



This is a critical decade for Scotland to deliver action to restore nature and to meet ambitious climate change targets. The scale of the nature and climate emergency is not to be underestimated: one in nine wildlife species are at risk of extinction in Scotland and the last three years of annual climate targets have been missed.

The climate and nature emergencies are deeply connected and must be tackled together. There are key opportunities in this parliament to stop and reverse nature loss, with legislation on the natural environment and agriculture and the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.

Nature's role in tackling climate change

Nature is our first line of defence against climate change. Carbon emissions are captured and stored in our peatlands, woodlands, soils and seas. Nature restoration can also help us adapt to a warming planet by increasing resilience to extreme heat, droughts, and soil erosion.

The UN [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) has said that natural methods of removing carbon dioxide, such as reforestation, peatland restoration, and coastal blue carbon management, can also enhance biodiversity and provide employment opportunities.

- Scottish peatlands hold carbon equivalent to [140 years' worth](#) of Scotland's annual greenhouse gas emissions
- Scotland has significant potential to restore our native woodlands, including our temperate rainforest and Caledonian pinewoods
- The 'blue carbon' stored in Scotland's marine and coastal environments is [roughly equivalent](#) to all of the carbon stored on land.

Funding for Nature

LINK welcomes the Nature Restoration Fund, announced in 2021 to restore and protect nature. Investing in Scotland's natural environment is a win for species, habitats, and local communities. The Nature Restoration Fund is a first step in the fight against biodiversity loss, helping to give Scotland's wildlife a fighting chance for the future.

The Resource Spending Review identified tackling the climate crisis and building a greener economy as priorities for Scottish Government spending. However, funding for Scotland's environmental agencies has been significantly eroded since 2010. NatureScot has seen a cut in funding from £69 million in 2010-11 to £61.1 million in 2023-24, which equates to real terms cut of 40%. SEPA has had a real terms funding cut of 26% over the same period.

The proportion of spending on our environmental agencies is very small. In recognition of the vital importance of the work of these agencies, LINK is calling for the upcoming budget to protect and increase the funding given to these bodies as the first step in reversing over a decade of real terms cuts.

Natural Environment Bill

The Scottish Government has committed to introducing legal nature recovery targets in the Natural Environment Bill. Net Zero targets have led to climate change being mainstreamed and treated as a priority by governments and other sectors. Legal targets can do the same for nature recovery.

LINK's recent report ['Nature recovery targets: Statutory targets to drive the recovery of nature in Scotland'](#) sets out robust proposals for nature targets to be included in the Natural Environment Bill that would ensure the best

possible outcomes for nature and people in Scotland. It highlights the need for strong, meaningful SMART targets to deliver real gains for nature, as well as statutory processes that will ensure we deliver on these targets.

Reforming Agricultural funding

Farming is vital to Scotland's Future. As well as producing food, farmers and crofters manage three quarters of Scotland's land. But the dominant farming methods of today make farming Scotland's second biggest source of climate emissions, and a major cause of the depletion of our nature.

The Scottish government published Scotland's [Agriculture and Rural Communities Bill](#) at the start of October. Although welcomed, LINK continues to call on the Scottish government to introduce a radical new farm funding system to help the industry reduce climate emissions and restore biodiversity.

The [Farm for Scotland's Future](#) campaign, launched in 2022 by environmental charities alongside farmers' groups, want at least three quarters of public spending on farming to support methods that restore nature and tackle climate change as well as producing food.

There is no food security without a stable climate and healthy natural environment. Food production depends on the health of soil, pollinators and natural pest and disease regulators.

Currently, less than 10% of public funding directly helps farmers and crofters do the right thing for nature. The new farm funding system should be focused on using public money to achieve public policy objectives, including restoring nature and mitigating climate change.

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:

Dan Paris, Advocacy Manager at Scottish Environment LINK: dan@scotlink.org



Scottish Environment LINK the voice for Scotland's environment

Registered office: 5 Atholl Place, Perth, PH1 5NE. A Scottish Charity No. SC000296

Scottish Environment LINK is a Scottish Company Limited by Guarantee and without a share capital under Company no. SC250899

