



Summary

- Nature is in crisis, both in Scotland and around the world. Research has found that 1 in 9 species are at risk of national extinction in Scotland. **The Scottish Parliament must declare a nature emergency** accompanied by an increase in ambition and investment in policies and projects to drive nature's recovery.
- In order to address the nature emergency, LINK members recommend the following measures are implemented as a matter of urgency:
 - **Setting new, legally-binding targets for nature recovery** to increase the abundance of wildlife species in Scotland and the restoration of their habitats.
 - Increasing connectivity of habitats and establishing important links for wildlife by delivering a **Scottish Nature Network** as part of the National Planning Framework 4.
 - **Placing nature jobs and skills training at the heart of green recovery plans.** Continued support and increased investment is needed for large-scale nature restoration projects which could provide training and skills development opportunities.

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.

Nature is in crisis, both in Scotland and around the world. Human activity is driving dramatic declines in wildlife and habitats at an unprecedented rate. Recent reports from the UN Global Biodiversity Outlook 5¹ report and WWF's Living Planet Report 2020² show that levels of biodiversity across continents are plummeting with no sign of halting. In the UK, a similar downward trend has been reported in The State of Nature Scotland 2019³ report, with 1 in 9 species at risk of extinction in Scotland.

In 2019, the First Minister acknowledged that the "challenges facing biodiversity are as important as the challenge of climate change, and I want Scotland to be leading the way in our response."⁴ This ambition now needs to be matched with a massive increase in investment in policies and projects to drive nature's recovery, which are also needed to build a long-lasting green recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and economic crisis.

Scottish Environment LINK members strongly support calls for the Scottish Parliament to declare a Nature Emergency, bringing the challenges facing biodiversity on an equal footing with the challenges

¹ <https://www.cbd.int/gbo/gbo5/publication/gbo-5-en.pdf>

² <https://f.hubspotusercontent20.net/hubfs/4783129/LPR/PDFs/ENGLISH-FULL.pdf>

³ <https://nbn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/State-of-nature-Report-2019-Scotland-full-report.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.scotlink.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/FM-response-to-cross-sector-letter.pdf>

posed by climate change. To respond to the Nature Emergency, the following LINK members urge the following measures are introduced as a priority:

Nature Recovery Targets

An ambitious set of set targets is needed to clean up our air, soils, seas and rivers, by driving the development of policies that deliver the recovery of Scotland's natural habitats and increase biodiversity. Scotland's climate change targets have been vital for leading a shift across all sectors of the Scottish economy and society towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and meeting net-zero goals. Targets have also been instrumental for driving change in other policy sectors and in restoring biodiversity by governments around the world. **New legally-binding targets for nature recovery urgently need to be developed in Scotland to increase the abundance of wildlife species and the restoration of their habitats.**

A recent Scottish Environment LINK report, *Putting Scotland on a Path to Recovery*,⁵ found that targets have led to action to restore wetlands and eradicate pests in New Zealand with NZ\$1.1bn invested in efforts as part of it's 2020 Budget. In the Netherlands, targets have led to action on the ground to increase the connectivity - physical and ecological links - between habitats as part of a nature network. Nature recovery targets are also supported by the EU, with its new 2030 Biodiversity Strategy proposing "a far-reaching EU Nature Restoration Plan that includes... developing a proposal for a new legal framework for nature restoration, with binding targets to restore damaged ecosystems, including the most-carbon rich ones."⁶ For Scotland to take a lead on this issue, work to develop nature recovery targets must be taken forward urgently.

Scottish Nature Network

A Nature Network is a strategic, long term approach to manage, restore and enhance Scotland's habitats and landscapes. It links the ecological processes that operate throughout the landscape, both in managed landscapes and protected areas. A Scottish Nature Network would deliver more space for nature and create links for wildlife and habitats to flourish, as well as opportunities to increase people's access to nature for their physical and mental wellbeing. More information can be found in this [short film](#). **A Scottish Nature Network is a key element of Scotland's green and blue infrastructure and there must be a commitment to deliver this through the forthcoming National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4).**

Green Recovery (nature jobs and funding)

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic there has been increased recognition of the importance of nature for our physical and mental wellbeing. Polling undertaken for Scottish Environment LINK found that 76% of people in Scotland became more aware of nature in their everyday life during lockdown this spring and strong support for policies to enhance Scotland's nature and urban greenspaces.⁷ The Scottish Government's focus on a 'green recovery' to the pandemic and economic crisis is welcome and it is essential that action to increase biodiversity is a part of this to ensure a sustainable recovery.

⁵<https://www.scotlink.org/publication/putting-scotland-on-a-path-to-recovery-the-case-for-nature-recovery-targets/>

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA_20_886

⁷<https://www.scotlink.org/most-people-living-in-scotland-want-a-green-recovery-from-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

Supporting large-scale nature restoration projects is one crucial way of delivering this. [LINK has set out a range of restoration projects](#) already in development that, with increased funding and investment, from both public and private partners could address the nature emergency, from restoring Scotland's Atlantic rainforest to giving practical support to land managers looking to adopt climate and nature friendly farming practises. **It is also vital that plans are put in place to train and upskill people to work in to protect jobs in the near-term and secure the next generation of rural jobs.** These large-scale restoration projects could offer opportunities for people to increase their skills to work in the environment sector, particularly Scotland's young people.

This response represents the collective view of LINK's Wildlife Group. Members may also respond individually in order to raise more detailed issues that are important to their particular organisation.

For more information contact:

Vhairi Tollan
LINK Advocacy Manager
vhairi@scotlink.org