

Motion S5M-17329 on World Environment Day 2019 Thursday 13 June 2019

Summary

- Scottish Environment LINK members welcome the motion and the opportunity it provides to discuss the need for a strong response to the unfolding and interconnected climate and nature emergencies.
- LINK members believe that today's environmental challenges can be addressed by introducing a Scottish Environment Act as only this can provide the necessary legal framework to drive the 'transformative action' which the First Minister acknowledged is needed.
- LINK's call for a Scottish Environment Act was supported by over 22,000 people who wrote to the First Minister in May.
- In response to evidence from the international community (IPCC, IPBES) as well as reports looking at the impacts in Scotland, we need action to address both the climate and biodiversity crises.
- Strong laws to cut greenhouse gas emissions will help reduce the impacts of climate change on wildlife. But more is needed if we want to protect our natural environment.
- As the IPBES Global Assessment report highlights, our natural world faces four threats in addition to climate change: changes in land and sea use, direct exploitation of organisms (e.g. overfishing); pollution; and the spread of non-native species. These challenges exist in Scotland too.
- With 1 in 11 species at risk of extinction in Scotland, we need a strategic approach to protect our environment and ensure that our nature is healthy and thriving for future generations.
- To achieve this, we will need a strong vision but also strong laws to:
 - Set targets and ambition
 - Ensure the robust enforcement of legal protections
 - Outline clear actions and pathways for achieving set targets and ambition
- We hope that Members of the Scottish Parliament and in particular Species Champions MSPs, will stand up for nature and support strong and effective laws that will protect and enhance our environment.

INTRODUCTION

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 35 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

SCOTLAND'S NATURE IS AT RISK

The [2016 State of Nature Scotland report](#) revealed that 1 in 11 species in Scotland is at risk of extinction. More recently, the report '[Scotland's Nature on Red Alert](#)', commissioned on behalf of Scottish Environment LINK and WWF Scotland, provides an overview of how key ecosystems and

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species are being already impacted by climate change. For example, seabirds such as the kittwake are being affected, as their populations have declined by approximately 60% since 1986. Rising sea temperatures are contributing to the birds' inability to breed as this is linked to the abundance of sandeels. Sandeels, abundant in low sea temperatures, are being affected by rising sea temperatures.

Clear and urgent action is needed to reverse these trends.

TRANSLATING COMMITMENTS TO ACTION

The Scottish Government is already committed to setting a net zero target for all greenhouse gases for 2045. This is an important and critical step to tackling climate change and it will also reduce the impacts which climate change has on our natural environment.

Climate change is a key driver of biodiversity loss and according to a [recent YouGov poll](#) 65% of respondents are worried about climate change due to its catastrophic impacts on wildlife.

However, action for the environment needs to tackle climate change as well as other drivers of ecosystem degradation, such as unsustainable land use and sea use practices, pollution, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources and the spread of non-native species.

Given the recent IPBES report conclusions as well as the fact that Scotland is set to meet only 7 out of 20 global biodiversity targets, it is clear that more action is needed to protect our natural environment.

As the First Minister said in the Chamber on 9 May, we need to ['ensure that our actions produce the transformative change that is needed'](#). 'On biodiversity targets, Scotland has more to do, just as all countries have more to do'.

THE NEED FOR STRONG LAWS

LINK members believe that today's environmental challenges can be addressed by introducing a Scottish Environment Act as only this can provide the necessary legal framework to drive the 'transformative action' which the First Minister acknowledged is needed.

Over 22,000 citizens agree that we need a Scottish Environment Act and wrote to the First Minister in May. A Scottish Environment Act would also build on the Scottish Government's commitment to an Environment Strategy and meet its ambition to 'maintain or enhance EU environmental standards'.

A Scottish Environment Act would:

1. Provide clear principles on which environmental policy can be based
2. Ensure environmental legislation can be properly enforced and implemented
3. Set targets for environmental protection and an action plan for how this can be achieved

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