

## **Manifesto for the 2019 UK General Election**

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.

Scottish Environment LINK members call on all parties to put the urgent need to tackle the twin climate and nature emergencies at the heart of their manifestos for this General Election. The risks to the world we call home, as highlighted by reports from IBPES, the IPCC, the UK Committee on Climate Change and the State of Nature Partnership, can seem overwhelming, but there is still time to restore nature if we act now. At a time when our relationship with the EU and other international partners is changing, it is essential we work together globally to restore nature and halt the climate emergency. Our existing environmental protections must not be downgraded as the result of an EU exit and nor should Brexit derail the UK from tackling the twin climate and nature emergencies.

We are therefore asking parties to demonstrate their commitment to a flourishing natural environment and development that works to enhance nature and climate resilience by committing to the following in their manifestos:

### **1) Ensure there is no weakening of environmental protections if the UK exits the EU**

No change in political or constitutional structures removes the need for well-designed and well-enforced legislation to protect and maintain our precious natural environment, which is currently facing tremendous challenges in terms of environmental degradation. With 80% of Scottish environmental protections stemming from EU legislation it is imperative that we maintain existing environmental protections and prevent environmentally damaging deregulation across the UK. LINK calls on parties to take steps to outline how they will address the governance gap that would arise from the loss of oversight, scrutiny and enforcement currently provided by the European Commission and the European Court of Justice, should the UK exit the EU, including through coordination and cooperation across the UK.

EU law has been developed on the basis of key principles such as the precautionary principle and the polluter pays principle and it is vital that these are retained in UK law. We call on the parties to commit to a further principle of non-regression, ensuring there can be no rollback of environmental standards in the future.

### **2) Build on existing EU environmental protections and ensure that all policies contribute to tackling the twin climate and nature emergencies**

The need to tackle the global climate emergency and biodiversity crisis is more urgent than ever before. The IPCC has warned that we have around a decade to act to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C and prevent the most damaging effects of climate change. Similarly, the State of Nature partnership has highlighted that the abundance and distribution of the UK's species is continuing to decline. To ensure the UK rapidly reduces its greenhouse gas emissions while restoring our natural environment, all parties must demonstrate how their policies across all sectors will contribute to meeting this challenge.

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Environmental objectives and sustainability should be embedded in sectoral legislation such as agriculture, fisheries and planning as well as wider economic policies

More specifically, outside of the Common Agricultural Policy regime, regulation across the UK needs to: reward farmers, foresters and other land managers for the full range of goods and services they provide; help rural businesses become more profitable and sustainable; protect and enhance the environment and the natural resources that underpin economic activity; and, spend taxpayers' money effectively, helping to create good livelihoods and jobs and contributing to our health and wellbeing.

With respect to fisheries, it is not only important to strengthen and enforce existing environmental protections arising from EU law and policy, but also to adopt a progressive Sea Fisheries strategy with ecosystem-based management at its core to contribute toward protecting and enhancing our seas.

Protecting our natural environment should be considered also within the context of trade agreements. We need a clear commitment that there will be no trading off environmental protections in the context of trade negotiations. This would be damaging to our natural environment and it would also upset the UK's trajectory towards a more sustainable future. The UK should ensure that trade terms are in line and, where possible, reinforce environmental goals and ambitions.

### **3) Commit to adopting robust national processes for implementing UK international commitments on climate and biodiversity**

Regardless of the UK's decision to exit the EU, the UK will continue to be bound by international agreements on climate change (Paris Agreement), biodiversity (Convention on Biological Diversity and Bern Convention) and marine protection (OSPAR). For the majority of these international agreements, the EU has provided the mechanism through which obligations were met at a national level. These mechanisms now need to be replicated within the UK to ensure that the UK continues to deliver on its international commitments. Parties must demonstrate how international targets will be incorporated into domestic efforts.

The UK will also continue to take part in international discussions about future global targets for lowering climate emissions and enhancing biodiversity. The current Aichi Biodiversity Targets come to an end in 2020 and the UK Government, along with input from devolved administrations, should be at the forefront of efforts to set ambitious, bold targets to recover global biodiversity over the next decade.

Successful achievement of the UK's international commitments will require continued collaboration and coordination with EU and EEA partners as well as increased participation in global networks.

### **4) Support an inclusive and transparent process for negotiating with the EU and determining the UK's future relationship**

Environmental policy is devolved, as is largely the case with agriculture and fisheries policies, particularly in Scotland. As negotiations with EU partners gather pace, it is important that any UK position also reflects the interests of all four nations by engaging in a substantive and forthcoming manner with the devolved governments and stakeholders operating in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Discussions with devolved administrations need to be progressed in a transparent and inclusive manner to develop a consensus on the UK's position for exiting the EU and the future relationship with EU partners. It is important that any interim UK agreement put in place while the terms of the UK's future relationship with the EU are being developed also respects the current devolution settlement.

#### **5) Increase long-term funding for environmental research and nature conservation projects**

EU funding, in particular EU LIFE+, has been critical to landscape-scape nature conservation and restoration in Scotland and across the UK, while also increasing our understanding of how our environment operates. Despite all our efforts to date, nature is still in trouble, and it needs us to do more.

To ensure that we can begin the vital work of addressing the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis, dedicated funding streams for nature conservation such as replacements for EU LIFE+ must be established within the UK and boldly increased to meet the higher ambitions on climate and biodiversity across the UK. Wider public spend on tackling the nature and climate crises must also be increased. The UK's Committee on Climate Change has recommended a target of 1-2% of GDP to be spent on greening the UK economy by 2050. The level of funding which has been made available for the environment to date must be increased to deliver the best protection for the UK's nature.

#### **6) Build an economy that delivers sustainability and wellbeing for all**

We are not living sustainably and our consumption habits are breaching environmental limits for air quality, climate change and natural nutrient cycles. Our economic system is part of the problem – it's not environmentally sustainable and it's driving environmental degradation. It's time to rethink our economy so that it delivers sustainable outcomes and increases the wellbeing of everyone in society. Scottish Environment LINK calls on parties to commit to steps that will transition the UK to a circular economy where products are kept in use for as long as possible before materials are recovered and transformed into something new.

As action to tackle the climate emergency steps up, consideration must be given to how new economic trends will impact different communities. Parties must plan for a just transition that ensures that the future low-carbon economy delivers training, employment and livelihoods for all.

**For more information contact:**

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