



Moorland Management in the Angus Glens

Economic, Environmental and Social Impacts from 2025





At Scottish Land & Estates (SLE), our work is driven by a clear vision: a thriving rural Scotland that delivers benefits for all.

As a membership organisation representing landowners, rural businesses and rural professionals, we champion the positive contribution that land-based enterprises make to Scotland’s people, economy and environment.

We promote the wide range of public benefits these businesses provide — from tourist attractions, leisure facilities and landscapes enjoyed by millions, to housing, employment, farming, sporting, enterprise and nature-based opportunities that sustain rural communities.

Guided by our mission to support responsible land management that enhances Scotland’s wellbeing, we represent the interests of our members and wider rural Scotland to the UK and Scottish Governments. Our aim is to ensure that policy and legislation recognise the unique needs of rural areas and enable land managers to continue delivering social, economic and environmental value for the whole of Scotland.



The Angus Glens Moorland Group represents land managers across the Angus Glens, working collectively to support the sustainable management of upland landscapes.

Our members are involved in a range of land-based activities including grouse shooting, farming, conservation, habitat restoration and rural enterprise. We aim to promote the environmental, economic and social contributions of managed moorland, including its role in supporting biodiversity, providing employment and sustaining local communities.

The landscapes of the Angus Glens are widely enjoyed by the public and are actively managed to balance access, nature and productive land use.

Welcome

The Angus Glens are a distinctive and valued part of Scotland’s upland landscape, shaped over generations by both natural processes and active land management. Today, they support a rich mosaic of habitats, species, communities and rural businesses.



The landholdings represented in this report collectively manage a significant proportion of this landscape. While each operates independently, they share a common commitment to long-term stewardship — balancing environmental, economic and social priorities in a way that is both sustainable and practical.

This report brings together, for the first time, a consistent and transparent account of the impacts of moorland management and grouse shooting across seven estates in 2025. It provides a snapshot of activity, contribution and outcomes based on data supplied directly by participating landholdings.

This report sets a baseline for understanding the impacts of land management in the uplands. Recognising the complexity of these landscapes and the range of perspectives they attract, it presents data in a clear and consistent way to support more informed, balanced decision making.

The findings highlight the role of managed moorland in supporting employment, sustaining communities and maintaining habitats for a range of upland species. They also reflect the challenges faced by those working on the land, including evolving policy expectations, economic pressures and regulatory complexity.

This report is a starting point. We recognise that there is more to do — both in improving data and in deepening understanding. We intend to build on this work in future years.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report.

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The Landholdings

The **seven landholdings** that contributed to this report collectively manage a substantial area, approximately **60%** of the **Angus Glens**, reflecting both the scale and diversity of upland land use in the region.

54,715 HECTARES OF LAND

are represented across the participating estates, out of the Angus Glens' total area of around 90,000ha. The estates span a mix of heather moorland, rough grazing, peatland, woodland and river catchments — forming a connected upland system that supports both ecological processes and rural livelihoods.

A Multi-Use Landscape

While often associated with sporting management, the data shows that these estates operate as diverse, multi-functional landholdings.

Main Land Uses Across Surveyed Estates:

Agriculture	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sporting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Conservation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Natural Capital	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Forestry	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Property	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Key insights

- All estates combine sporting and agricultural activity, reflecting the integrated nature of upland management;
- Conservation is a core land use on the majority of holdings, underpinning habitat and species management;
- Emerging activities, such as natural capital and woodland creation, are beginning to play a role;
- Some estates are also engaged in property and diversification, supporting wider rural economies.

Grouse Shooting Models

Grouse shooting is undertaken across all surveyed estates, but in different forms reflecting habitat, wild bird populations, management approach and estate objectives.



Key insight

This variation highlights that grouse shooting in the Angus Glens is not uniform, but adapted to local conditions and priorities.

Integrated Land Management

Taken together, these landholdings illustrate a working landscape, where multiple objectives are delivered simultaneously:



Rather than operating in isolation, these functions are interconnected — each influencing how land is managed and the outcomes it delivers.

