New law says large landowners need to set out biodiversity plans, in ‘big step towards a Rewilding Nation’

Thursday 30 October, 2025

MSPs in the Scottish Parliament have voted this week to create a law obliging the owners of large landholdings to publish plans on how they will increase biodiversity, as part of the new Land Reform Bill – in what the Scottish Rewilding Alliance says is a ‘big step towards a Rewilding Nation’.

The Scottish Rewilding Alliance has campaigned for the change as part of its Rewilding Nation campaign, supported by thousands of people across Scotland.

The new law will require landowners of landholdings over 1,000 hectares to set out how they are boosting biodiversity, as well as adapting to climate breakdown.

They will also have to lay out how they are complying with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, complying with the code of practice on deer management, and contributing towards net-zero emissions.

While many responsible landowners will already be taking steps to restore nature and ensure ecosystem health, all large landowners will now have a legal duty to consult on and publish land management plans, once the Scottish Government has put the required regulations in place.

The Alliance says Scotland’s largest landholdings have a pivotal role to play in repairing Scotland’s biodiversity, mitigating against the effects of climate breakdown and enabling Scotland to adapt to a changing climate.

Steve Micklewright, co-convenor of the Scottish Rewilding Alliance, and chief executive of Trees for Life which owns the 4,000-hectare Dudreggan estate near Loch Ness, said: “This new law represents a big step towards Scotland becoming the world’s first Rewilding Nation.

“How land is managed is a key part of tackling climate breakdown and reversing biodiversity loss – and in Scotland, where land ownership is highly concentrated, large landholdings have a key role in repairing Scotland’s ecosystems.

“Ensuring that large estates set out their plans to restore nature is vital. Rewilding – large-scale restoration of ecosystems and natural processes – offers hope for tackling the nature and climate emergencies, and creates a cascade of benefits for people.”

There are 1,810 landholdings in Scotland over 1,000 hectares. Some landholdings are already restoring nature at scale, but currently the lack of land management plans laying this out makes data collection difficult.

The successful change to the bill was proposed in Parliament by Ariane Burgess, Scottish Greens MSP for the Highlands and Islands. The change received cross-party support.

While celebrating the success, the Scottish Rewilding Alliance says that with Scotland being one of the world’s most nature-depleted countries in the world, the Scottish Government needs to be more ambitious going forwards. This includes putting in place support and funding to enable large landowners to restore biodiversity and take upscaled action to ensure ecosystem health.

Although the Scottish government is committed to protecting 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 and people, 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.

The Alliance’s Pathway to a Rewilding Nation lays out a clear vision for a wilder, fairer future for

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Scotland. Political parties are being asked by rewilding campaigners across the country to put rewilding in their manifestos ahead of the 2026 elections.

The Rewilding Nation campaign has been backed by thousands of people from all walks of life across Scotland. It has received public backing from Scottish actors Brian Cox and Alan Cumming, Scottish musician Nathan Evans, Hollywood A-lister Leonardo DiCaprio, and activists Laura Young (Less Waste Laura) and Somhairle.

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