

2030 vision for River Leven Catchment outlined as Scottish Environment Protection Agency partnership 'locks in' sustainable, inclusive growth ahead of Earth Overshoot Day

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A 2030 vision for the River Leven Catchment was outlined today (26 July 2019) as a Scottish Environment Protection Agency partnership 'locks in' sustainable, inclusive growth to the Leven Programme Partnership.

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- Partners sign a 'Sustainable Growth Agreement' focused on six strategic outcomes for a "living, breathing example of inclusive growth."
- First in Scotland partnership signed ahead of Earth Overshoot Day on 29 July – the day humanity will have used nature's resource budget for the entire year.

Fife Council, Sustrans, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Water, Scottish Enterprise, Fife College, Forth Rivers Trust, Diageo, Central Scotland Green Network Trust and Keep Scotland Beautiful backed a 'Sustainable Growth Agreement' with SEPA focused on six strategic outcomes for a "living, breathing example of inclusive growth."

The ambitious first in Scotland partnership, signed at a launch event held in the former Tullis Russell Environment Education Centre, Glenrothes, seeks to deliver a series of 2030 objectives:

- The area will support a network of paths and sustainable travel routes that will connect people, communities and business to each other and the environment.
- The area will become a 'go to' destination and sustainable tourism will become one of the area's key economic attractions, whilst not increasing carbon emissions or negatively impacting on biodiversity of the area.
- The area will be a dynamic hub for social enterprise, youth and education.
- The area will be able to attract and support business and industry and become a hub between the cities of Dundee and Edinburgh.
- Registered vacant and derelict land, the equivalent of around 12 football pitches, in the Leven catchment, will be made productive for the benefit of communities in the region and in support of inclusive

economic regeneration.

- The area will have a natural environment that will support a diverse ecology and celebrate its social history.

Sustainable Growth Agreements are voluntary, non-legally binding, formal agreements through which an organisation (or organisations) and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) can explore new and innovative ways to improve environmental performance and focus on practical actions that deliver environmental, social and economic success.

This Sustainable Growth Agreement is the first in Scotland involving multiple organisations working in partnership to achieve shared outcomes across a river catchment. It takes an innovative partnership approach to realise ambitions that go beyond the scope of the individual organisations involved.

The vision, shared by partners, is that by 2030, the Leven catchment will be a living, breathing example of inclusive growth, achieving environmental excellence in ways that create social and economic opportunities

Historically the catchment was the engine of mid-Fife sustaining several hundred mills and factories and was home to miners and workers in the manufacturing industries. Since then serious environmental challenges have arisen in the catchment with multiple pressures and environmental impacts including barriers to fish migration, water quality issues and physical modifications to the rivers.

The agreement was signed ahead of Earth Overshoot Day on 29 July – the day the Global Footprint Network calculates humanity will have used nature's resource budget for the entire year and was backed by Fellow at Cambridge University Institute for Sustainability Leadership and Former CEO Greenpeace International Paul Gilding.

Speaking at the event, SEPA Chief Executive, Terry A'Hearn, said:

"I'm excited to be signing this River Leven Partnership today. I've worked as an environmental professional for thirty years in four different nations. I've heard lots of speeches and read lots of strategies about sustainability. Too much of this has been about generalities; not enough has been about action.

"This River Leven Partnership is different. Eleven organisations are signing up today to take actions, not to simply speak fine words. All of us are determined to create environmental improvements in ways that drive economic and social success for the people living in this part of Scotland."

Dr. Martin Valenti, Head of Climate Enterprise, Scottish Enterprise, added:

"Sustainable and inclusive economic growth is at the heart of Scotland's bold new economic vision, 'Building Scotland's Future Today. As a small nation with huge potential, we need to be ready to face the challenges ahead while being in the best position possible to exploit the new opportunities that these changes present. We'll achieve more when we work in partnership which

is why we're standing with public and private sector partners to back this important initiative."

Paul Gilding, Fellow at Cambridge University Institute for Sustainability Leadership and Former CEO Greenpeace International, who spoke at the event, welcomed the initiative, stating:

"With Scotland's globally ambitious climate strategy, leadership and innovation in response to the climate emergency, it's great to see progressive partners such as SEPA and others work together in new ways to transform communities for the people who live and work there."

Andy Keba, Head of Strategic Partnerships, Sustrans Scotland, added:

"Sustrans is pleased to be able to support the delivery of new walking, cycling and wheeling routes as part of the Leven Project, overcoming a legacy of poor active travel links in the area. As a partner in the project, we hope to help create new places along the routes for people to visit, rest and relax, and we look forward to working with the local community to shape these new spaces. At the same time, we will be working to make it easier for everyone to travel between the local communities, business and workplaces on foot, bike or by wheel, helping to boost the local economy and the health of people in the local area."