What This Means

This dataset provides an important insight: the Angus Glens are not defined by a single land use, but by a balance of activities operating across a large, continuous upland area. Understanding this balance is key to interpreting the wider economic, environmental and social impacts explored in the rest of this report.



People, Employment & Community

Moorland management across the seven Angus Glens estates supports a **significant workforce** and plays a central role in sustaining **rural communities**.

86.5 FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE) STAFF

forming the core of year-round employment in the Angus Glens.

Including **43** FTE Gamekeepers:

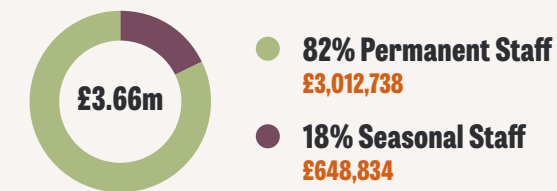
30 grouse focused gamekeepers

13 pheasant/partridge focused gamekeepers

Gamekeepers represent the operational backbone of estate management — responsible not only for sporting activity, but also habitat management, predator control, monitoring, maintenance and visitor management across large upland areas.

Investment in People

Employment is supported by a combined investment of **£3,661,572**:



Key insight

Long-term employment is complemented by a large seasonal workforce, creating both stability and flexibility in the rural economy.

A Broad and Inclusive Workforce

Seasonal employment is a defining feature of the Angus Glens with strong local community involvement and multigenerational participation. Shoot days, in particular, offer unique seasonal employment opportunities which are physically demanding, socially stimulating and altogether good for the health and wellbeing of participants.

768 seasonal staff engaged in 2025

Key insights

- Intergenerational participation;
- Local community involvement;
- Opportunities for both casual and experienced workers.

What This Means

Taken together, these figures show that:

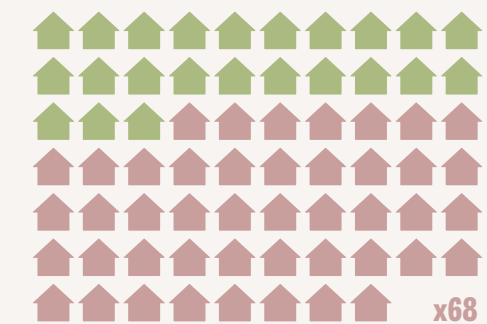
- Moorland management supports both permanent careers and flexible, seasonal employment;
- Estates act as local employment hubs in otherwise sparsely populated areas;
- Housing provision reinforces the link between jobs and community sustainability.

Supporting Rural Communities

Estate employment is closely linked to housing provision:

68 homes provided

23 of which house school-age children



Key insight

This reflects a critical but often overlooked contribution: helping sustain rural populations, schools and local services in remote areas.





Economic Activity and Operational Scale

Beyond direct employment, estate activity generates substantial economic value through **supply chains, local services** and **seasonal activity**.

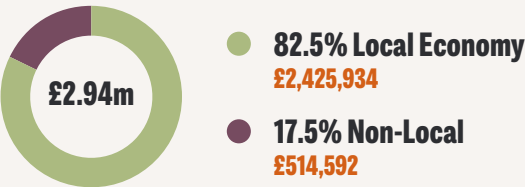
£2,940,526
SPENT ON CONTRACTORS AND GOODS/SERVICES

Estates generate significant economic activity beyond direct employment. This includes:

- Local contractors
- Equipment & materials
- Specialist services

Local Economic Retention

A defining feature of this spend is how much remains in the local economy: **82.5%**.



Key insight

The majority of estate expenditure circulates within the Angus Glens and surrounding areas, supporting local businesses and supply chains.

Circulating Value Locally

Through regular engagement with local businesses, estates contribute to sustaining rural trades and skills, supporting small and family-run enterprises, enabling responsive locally delivered services and maintaining year-round economic activity.



Key insight

Estate spending does not stop at the point of purchase — it circulates through the local economy, supporting jobs, skills and business viability.

