‘Vision of hope’ pathway to Rewilding Nation presented to Scottish Government

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A pioneering pathway for Scotland to become the world’s first Rewilding Nation, with nature recovery across 30% of its land and seas, has been presented to the Scottish Government by the Scottish Rewilding Alliance.

The coalition of more than 20 organisations presented the pathway to Minister for Climate Action, Dr Alasdair Allan MSP, at a reception in Edinburgh on 3 December – setting out what it describes as a trailblazing ‘vision of hope’ for Scotland requiring leadership from Government in line with its international commitments.

Rewilding helps tackle the connected nature and climate emergencies, and creates benefits for people and local communities around health, jobs, sustainable food production, re-peopling, clean air and water, and healthy rivers and seas, says the 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.

“This is about choice and opportunity. Declaring Scotland the world’s first Rewilding Nation would be a powerful statement of intent that we want to be a world leader in nature restoration. Our pathway sets out a route offering the Scottish Government the opportunity to show global leadership,” said Karen Blackport, Scottish Rewilding Alliance Co-Convenor and CEO of Bright Green Nature.

Declaring Scotland a Rewilding Nation would lead to meaningful action with ministers committing to restoring the country’s natural environment through groundbreaking legislation and funding to enable rewilding and empower local communities, the Alliance says.

The Rewilding Nation pathway includes specific proposals to make nature recovery the primary purpose of Scotland’s protected landscapes and seascapes, establishing wild zones around rivers and coastlines, doubling native woodland cover, restoring peatlands at pace, and restricting dredging and bottom trawling across Marine Protected Areas.

Recovery targets would ensure habitat restoration, as well as increases in species abundance and diversity. The government would champion expansion of beaver populations, and begin work on a managed lynx reintroduction, in close collaboration with key stakeholders and local communities.

The proposals champion the crucial role of people and communities, and include action for coexisting with wildlife, support for land managers and farmers, and investment in nature-based economies, jobs and skills.

At the presentation of the Rewilding Nation pathway, Minister for Climate Action Dr Alasdair Allan MSP said the event came at an important time for the Scottish Government, and that nature is under threat in an unprecedented way, with one in nine species facing extinction across the country.

The minister acknowledged that Scotland has yet to yet to tackle biodiversity loss at a sufficient scale, and praised the work of Scottish Rewilding Alliance members including Argaty Red Kites, Bamff and Seawilding.

“We are extremely grateful, all of us, for the transformative work being underway and for the partnerships that the Scottish Rewilding Alliance has helped to develop. Addressing the nature crisis requires a whole government and a whole society approach – working together to achieve a nature positive Scotland by 2030,” said Dr Allan.

“We also need to support nature to help address the climate crisis and to create a climate resilient Scotland. We know we must protect and restore natural environment for future generations.”

The Scottish Rewilding Alliance calculates that more than 2% of Scotland’s land is now rewilding, with over 150 rewilding projects across the country, from community sites to landscape-scale partnerships. At sea, government inaction on ensuring Marine Protected Areas are truly protected is holding back the recovery of Scotland’s waters, says the Alliance.

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Calls for large-scale nature restoration are growing. This year thousands of people from all walks of life and a wide-range of diverse organisations have signed the Rewilding Nation Charter, calling on the Government to commit to urgent action. Polling has shown 80% of Scots think the Scottish Government should have policies in place to support rewilding.

Steve Micklewight, Co-Convenor of the Scottish Rewilding Alliance and Chief Executive of Trees for Life, said: “As a country, we need to be far more ambitious. This is a chance for Scotland to be leading the movement for global change, reclaiming its voice on the international stage by embracing the Rewilding Nation’s vision of hope for people, nature and climate.”

The Rewilding Nation campaign has drawn widespread support from people and organisations across Scotland. It has received high-profile public backing from actors Brian Cox and Leonardo DiCaprio.

Scotland is currently ranked in the bottom 25% of countries globally for the state of its nature. Intensive agriculture and climate breakdown are having the biggest impacts on biodiversity, according to the authoritative and most recent State of Nature report, with other threats including non-native forestry, pollution, and introduced species.

The Scottish Rewilding Alliance is calling on people to sign the Rewilding Nation Charter at rewild.scot/charter.

Ends

Company Contact:

Trees for Life

T. 07753 488146
E. richardbunting@gmail.com
W. https://www.treesforlife.org.uk

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