



# WWF-UK'S WHOLESCAPE FRAMEWORK

DESIGNING AND DELIVERING THE  
WHOLESCAPE APPROACH IN THE UK

MAY 2026

## About WWF

We're WWF, the leading global environmental charity and we're bringing our world back to life. We are tackling the causes of nature loss. And we're finding solutions so that future generations inherit a world where nature is thriving and the climate is stable. This framework has been prepared by WWF-UK and reflects the views and analysis of WWF-UK only. It does not necessarily represent the positions or opinions of any other organisations, stakeholders, or individuals who may have contributed data, insights, or commentary during the development of this work.

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## Design

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# WHAT IS WWF-UK'S WHOLESCAPE APPROACH

WWF-UK recognises the urgent need to rethink the approach to the twin crises of climate change and nature loss, whilst meeting the wellbeing needs of people. Taking a “landscape approach” is a way of tackling these multiple challenges, because designing solutions at a landscape-scale helps us to understand the connections between natural and human systems in a place. This is important as decisions between outcomes for the climate, nature and people may need to be made. Through WWF-UK's Wholescape Approach we are creating the space to support the co-design of landscape approaches, delivering impact in the places that we work.

## Definitions

**Landscape:** a geographic area defined by common ecological and socioeconomic characteristics, chosen and defined based on river basins, seascapes, ecosystems, jurisdictions, agricultural production, or in other ways.

**Landscape Approach:** A collaborative approach to management focused on a shared vision to advance sustainability goals, reduce risk and build more resilient landscapes.

**Wholescape<sup>1</sup> Approach:** a landscape approach, designed by WWF-UK, that focuses on enabling a systems-based approach, delivering integrated environmental and social outcomes across land, freshwater, coast and seas.

To meet this challenge, WWF-UK has embedded new theories, research and evidence into the Wholescape Approach, strengthening its ability to deliver fairer and more just outcomes for all. It also reflects the reality that every landscape holds both local and global significance, and that whilst solutions must be shaped by the people, ecosystems and pressures unique to each place, we understand and acknowledge the system connections at planetary scale.