A Diverse Local Supply Chain

Estates regularly work with a wide range of local businesses, spanning construction, maintenance, fuel supply, agriculture and services:

- Construction & Groundworks**
Cochrane Groundworks Ltd
Milnbank Ltd
M&A Fencing Ltd
- Mechanical & Vehicles**
Maryton Garage Ltd
Hamish A MacKay
Autosales of Kirriemuir
AP DC Autos
Rattray ATV
- Plumbing & Utilities**
Caledonian Heating & Plumbing Ltd
Gordon Dobbie Heating & Plumbing Ltd
- Agriculture & Supplies**
Harbro
Ringlink Scotland Ltd
Gammies Groundcare
- Local Services & Trades**
Dave Robbie Gardening
Mark Farmer Gardening
Careston Carvings Ltd
Donald Rae & Sons Engineering
The Laundry Room
- Hospitality, Food & Catering**
Glen Clova Hotel
The Glenesk Hotel
The Panmure Arms
Bel's Butchers
Kitchen Toque
- Fuel & Energy**
Carnegie Fuels Ltd
Angus Biofuels

Key insight

This reflects a broad and resilient rural supply chain, supporting both specialist and everyday operational needs.

Scale & Reach

The range of businesses engaged demonstrates that estate activity supports:

- Construction and infrastructure maintenance;
- Vehicle and machinery servicing;
- Fuel and energy supply chains;
- Agricultural inputs and advisory services;
- Food production and local catering.

Key insights

This diversity highlights how estate expenditure underpins a network of interdependent rural businesses. The high level of local spend **(82.5%)** is not incidental, it reflects:

- Established relationships;
- Practical necessity in remote areas;
- A preference for local knowledge and reliability.

Grouse Shooting

During the 2025 season, 84 grouse shoot days were delivered across the estates.

Each shoot day is a significant logistical undertaking, reflecting the scale of activity and the seasonal employment opportunities these days generate.

54 seasonal staff required on average per shoot day per estate

Key insight

This highlights the scale of activity on shooting days and the associated seasonal employment opportunities.

A Connected Rural Economy

Bringing these elements together:

- Permanent staff provide continuity and management capacity;
- Seasonal staff provide flexibility and community participation;
- Contractors and suppliers extend economic impact into local businesses.

Key insights

This interconnected system underpins both:

- The economic viability of estates;
- The long-term sustainability of rural communities in the Angus Glens.

What This Means

Estates in the Angus Glens function as economic anchors in the uplands, generating multi-million-pound annual expenditure that circulates through the local economy.

Their activity:

- Supports hundreds of direct and indirect jobs;
- Helps sustain dozens of local enterprises and a skills base on which communities depend;
- Retains a high proportion of value within the local economy, reinforcing rural economic resilience;
- Creates episodic peaks of activity, such as shoot days, that ripple outwards through rural supply chains.

The socio-economic contribution of these landholdings is not defined by a single activity, but by a network of employment, spending and community support.



Working with Others

The Angus Glens are not only a managed landscape, they are a **shared landscape**: used, studied and enjoyed by a wide range of organisations, communities and individuals.

This section highlights the extent to which estates operate as open, collaborative systems, supporting access, education, research and emergency services.

A Wide Stakeholder Network

The landholdings engage with a diverse range of local and national stakeholders:

-  **Community & Access**
Walking Groups
Outdoor Access Trust
Mountain Bothies Association
-  **Recreation, Education and Youth**
Duke of Edinburgh Award
Gun Clubs
Local Schools
-  **Research & Environment**
University of Glasgow
Heather Trust
Royal Highland Educational Trust
Deer Management Group
-  **Wider Community**
Community Councils
Alba Explorers
Curling Club

Key insight

This network reflects the multi-functional nature of the landscape, supporting recreation, education, sport and conservation.

Land Supporting Public Services & Research

The estates provide land access and operational support for a wide range of organisations.

-  **Emergency & Military Use**
Mountain Rescue Teams
45 Commando Royal Marines
-  **Environmental & Public Bodies**
NatureScot
Cairngorms National Park Authority
Forestry and Land Scotland
Scottish Forestry
-  **Research & Education**
University of Glasgow
Abertay University
Dundee University
Aberdeen University
Countryside Learning Scotland
Game Conservancy Deutschland
-  **Land Management & Advisory**
Soil Association
Pasture for Life
Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust
Heather Trust
Scottish Rural Network

Key insight

Estates act as platforms for research, training and operational activity, extending their role far beyond land management.

