

27 November 2024

SCOTLAND'S LARGEST CONSERVATION CHARITY WELCOMES BIODIVERSITY DELIVERY PLAN

The National Trust for Scotland has welcomed today's publication of the Scottish Government's new delivery plan to implement the first phase of Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy. The conservation charity said it warmly endorses its scope and level of ambition.

The National Trust for Scotland, which cares for 76,000 hectares of countryside, including some of Scotland's most iconic habitats and species, eight National Nature Reserves, mountain ranges and many islands, worked alongside other organisations to engage in the consultation process which helped shape the strategy.

Jeff Waddell, the Trust's Head of Nature Conservation said: "Nature is in decline – there's no doubt about it. Scotland ranks in the lowest 15 per cent of countries in terms of the intactness of its biodiversity, with 11 per cent of Scotland's species under threat and only 18 percent of land protected for nature. That's why accelerated and sustained nature restoration action is so important and why the commitments set out in this new strategy are fundamental to achieving that.

"Nature isn't something apart from our everyday existence – restoring it and living in balance with it are vital to our own well-being and our nations prosperity.

"We can see in real time the impacts of climate change, intensive farming, forestry and fishing, pollution and the impact of invasive species, and have worked tirelessly to address the resulting loss of habitats and species. We drew upon our long experience in nature conservation in our submissions to the Scottish Government and we are pleased that much of our ambition has been included.

"We welcome commitments to establish statutory targets for biodiversity recovery, to expand the area of Scotland effectively managed for nature and the creation of new ecosystem restoration programmes amongst the many other positive measures in the strategy. Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2030 and for Scotland to have restored and regenerated biodiversity by 2045 are very challenging but essential ambitions. There is still much to do to develop the detail to support new approaches to sustainable and regenerative land and marine management and this is a useful framework to take that ambition forward.

"Despite our overall positive response to the launch of the strategy, we have some important areas of concern in relation to its implementation. Some key actions appear to be very slow to implement despite the urgency of tackling nature loss, for example a new programme for monitoring protected areas will not be implemented until 2027, after years of hiatus.

“It is going to be essential that all elements of society, including all public bodies, adopt the urgency and ambition of this plan and monitoring and reporting programmes are put in place quickly.”

Jeff Waddell continued: “The National Trust for Scotland has prepared itself to contribute to this national delivery plan through our own recently published Plan for Nature, which outlines the habitats and species we know are important in Scotland and the actions we are taking as a leading conservation charity to restore nature. We greatly appreciate the support of our members and partners who work with us in this important work.

“We have special responsibility for heathlands, native pinewoods and willow scrub in our mountainous places, as well as seabird colonies and machair at our island locations and coastlines plus habitats linked to parklands and wood pastures in our designed landscapes. We’ll be taking forward conservation activity in the coming years to build upon previous achievements, such as the restoration of pinewood forests at the Mar Lodge Estate in Aberdeenshire, and our species conservation work on seabirds and mountain plants.”

Read the full Plan for Nature at www.nts.org.uk/plan-for-nature.

ENDS

Editor’s Notes:

About the National Trust for Scotland

Established in 1931, the National Trust for Scotland is Scotland’s largest conservation charity and cares for, shares and speaks up for Scotland’s magnificent heritage.

Over the last 90 years the Trust has pioneered public access to and shared ownership of some of the most magnificent buildings, collections and landscapes in Scotland. It cares for more than 100 sites, from ancient houses to battlefields, castles, mills, gardens, coastlines, islands, mountain ranges and the plants and animals which depend upon them.

In March 2022 the National Trust for Scotland launched *Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone*, its ten-year strategy which sets out the ambitions of the charity over the coming decade. From speaking up for Scotland’s heritage which doesn’t have a voice, to improving the lives and wellbeing of people across the country, and responding to the climate and biodiversity crisis, the Trust will build on its work in recent years to grow its impact and conserve and restore more of Scotland’s heritage, as it moves towards its centenary in 2031.

Scotland’s largest membership organisation, the National Trust for Scotland relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work. For more

information on the National Trust for Scotland visit www.nts.org.uk. The National Trust for Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410.