should look like in this area? Yes/No/Partially
N/A	
18.	Do you wish to comment further?
N/A	
19.	For environment and climate change, which of the below data indicators should be scored as high priority, medium priority or not appropriate for inclusion in the Rural Delivery Plan? Please score each one either High Priority, Medium Priority or N/A

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage (%) of household waste recycled Renewable Electricity Generation (MWh)³ Clean Seas: the percentage of biogeographic regions with acceptably low levels of contaminants Biodiversity: This indicator is a combination of trends for three measures of Scottish species, index of abundance of marine species (based on seabirds), index of abundance of terrestrial species and index of occupancy of terrestrial species. Fresh Water condition: The percentage of river and loch waterbodies achieving 'Good' or better status in terms of four metrics; water quality, water resources (flows and levels), access to fish migration and physical condition - High Priority, especially water resources Hectares of restored peatland: Cumulative area of peatland restored since 2012 (thousands hectares) - High Priority Awareness, understanding and support for biodiversity conservation Status of rare and threatened species Total area of forests and woodlands
20.	<p>Do these adequately measure what success should look like in this area?</p>
	Partially
21.	<p>Do you wish to comment further?</p>
	<p>Consideration could be given to an indicator of water efficiency, either with respect to new homes or all homes. This could consider either reflect uptake of specific water efficiency measures such as water efficient fittings, rainwater harvesting (eg water butts), smart monitors, grey water recycling or (in the future) average household consumption in litres per capita.</p>
22.	<p>For transport, which of the below data indicators should be scored as high priority, medium priority or not appropriate for inclusion in the Rural Delivery Plan?</p> <p>Please score each one either High Priority, Medium Priority or N/A</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How adults usually travel to work/education Satisfaction with the quality of public transport Proportion of primary schools delivering on-road cycle training Household access to a bike (with focus on regional and socioeconomic variation) Number of disability accessible or low-floor buses used as Public Service Vehicles in Scotland (Local Operators) Passenger journeys on local bus services Local authority road network condition

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local bus fare indices • Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure • Ferry reliability 	
N/A	
23.	Do these adequately measure what success should look like in this area? Yes/No/Partially
N/A	
24.	Do you wish to comment further?
N/A	
25.	For culture, arts and language, which of the below data indicators should be scored as high priority, medium priority or not appropriate for inclusion in the Rural Delivery Plan? Please score each one either High Priority, Medium Priority or N/A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance at cultural events and visiting places of culture • Participation in any cultural activity • Percentage (%) of the population that can speak Gaelic • Number of visits to Scotland's visitor attractions 	
N/A	
26.	Do these adequately measure what success should look like in this area? Yes/No/Partially
N/A	
27.	Do you wish to comment further?
N/A	

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