

The Rt Hon Alex Salmond MSP  
First Minister  
Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh EH1 3DG



7th January 2010

Dear First Minister

**We are sending this open letter to yourself, the UK Prime Minister, the Welsh First Minister, and the Northern Ireland First Minister as we wish to:**

- **Highlight the value of landscape for engaging all members of society in planning, managing and protecting our natural and cultural environment;**
- **Call on the UK Government along with the Welsh Assembly Government, Scottish Government, and Northern Ireland Executive to reaffirm its commitment to the European Landscape Convention;**
- **Ask for a clear indication that a system of monitoring and proofing of all new relevant legislation, policy and government guidance will be carried out to ensure compliance with the Convention; and**
- **Ask for the comprehensive implementation of Scotland's Landscape Charter and the corresponding country-wide initiatives of the other devolved governments.**

We welcome the support for the principles of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) shown by Richard Benyon MP, Minister for the Natural Environment and Fisheries, at the UK Landscape Conference, held in Liverpool in November 2010. He noted that, "All landscapes matter for the health, wealth and well-being of society, for our cultural identity and for the diverse habitats that exist as part of them." Our hope is that this recognition of the importance of landscape will continue to translate into meaningful action across the UK Government and the devolved governments.

In this letter, we underline the importance of the ELC and suggest how Mr Benyon's commitment can be built upon at a UK level and by devolved governments who carry responsibility for much of the delivery of the Convention's aims within the different countries.

**Landscape is more than just scenery:** it is the interaction between people and place; the bedrock upon which our society is built. Landscape is what gives meaning and value to the world around us, contributing greatly to our sense of identity and quality of life. Landscape does not just mean rural; it includes urban areas as well as inland water, coastline and marine areas. Landscape includes both beautiful and everyday places, as well as those in need of restoration.

Landscape makes connections between people, between people and places, and between society and its environment. Involving all of society in shaping and celebrating our landscape will address many challenges facing us today, including demographic and lifestyle changes, food and energy security, heritage and biodiversity conservation.

**The European Landscape Convention** is the world's first treaty to focus specifically on landscape. The Convention, developed by the Council of Europe, was ratified by the UK Government and came into force in March 2007. The Convention commits the UK to:

- Recognising the concept of landscape in law.
- Integrating landscape into all relevant policies, including policies for environment, spatial planning, coastal defence, community engagement and culture.
- Identifying, assessing and monitoring landscapes, describing their character and analysing what contributes to, or detracts from, their quality and distinctiveness.
- Involving all members of society in the protection, management and planning of landscapes: safeguarding their heritage value, enabling positive change and looking ahead to adapt and create the landscapes of the future.
- Raising awareness of landscape throughout society; and promoting landscape education and training.
- Co-operating across Europe to share experience in landscape and tackle cross-border issues.

**The UK has a rich expertise in landscape** and UK experts were central to the drafting of the Convention. The recent UK Landscape Conference in Liverpool highlighted examples of the excellent work being carried out across the UK. The event celebrated our best practice, including recognition of the 'UK Landscape of the Year', which was awarded to the Durham Heritage Coast project, itself now due to represent the UK in the European Landscape Award taking place in Strasbourg in March 2011.

**The opportunities presented by the European Landscape Convention must be seized at every level:** within Europe and by national Governments, and by local authorities, non-governmental organisations, businesses, communities and individuals. Doing so would not only protect, manage and plan our national landscape assets, but also fulfil the following six main purposes of public policy:

- Reinforce democracy, in that landscape belongs to everyone.
- Promote co-responsibility, in that every member of civil society, every property owner, every user of land can influence landscape for good or ill.

- Strengthen good governance, in that concern within communities for their landscape can lead to the development of greater environmental responsibility.
- Encourage localism, in that landscape not only contributes to the formation of local cultures and local quality of life, but the ELC also respects the principle of subsidiarity at every administrative level and landscape scale.
- Secure a valuable economic resource, in that landscape protection, management and planning can contribute to job creation, as well as social, cultural and environmental and economic value.
- Advance integration, in that landscape issues can provide the stimulus and framework for integrated policy-making and action affecting environmental change.

**Therefore we, the undersigned individuals and organisations, are committed to the intent and Articles of the European Landscape Convention.** We call on the UK Government, Welsh Assembly Government, Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Assembly to respond to this letter by re-affirming their commitment to the principles of the Convention and to supporting its implementation within the UK.

In particular we ask:

- For a clear indication that a system of monitoring and proofing of all new relevant legislation, policy and government guidance will be carried out to ensure compliance with the Convention; and
- For the comprehensive implementation of Scotland's Landscape Charter and the corresponding country-wide initiatives of the other devolved governments.

We look forward to progress on this agenda in the weeks and months ahead.

We are copying this letter to Richard Lochhead MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment and to Roseanna Cunningham MSP, Minister for Environment and Climate Change. Similar letters are being sent to the UK Government, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Northern Ireland Executive.

Yours sincerely

Signatories are shown overleaf, please respond to:

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Dennis Canavan (Ramblers Scotland)  
Hebe Carus (Mountaineering Council of Scotland)  
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Michael Dower CBE FRICS MRTPI HonFLI  
Professor Ian Douglas  
Dr Bella Davies (The Wandle Trust)  
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Archaeology Scotland  
The Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland  
Built Environment Forum Scotland  
Campaign for National Parks  
Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales  
Campaign to Protect Rural England  
Cheshire Landscape Trust  
Countryside  
Greenspace Scotland  
Groundwork UK  
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John Muir Trust  
Land Use Consultants  
Landscape Institute  
Landscape Research Group

Mountaineering Council of Scotland  
National Trust  
National Trust for Scotland  
New Forest District Council  
Northern Ireland Environment Link  
Northern Ireland Countryside Access and Activities Network  
Northern Ireland Protected Areas Network  
Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum  
Ramblers Scotland  
River Nene Regional Park CiC  
Scottish Campaign for National Parks  
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Sperrins Tourism Limited  
The Wandle Trust  
Wilderness Foundation

