

Press Release

Scottish Environment LINK reaction to EU Referendum outcome

24 June 2016 - On 23 June, 52% of the UK's population voted in favour of the UK withdrawing from the European Union while 62% of Scottish voters supported remaining in the EU. Given that environmental legislation falls primarily within the competence of the EU, with 28 different Member States working together on common policies, the referendum result will have critical implications for Scotland's environment.

Reacting to the referendum results, Scottish Environment LINK's President Joyce McMillan said:

"This is a hugely significant vote. The UK's journey towards a withdrawal from the EU will be a lengthy process, and it is critical that Scotland's government and elected Members of the Scottish Parliament work together to ensure that the standards of environmental protection enshrined in European law are upheld and enhanced."

"The UK electorate's decision to vote in favour of leaving the EU does not change the fact that Scotland and the UK are facing tremendous challenges in terms of environmental degradation. Through the UK's EU membership, Scotland has benefited from a number of critical pieces of EU environmental legislation such as EU Nature Laws, air and water quality. Now, the direction of travel for Scotland needs to be one that builds on those achievements, rather than one that seeks to weaken or undo the progress which our EU membership has helped us to secure. This is equally true for UN agreements to which the UK and Scotland have committed themselves via the EU, such as the Paris Agreement on climate change", added Joyce.

EU Directives and Regulations continue to apply to Scotland and the UK until a withdrawal agreement is negotiated between the EU and the UK. "It is important that we continue to respect the EU laws to which we remain bound. Any failure to do so could result in court action and will damage existing relationships with EU partners. Environmental challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss know no boundaries. This is why redefining our relationship with the EU and its member countries will be particularly important in the coming months. We look to our leaders here and in the UK to open discussions with all relevant stakeholders now, to consider the relationships we will need with Europe as a whole, and to ensure delivery of adequate environmental protection. A healthy, sustainable environment is the key to our future economy, health and wellbeing", underlined Joyce, "and no change in political or constitutional structures alters the need for well-designed and well-enforced legislation to protect and maintain our precious natural environment."

Scottish Environment LINK will be closely monitoring the UK's and Scotland's next steps in the process of EU membership withdrawal to ensure that protection of our environment is upheld and enhanced, at Scottish, UK and international levels.

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Notes to Editors:

- Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's environment organisations facilitating and enabling informed debate, information-sharing, discussion and joint action. Our 36 member

organisations have cumulatively over 500,000 individual members, and represent a range of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

- According to Article 50 of the Treaty of the EU, an EU Member State wishing to withdraw from the EU needs to notify the [European Council](#) of its intention to exit the Union. A withdrawal agreement is negotiated between Council, on behalf of the EU, and the relevant Member State. EU law ceases to be applicable to the withdrawing Member State from the date of the withdrawal agreement enters into force or, failing that, within two years of the notification unless the Member State and Council both agree to extend this period. The agreement must set out the arrangements for withdrawal, including a framework for the Member State's future relationship with the EU. The agreement is approved by the Council acting by [qualified majority](#) and the [European Parliament](#) needs to provide its consent.
- It is important to note that any national acts adopted in implementation or transposition of EU law would remain valid until the national authorities decide to amend or repeal them. More information on the process and timescale for an EU membership withdrawal can be found here: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/577971/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)577971_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/577971/EPRS_BRI(2016)577971_EN.pdf)

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 35 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

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