



Scottish
Environment
LINK



giving
nature
a home

COP15: Scotland's chance to lead the way on nature's recovery **April 2022**

We are in a nature and climate emergency, a twin crisis that must be tackled as one. Nature is being lost around the world faster than ever. The need to restore nature has never been more urgent. There is now an opportunity for Scotland to be a world leader in tackling the climate and nature emergencies together.

COP15 of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity is taking place later this year in Kunming, China. It will be the biggest conference for nature in a decade. World leaders are expected to agree on a post-2020 agreement for nature, a 'Global Biodiversity Framework' which contains a set of headline goals and targets intended to achieve Nature Positive: end the loss of nature and set nature on a path to recovery by 2030 and achieve a 2050 vision of living in harmony with nature. We need these global targets to be ambitious and provide a strong framework for strong national targets.

Scotland, a country world-famous for its wildlife and landscapes, was recently found to be one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, coming 212th out of 240 countries and territories in an assessment of how intact its nature remains. Whilst much of this loss of nature is historical, we are still losing nature now: since 1970 half of our species in Scotland have declined, with 1 in 9 at risk of national extinction. However, the challenge to help nature recover also creates opportunities. A Nature Positive future for Scotland would deliver many benefits such as creating green jobs and skills, improving health and wellbeing, and creating a more resilient economy and society.

So far, efforts to tackle the nature crisis are lagging far behind efforts to limit global temperature rises. This is true in Scotland as much as anywhere: Scotland has ambitious climate targets that are helping us reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, but there are not yet equivalent targets in place for nature.

We need Net Zero and Nature Positive to work in tandem: restoring nature can be a huge part of the climate solution, as restoring habitats like peatlands, native woodlands, coastal habitats, and our oceans to a healthy state will help lock up carbon, as well as helping wildlife to thrive. Reaching net zero depends on enhancing the role of nature in removing carbon from the atmosphere. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) [latest climate report](#) highlights that safeguarding and strengthening nature is key to a liveable future.

However, beyond investing in natural solutions to climate change, nature will need other actions to thrive across Scotland, such as tackling some of the big drivers of nature loss like habitat loss and invasive non-native species. We must also halt species extinctions and reverse the fortunes of rare and threatened species. They must be the stars of an ecosystem restoration approach and their unique individual needs must not be lost within landscape-scale actions.

It is therefore extremely welcome that, following a campaign by environment charities, the Scottish government has committed to introducing legally binding targets to restore nature in a Natural Environment Bill in 2023-4. This is a major opportunity for Scotland to bring forward world-leading legislation to tackle the nature crisis.

To make the Natural Environment Bill a success we need:

- The upcoming Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to be a **Nature Emergency Strategy** to 2045 that puts nature on an equivalent footing with climate change in terms of government priorities.
- Ambitious legally binding targets to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2030 and secure nature recovery by 2045.

- Increased direct funding for nature and actions to increase private finance into nature restoration in line with the Scottish Government's Interim Principles for Responsible Investment in Natural Capital.
- A robust monitoring framework to measure progress towards nature recovery targets.
- To adopt a Scottish Nature Network with national reach to join up sites for nature and wildlife to restore, create and protect the habitats our native species need to survive.
- To strengthen the MPA network for ocean recovery, where at least 30% of Scotland's seas are highly protected from extractive activities by 2030.

Scotland has the potential to be a world leader in biodiversity recovery, but as things stand, our ecosystems are degraded, and an alarming number of our species populations are in decline. The new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy offers the opportunity to develop and implement targeted action to turn this around and put Scotland on the path to nature's recovery.

The few years between now and 2030 are the most crucial we have ever faced, named by the UN as the Decade of Ecosystem Restoration. If we do not make significant progress with ecosystem restoration during this time, future success becomes increasingly unlikely.

A Nature Positive approach will ensure that Scotland has more nature at the end of the decade than we started with, meaning that we have halted declines and are driving the recovery, putting us on an upward path to restoring the health of nature by 2045 by choosing the right actions for the benefit of people and the planet. A Nature Positive Scotland is a future where Scotland's nature is thriving across the country, in turn helping us all to thrive.

Future events

This is part of a series of briefings for MSPs to explore why we need nature, what is driving its unprecedented decline globally and in Scotland, and solutions to the nature crisis ahead of COP15. Look out for the next three briefing events which will be online over May - September on the following topics:

Towards a Nature Positive Economy

30 by 30: Protecting Scotland's Land and Sea

Saving Scotland's Seas

[Click here](#) to find out more

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