

Protecting Scotland's wildlife for the future

Fergus Ewing MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG



1 December 2016

Dear Fergus,

December 1st marks the third anniversary of the introduction of Europe-wide restrictions on three neonicotinoid pesticides (often known as 'neonics') - after they were found by scientists to pose a "high acute risk" to honeybees. It is clear that there is now more than enough evidence to retain the ban and extend it to all crops, and that this is essential to reverse the decline of bees and other pollinators.

Since 2013 many more independent laboratory and field studies have found neonics impairing the ability of different bee species to feed, navigate and reproduce resulting in declining populations.

There is now solid evidence of harm from neonics to wild bumble and solitary bees which are even more sensitive to these pesticides than honeybees. Evidence has also grown of neonics harming the wider environment with studies indicating a link to butterfly population decline, identifying risks to bird species and finding neonics accumulating to dangerous levels in wildflowers surrounding crops.

2017 will be a crucial year for decisions on bees as scientists will publish the official review of the evidence of harm to bees from the three restricted neonicotinoids.

In early 2016, the Scottish Government stated¹

"we do not yet have enough evidence at the right scale to know if the effects [of neonicotinoids] are strong enough to affect the health of honeybee colonies, the abundance and viability of wild pollinator populations or the pollination services they provide."

¹ February 2016 ref: 2015/0041802

Protecting Scotland's wildlife for the future

The third anniversary of the neonics restrictions presents the opportunity for the Scottish Government to catch up with scientific evidence and public opinion (as evidenced by opinion polls) by keeping and extending the ban as part of properly protecting Scotland's bees and pollinating insects.

As decisions regarding the use of neonicotinoids in agricultural systems in Scotland affect both biodiversity and the rural economy – with crop pollination alone being worth at least £43 million per year - this letter is also being sent to the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Maggie Keegan, Head of Policy and Planning
Scottish Wildlife Trust



Dr Craig Macadam, Conservation Director Scotland
Buglife



Paul Kirkland, Director
Butterfly Conservation, Scotland



Lloyd Austin, Head of Conservation Policy
RSPB Scotland