




Scottish
Environment
LINK

Still Delivering the Goods

The role of
environment
charities in
protecting and
enhancing nature
in Scotland.

A close-up photograph of a red squirrel climbing a tree trunk. The squirrel is positioned vertically, facing the viewer, with its front paws gripping the bark. Its fur is a rich reddish-brown color, and its eyes are dark and alert. The tree bark is deeply textured with vertical ridges and horizontal fissures. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a forest setting.

The scale of the challenge
faced by Scotland and the
wider world to reverse
biodiversity decline and
restore it for future
generations can only be
achieved by working together.

Executive Summary

Scotland's biodiversity, or wildlife, is rich and diverse. This richness is often lauded, but not all is well; our wildlife has suffered and declined considerably over the years and remains in danger. At the most basic level, biodiversity is important because we all depend on it for our existence and it is an essential "public good".

This report builds on Scottish Environment LINK's 2008 report *Delivering the Goods* by setting out 15 case studies of work undertaken by Scotland's environment charities to protect and enhance biodiversity, and thus to deliver on the objectives of the Scottish Government's biodiversity strategy. Some of the projects follow on from the 2008 report by showing that projects, planned then, have since come to fruition; others are entirely new and additional. They are the proverbial 'tip of the iceberg' but provide a cross-section of completed, ongoing, and planned work; and are a small selection chosen to represent the wide range of work on all aspects of biodiversity conservation.

The wider context in which biodiversity policy has developed in Scotland and at international level is explored in an accompanying *report*.

In the context of existing biodiversity policy and likely **developments in 2021**, this report reviews the successes and challenges faced by the case studies. These include their substantial biodiversity delivery, their contribution to climate change objectives and their role in providing employment and well-being.

These case studies demonstrate the track record and plans of Scotland's environmental charities. They include real, proven delivery for species, habitats, and ecosystems. They illustrate the critical role that NGOs play in leveraging external funding to benefit Scotland's environment. They also demonstrate significant contributions to Scotland climate emergency response, with simultaneous and valuable cultural, well-being and socio-economic benefits. Despite the successes, however, this review also highlights several challenges, especially funding. It further reveals the enormous reliance, by Government and public bodies, on the charities' members and donors and charitable funds they can access to achieve their public policy goals.

On funding, the Scottish Government and NatureScot have made some positive progress but more is needed. At a minimum, to address this funding challenge, eNGOs have called on the Scottish Government to transform the Biodiversity Challenge Fund into a large-scale nature fund. **Public investment in these public policy objectives is currently inadequate. There is a clear need for a step change in funding for biodiversity conservation. If this happens, Scotland's environmental charities stand ready to increase delivery for and on behalf of Scotland's people.**

Biodiversity action does not take place in a vacuum; it also needs a supportive and integrated policy framework. The new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy must help to ensure such a supportive policy framework, including:

- **Legally binding targets for nature's recovery.**
- **Delivery of the "30x30 commitment" for protected areas.**
- **Commitment to, and delivery of, a Scottish Nature Network.**
- **Reform of land management incentives and policies on marine use.**

Overall, there remains a need for a step change, a phrase first used in the 2020 *Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity*, but the **2021 Scottish Biodiversity Strategy must deliver a real and sustained step change**, in both policy actions and funding to enable more and bigger projects of the type illustrated in this report. The scale of the challenge faced by Scotland and the wider world to reverse biodiversity decline and restore it for future generations can only be achieved by working together: neither the public nor private sector can achieve this alone. **Environmental charities and civic society offer a key to success through their sustained action on the ground, working together at scale and over time.**

“Conservation is not a luxury, an optional extra we can afford when the economy picks up, but a vital necessity if our species are to have a long-term future.”

Prof. Aubrey Manning, 1997 ¹

Conclusion

- 1** Scotland has one of the most vibrant and active voluntary environment sectors in the world. Our environmental charities represent over 500,000 individuals who subscribe as members, donors, supporters and/or volunteers. They underscore the deep connections between nature and people in Scotland, and the huge enthusiasm for wildlife conservation among the Scottish public.
- 2** Scotland’s environmental charities remain committed to playing their role in protecting and enhancing Scotland’s environment, and thus contributing to the delivery of current and future policy goals for biodiversity. Their role remains multi-faceted: delivery of ‘on-the-ground’ projects, such as those highlighted in this report, will remain crucial, but this will be accompanied by work to improve public awareness and understanding, to collect and publish relevant data, but also to challenge and constructively criticise public bodies, where necessary. Flexibility and commitment to deliver despite existential challenges brought by the impact of Covid-19 underline the ability of the sector to be creative and pivot to deliver impact.
- 3** The case studies highlighted demonstrate the track record and plans of Scotland’s environmental charities. They include delivery for species, habitats, and ecosystems, but also demonstrate significant contributions to climate mitigation/adaptation, well-being and considerable socio-economic benefits. Despite the successes, however, this review also highlights several challenges, especially funding and the difficulties associated with raising funds for such work. It further reveals the enormous reliance, by Government and public bodies, on the charities’ members and donors, and charitable funds they can access, to achieve their public policy goals.
- 4** Through these example projects, and other work, **Scotland’s environmental charities are making a massive contribution to the delivery of public policy objectives** as set by the Scottish Government. This contribution is:
 - a. delivering a total investment of over £30 million
 - b. rightly, supported by significant, but often proportionally limited, sums of taxpayers’ money; and
 - c. only deliverable because of the investment, by those charities, of funds provided by their members, supporters, and donors, as well as the work, again by the staff of those charities, to raise funds from private foundations or European and lottery sources.