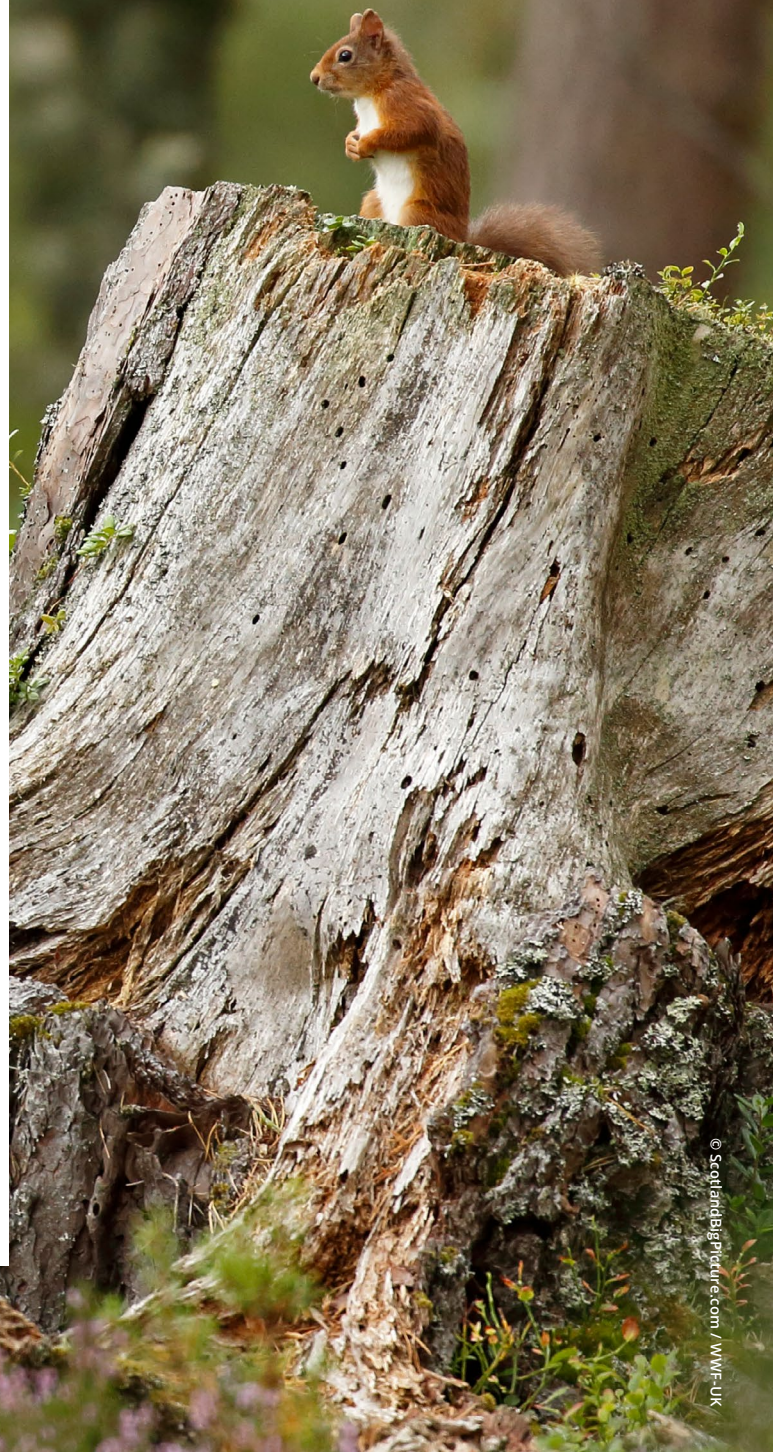
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<sup>1</sup> Note that WWF-UK adopted the term “Wholescape” from others, as defined by the Natural Capital Initiative, Edward Maltby and Mike Acreman in 2021 and built from it an approach that integrates our own definition, theories, research and evidence.

# WHAT MAKES THE WWF-UK WHOLESCAPE APPROACH UNIQUE?

The concept is not dissimilar to initiatives developed and delivered by others, however what makes the WWF-UK Wholescape Approach unique is its systems-based framing and purpose. The relationships between climate change, nature loss and societal wellbeing are complex but connected, and WWF-UK believes that by taking a systems-based approach to the drivers of these challenges we can achieve greater overall impact.

WWF-UK acknowledges that achieving positive outcomes for climate, nature and people at the same time is challenging. Working at landscape-scale will inevitably involve difficult decisions and some trade-offs, but there will also be opportunities for win wins where actions will have multiple benefits. The Wholescape Approach aims to support local communities and other organisations delivering a landscape approach to make these decisions, by providing a framework that translates the needs of the climate, nature and people into deliverable programmes of work.



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# HOW DOES WWF-UK'S WHOLESCAPE APPROACH WORK?

The Wholescape Framework is the foundation of the Wholescape Approach. It provides an integrated outcomes framework for monitoring and reporting impact, across landscapes. Each layer builds on the one above it, moving from high-level commitments to concrete and measurable change. The four components: principles, criteria, outcomes and indicators form a clear chain of intent, delivery and evidence.

**Principles** – statements that express the core commitments of our approach i.e. climate, nature and people, establishing the structure of the Wholescape Framework.

**Criteria** – component parts of the principles set the scope for delivery at landscape-scale. For example, under the climate principle we have committed to work on adaptation and the mitigation potential a landscape has – these are our two criteria for climate. Although we recognise the importance of a wide range of actions in tackling climate

change, these are the two areas that we have the expertise to work on.

In the Wholescape Framework there are currently six criteria organised within the three principles of climate, nature and people. Each outcome has a description and one or more indicators outlined in an indicator dictionary, with suggestions for monitoring and reporting.

**Outcomes** – the results we expect to achieve, organised within each criterion.

**Indicators** – the quantitative or qualitative measures, evidencing whether the outcomes are being achieved; with an indicator dictionary.

