

Rewilding conference signals fresh thinking for Scotland's land and seas

Friday 26 July, 2019

Against a backdrop of global biodiversity crashes and climate breakdown, a major conference in Stirling this September will examine how Scotland can reverse its widespread depletion of nature and become a world leader in restoring its land and seas to good health, so wildlife and communities can flourish.

The Big Picture Conference will explore the potential for rewilding large parts of Scotland's forests, peatlands, rivers, moorlands and seas, and the benefits this could bring for declining wildlife such as red squirrel, wildcat and capercaillie, as well as for people's health, wellbeing and employment.

Hosted by communications group SCOTLAND: The Big Picture at the University of Stirling's MacRobert Arts Centre on 21 September, the event will examine why rewilding – the repair and restoration of nature – matters.

The conference – the only event of its kind in Scotland – will focus on solutions rather than reinforcing problems. There will be inspirational presentations and examples from around the world, delivered by leading rewilding practitioners, policy makers and storytellers.

"Scotland is blessed with awe-inspiring landscapes, but huge areas have become ecologically depleted. Woodlands, wetlands and peatlands across the country are all shadows of what they could be. But with different thinking, Scotland could become a world-leader in restoring its ecosystems to good health, for both wildlife and people," said Peter Cairns, Director of SCOTLAND: The Big Picture.

"We're aiming for a great day of inspiring presentations and thought-provoking discussions."

Scotland's biggest habitat restoration project – Cairngorms Connect, a land manager partnership that is enhancing habitats across a vast area of Cairngorms National Park – will feature at the event, as will Lynbreck Croft, whose owners are farming with nature.

The keynote presentation will be from the inspiring American Prairie Reserve, where three million acres of public and private lands across Montana, USA are being reconnected to benefit nature and people.

SCOTLAND: The Big Picture says rewilding could provide employment, especially in the Highlands and Islands, where otters, deer, puffins and sea eagles already support a growing nature tourism economy. Nature's benefits also include beavers reducing flooding, trees providing food, and peatlands soaking up carbon. Increasingly, studies show how nature boosts people's health, and is good for children.

The organisers hope to encourage debate and discussion, and also cooperation between different groups. They say rewilding can co-exist well with farming, forestry and recreational activities.

Anyone can attend the conference, which is sponsored by The Woodland Trust and Ecosulis. Tickets can be purchased at www.scotlandbigpicture.com/conference.

SCOTLAND: The Big Picture is Scotland's first organisation wholly dedicated to rewilding advocacy and communications. Its mission is to help drive transformational change towards a vast network of rewilded land and sea, where wildlife and communities can flourish. See www.scotlandbigpicture.com.

Ends

Notes to editors

Event details

What: The Big Picture Conference – bringing rewilding to life

When: Saturday 21 September 2019, 9.30-18.00

Where: MacRobert Arts Centre, University of Stirling, FK9 4LA

Price: £69 / £35 for students and under 18s

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