

Conservationists give new bill green light

29.11.04



Scottish Environment LINK
2 Grosvenor House
Shore Road
Perth
PH2 8BD

Tel 01738 630804
Fax 01738 643290

enquiries@scotlink.org
www.scotlink.org

On 29th November, the final part of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) bill comes into force. This includes a new duty for all Scotland's public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity. Leading environment organisations welcome the bill, but question whether the Scottish Executive's guidelines emphasise enough how the new law should be central to running the country's public bodies.

With just 23 working days left in the year, Part 1 of 2004's Nature Conservation (Scotland) Bill becomes law. **Scottish Environment Link** recognises it as a positive step in the conservation of biodiversity. Lloyd Austin, Head of Policy Operations at RSPB Scotland says:

*'The Biodiversity duty is **very welcome**, we have long campaigned for such a duty, and we look forward to seeing **significant changes** in the policy of the Scottish Executive Departments and Agencies, and **adequate funding** for implementation'.*

BRISC comments that *'comprehensive and accurate information underpins both the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and all sensible efforts to further conservation. BRISC welcomes the new duties, which will **require public bodies** to ensure that their efforts are founded on reliable, **scientifically robust** information'.*

Monday also sees **the publication** of the Scottish Executive's guidance on the duty, aimed at helping public bodies fulfil this new obligation. Likening biodiversity to a 'living bank balance', it remains to be seen whether the guidelines are clear enough on advising public bodies on how not to become overdrawn. Dr Deborah Long at Plantlife Scotland comments:

*"The important thing is for public bodies and office holders to see the conservation of biodiversity **as integral** to everything they do. These guidelines still present the conservation of biodiversity as an optional add-on. Ultimately Scotland's future depends on assuring the long term conservation of biodiversity, in which **we are all implicated** and all have a role to play."*

Established in 1987, **Scottish Environment LINK** is the umbrella body for Scotland's voluntary environment organisations - 36 member bodies representing a half a million members. : this statement is supported by RSPB Scotland, Woodland Trust Scotland, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Scottish Native Woods, National Trust Scotland, Marine Conservation Society, Plantlife Scotland, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland and BRISC.

www.scotlink.org

Scottish Environment  The voice of Scotland's environment movement

Registered Office: 2 Grosvenor House, Shore Road, Perth PH2 8BD. A Scottish Charity under Scottish Charity No SC000296.
Scottish Environment LINK is a Scottish Company Limited by guarantee and without a share capital under Company No SC250899.