The outcomes and indicators align with national and international targets, wherever possible.

Here, the Framework is presented as a dashboard. There are currently six criteria



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and sixteen outcomes organised within the three principles of climate, nature and people. Each outcome has a description and one or more indicators outlined in the indicator dictionary, with suggestions for monitoring and reporting.

The Framework includes an additional section called Design and Process outlining the core processes that guide WWF's programmatic work. This begins with the WWF Standards for Project & Programme Management (PPMS) – based on the internationally agreed Conservation Standards (Conservation Measures Partnership). By applying the PPMS consistently, we strengthen the quality, transparency, and effectiveness of our programmes and ensure that our conservation efforts deliver lasting results. WWF's Environmental & Social Safeguarding (ESSF) screening tool ensures that our conservation work is carried out responsibly, ethically, and with respect for people and nature. It sets out the standards, processes, and accountability measures that guide how we identify, prevent, and manage potential environmental and social risks in our programmes.

Other areas of the Wholescape Framework are continually developing such as the methodologies used to assess how landscape design and management balance the needs of the climate, nature and people, and critically how trade-offs are being made and synergies maximised.

This section also introduces the Core Criteria for Mature Landscape Initiatives<sup>2</sup> (see page 14) – the full details are available on

request. This is one of several tools that help landscapes build the enabling conditions for scaling both activity and conservation finance. WWF is using the criteria to support the development of Wholescapes, providing a structured way to identify shared challenges and opportunities across the places that we work. The approach will also help shape a clearer pathway toward long-term, sustainable landscape financing.

Without significant resource WWF-UK and our landscape partners are unlikely to achieve the full set of Wholescape outcomes in any of the places that we work. It is necessary then to prioritise the greatest potential impact, with decisions made based on data and evidence and informed by engagement with landscape partners within each place. How this is done will be determined in collaboration with the local landscape partners, using local data and evidence on the drivers and consequences of landscape risk or system degradation, such as intensive agriculture contributing to poor water quality, habitat loss and poor connectivity for wildlife, as well as greenhouse gas emissions.

With a complete understanding of the drivers and their consequences, landscape partners can prioritise the Wholescape outcomes most likely to build resilient landscapes, and direct resources toward designing and delivering the most effective programmatic interventions.

<sup>2</sup> Designed by the Landscape Practitioner Network, of which WWF is a member – convened and led by ISEAL.

# WHOLESCAPE FRAMEWORK

DESIGN & PROCESS		CLIMATE PRINCIPLE		NATURE PRINCIPLE		PEOPLE PRINCIPLE	
<p><b>WWF DESIGN &amp; IMPACT (CROSS CUTTING PROCESS)</b></p> <p>Robust design and safeguarding processes have informed the Wholescape design, implementation and adaptive management, underpinned by inclusive processes and systems-based approach to support the identification and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of trade-offs at landscape level.</p>	<p><b>ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR LANDSCAPE MATURITY</b></p> <p>Wholescape is externally demonstrating that the landscapes in which we work are maturing – with emerging positive characteristics including defined scale, strong and inclusive governance, collective action and robust monitoring; we are growing the enabling conditions for scale-up and sustainable finance.</p>	<p><b>CRITERION 1</b></p> <p>Land-based carbon storage is maintained or increased and net greenhouse gas emissions from restored or managed areas remain stable or declines, demonstrating that Wholescape actions safeguard existing stocks and make a positive contribution to climate regulation.</p>	<p><b>CRITERION 2</b></p> <p>Wholescape is strengthening climate resilience and adaptation for nature and people.</p>	<p><b>CRITERION 3</b></p> <p>Wholescape is designing and delivering strategies that restore and connect ecosystems across land, rivers and sea, improving the resilience of nature at landscape-scale.</p>	<p><b>CRITERION 4</b></p> <p>Wholescape is effectively enabling wildlife &amp; species recovery, evidenced through improving population and habitat metrics, providing enhanced ecosystem resilience and function.</p>	<p><b>CRITERION 5</b></p> <p>Wholescape programmes support increased nature connectedness and contribute to improved human wellbeing.</p>	<p><b>CRITERION 6</b></p> <p>Wholescape programmes support a fair transition to sustainable use of the natural environment.</p>
PPMS evidence of process	D1 Scale	C1 Climate Mitigation	C2 Climate Adaptation	N1 Land	N4 Abundance & Distribution	P1 Human Wellbeing	P3 Just Transition
ESSF evidence of process	D2 Multi-stakeholder governance process or platform			N2 Freshwater	N5 Connectivity	P2 Nature Connectedness	P4 Equitable Governance
Inclusive co-design of partnerships & programmes	D3 Collective goals & actions			N3 Marine	N6 Extinction risk		
Assessing the trade-offs and synergies between the principles, support for process.	D4 Collective monitoring				N7 Reintroduction/translocations		
Systems-based approach evidence of process					N8 Human Wildlife Conflict		
					N9 Invasive non-native species		
				NX (cross-cutting indicator) Increased areas of land, rivers and sea are in better ecological condition because of integrated restoration and better management of protected areas.			

