



T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

1 May 2024

Dear all,

On 18 April, the Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy made a [statement](#) to the Scottish Parliament with new measures aimed at accelerating Scotland's journey to net zero.

The Cabinet Secretary also confirmed that the Scottish Government's ambition and legal commitment to reach net zero by 2045 remains unchanged, with legislation to be introduced that will clarify our pathway there.

The Cabinet Secretary highlighted that Scotland's food and drink is a significant national success story and food security is important to this government. That is why we are supporting farmers, crofters, landowners and managers to increasingly adopt practices that lower emissions and protect nature as part of Scotland's response to the linked climate and biodiversity emergencies.

Those who work and make a living from the land are on the front line of climate change - we are seeing that again with the difficulties for farmers caused by recent wet weather. Many are already adopting low carbon practices that will help cut emissions. We now want to build on this and further accelerate action, creating new opportunities for the agriculture and land use sectors.

In this regard, I want to highlight some of the measures mentioned by the Cabinet Secretary in her statement last week that may be of particular interest to you.

Partial rewetting of peatlands and peat soils

In addition to our on-going commitment and progress towards restoring 250,000 hectares of degraded peat by 2030, the announcement included measures to reduce peatland emissions and protect nature in other ways.

Partial rewetting involves reducing the level of drainage of peat or peaty soils by either fully rewetting during only the winter months or by moderating the drainage depth towards shallower water tables across the site. As a result, it may allow for some form of agricultural activity to continue for at least part of the year on at least part of a holding.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot



Investing up to £1m, we will work with farmers, crofters and other land managers to explore and pilot this approach to restoration, helping us to understand the scope for such an approach in Scotland, the costs and benefits, and how it could be part of future agricultural support from 2026 onwards. As part of this, we will also conclude current research to better understand the extent, depth and quality of grassland on peat which is where this technique is most likely to be possible.

Deer management

We are continuing our work taking forward a package of measures to increase the effectiveness of deer management in meeting our climate and biodiversity aims. That includes legislation which we have already brought into effect to make changes to the closed season for male deer, amending the regulations on firearms to make it easier to access non-lead ammunition and use additional sights when shooting deer.

Through upcoming legislation, the details of which can be found in our consultation on [Managing deer for climate and nature](#), we will implement the other legislative recommendations made by the Deer Working Group and modernise our deer legislation. However, we recognise that legislation alone is not enough. The Scottish Government's Strategic Deer Board have been leading work to consider how we can also support deer management through both regulation and incentivisation.

We also recognise that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to deer management, and that managing deer in the open hill range will be different to managing deer in the lowlands, with different local facilities and challenges. That is why we are developing local schemes this year in different parts of Scotland to test different approaches to incentives and to better understand the barriers to deer management. One of those schemes is already in development in the Cairngorms National Park. That scheme aims to deliver an increased red deer hind cull by trialling new incentives and looking at ways to support local venison.

While we want to build on those principles, we are clear that we will not be able to simply replicate that elsewhere or roll it out across the country. Instead, we will look to achieve the same aims, of delivering an increased cull, by incentivising deer management and supporting local venison supply, most likely through increased larder facilities. We will then look to build on these local schemes in future years to develop a package of support that meets the needs of deer managers nationally.

We want to make sure that we can achieve the right balance so that deer are an effective part of a functioning ecosystem and that we maximise the benefits they bring to our local communities.

Regional Land Use Partnerships

Following a successful set of pilots, the Scottish Government now intends to establish Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs) across Scotland by the end of the next Parliamentary term. This will start with the recruitment of up to three new areas over the next year, recognising that successful partnership must be driven by communities from the bottom up.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE[™]
We invest in people Silver



Carbon Land Tax

We will consult on options for a carbon land tax on larger landholdings in summer 2024, as part of exploring regulatory and fiscal changes that could be made to further incentivise peatland restoration afforestation, and renewable energy generation.

The agriculture and land use sectors are critical to a nature rich and net zero Scotland. The full package of measures announced by the Cabinet Secretary can be found [here](#), and I look forward to working with you and your partners to take forward this important and exciting work in the months ahead.



MAIRI GOUGEON

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™
We invest in people Silver