Cllr Ross Vettraino, Convener – Environment, Protective Services & Community Safety Committee, said:

"Fife Council is delighted to be a partner on 'The Leven Programme', which is set to revitalise the River Leven by making environmental improvements and promoting biodiversity, as well as boosting business, tourism, heritage and active travel. This project is all about developing connections between communities, the river and the coast."

"The Connectivity Project is the first of a series of programmes under the programme and will focus on a 5km stretch of the River Leven at Levenmouth. It seeks to deliver environmental river improvements, develop a series of paths to connect the communities to and along the river, and unlock opportunities on the vacant and derelict land.

"This new Sustainable Growth Agreement (SGA) formalises our strong partnership approach to creating new opportunities for everyone in the area. Working together and with local communities, we will pool resources and skills to ensure this project puts local people and the environment at its heart.

"Mid-Fife is a key focus for Fife Council, and we are already working hard and taking action to reinvigorate and regenerate this important area."

Hugh Hall, Fife College Principal, said:

"Fife College is committed to working with its partners to deliver the ambitions set out in the Leven Sustainable Growth Agreement. The project has already enabled our talented students to make use of their creative skills in

designing a brand image and logo which will be used on everything associated with the Leven Catchment programme – from the website and publicity materials to t-shirts and recycled pencils. We aim to give many more Fife College students opportunities to get excited and educated about sustainability and to contribute to achieving successful outcomes for the River Leven catchment.”

Steve Blake, Operations Director, Cameronbridge Distillery, said:

“Diageo’s deepest roots are here in Fife dating back to 1627 when the Haig family first started distilling. Today we are a global business and everywhere we operate around the world we are committed to reducing our environmental impact and building thriving communities. As a major employer in Fife the local environment and community are hugely important to us and that is why we are delighted to be part of the Leven Programme Partnership.

“At Cameronbridge Distillery we’ve made significant investments in renewable energy and water treatment directly aimed at minimising our environmental impact, and alongside our Leven Packaging Plant we are working every day to achieve the highest standards of sustainability.

“We look forward to collaborating with our partners in this initiative to drive further environmental and community benefits for the Leven area.”

Ross Johnston, Scottish Natural Heritage Head of Sustainable Development, said:

“We are delighted to be involved in this exciting project and look forward to working with partners and local communities to enhance the fabulous natural assets of the River Leven and surrounding area for the benefit of all.”

Ends

Notes to editor

RIVER LEVEN:

The River Leven catchment runs largely through the Mid-Fife area. The main stem of the river originates from tributaries around Loch Leven (with Loch Leven itself being situated in the Perth and Kinross Council area) and flows to the Firth of Forth through several towns and communities.

Historically the catchment sustained several hundred mills and factories and was home to a proud population of miners and workers in manufacturing industries; it was the engine of Mid-Fife, towns and communities grew around and along it.

SEPA has a responsibility to tackle and improve or remove these pressures, which include barriers to fish migration, water quality issues and physical modifications to the rivers.

The area has pockets of severe deprivation and much of it is economically stagnant. With a population often disconnected from the natural environment

there are serious problems associated with poor health and well-being.

The vision of the Leven Programme includes creating a network of paths and sustainable travel routes, attracting and supporting business and industry, being a dynamic hub for social enterprise, youth and education and making productive use of vacant and derelict land.

Reconnecting people and place is a key focus of the initiative and plans start with the connectivity project, which will focus on a 5km stretch of the River Leven at Levenmouth.

EARTH OVERSHOOT DAY:

On July 29, humanity will have used nature's resource budget for the entire year, according to [Global Footprint Network](#), an international sustainability organization that has pioneered the Ecological Footprint. The [Ecological Footprint](#) adds up all of people's competing demands for biologically productive areas – food, timber, fibers, carbon sequestration, and accommodation of infrastructure. Currently, carbon emissions from burning fossil fuel comprise 60% of humanity's Ecological Footprint.

Earth Overshoot Day marks the date when humanity's annual demand on nature exceeds what Earth's ecosystems can regenerate in that year.

Over the past 20 years, it has moved up two months to July 29, the earliest ever. This means that humanity is currently using nature 1.75 times faster than our planet's ecosystems can regenerate, equivalent to 1.75 Earths. Humanity first saw ecological deficit in the early 1970s. Overshoot is possible because we are depleting our natural capital, compromising the planet's future regenerative capacity.