

News Release

Embargoed until: 00.01 am, Thursday 24 January 2008

What state is Scotland's wildlife in?

Scottish Parliament debates progress report on Scottish Biodiversity Strategy

The Biodiversity Task Force of Scottish Environment LINK has welcomed the debate today (Thursday 24 January 2008) in Parliament by MSPs on the implementation of Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy following the publication of a report that considers the progress made over first three years since its launch in 2004.

Scotland's Biodiversity: It's In Your Hands is a framework for action to conserve and enhance biodiversity for its people, economy and wildlife and was developed as part of the UK's pledge to the European and international commitment to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010.

Dr Deborah Long, Convenor of Link's Biodiversity Task Force said: *"Scotland's rich biodiversity, with our unique range of habitats from temperate rainforest to high mountain tops, sustains a large part of our rural economies and underpins our sense of place. While we have made significant progress over the last 3 years in conserving some of that biodiversity, we still have a long way to go to meet our target to halt the loss of biodiversity in Scotland by 2010. The debate on Thursday, following the report to parliament published in December, provides us all with the opportunity to assess progress to date and plan action to meet future targets. As Scotland necessarily takes on more work to meet this target, less is likely to be achieved as the government's funding commitment to support this work declines. We are looking forward to an informed debate on Thursday on how to maintain our rate of progress towards the 2010 target."*

Stuart Brooks, Head of Conservation for the Scottish Wildlife Trust, a member of Scottish Environment LINK, said: *"We are delighted to see that progress is being made in some areas. The report shows that some species such as otters are increasing in numbers and visitors enjoying the outdoors are on the rise. This really demonstrates the benefits of protecting and enhancing our wildlife. But the time for planning and strategising is over. We can only speak of successes when we see our most important species and places recovering, when Scotland stops destroying its most valuable natural assets and there is a sense of collective pride and enjoyment in our wonderful natural environment. We look forward to working with government to make this a reality."*

Scottish Environment LINK is a Scottish charity under Scottish Charity No SC000296 and a Scottish company limited by guarantee and without share capital under Company No SC250899

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Despite the many positive steps taken by government, voluntary bodies, local authorities, businesses and individuals over the last three years, the report also illustrates the many challenges that lie ahead. Most recent statistics show that 30% of priority habitats and 18% of priority species in Scotland are in decline. Climate change, diffuse pollution, over grazing in the uplands and fragmentation of natural habitats are all exacerbating the problem. Our cliffs and coasts, once famous for huge colonies of breeding sea birds are now under serious threat, as oceans warm; food supplies for breeding birds dwindle.

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Editors' Notes

(1) **Scottish Environment LINK** is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment organisations - 36 member bodies, with around 0.5 million members, representing a spectrum of environmental and associated cultural heritage interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society. LINK member bodies own or manage c. 308,000 ha of land in Scotland between them, promoting and delivering sustainable land management for Scotland's wildlife and its people. Further information on LINK is available at www.scotlink.org

(2) Link's Biodiversity Task Force member organisations include Plantlife Scotland; Scottish Wildlife Trust; Mountaineering Council of Scotland; Buglife – the Invertebrate Conservation Trust; Butterfly Conservation Scotland; National Trust for Scotland; Royal Zoological Society of Scotland; Marine Conservation Society; RSPB Scotland; Woodland Trust Scotland; Scottish Native Woods, Scottish Allotments & Gardens Society.

(3) For more information on the Progress Report for the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy visit: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/12/11141751/0>

(4) Link has produced a briefing for MSPs to inform their debate, available at http://www.scotlink.org/LINK_action/parliamentary.php

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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