



Scottish
Environment
LINK

13 Marshall Place
Perth
PH2 8AH

T 01738 630804
E: enquiries@scotlink.org
W www.scotlink.org

The Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3D

18th June 2020

Dear Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations,

Cc Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform

Introduction of Continuity Bill

The end of the Brexit transition period is fast approaching and Scottish Environment LINK members are growing increasingly concerned about the lack of essential provisions in place to protect Scotland's environment.

For over two years, we have argued that the establishment of an environmental watchdog and provisions for continued application of the EU Environment Principles were the absolute minimum that must be in place in Scotland before the EU ceased to have effect. In 2019, our public opinion polling found that 81% of the Scottish public supported the creation of an independent body to replace the environmental governance role of the European Commission.

With only six months until EU law will cease to have effect, these provisions are still not in place and the Scottish Government is yet to provide any update on its plans. Proposals for a Scottish environment watchdog had been due to be set out in the Scottish Government's Continuity Bill this past spring. With the legislation understandably delayed as the government responds to the pandemic, time is now running out to ensure key protections for the environment are developed and in place by the end of this year.

As other essential post-Brexit legislation, such as the Agriculture (Retained EU Law and Data) (Scotland) Bill, proceeds in the absence of the Continuity Bill, and the as UK Government has failed to commit to maintain environmental standards for agriculture and trade at the UK level, there is a very real risk that environmental standards in Scotland could slide.

Environmental governance is, in and of itself, an environmental standard and the Scottish Government is well placed to set a high bar within the UK by introducing a world-leading environment watchdog and allowing Scotland to keep pace with EU standards.

We have been sympathetic of the Scottish Government's position regarding leaving the EU, and the significant disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, there is no further room for delay. The UK Government has now introduced its own Environment Bill, covering environmental targets, environmental principles and the new Office for Environmental Protection.

We urge the Scottish Government to introduce the Continuity Bill, including provisions for an environmental watchdog and application of the EU Environment Principles, for consultation before summer recess. This would enable Stage 1 evidence to be gathered over the summer, thus allowing swift consideration by Parliament at Stages 1, 2 and 3 in the autumn.

With kind regards,



Deborah Long
Chief Officer



Scottish Environment LINK the voice for Scotland's environment

