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Chief Executive
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Ìrean Àrainneachdail na h-Alba

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Gillian Martin MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural
Affairs
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

24 August 2026

Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2026: Commencement of provisions

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

ESS welcomes the recent update on the Scottish Government's plans for commencement of provisions within the *Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2026*. In our new role as the Independent Review Body clarity on the planned timetable is especially important in guiding our planning and helping to support the effective implementation of the legislation.

ESS recognises the complexity of the remaining provisions and the importance of appropriate development, engagement and consultation. However, we are concerned that the proposed timetable will slow the implementation of the statutory biodiversity targets and the associated reporting framework. This delay will reduce the effectiveness of the targets in supporting the achievement of the 2030 milestones in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.

Environmental Standards Scotland Enquiries

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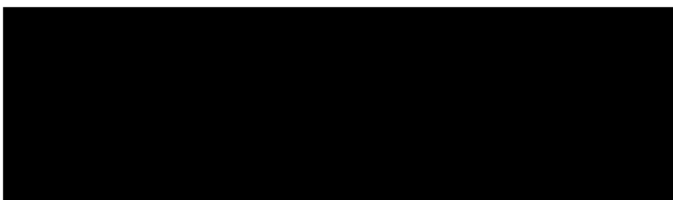
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In addition, the final timetable for commencement of Part 1 will determine the parliamentary time available to scrutinise the first progress report. ESS previously raised concerns around the timing of the [draft Climate Change Plan](#), where opportunities to consider and incorporate feedback were significantly constrained due to proximity of parliamentary dissolution and recess. It is important that sufficient time is factored into planning to enable meaningful scrutiny and response to the report on progress against biodiversity targets.

To help address these concerns ESS would welcome greater clarity of the proposed timetable and confirmation of the date by which the targets will come into force. In addition, it would be helpful to understand the extent to which the Scottish Government will ensure that current policy development processes across government will reflect the advice from the target Programme Advisory Group. This is important to ensure that policy development during this period of target approval is aligned with the delivery of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and its long-term goals.

ESS has had positive engagement with your officials on this issue to date and looks forward to continuing that engagement as the biodiversity targets are developed and brought forward in legislation. We also welcome the commitment to provide a further update on commencement plans and look forward to receiving additional detail later this year. I have copied this letter to the Convener of the Climate Action Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Mark Roberts
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