



Scottish
Environment
LINK

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Ivan McKee MSP
Minister for Public Finance
Scottish Government

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Dear Minister,

On behalf of Scottish Environment LINK, we would like to extend our congratulations to you on your additional responsibilities as Minister for Public Finance.

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 40 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

The climate and nature crises are inextricably linked. A healthy environment with rich and diverse nature is fundamentally important to the health, wellbeing and prosperity of Scotland's people. However, Scotland has suffered a high level of historic nature loss and this is accelerating further, with 1 in 9 species at risk of national extinction. Neither the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) nor the planning system on their own can address the climate and nature crises or achieve the wider ambitions for Scotland, but they can play a substantial and positive role.

As your new responsibilities include planning, we thought it would be helpful to map out LINK Planning Group's current priorities:

Implementation of Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4)

The adoption of NPF4 last year presents real opportunities for planning to support a nature positive and net zero Scotland. The ongoing implementation of NPF4, through guidance, development of tools and through decisions, will be crucial in how effective it is.

Resourcing of the Planning System

The planning system, including planning authorities, statutory agencies and decision makers need to be properly resourced to support delivery of NPF4 as intended, with climate and nature at the centre of decision-making, securing biodiversity protection and enhancement, safeguarding our important natural assets and creating nature networks.

Biodiversity Enhancement

Biodiversity enhancement in planning is an exciting new policy area introduced by NPF4 which has the potential to make a real difference to nature and people. We continue to engage with the national guidance on this, including Developing with Nature guidance, produced by NatureScot, providing feedback to improve the guidance and its use in applications and decision making. We are also keen to monitor the way in which Policy 3 is being interpreted and used in decision making.

Nature Networks

Although nature networks are mentioned numerous times in NPF4, it is not yet clear how these will be implemented and this is something that local authorities are working on. Nature Networks represent the best tool to strategically plan out an ecological infrastructure at landscape scale and can help deliver positive effects for biodiversity through the planning system. We aim to support their effective role out across Scotland.

Future working

LINK and our members are keen to work closely with the Scottish Government to deliver for our natural environment. We would like to invite you to a meeting where we can bring key topics of importance to your attention.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Esmé Clelland, Senior Conservation Planner at RSPB Scotland & Convener of LINK Planning Group



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