80% of Scots want more rewilding action from Scottish Government, polling shows

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80% of Scots think the Scottish Government should have policies in place to support rewilding, shows polling carried out for the Scottish Rewilding Alliance.

But the coalition of more than 20 organisations is warning that despite overwhelming public opinion in favour of large-scale nature restoration, the Scottish Government and public bodies are being too slow to engage with the opportunities offered by rewilding.

There are also fears that the forthcoming Scottish Natural Environment Bill may be less ambitious than planned. Recent government decisions such as the reallocation of £5 million from the Nature Restoration Fund have caused dismay.

The Scottish Rewilding Alliance is calling on the Scottish Government to declare Scotland the world's first Rewilding Nation, with nature recovery taking place across 30% of the country. The Alliance says the Programme for Government, due to be announced on 4 September, is a key opportunity to act.

"The Scottish Government has been moving far too slowly on addressing the country's nature crisis through rewilding, and risks being left behind internationally," said Steve Micklewright, Scottish Rewilding Alliance Convenor and Chief Executive of Trees for Life.

"It should seize the opportunity to declare Scotland the world's first Rewilding Nation. Such ambition would offer hope for tackling the nature and climate emergencies, and create benefits for people and local communities on health, jobs, and sustainable food production."

While some public bodies now mention rewilding in their plans or are increasingly taking action to support rewilding, this is not widespread or clearly set out, says the Alliance.

Rewilding is not yet included in the Government's key policies and frameworks, such as the planning framework, net zero plan, and biodiversity strategy.

Scotland is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. Intensive agriculture and climate breakdown are having the biggest impacts on habitats and wildlife, with other threats including non-native forestry, pollution, and introduced species, research shows.

In the new polling carried out by independent research agency Survation, 80% of respondents said they felt it was important the Scottish Government has policies in place to support rewilding.

Currently less than 3% of Scotland's land and less than 1% of its seas are rewilding, according to analysis carried out by the Scottish Rewilding Alliance.

Rewilding 30% of Scotland can be achieved by restoring habitats including peatlands, native woodlands, wetlands, rivers and seas, while maintaining and benefitting productive farmland, it says.

The Rewilding Nation Charter at www.rewild.scot/charter, calling on the Government to declare Scotland a rewilding nation, has already been signed by thousands of people.

Charter signatory Genevieve from Nairn, said: "We must be the future and show the way. Scotland has so much potential and the people are already showing their commitment to nature, for the species, planet and ourselves. We need the government to be brave, take our lead, and commit to becoming a Rewilding Nation."

The Rewilding Nation campaign was backed by Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio earlier this year.

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