



Scottish
Environment
LINK

Rt Hon Alistair Jack MP
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Dear Secretary of State,

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

We write with considerable concern about recent announcements from the UK Government that have significant implications for nature protections in Scotland.

In particular, we are deeply concerned about the UK Government's Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill, laid on 22 September. This represents the single biggest potential modification of environmental law in the UK in recent history. It puts at risk hundreds of laws that are crucial to conserving and restoring the natural environment, as well as to protecting public health and creating a sustainable economy. We are also concerned at the timescales in the Bill, as there is just over one year until the first sunset of retained EU law, which will amount to hundreds of environmental regulations.

You will be aware that the Scottish Government wrote to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on 22nd September, to raise their opposition to this Bill, stating that it "puts at risk the high standards people in Scotland have rightly come to expect" and that this represents "a rush to impose a deregulated, race to the bottom, society and economy".

The Scottish Government has stated that it will continue to maintain or exceed EU environmental standards in areas of devolved competence. However, we are extremely worried about the impacts this Bill will have on their ability to deliver on these commitments and critically to move ahead with a vital programme of nature restoration and protection. The need to ensure that existing environmental protections are retained in our domestic laws could cause disruption to the Scottish Government's existing legislative timetable, including vital new legislation on agriculture funding and the Natural Environment Bill. In addition, we are concerned about the potential impact of the Internal Market Act if there is divergence between environmental standards across the UK.



Scottish Environment LINK the voice for Scotland's environment

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Furthermore, the UK Habitats Regulations – our most important wildlife protections – apply in Scotland under some circumstances. Revoking or weakening these protections could have negative consequences for Scotland's wildlife and wild places. We seek reassurances from the UK Government that key wildlife and environment protections will not be removed from the UK's statute books at the end of 2023.

Finally, we share concerns that have been raised across the UK about the proposals to create Investment Zones. We are aware that the UK Government has had some initial conversations with the Scottish Government about creating investment Zones in Scotland. We urge the UK Government to ensure that key nature protections are not removed or weakened within Investment Zones, and would welcome clarity over how these are intended to work in Scotland given that planning is a devolved matter.

With the Convention on Biological Diversity COP taking place at the end of the year in Montreal, the world will be focused on setting a new, ambitious framework to turn the tide and reverse declines in our natural world. This is an important moment for the United Kingdom to demonstrate the importance of this agenda and set its stall out as a world leader in tackling the biodiversity crisis. This must be the decade that we take action to reverse the fortunes of our natural world. We welcome the commitment of the Prime Minister to lead a delegation to Montreal. We urge the UK Government to ensure that Scotland and the other UK countries are not undermined in their efforts to take critical action to protect and restore nature here at home, in particular through de-regulation which will be counter-productive to ambitions and commitments.

We would welcome your thoughts on these matters and would be happy to meet at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah Long". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Deborah Long
Chief Officer
Scottish Environment LINK