Access & Infrastructure

Tracks are a shared resource across all seven estates, supporting **land management, emergency services, research & monitoring** and **recreational** users alike.

The £114,087 invested in track maintenance during 2025 reflects the ongoing commitment required to keep this infrastructure functional for all users.

£114,087 spent on track maintenance in 2025

Key insight

This investment underpins safe, practical access across remote terrain, enabling both estate operations and wider public benefit.

Strategic Partnerships

Collaboration is also formalised through a number of long-term partnerships with entities including:

- Abertay University
- University of Glasgow
- Scotland's Rural College
- RSPB Scotland
- Cairngorms National Park Authority
- Esk Catchment Partnership
- Strathmore RFC
- Esk Rivers & Fisheries Trust
- Angus Glens Forum
- Game Conservancy Deutschland

- Research & Education
- Wider Community
- Conservation & Environment

Key insight

These partnerships support:

- Scientific research;
- Catchment-scale environmental management;
- Knowledge exchange;
- Policy engagement.

A Connected Landscape

Taken together, this data demonstrates that estates operate as hubs within a wider network of users and organisations;

Land is regularly used for **public**, **educational** and **environmental** purposes.

Collaboration spans **local**, **regional** and **international** levels.

Infrastructure investment supports shared access and resilience, and the relationships formed through that activity contribute to a **wider network of users and organisations**.

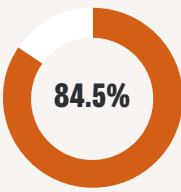
Partnership in Practice

Evidence from Strathmore RFC provides a practical example of strategic partnership delivering wider social outcomes.

Through collaboration with the Angus Glens Moorland Group, game meats have been incorporated into player nutrition to diversify protein consumption.

Data from the 2024–25 and 2025–26 seasons records:

1,519 game meat meals served



84.5 % of hospitality guests chose game meat from a choice of game or an alternative meal

Key insight

This provides a practical example of how estates can contribute beyond land-based activity alone — supporting local partnerships, promoting sustainable food use and demonstrating wider social value.

What This Means

The Angus Glens function not just as privately funded estates, but as a shared working landscape supporting emergency response, scientific research, education, community activity and recreation.

This reflects a high degree of openness and interdependence — moorland estates as part of a broader social and environmental system.

The Angus Glens are a shared working landscape, open to and relied upon by the wider community.



Nature & Biodiversity

The Angus Glens support a **diverse upland ecosystem**, with evidence from monitoring highlighting both **species richness** and **ecological function**.

Monitoring across participating estates provides valuable insight into species presence, habitat condition and ecological trends.

Monitoring & Evidence

Biodiversity monitoring is undertaken in partnership with a range of organisations:

- Wildlife Estates Scotland
- Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust
- Game Conservancy Deutschland
- University of Glasgow

Key insight

These collaborations support robust, science-based understanding of species populations and habitat dynamics across the landscape.

Key Upland Species

A number of characteristic upland birds were recorded as among the most abundant species in 2025:

- Curlew ●
- Black Grouse ●
- Lapwing ●
- Skylark ●
- Oystercatcher ●
- Meadow Pipit ●
- Golden Plover ●

- Red Listed UK Conservation Status
- Amber Listed UK Conservation Status

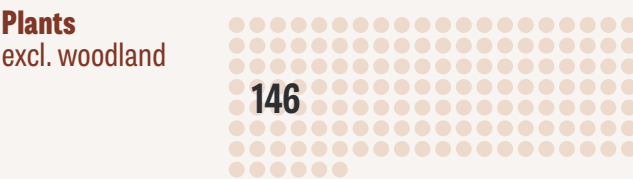
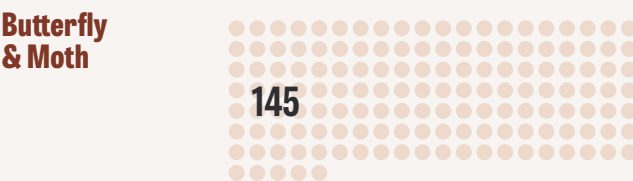
Key insight

Many of these species are of national conservation concern, underlining the importance of well-managed upland habitats.

