

Scottish Wildlife Trust Briefing

Ecological coherence



Ecological coherence sounds like jargon - but it is a concept we need to understand and make happen on the ground if we are to reverse the decline in Scotland's wildlife.

Ecological networks made up of 'patches' of habitat in the landscape are important for the recovery of Scotland's wildlife and for maintaining nature's services on which Scotland's prosperity depends.

But such networks need to be **coherent** to function properly. That means they need to be connected in such a way that wildlife can move from habitat patch to habitat patch freely and easily.

Ecological coherence is at the core of European wildlife law: the coherence of European protected sites **must** be maintained and **should** be enhanced.

Ensuring the ecological coherence of Scotland's species, habitats and ecosystems requires **better use of existing resources**. It would bring greater clarity to the planning system and would enhance the resilience of both rural and urban areas to withstand future changes in climate.

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The Scottish Wildlife Trust would like to see the Scottish Government and Parliament:

- Develop a **National Ecological Network** for Scotland
- Amend the **Habitats Regulations** to include ecological coherence as required by the Habitats Directive
- Develop **planning guidance** for local authorities on improving connectivity between habitats
- Ensure that all local authorities have access to **ecological expertise**
- Develop catchment-level **opportunity maps** to target agri-environment funds in support of greater habitat connectivity
- Encourage collaborative working through **SRDP** by **supporting multi-landowner initiatives** which seek to restore connectivity and ecosystem health across neighbouring holdings
- Ensure that green infrastructure in **towns and cities** is planned and deployed with coherence in mind