



Introduction

Scotland is well known globally for its stunning nature and iconic wildlife, and during the Covid-19 pandemic nature has been a lifeline for many, improving people's wellbeing in the most challenging times. But our nature is in crisis. Human activity is driving dramatic declines in wildlife and habitats at rates never seen before. At the same time, whilst the pandemic has brought a new appreciation for nature, it has also shone a light on the unequal access to nature across society. It is clear that the 'old normal' was not working for many of us nor for the environment. Rather than returning to this 'old normal', we need a green recovery from the pandemic. **This briefing sets out five key things you should know about a green recovery and why it is crucial to restoring and increasing equal access to our nature.**

1) We need a Green Recovery from the pandemic to tackle the nature and climate emergencies

The pandemic has had and will continue to have severe consequences, not just on people's health but for the economy and people's livelihoods, both globally and here in Scotland. For many, the last year has been one of the most challenging they have experienced. However, even before the pandemic we were in the middle of a crisis – the nature and climate crisis. To tackle the nature and climate crisis, recover from the pandemic and contribute to the wellbeing of all, Scotland needs a green recovery. Scotland needs a new normal that puts nature and climate at the centre of our society and economy. Moving towards a green recovery should be based around building an economic and social recovery in a clean and healthy environment. We need to invest in nature-based solutions which create green jobs and develop the skills for those jobs amongst all sectors of society, but particularly younger generations. A green recovery is not unattainable. It is a matter of political choice and will to save our nature and our wellbeing, and to reverse the societal inequalities that have only become deeper in the last year.

2) Appropriate levels of investment are needed to restore the environment for future generations

Nature is in crisis, but there are, fortunately, significant proven interventions to tackle this. However, reversing ecological decline is not quick. Action across entire landscapes, working with local communities and targeting threatened species requires investment over at least 5 years. Biodiversity projects require sustained investment until a clear tipping point has been reached. One of the driving forces behind many such successful interventions that have protected and enhanced nature in Scotland is EU LIFE funding for environment and climate action, and the legislation it supports. This EU funding has, among others, benefitted Scotland's Atlantic Salmon, corncrake, hen harrier, red squirrel, machair grasslands, rainforest and upland invertebrates. However, the UK's exit from the EU means this funding mechanism is no longer available to Scotland. At a crucial time for our nature and society, there are currently no clear plans in place to replace this funding. As Scotland aims to rebuild after the



pandemic and tackle the ongoing environmental crisis, this leaves an urgent need for investment opportunities at a landscape scale that last at least five years.

3) We need investment in nature-based solutions and skills development for future green jobs

If we are to recover from the economic and societal impact of the pandemic by putting nature and climate at the centre of our society, we need to significantly ramp up investment in **nature-based solutions and skills development for future green jobs**. Investment in these areas increases employment and training opportunities and has the co-benefit of helping tackle nature and climate emergencies. The youth unemployment rate, in particular, has increased drastically during the pandemic, and we know that younger people will be the most impacted by the ongoing environmental crisis. Demand for green jobs is rising with the increasing recognition amongst younger generations of the need to act. Scotland's future prosperity depends on ensuring younger people are not left behind. An entry-level [Natural Restoration and Training Programme](#) designed to deliver skills and a better environment would help support those impacted by the pandemic, providing training opportunities and better prospects, as well as building community resilience and better mental and physical health.

4) Five tests for a green recovery

Emerging from the pandemic, a green recovery must be designed and its progress measured. Applying [five key tests](#) for a green recovery to all policies and strategies from the government would help. These five tests are:

1. Every individual policy/action adopted must be based on sound evidence, must not increase carbon emissions, must not damage nature and must not harm social wellbeing;
2. Reduce pollution;
3. Improve adaptation to climate change and reach net zero by 2045;
4. Secure sustainable consumption of natural resources;
5. Improve biodiversity and ecosystem services.

5) For a green recovery to be successful, we all need to work in partnership

Achieving a truly green recovery is ambitious: we all need to work together in partnership to be successful. The scale of the challenge ahead cannot be faced by any sector alone. Partnership working would secure the level of buy-in needed to see the substantial and wide-reaching change necessary to recover from the pandemic in a way that also helps us tackle the ongoing nature and climate crisis. This does not only mean partnership between the public and private sector, but the third sector and local communities and local voices also need to be included and heard. The charity sector and community voices bring a diversity of world views, creativity and innovation. Together, this can help build the foundation for and implements a recovery strategy that delivers for people and nature across Scotland, and which can set an example of success for the world.



This response is supported by the following LINK member organisations:

CIEEM
Froglife
Keep Scotland Beautiful
Scottish Wildlife Trust
WWF Scotland

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 40 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

For more information contact:

Vhairi Tollan
LINK Advocacy Manager
vhairi@scotlink.org

LINK is a Scottish Charity (SC000296) and a Scottish Company Limited by guarantee (SC250899), core funded by Membership Subscriptions and by grants from NatureScot, Scottish Government and Charitable Trusts.
Registered Headquarters: 13 Marshall Place, Perth, PH2 8AH
Advocacy Office: Dolphin House, 4 Hunter Square, Edinburgh, EH1 1QW