



Scottish  
Environment  
LINK

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Humza Yousaf MSP  
First Minister  
Scottish Government

28 March 2023

Dear First Minister,

On behalf of Scottish Environment LINK, we would like to extend our congratulations to you on your election as First Minister. 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.

Scotland faces twin environmental crises of nature loss and climate change. The latest IPCC report, issued this month, made clear that humanity requires urgent action to protect our environment, and underlined the importance of restoring nature as part of this effort. A healthy environment with rich and diverse nature is fundamentally important to the health, wellbeing and prosperity of Scotland's people. However, Scotland has suffered a high level of historic nature loss and this is accelerating further, with 1 in 9 species at risk of national extinction.

The Scottish Government has shown considerable leadership on environmental issues in recent years, notably through the Edinburgh Declaration on biodiversity. It is essential that this leadership is now translated into action. There are several key issues and opportunities over the remainder of this parliamentary term which will require your firm leadership if we are to be successful in our environmental ambitions.

We call on you to reaffirm the Scottish Government's commitment to our natural environment by:

***Nature protection and restoration***

- Introducing legally binding targets for nature restoration in a Natural Environment Bill, with an overarching goal to prevent and halt declines across land and sea by 2030, and making significant progress towards restoration by 2045
- Effectively protecting 30% of Scotland's land and seas for nature by 2030 in line with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
- Improving the existing MPA network by designating a suite of Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) covering at least 10% of our seas
- Supporting effective recovery programmes for Scotland's most threatened species



Scottish Environment LINK the voice for Scotland's environment

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- Designating at least one new National Park and strengthening the role of all of Scotland's National Parks so that they lead nature recovery and a Just Transition
- Delivering sufficient and responsible public investment in nature restoration, with ambitious and resourced delivery plans for the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy
- Implementing the recommendations of the independent Deer Working Group Report to deliver more flexible and sustainable deer management and to assist peatland protection and native woodland establishment
- Continuing to demonstrate commitment to securing the future of Scotland's rainforest, a globally unique habitat along the west coast
- Following the current consultation, acting swiftly to deliver the Government's commitment to phase out the use of peat in horticulture
- Delivering the Wildlife Management and Muirburn Bill providing better protection for Scotland's birds of prey by licensing grouse shooting, as well as licensing muirburn to protect our peatlands, our vital carbon stores important for combating climate change
- Ensuring planning authorities and other decision makers are properly resourced to support delivery of the Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) as intended, with climate and nature at the centre of decision-making, securing biodiversity protection and enhancement, safeguarding our important natural assets and creating nature networks.

### ***Farming and forestry***

- Developing a new system of agricultural funding that supports our farmers and crofters in the transition to nature- and climate-friendly farming
- Reviewing funding support from the Forestry Grant Scheme to support land managers in establishing nature positive forests and woodlands

### ***Circular economy***

- Supporting a robust Circular Economy Bill that will limit waste and pollution and reduce our consumption of raw materials
- Launching the Deposit Return Scheme as planned on 16th August

### ***Just Transition and human rights***

- Incorporating the substantive and procedural elements of the right to a healthy environment in a Human Rights Bill
- Ensuring a Just Transition to Nature Positive and Net Zero across land and sea, and ensure that environmental restoration benefits all of our communities

- Meaningfully involving workers, their trade unions, and communities in the development of plans to deliver emissions reductions and restore nature, and increasing support for workers moving industry, such as from oil & gas into renewable energy

LINK and our members are keen to work closely with the Scottish Government to deliver for our natural environment. We would be delighted to offer you the opportunity to undertake a site visit over the coming months to discuss the enormous potential in Scotland's natural environment.

Yours sincerely,

Deborah Long, Chief Officer, Scottish Environment LINK  
Kat Jones, Director, Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland  
Gus Jones, Convener, Badenoch & Strathspey Conservation Group  
Kit Stoner, Chief Executive, Bat Conservation Trust  
Tim Coleshaw, Chair, British Dragonfly Society  
Hazel Norman, CEO, British Ecological Society  
Craig Macadam, Conservation Director, Buglife  
Gill Perkins, CEO, Bumblebee Conservation Trust  
Keith Charman, Secretary, Cairngorms Campaign  
Jason Reeves, Head of Policy, Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management  
Shivali Fifield, Chief Officer, Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland  
Catherine Gunby, Executive Director, Fidra  
Gracie Bradley, Director, Friends of the Earth Scotland  
Kathy Wormald, Chief Executive Officer, Froglife  
David Balharry, Chief Executive Officer, John Muir Trust  
Calum Duncan, Head of Conservation Scotland, Marine Conservation Society  
Stuart Brooks, Director of Conservation & Policy, the National Trust for Scotland  
Alan Drever, Chair, Nature Foundation  
Pete Ritchie, Director, Nourish Scotland  
Clare Symonds, Chair, Planning Democracy  
Alistair Whyte, Head of Plantlife Scotland  
Brendan Paddy, Director, Ramblers Scotland  
Eddie Palmer, Chairman, Scottish Badgers  
John Thomson, Chair, Scottish Campaign for National Parks  
Kate Elliott, Chair, Scottish Countryside Rangers' Association  
Logan Steele, Communications Secretary, Scottish Raptor Study Group  
Susan Davies, Chief Executive, Scottish Seabird Centre  
Peter Ewing, Convener, Scottish Wild Land Group  
David McKay, Head of Policy, Soil Association Scotland  
Steve Micklewright, CEO, Trees for Life  
Alastair Seaman, Director of Scotland, Woodland Trust  
Helen Senn, Head of Conservation and Science, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland