

Protecting Scotland's wildlife for the future

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Dear Ministers,

Request to call in application for Golf Course and associated infrastructure at Coul Links near Embo, East Sutherland in the Highland Council region (Ref:23/00580/FUL).

I am writing to you both because the Scottish Wildlife Trust considers this to be a cross-cutting issue of significant importance. As you may be aware, the above application would threaten nationally and internationally important sites which are protected for wildlife and would therefore run contrary to the Scottish Government's stated ambitions on tackling the nature and climate emergency. We urge the Government to call in this application.

The Scottish Wildlife Trust and other eNGOs, working as part of a Conservation Coalition, were very actively involved in the Public Local Inquiry around an extremely similar application which was refused by the Scottish Ministers in 2020. This took significant resource from the members of this Coalition which could not be devoted to other important projects. We believe one of the main functions of protected sites is to signpost clearly where development is not appropriate and are therefore extremely disappointed that this application has come up again so quickly.

Government high-level ambition on the nature and climate crisis is clear. The draft Scottish Biodiversity Strategy puts in place the entirely necessary, ambitious targets of halting biodiversity loss by 2030 and restoring and regenerating biodiversity by 2045. Additionally, the National Planning Framework 4, Policy 3 claims to "*rebalance the planning system in favour of conserving, restoring and enhancing biodiversity and promotes investment in nature-based solutions, benefiting people and nature.*" It is the Scottish Wildlife Trust's view that these statements would mean very little without effective actions to back them up. In the case of Coul Links, this means calling in the application.

We know that internationally and in Scotland our well-being and economic prosperity are completely dependent on a healthy functioning ecosystem. We trust that you will act in Scotland's best interests and the best interests of future generations by calling in this application.

Yours sincerely,

Jo Pike
Chief Executive

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