



John Brownlee
Inquiry into Future Support for Agriculture in Scotland
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Dear Mr Brownlee

Inquiry into Future Support for Agriculture in Scotland

The Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT), with 35,000 members the largest voluntary organisation dedicated to conserving all of Scotland's wildlife, welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry into Future Support for Agriculture in Scotland.

SWT supports the Scottish Environment LINK response which addresses each of the specific questions posed in the Inquiry's call for evidence in turn. It may be of assistance to the Inquiry, however, for SWT to outline its own priorities for agricultural support.

SWT believes that the agriculture sector has the potential to deliver very real gains in the conservation of biodiversity but that current funding structures work against this objective. This was underlined by the European Commission report of July 2009 which concluded that, across the EU, "in general, the conservation status of all habitat types associated with agriculture is significantly worse than other types of habitat"¹.

In July 2009, SWT published *Living Landscapes: towards ecosystem-based conservation in Scotland* (attached). Our priorities for an agricultural sector which supports national food policy objectives, a resilient and sustainable rural economy and rewards the provision of environmental services can be achieved through:

- In the medium term, support fundamental reform of the Common Agricultural Policy which should be replaced by a Sustainable Land Use Strategy (SLUS) which rewards land managers for good management of ecosystem services, including biodiversity, soils and water; the new SLUS should facilitate a fundamental shift towards 'agricultural ecosystems', productive in terms of both food and ecosystem services
- In the short term, agri-environment schemes under the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) should be designed to deliver spatial targeting of habitat restoration and creation (informed by biodiversity opportunity and ecological network maps) which contribute to the development of micro and macro scale ecological networks and patchworks
- In the short term, target funding to encourage extensive conservation grazing regimes (particularly for cattle) in upland fringe areas to create wildlife-rich vegetation

Protecting Scotland's wildlife for the future

Patron HRH The Prince Charles, Duke of Rothesay Chairman Allan Bantick Chief Executive Simon Milne MBE

The Scottish Wildlife Trust is a company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland (registered number SC040247).
It is also a Scottish registered charity (charity number SC005792).

¹ Commission of the European Communities. Composite Report on the Conservation Status of Habitat Types and Species as required under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive. COM (2009) 358 final. 13/07/2009.

mosaics and wood pasture habitat more resilient to climate change; this could be achieved, for example, through a new national envelope to support High Nature Value farming and will also support rural livelihoods.

In summary, SWT favours a move away from income support-based mechanisms for agricultural funding towards a system which rewards and encourages the delivery of environmental objectives. Public money should deliver public benefits.

We see no conflict between the delivery of environmental objectives and a sustainable agricultural sector; we would go further and say that such an approach is essential for the future of agriculture.

If you would like us to expand further on any of the issues raised in this letter, or if we can assist the Inquiry in any other way, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

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