‘A win for people-led rewilding’ – new hutting law in Scotland to unlock public land to connect people and nature

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Last night (4 November) MSPs in the Scottish Parliament voted to create a new hutting law compelling the Scottish Government to publish a model lease for hutting on public land.

The change to the law will make it easier for people across Scotland to access public land for low-impact, sustainable hutting in future.

Huts are simple homes where people can reconnect with nature and experience the land off-grid. Reforesting Scotland’s 1000 Huts Campaign says that a culture of recreational hut use would benefit people greatly, including by bringing people close to nature, cultivating practical skills in low-carbon living, fostering community, and offering benefits for health and wellbeing.

With hutting depending on access to land for huts, campaigners from Reforesting Scotland and the Scottish Rewilding Alliance had called on the Scottish Government to publish a draft lease for hutters on public land.

The successful campaign for a legal change was inspired by a pilot project at Carnock in southwest Fife, which has seen a pioneering lease enable a group of hutters to build 12 huts on the national forest estate.

Al Whitworth, Director of Reforesting Scotland, said: “This is another success for our ongoing 1000 Huts Campaign, and we’re delighted that the Scottish Government has again recognised the benefits of making a model lease available for hutting on public land. We hope this will help unlock more sites where hutters can enjoy nature protected by a strong legal agreement.”

Steve Micklewright, co-convenor of the Scottish Rewilding Alliance and chief executive of Trees for Life, said: “It’s great to see the Scottish Government supporting the need for a model lease for hutting in the new Land Reform Bill. As well as restoring nature in a big way, rewilding is about people and restoring our relationship with the land. Hutting offers a fantastic way for more people to share in, and care for, Scotland’s landscapes. This is a win for people-led rewilding.”

The successful changes to the bill were proposed in Parliament by Ariane Burgess, Scottish Greens MSP for the Highlands and Islands.

“Opening up more public land for hutting will in turn create all sorts of opportunities for people to get closer to nature and develop practical skills, and will foster community and co-operation. I’m really pleased to see the Scottish Government recognising the importance of hutting in the new Land Reform Bill by supporting my proposed amendment. This positive result should benefit people for years to come,” said Ariane Burgess.

The hutting win represents a double success for the Scottish Rewilding Alliance’s recommendations on the Land Reform Bill. MSPs voted on 28 October to create a law obliging the owners of large landholdings over 1,000 hectares to publish plans on how they will increase biodiversity – which the Alliance says represents a ‘big step towards a Rewilding Nation’.

While celebrating the two new laws, the Alliance says that with Scotland one of the world’s most nature-depleted countries, the Scottish Government needs to be more ambitious going forwards.

Although the Scottish government is committed to protect at least 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030, just 2.5% of Scotland’s land is currently rewilding – with current rates of increase meaning it will take 65 years before major nature restoration is underway across 30% of the country.

Rewilding is the large-scale restoration of nature to a state where it can look after itself, focusing on restoring natural processes and, where appropriate, reintroducing missing species.

The Scottish Rewilding Alliance is calling on the Scottish Government to declare Scotland the world’s first Rewilding Nation, bringing in bold legislation to support rewilding. Polling has shown this is supported by over 80% of the Scottish public.

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The Alliance's Pathway to a Rewilding Nation lays out a clear vision for a wilder, fairer future for Scotland. Political parties are being asked by rewilding campaigners across the country to put rewilding in their manifestos ahead of the 2026 elections.

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