

OPEN LETTER TO ROSEANNA CUNNINGHAM MSP, CABINET SECRETARY FOR
ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND LAND REFORM

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Roseanna Cunningham MSP,
Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform,
The Scottish Government,
St Andrew's House,
EDINBURGH,
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29th June, 2016.



Environmental legislation in Scotland

We write following the dramatic events of the last week. In advance of the referendum, we were pleased to see that you highlighted the benefits to wildlife and the environment of European legislation. This is especially crucial for Scotland's biodiversity – where the conservation of species and sites, environmental assessment, and improvements to water quality have all been underpinned by European laws. In addition, European regulation is crucial to the protection and enhancement of our marine environment, and management of fisheries.

Notwithstanding the Scottish Government's position in seeking to remain with the EU in some form, these are uncertain times. Yet, nature conservation and the environment remain a devolved matter – and nature does not respect jurisdictional boundaries. In such circumstances, the Scottish Government is able, if it wishes, to indicate a desire – and policy position – to maintain, or even improve, the standards of protection afforded to our outstanding wildlife. This would both be desirable and consistent with the Government's commitment to both the global biodiversity targets agreed in Japan and the Sustainable Development Goals, to which Scotland was an early signatory.

We hope that you can be explicit that, despite the uncertainties, the Scottish Government does not see "Brexit" as an opportunity to de-regulate and weaken environmental targets or legislation. In particular, **we would welcome a public statement that signals commitment to the Nature, Water and Marine Directives in Scotland** – whatever the outcome of coming discussions. This would be consistent with the Scottish Government's European aspirations, as well as your earlier statement that the natural environment is one of Scotland most precious assets and how it is managed, controlled, conserved, promoted, supported and developed matter hugely to the Government's ambitions for our country.

In the current difficult and uncertain situation, a statement such as suggested here would be another example of the Scottish Government showing leadership within the UK, by committing to maintain good environmental standards in line with our European partners. We also note the First Minister's establishment of an Advisory Panel – another example of leadership – and hope that environmental matters will be firmly on its agenda and that it has access to sufficient environmental expertise.

We look forward to such an announcement. Given public interest in this and other current events, we are making this letter public and copying it to members of the Scottish Parliament's Environment Climate Change and Land Reform Committee.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lloyd Austin". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Lloyd Austin
RSPB Scotland

Signed on behalf of and with the support of:

Calum Duncan
Head of Conservation Scotland,
Marine Conservation Society

Carol Evans
Director, Woodland Trust Scotland

Stuart Housden
Director, RSPB Scotland

Jonathan Hughes
Chief Executive, Scottish Wildlife Trust

Paul Kirkland
Director, Scotland
Butterfly Conservation

Deborah Long
Head of Plantlife Scotland

Craig Macadam
Scotland Director
Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust

Simon Skinner
Chief Executive, The National Trust for Scotland