

His Majesty, The King

Balmoral Castle

Braemar

Aberdeenshire



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Environment
LINK

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Your Majesty,

We are writing as leaders of Scotland's environmental charities in recognition of your welcome leadership on environmental issues over decades and to seek your support for ambitious action in Scotland's uplands in response to the nature and climate crises. Nature in Scotland is in trouble. A recent study of 'Biodiversity Intactness' ranked Scotland 212th out of 240 countries. The most recent State of Nature Scotland Report shows that 1 in 9 species is threatened with extinction and that 43% of monitored species have declined strongly in the last decade. Against that backdrop, the need for ambitious action is clear. Unsustainably high deer densities are one of the biggest threats to nature in our uplands. Scotland's deer population has expanded significantly to around a million in the last 30 years resulting in significant loss and damage to many important habitats. For example, a recent study of Caledonian Pinewoods¹ found that 23% are critically threatened due to overgrazing, mostly by deer while deer have also been highlighted as one of the most significant threats to Scotland's Rainforest². The Scottish Government's analysis concludes that:

Deer numbers have a profound effect on nature and on climate. High deer numbers are preventing natural regeneration of woodland, they have a negative impact on carbon sequestration and emissions and prevent biodiversity restoration and recovery³.

We have been encouraged by reductions in deer densities at Balmoral in recent years and welcome the hard work and professionalism of your team. We believe that Balmoral could become an exemplar of a nature-positive Highland estate and inspire others in the sector to follow suit. Around 30% of Scotland's land is managed as sporting estate and evolution of land management in this sector represents one of the most exciting opportunities for truly landscape scale nature recovery in the UK.

¹ <https://treesforlife.org.uk/about-us/caledonian-pinewood-recovery/>

² <https://www.scotlink.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Deer-Report.pdf>

³ <https://www.gov.scot/groups/strategic-deer-management-board/>



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We would be grateful for an opportunity to meet with you, at a time and location of your convenience, to explore how Balmoral could become a sector-leading exemplar through which you could champion an exciting nature positive future for our Highland estates.

Yours faithfully,

Alastair Seaman, Director, Woodland Trust Scotland

Anne McCall, Director, RSPB Scotland

Alan Drever, Chairperson, Nature Foundation

Brendan Paddy, Director, Ramblers Scotland

Deborah Long, Chief Officer, Scottish Environment LINK

Jo Pike, Chief Executive, Scottish Wildlife Trust

Steve Micklewright, Chief Executive, Trees for Life

Kat Jones, Chief Executive, APRS

David Balharry, Chief Executive, John Muir Trust



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