# CRITERION 1: MITIGATION

<b>CRITERION</b>	Land-based carbon storage is maintained or increased and net greenhouse gas emissions from restored or managed areas remain stable or declines, demonstrating that Wholescape actions safeguard existing stocks and make a positive contribution to climate regulation.
<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>C1 CLIMATE MITIGATION</b> Carbon stored in the land has not decreased and greenhouse gas emissions from the landscape have not increased because of Wholescape activity; where possible activities are planned that lead to increased carbon storage on land.
<b>INDICATORS</b>	<p>C1 (a) Where it is possible to report activities, tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions removed each year by activities across the landscape are reported with robust MRV standards and processes in place.</p> <p>C1 (b) Area of land-use types maintained or increased through Wholescape programmes where carbon stocks in the landscape are disproportionately high and/or where annual greenhouse gas emission rates are disproportionately negative (i.e. where greenhouse gases are being “absorbed” by the landscape).</p> <p>For carbon stocks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hectares of peatland and woodland across the Wholescape.</li></ul> <p>For greenhouse gas emissions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hectares of saltmarsh and replanted native woodland across the Wholescape.</li></ul> <p>C1 (c) Annual greenhouse gas emissions being stored in the landscape and ensuring any carbon stored within the landscape is not lost through Wholescape land management activities.</p> <p>Note: Wholescape may also contribute scientific evidence to improve understanding of the link between climate mitigation and land management practices, see C1 (d) below.</p> <p>C1 (d) Number of studies which contribute to the knowledge base on the link between land management and climate mitigation.</p>



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# CRITERION 2: ADAPTATION

<b>CRITERION</b>	Wholescape is strengthening climate resilience and adaptation for nature and people.
<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>C2 CLIMATE ADAPTATION</b> There is better community understanding of the risks posed by climate change and there is action being taken to ensure people and nature are adapted to climate impacts.
<b>INDICATORS</b>	<p>C2 (a) Number of hectares where nature-based solutions support resilience for ecosystems and people exposed to climate risk, including actions under Criterion 3 that restore and reconnect habitats across land, freshwater and marine systems to strengthen cross-ecosystem conditions for climate adaptation.</p> <p>C2 (b) Number of local people with increased awareness of climate impacts in the area and of personal and collaborative steps that can be taken to adapt to these impacts.</p> <p>C2 (c) Number of identified barriers to effective adaptation being reduced or removed through Wholescape activities.</p>



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# CRITERION 3: CROSS-ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

