



Reporting on Natural Capital in Scotland



The James
Hutton
Institute

May 2025

Kerry Waylen

Alternet, Aveiro

Natural Capital (NC)

- Relates to ecosystem services: but more attention to condition & quality of underlying resources e.g. soil
- Usually – but not always - quantified & monetised
- Can be considered together with other capitals – intended to improve cross-sectoral decisions



Natural Capital (NC)

- Scotland (and rUK) was a pioneer in endorsing work on and with NC
- Now 2 official statistics for Scotland's NC

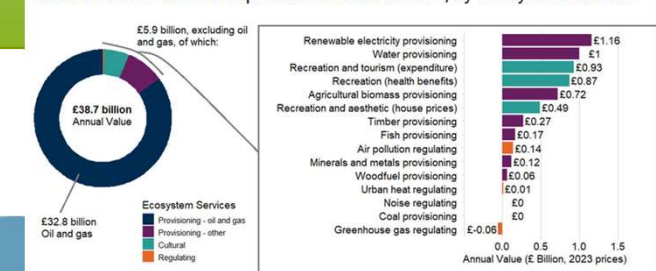


NC reporting – type 1.

- NC Accounts
- Published by Office for National Statistics
- Based on services from natural resources
 - Follows UN-SEEA accounting standards
 - Does include some marine (fish), and non-renewable resources
 - Doesn't include disbenefits
 - No citizen input
- Output = monetary value, both annual (can split to ESS types) & lifetime “asset value”

“..£254.7 billion including oil and gas, or £142.2 billion when oil and gas is excluded. This measures the stock of ecosystem services and takes into consideration their future expected supply.”

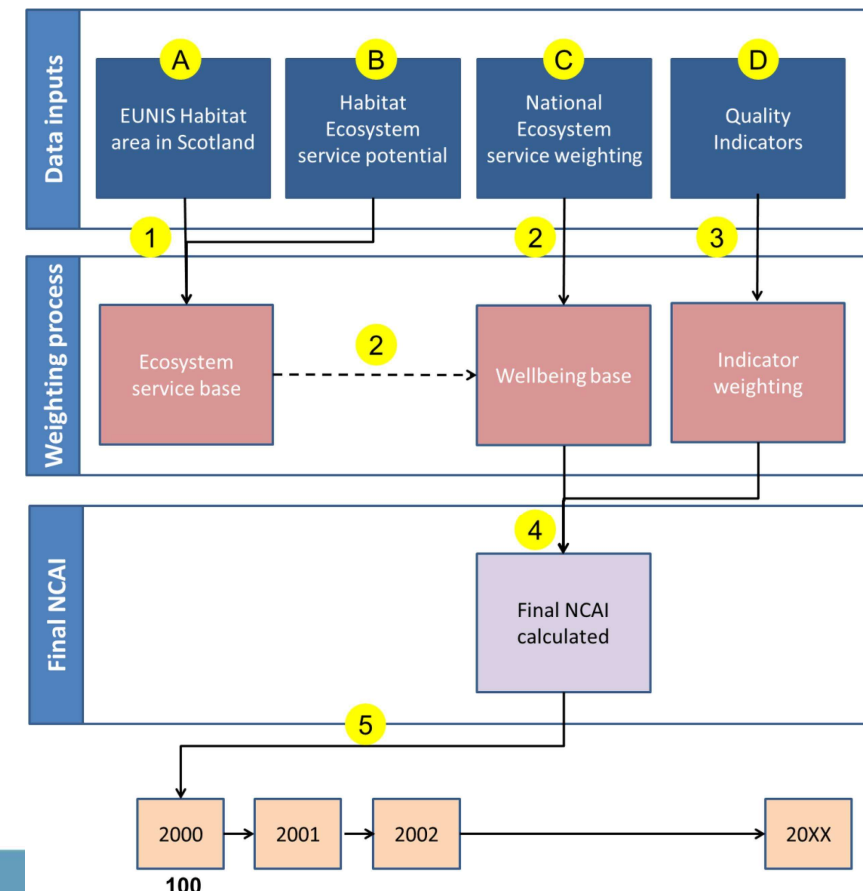
Annual value of natural capital in Scotland in 2022, by ecosystem service.



www.gov.scot/publications/summary-of-scottish-data-from-uk-natural-capital-accounts-2024/

NC reporting – type 2.

- NC Asset Index – NCAI
- Published by NatureScot
- Based on terrestrial ecosystems' condition & extent
 - Incl some biodiv. related metrics
 - Some measures of stress on ecosystems
 - Habitat monitoring incl some cit. science
 - Survey of society's values/views of nature
 - Expert input into design & peer review
- Output = indicator (no unit), annually



<https://www.nature.scot/doc/natural-capital-asset-index-official-statistic>

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1470160X19306375#f0005>

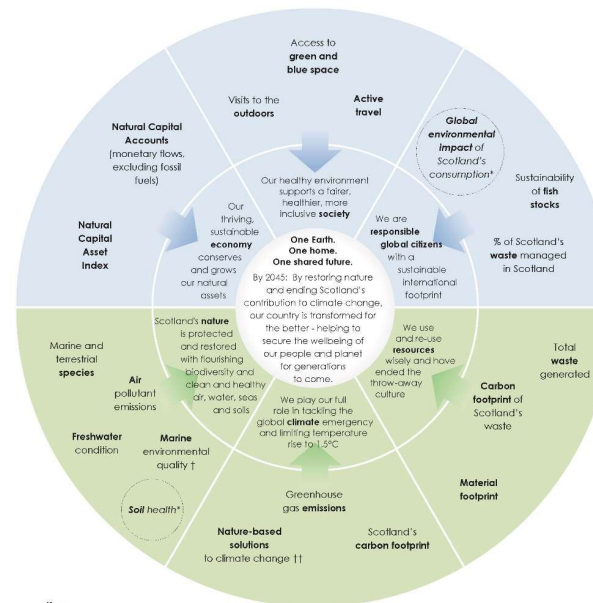
Use or influence?

- Neither required by any environmental policy
 - E.g. separate to monitoring RBMP, FRMPs, N2K, SBS..
- NCAI feeds into a measure for the National Indicator 'Increase our natural capital' in the National Performance Framework

<https://www2.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms/indicator/naturalcapital>

Use or influence?

- Both feed into monitoring of Scotland's Environment Strategy



THE ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY
FOR SCOTLAND:
VISION AND OUTCOMES



Key:

Centre: Environment Strategy vision

Inner ring: Environment Strategy outcomes

Outer ring: Indicators in Initial Monitoring Framework

* Indicators to be confirmed

† A suite of indicators reflecting chemical contamination, marine litter and seafloor integrity

†† A suite of indicators relating to woodland expansion and peatland restoration

Use or influence?

- Accessible but uninteresting?
 - Both published online, - graphics, webpages, pdfs – data, graphs, also explanation and methodologies
 - Little media coverage



Driving transformative change?

- Limited – some concern over lack of salience
- Additional work commissioned using other methods (input-output modelling) and/or to show value of NC to Scotland in other economic/societal terms

“estimating £40 billion economic output and 261,000 jobs supported”

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/importance-natural-capital-scottish-economy/pages/5/>

Conclusion

- So far limited 'mainstreaming' of nature via NC...
...ironic and frustrating given the framing is intended to make nature salient across sectors.
- Does influence in policy need clearer policy 'customers'? To sector or societal concerns?
Scales?



Thank you

With funding from the Scottish Government
Strategic Research Programme 2022-27,
Galvanising Change via Natural Capital (JHI-D5-3)

