

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

8th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6)

Tuesday 7th March 2023

Evidence session on the outcomes of the 15th UN Conference on Biodiversity (COP15)

Background

1. Every two years, governments and stakeholders from across the world gather for the UN Convention on Biodiversity Conference to focus on finding global solutions to tackling the nature emergency.
2. From 7-19 December 2022, the [15th UN Convention on Biodiversity Conference \(COP15\)](#) was held in Montreal, Canada. The Conference was of notable significance as it delivered a new [Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework](#) for halting and reversing biodiversity loss on a global scale.
3. The Scottish Government formed part of the official UK delegation at the event and has primary responsibility for implementing the outcomes agreed at COP15 in Scotland and ensuring Scotland is compliant with new targets agreed at the summit on nature restoration.

COP15 Nature Restoration Targets

4. On 19 December, the final day of COP15, participating countries signed an agreement on halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030. The '[Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#)' sets four high-level goals and 23 specific targets for 2030. Targets include—
 - effective conservation and management of at least 30% of the world's lands, inland waters, coastal areas and oceans;
 - reduce to 'near zero' the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance;
 - halve global food waste and significantly reduce overconsumption and waste generation;
 - halve excess nutrients and the risk posed by pesticides and hazardous chemicals;
 - phase out hazardous subsidies while scaling up positive incentives for biodiversity and sustainable use; and

- require large companies and financial institutions to monitor, assess and disclose their risks, dependencies and impacts on biodiversity.

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy

5. In June 2022, the [Scottish Government began consulting on a new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy](#) to set out its plan for tackling biodiversity loss. To accompany the consultation, [a high-level outcomes paper](#) was published outlining the Scottish Government’s vision and conditions for success on which its future biodiversity policy would be measured.

6. The Scottish Government also explained that the new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy would be the beginning of a process leading into the publication of rolling delivery plans for its new Strategy and a Natural Environment Bill.

7. On 13 December, the Scottish Government published the [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045: tackling the nature emergency](#) at COP15. The Scottish Government stated it intends to further revise its Strategy to embed the new targets agreed at COP15.

8. The Scottish Government has indicated that it intends to publish an updated Strategy alongside its rolling delivery plans later this year and consult on these documents together.

NZET Scrutiny of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy

9. In autumn last year, the Committee examined biodiversity policy and the Scottish Government’s high-level outcomes paper with the aim of informing its deliberations around its new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. As part of its scrutiny of this issue, held an evidence session with stakeholders on 6 September. [Read the Official Report from 6 September.](#)

10. The Committee received written statements from—

- [Scottish Wildlife Trust](#)
- [Woodland Trust Scotland](#)
- [Marine Conservation Society](#)
- [RSPB Scotland](#)

11. [The Committee presented its conclusions and recommendations](#) to the Scottish Government in a letter on 29 September to the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity. [The Minister sent a holding response on 1 November.](#)

12. On 12 December, the [Minister provided a response](#) explaining the extent to which points raised in the Committee’s letter had been incorporated into the updated strategy.

NZET Scrutiny of COP15

13. At its meeting on 10 January 2023, the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee agreed to examine the outcomes of COP15 as they relate to biodiversity policy in Scotland.

14. On 7th March, the Committee will hear from a panel of Scottish and UK-based experts in biodiversity policy—

- Dr Daniela Diz, Associate Professor, International Ocean Governance, The Lyell Centre, Heriot-Watt University;
- Prof Colin Galbraith, Chair, Joint Nature Conservation Committee;
- Dr Deborah Long, Chief Officer, Scottish Environment LINK; and
- Dr Ruth Mitchell, Head of the Biodiversity and Ecosystems Group, The James Hutton Institute.

15. Panellists will be invited to share their reflections on COP15 and if the targets agreed at the summit are ambitious enough to successfully address the nature emergency. Members may also take this opportunity to explore what the outcomes of COP15 means in the Scottish context. In particular, the Committee may choose to discuss the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, if it is ambitious enough to tackle biodiversity loss in Scotland and how the Strategy could be updated further to ensure it achieves the nature restoration targets set out at the COP15.

16. Next week, the Committee will hold an evidence session with Lorna Slater MSP, Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity, to undertake further scrutiny of COP15 and the Scottish Government's approach to biodiversity policy.

Clerks

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee