

Roseanna Cunningham MSP
Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Cabinet Secretary
St. Andrew's House
Edinburgh

13 November 2018

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Calling for Scottish Environment Act

On behalf of 35 environmental charitiesⁱ working across Scotland for an environmentally sustainable future and representing half a million citizens, we thank you for your unwavering support for the need to retain and enhance environmental protections in the face of Brexit.

We would also urge you to support the next logical step given the Scottish Government's existing commitments: the introduction of a Scottish Environment Act.

Following the outcome of the UK's referendum on European Union membership, both you personally and the Scottish Government have provided swift and very welcome reassurances on the need to steadfastly adhere to existing environmental commitments.

You have continued to provide firm policy direction in support of the continued importance of EU environmental principles and directed an expert group to look at the consequences of losing functions performed by EU bodies. A critically important public consultation is expected on those two issues by end of the year. What is more, you have committed to introducing the first ever Scottish Environment Strategy, acknowledging Scotland's natural environment as our greatest national asset and that significant, urgent action is required to halt biodiversity loss and protect the environment from growing global challenges.

We need legislation to catalyse this action. The legal framework of protections and associated funding that we currently receive from the EU have been pivotal to holding back the tide of biodiversity loss. The combination of strong legislation and support for effective implementation has made these environmental laws among the most effective on earth. Brexit threatens to unravel this set of critical environmental protections at a time when one in eleven species occurring in Scotland is at risk of extinction.

While it is uncertain what outcome, if any, the Brexit negotiations will deliver, it is vital that the Scottish Government underlines, for everyone in Scotland and businesses operating here, its assurances to date and reminds both EU partners and the world of our unwavering commitment to protecting and enhancing our natural environment. This statement would be all the more potent as we approach 2020, a year critical for the culmination of global efforts to halt biodiversity loss.

We need to bring together existing Scottish Government commitments to ensure we have the right tools to protect our environment now and in the future. A Scottish Environment Act would do that by:

- 1. embedding much needed EU environmental law principles in Scots law;**
- 2. creating an independent, well-resourced watchdog to enforce environmental protections; and**
- 3. setting clear targets for environmental protection that are matched with adequate financial resources.**



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Human wellbeing relies on a healthy natural environment but evidence that we are in the midst of a global ecological crisis emerges every single day. The provisions of this Act would send a clear message that the protections given to Scotland's environment are not up for negotiation and that as a nation we are committed to working together with progressive European and global leaders for a greener future.

We stand with you in highlighting the need to protect and enhance our environment and ensure Scotland is able to maintain a place as an international leader in this field, alongside European partners. We hope this letter can provide the starting point for a national discussion about the legal protections that are needed to safeguard our nation's natural environment.

Yours sincerely,



Charles Dundas,

Chair of Scottish Environment LINK on behalf of:



¹ Scottish Environment LINK members supporting this letter are: Amphibian & Reptile Conservation - Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland - Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group - Bat Conservation Trust - Buglife Scotland - Bumblebee Conservation Trust - Butterfly Conservation Scotland - Cairngorm Campaign - Friends of the Earth Scotland - Froglife Trust - Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust - Marine Conservation Society - National Trust for Scotland - North East Mountain Trust - Nourish Scotland - Planning Democracy - Plantlife Scotland - Ramblers Scotland - RSPB Scotland - Royal Zoological Society of Scotland - Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society - Scottish Badgers - Scottish Campaign for National Parks - Scottish Countryside Rangers Association - Scottish Geodiversity Forum - Scottish Raptor Study Group - Scottish Wild Beaver Group - Scottish Wild Land Group - Scottish Wildlife Trust - Soil Association Scotland - The SCAPE Trust - Tress for Life - Whale and Dolphin Conservation - Woodland Trust Scotland - WWF Scotland