<b>CRITERION</b>	Wholescape is designing and delivering strategies that restore and connect ecosystems across land, rivers and seas, improving the resilience of nature at landscape-scale.		
<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>N1 NATURE POSITIVE LAND-USE CHANGE AND LAND MANAGEMENT</b> The health of the land in scope is improving as a result of nature positive land management and LULUCF (land-use, land-use change & forestry), evidenced by the extent of natural and semi-natural habitats, reduced land-based impact on rivers and seas, and improvements in biodiversity.	<b>N2 IMPROVE CONDITION OF FRESHWATER ECOSYSTEMS</b> The inland waters in scope show improved health, as demonstrated by diverse data indicating better ecological status.  Uses a combination of available and/or achievable Water Framework Directive datasets shown below that are most relevant to the project and/or Wholescape.	<b>N3 IMPROVE CONDITION OF MARINE ECOSYSTEMS</b> The coastal waters and seas in scope show improved health, as demonstrated by diverse data indicating better environmental condition.  Uses a combination of available and/or achievable Marine Directive Strategy measurements shown below that are most relevant to the project and/or Wholescape.
<b>INDICATORS</b>	N1 (a) Area (ha) of land committed to nature positive land-use change. i.e. area of land (ha) committed to positive land-use change defined as a process based on local decision making and activities that transform landscapes. Note: commitment to land-use change must be secured by binding agreement.	N2 (a) Area/extent (ha or km) of freshwater system that has improved biological condition.	N3 (1a) Area/extent (ha) of biodiversity positive sea-use change (Marine Strategy Framework Directive – measurement of change).
	N1 (b) Area (ha) of land undergoing nature positive land-use change.	N2 (b) Area/extent (ha or km) of freshwater system that has improved water quality.	N3 (1b) Reduced disturbance to achieve greater area/extent (ha) of seabed integrity.
	N1 (c) Area of land in nature positive management.	N2 (c) Localised reduction in water temperature (°C).	N3 (1c) Removal of land-based pressures delivered via rivers – requires data from N1 and N2.
	N1 (d) Enabler of nature positive land-use change and land management.	N2 (d) Area/extent (ha or km) of freshwater system that has improved physical environment.	N3 (1d) Marine legislative change, policy instruments and guidance e.g. 30x30.
		N2 (e) Area/extent (ha or km) of freshwater system that has improved environmental flow regimes (m <sup>3</sup> /s).	N3 (2a) Use of marine spatial planning.
			N3 (2b) Reduced coastal eutrophication.
			N3 (2c) Increased survivability (habitats and species) (context and project specific).
<b>CROSS-CUTTING OUTCOME &amp; INDICATORS</b>	Outcome: <b>NX INCREASING AREAS OF LAND, RIVERS, COAST AND SEA ARE IN BETTER ECOLOGICAL CONDITION BECAUSE OF INTEGRATED RESTORATION AND BETTER MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED AREAS</b>	Indicator NX (a) Area (ha) committed (agreement type) to ecological restoration is increasing.  Indicator NX (b) Area (ha) undergoing ecological restoration is increasing.  Indicator NX (c) Positive changes (qualitative) in condition status of protected areas.	

# CRITERION 4: WILDLIFE & SPECIES

<b>CRITERION</b>	Wholescape is effectively enabling wildlife & species recovery, evidenced through improving population and habitat metrics, providing enhanced ecosystem resilience and function.					
<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>N4 ABUNDANCE AND DISTRIBUTION</b> Indices of abundance and distribution/occupancy of representative taxa have improved as an apex measure of nature recovery.	<b>N5 CONNECTIVITY</b> Extent of ecological connectivity (structural and functional) improves over time, supporting range expansion and genetic mixing as populations recover.	<b>N6 EXTINCTION RISK (WHERE RELEVANT TO THE CONTEXT)</b> Extinction risk reduced where Wholescape encompasses significant proportion of a red listed species range/population.	<b>N7 SPECIES REINTRODUCTIONS (WHERE RELEVANT TO THE CONTEXT)</b> Species reintroductions and translocations have been successful in line with specified indicators.	<b>N8 HUMAN WILDLIFE CONFLICT (WHERE RELEVANT TO THE CONTEXT)</b> Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) is reducing as a result of Wholescape activities and no longer affecting conservation efforts.	<b>N9 INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES (WHERE RELEVANT TO THE CONTEXT)</b> Invasive Non-native Species (INNS) have been identified, managed, eradicated and/or controlled.
<b>INDICATORS</b>	N4 (a) Increase in sizes and health of key species/taxa populations.  N4 (b) Improvements in local wildlife and species health at project / Nested Wholescape level.	N5 (a) Increase in opportunities for safe movement of species within either a landscape matrix or core habitat/mosaic, demonstrated by positive changes to habitats.  N5 (b) Positive ecological responses in indicator species / taxa i.e. changes within communities and at landscape-scale.	N6 (a) Improved status of species at risk of extinction through the removal of threats.  N6 (b) Improved status of species at risk of extinction through an increase in habitat.	N7 (a) Indicators developed during design process where reintroductions/translocations are relevant.	N8 (a) Indicators developed during design process where HWC is relevant.	N9 (a) Indicators developed during design process where INNS relevant.