Species Richness

Detailed monitoring on a single estate highlights the ecological diversity of the Angus Glens:

Recorded Species

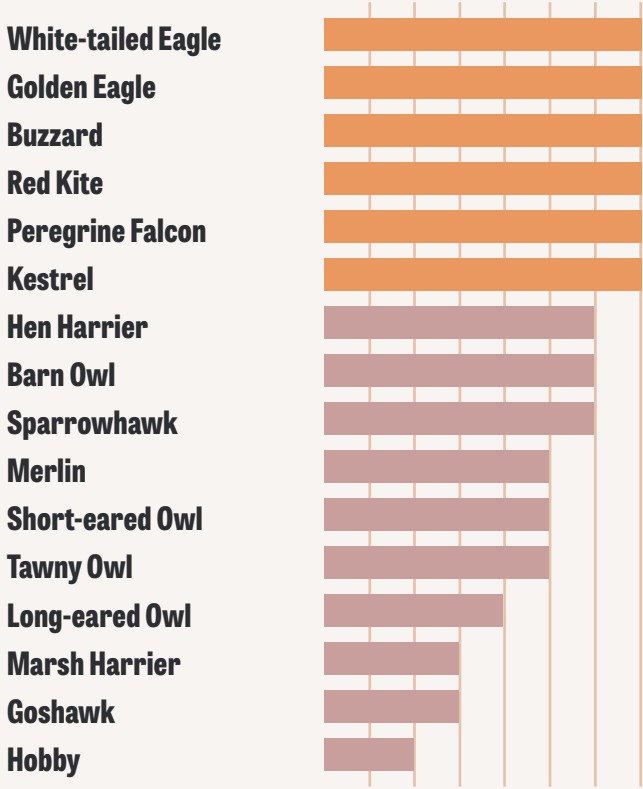


Key insight

This snapshot illustrates the breadth of habitats and species supported within a single upland estate – made possible by an enduring commitment to ecological monitoring.

Raptors Across the Glens

Raptors and owls were widely recorded across all seven surveyed estates in 2025, with six raptor species present on every estate.



Key insight

The widespread presence of both common and rare raptors reflects a complex and functioning upland ecosystem.

What This Means

The Angus Glens are not simply a landscape of single-purpose land use, but a dynamic ecological system. This reinforces the role of managed moorland as part of a wider effort to maintain and enhance upland biodiversity in Scotland:

- Habitats support a broad range of species;
- Monitoring provides evidence to inform management;
- Collaboration strengthens understanding of biodiversity outcomes.



A Managed Ecosystem

Taken together, the data presents a picture of estates actively managing for ecological health and long-term biodiversity.

Species diversity spans **multiple taxonomic groups** across habitats. **Ground-nesting bird** populations are strong and well-established. **Raptor and owl** species are distributed widely across the landscape.

Monitoring activity supports ongoing **research partnerships**.

Looking Forward

With the right support, the Angus Glens can continue to be a stronghold for **biodiversity**, a driver of **rural employment** and **economic activity** and a model for integrated upland management. This is a **shared opportunity**.