¹ Manning, A. (1997) Biodiversity Conservation in Scotland: personal reflections. In Biodiversity in Scotland: status trends and initiatives, ed Fleming et al, TSO, Edinburgh, pp286-294

5 On funding, the Scottish Government and NatureScot have made positive progress with schemes such as the Peatland ACTION Fund² and the Biodiversity Challenge Fund³. These are welcome, as are some improvements to the core funding of NatureScot, announced in the most recent budget, albeit not fully reversing recent declines. However, as the funding issues highlighted by the case studies in this report demonstrate, this will be inadequate to meet the challenges ahead or to enable Scotland to meet either the 2020 targets, belatedly, or the likely 2030 targets.

At a minimum, to address this funding challenge, eNGOs have called on the Scottish Government to:

- ***“Review and reform existing public expenditure and procurement so that perverse and conflicting incentives are ended.***
- ***Transform the Biodiversity Challenge Fund into a large-scale nature fund for Scotland. This should be targeted explicitly at addressing the five direct drivers of biodiversity loss, at a project scale between £200k and £10m.***
- ***Properly fund the statutory environment agencies so they can carry out their statutory duties, at a minimum by reinstating budgets to 2010 levels.”***⁴

It has been estimated that a “Scottish Nature Fund” as described above would need to be in the order of at least £10m per year over the decade to 2030; this would be additional to current expenditure on peatlands, agri-environment schemes, etc. In addition to these recommendations **the Scottish Government must urgently press the UK Government to develop a post-Brexit replacement for the LIFE Nature funding stream.**

Public investment in these public policy objectives is currently inadequate. **There is a clear need for a step change in funding for biodiversity conservation.** If this happens, Scotland’s environmental charities stand ready to increase delivery for and on behalf of Scotland’s people.

6 Biodiversity action does not take place in a vacuum. Its ability to deliver, and to contribute to national objectives, is heavily influenced by wider public policy. A supportive and integrated policy framework leads to the development of more projects, to an increase in funding for such projects, and to their delivery becoming part of a “greater whole”.

Related policy can also support, or undermine, biodiversity objectives – central to this is public policy related to land management and to the use and exploitation of marine resources. This is recognised in the current Aichi 2020 targets, in the likely post-2020 framework to be agreed at Kunming and in the new EU biodiversity strategy.

The Scottish Government should, therefore, along with a new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy move to ensure such a supportive policy framework. At the minimum, this should include:

- **Legally binding targets for nature’s recovery.**
- **Delivery of the “30x30 commitment” for protected areas.**
- **Commitment to, and delivery of, a Scottish Nature Network.**
- **Reform of land management incentives and policies on marine use.**

7 The Edinburgh Declaration⁵ notes the important role of eNGOs and other stakeholders “in decision making and in taking action” for biodiversity. This recognition is very welcome and is also reflected in the case studies presented in this report – which demonstrate the central role of the environmental charities in delivering biodiversity outcomes. The new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy must recognise this role, continuing its support for such projects, enhancing funding, but also by improving participation in decision making, such as the developing implementation structures.

8 Overall, there remains a need for a step change, a phrase first used in the 2020 Challenge for Scotland’s Biodiversity, but the **2021 Scottish Biodiversity Strategy must deliver a real and sustained step change**, in both policy actions and funding to enable more and bigger projects of the type illustrated in this report. The scale of the challenge faced by Scotland and the wider world to reverse biodiversity decline and restore it for future generations can only be achieved by working together: neither the public nor private sector can achieve this alone.

Environmental charities and civic society offer a key to success through their sustained action on the ground, working together at scale and over time.

² <https://www.nature.scot/climate-change/nature-based-solutions/peatland-action/peatland-action-fund-how-apply>

³ <https://www.nature.scot/funding-and-projects/biodiversity-challenge-fund-bcf>

⁴ <https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/nature-recovery-plan---scotland/nature-recovery-plan.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/edinburgh-declaration-on-post-2020-biodiversity-framework/pages/call-for-action/>



Scottish Environment LINK



Alliance for
Scotland's
Rainforest



Cairngorms
Connect



Hebridean
Whale &
Dolphin
Trust



Plantlife