# CRITERION 5: NATURE CONNECTEDNESS

<b>CRITERION</b>	Wholescape programmes support increased nature connectedness and contribute to improved human wellbeing.	
<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>P1 WELLBEING</b> The wellbeing of local people has increased, connected to a more equitable flow of benefits from nature.	<b>P2 NATURE CONNECTEDNESS</b> Nature connectedness among local people has increased.
<b>INDICATOR</b>	P1 (a) Improved wellbeing reported by participants (specific elements of wellbeing to be defined by participants as appropriate to local context): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical and mental health and wellbeing</li> <li>• Social, cultural and spiritual wellbeing</li> <li>• Learning &amp; inspiration</li> <li>• Economic opportunities and livelihoods</li> <li>• Material wellbeing (including local, accessible and affordable food and energy resources).</li> </ul>	P2 (a) Increase in measures of nature connectedness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local communities feel more connected to nature</li> <li>• Local communities show increased understanding of how their actions affect the natural world.</li> <li>• Local communities express a sense of hope for the future in relation to climate / nature / environment.</li> <li>• Local communities have access to green space/nature.</li> </ul>



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# CRITERION 6: JUST TRANSITION

<b>CRITERION</b>	Wholescape programmes support a fair transition to sustainable use of the natural environment.	
<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>P3 JUST TRANSITION</b> Food producers have transitioned to more sustainable food production methods that are economically viable; local people are better able to access jobs/derive an income from sustainable livelihood opportunities.	<b>P4 EQUITABLE GOVERNANCE</b> Equitable governance has enabled greater community agency, and a fairer navigation of natural resource use decision making and trade-offs.
<b>INDICATOR</b>	P3 (a) Number of food producers (and ha covered) that have adopted more sustainable food production methods (in line with defined nature positive agriculture and aquaculture practices).	P4 (a) At Wholescape level – multistakeholder processes for the equitable navigation of trade-offs are facilitated with more equitable outcomes for people.
	P3 (b) Participating / engaged food producers have economically viable business / business plans.	P4 (b) At Wholescape level – proportion of projects that implement co-design, co-implementation and/or are community-led.
	P3 (c) Number and proportion of farm business owners/food producers that feel positive about their future in farming.	P4 (c) At project level – number and proportion (%) of local community members directly participating in project governance (including representation of most impacted/underserved community members).
	P3 (d) Number of people supported by Wholescape programmes who are deriving an income from a sustainable livelihood/business.	P4 (d) At project level – % of community members involved in decision making satisfied with their levels of participation in decision-making processes and agree their participation has influenced the decisions within the project/landscape.



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# ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR LANDSCAPE MATURITY

WWF-UK has integrated the Core Criteria for Mature Landscape Initiatives—developed by the Landscape Practitioner Network, convened by ISEAL—as a foundation for advancing the Wholescape Approach. These criteria offer a structured framework for building the enabling conditions required for landscape maturity, helping initiatives progress toward larger-scale action, measurable impact, and increased financial investment.