Key insight

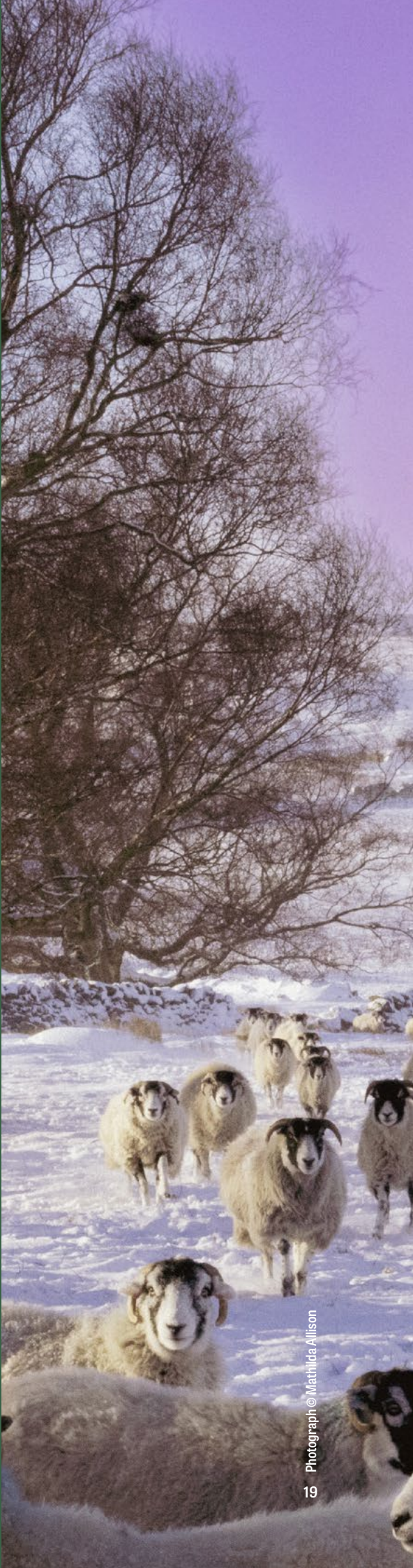
The Angus Glens represent a landscape where people live and work, nature is actively managed and monitored, and economic activity sustains rural communities. The estates that contributed to this report are already demonstrating what integrated land management can achieve.

Privately funded estates in the Angus Glens are delivering multiple benefits for people, jobs and nature.

The Opportunity

The opportunity now is for decision-makers to:

- Recognise this contribution;
- Build on what is working;
- Create an enabling environment in which these landholdings can continue to invest, adapt and thrive;
- Explore replicating this thriving landscape-scale model in other upland areas.



Voices from the Angus Glens

On what success looks like:

“Success for this estate in 2030 means it is financially sustainable, environmentally resilient, and delivering clear social value.”

“A harmonious and financially sound balance between wildlife, biodiversity, farming, access and sustainable sporting.”

On long-term stewardship:

“Managing land is a long-term thing where people, nature, biodiversity, profitability and the next generation all need balancing within your plans.”

On the role of estates in rural communities:

“Moorland estates help keep remote communities alive by providing year-round employment, supporting local services and providing a stronghold for key species.”

“The most important word in the countryside... COMMUNITY.”

On environmental delivery:

“Creating 30 hectares of wetland and re-meandering another burn on the estate.”

“Increasing wader populations.”

On resilience and continuity:

“The seemingly endless bureaucracy... preventing us doing what we do best – managing land.”

“It’s getting harder and harder.”

Key insight

The responses from estates provide a clear and consistent picture of both achievement and challenge. Estates are already delivering across multiple fronts — but maintaining and building on this contribution depends on the right conditions.

Respondents consistently highlighted the challenge of navigating increasing complexity, at the same time as being asked to deliver more:

- Climate mitigation;
- Biodiversity enhancement;
- Public access;
- Rural employment.



The message is clear:
delivery depends on viability.

Across all responses, a consistent set of priorities emerged:

1.

Clarity and stability in regulation

Keep regulations clear and stable, and cut out needless bureaucracy.

2.

Recognition of active management

Back proactive management to sustain biodiversity and reduce wildfire risk.

3.

Support for integrated land use

Increase funding for habitat management, biodiversity monitoring and rural enterprise.

4.

Investment in people and skills

Invest in rural skills, apprenticeships and long-term employment.

5.

Alignment between policy and delivery

“You can’t ask us to deliver on the one hand and penalise us on the other.”

Delivering for People, Jobs and Nature

Across the Angus Glens, privately owned estates manage over 54,715 hectares of upland landscape, supporting **employment**, sustaining **communities** and contributing to **biodiversity** at scale.

This report demonstrates that these landholdings are not single-purpose operations, but multi-functional working landscapes.

They support:

- **Jobs** → 86.5 FTE roles and 768 seasonal workers;
- **Economic activity** → £6.6 million annual expenditure;
- **Local economies** → 82.5% of spend retained locally;
- **Communities** → 68 homes provided, including 23 for families with children;
- **Nature** → diverse habitats supporting threatened upland species and widespread raptor presence.

Privately funded estates in the Angus Glens are delivering for **people, jobs and nature**.





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