



Wildlife and  
Countryside



## News Release

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# 100 voluntary organisations Unite to Defend Nature

**100 voluntary organisations across the UK have joined forces to call for the protection of Europe's natural environment.**

**EU legislation – the Birds and Habitats Directives – exist to protect the most important wildlife species and habitats in the UK and Europe. For over 30 years they have protected some of our best loved and most iconic landscapes from the Scottish Flow County peatlands to the Caledonian pine forests of the Cairngorms, and they are essential to the protection of species large and small, from the basking shark and the harbour porpoise, to the capercaillie and the corncrake. However, now these laws are under review and at risk of being weakened.**

Today, the 'Joint Links group', representing 100 voluntary organisations across the UK, has published a position statement warning that the European Commission's REFIT 'Fitness Check' of the Birds and Habitats Directives is the single biggest threat to UK and European nature and biodiversity in a generation.

The Joint Links raise concerns that the Directives are under threat of being weakened by those who mistakenly regard them as a block on business and economic growth. In the current political context any revision of the Directives would expose them to prolonged uncertainty and leave the long-term future of Europe's biodiversity vulnerable to short-term political priorities.

Convener of Scottish Environment LINK's Wildlife Forum, Deborah Long, said: "Scottish environmental NGOs are delighted to join with our colleagues from across the UK to sign this statement. Not only should our amazing wildlife be protected for itself, but it is also hugely economically important in attracting people to visit Scotland and in marketing Scottish produce. Those who see protecting nature as somehow getting in the way of business are often just wrong."

The Joint Links group's response to the EC consultation sets out a huge volume of evidence that demonstrates the effectiveness of the Directives in protecting nature, providing huge benefits for people and providing a stable framework for responsible businesses.

On 30 April the European Commission launched its public consultation on the Directives. Voluntary organisations have also today launched the 'Nature Alert' electronic tool, enabling the public to have their say in one easy click [[www.naturealert.eu](http://www.naturealert.eu)].

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Notes to Editors:

1. The Joint Links' group's joint position is at <http://www.scotlink.org/public-documents/joint-links-refit-position-statement/>

2. Joint Links collectively represents voluntary organisations with more than 8 million supporters across the UK. It comprises the combined memberships of [Scottish Environment LINK](#), [Wildlife and Countryside Link](#), [Wales Environment Link](#) and the [Northern Ireland Environment Link](#). Each is a coalition of environmental voluntary organisations, united by their common interest in the conservation and restoration of nature and the promotion of sustainable development across the terrestrial, freshwater and marine environments.
3. For more information please contact;
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4. The 'Nature Alert' tool was developed by a coalition of Europe-wide voluntary organisations (BirdLife Europe; European Environmental Bureau; Friends of the Earth Europe; and WWF Europe). The tool is being made available to citizens of 28 European countries and has been translated into 20 languages.