## CORE CRITERIA FOR MATURE LANDSCAPE INITIATIVES

CROSS-CUTTING ACTIVITY - WWF PPMS & ESSF

SUB-CRITERIA	D1 SCALE	D2 MULTI-STAKEHOLDER GOVERNANCE PROCESS OR PLATFORM	D3 COLLECTIVE GOALS & ACTIONS	4 COLLECTIVE MONITORING
	<p>Landscape initiatives typically operate at a scale of hundreds of thousands of hectares but can often be larger or occasionally smaller, depending on the landscape context.</p> <p>The landscape initiative is of a scale that:</p> <p>D1 (a) It can influence systemic conditions underlying its sustainability goals, such as through land-use planning and policy reform.</p> <p>D1 (b) Enables coherent area-level management by the multi-stakeholder governance process.</p>	<p>The multi-partner process or platform:</p> <p>D2 (a) Includes active participation from key stakeholders in the landscape, including local community representatives.</p> <p>D2 (b) Sets or facilitates definition of the collective goals and actions of the initiative, engages with local government directly and seeks to align with progressive local, sub-national, or national government priorities and policies.</p> <p>D2 (c) Has clear and transparent operating procedures and decision-making that supports effective stakeholder participation.</p> <p>D2 (d) Plays a coordinating role for actions and monitoring in the landscape; and implements safeguards, including grievance mechanisms, that minimise the risks of negative human rights or environmental impacts, while enhancing positive results for people and nature within the landscape.</p>	<p>Partners in the landscape initiative have agreed on a set of long-term landscape-scale sustainability impact goals and a collective action plan for achieving those goals.</p> <p>The sustainability goals:</p> <p>D3 (a) Are informed by a context analysis or similar effort to understand current landscape conditions and stakeholder priorities for action.</p> <p>D3 (b) Encompass social, environmental, and economic priorities.</p> <p>D3 (c) Are each accompanied by measurable metrics, baseline data, and short and medium-term milestones.</p> <p>D3 (d) Are reviewed regularly and revised as necessary to reflect the changing landscape context.</p> <p>The collective action plan:</p> <p>D3 (e) Addresses systemic issues by focusing on long-term solutions that can be embedded in local governance.</p> <p>D3 (f) Considers the diversity of land-use types and supply chains that are present in the landscape.</p> <p>D3 (g) Lays out strategies and actions to achieve defined milestones and make progress towards the goals.</p> <p>D3 (h) Is made publicly available for all (inc local communities) and is agreed upon by participating partners.</p> <p>D3 (i) Is updated regularly to reflect progress and funding.</p> <p>D3 (j) Is accompanied by a finance or funding strategy.</p>	<p>The landscape initiative manages a collective monitoring and reporting framework that enables assessment and communication of progress towards the initiative's collective sustainability impact goals.</p> <p>The collective monitoring framework includes:</p> <p>D4 (a) A locally validated baseline performance assessment of the ecological and socio-economic conditions of the landscape.</p> <p>D4 (b) Activity monitoring that assesses progress in implementing activities included in the action plan.</p> <p>D4 (c) Performance monitoring at a landscape scale against defined performance metrics and milestones for the collective sustainability goals.</p> <p>D4 (d) Robust and transparent reporting of activity and performance data.</p>

## GUIDANCE FOR APPLYING THE WHOLESCAPE FRAMEWORK

The Wholescape Framework has been developed by WWF-UK to support organisations, communities, and decision-makers in taking an integrated landscape approach to climate resilience, nature's recovery and the wellbeing of people. It is designed as a holistic framework, where each component works together to ensure lasting outcomes for people and nature. Whilst we recognise that delivering outcomes for the climate, nature and people requires significant resource, WWF-UK encourages the full application of the Wholescape Framework. Selective use, adaptation, or extraction of individual elements risks undermining the principles of justice in conservation, the equitable flow of finance, and the inclusive, community-centred processes that the framework is built to uphold.

While WWF-UK welcomes interest in the Wholescape Approach, we cannot endorse or be held responsible for applications that do not reflect the framework in its entirety, or that diverge from its core purpose of enabling fair, resilient, and landscape-led action. To ensure its integrity and intended impact are maintained, users are encouraged to engage with a wide range of partners, including local communities, when applying the framework.





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