

Rural Affairs and Islands Committee
Wednesday 5 March 2025
8th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill

Introduction

1. The Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill was introduced by the Scottish Government on 19 February 2025. It is expected that the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee will have a role in considering the Bill at Stage 1.
- [Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Bill – as introduced](#)
 - [Policy Memorandum](#)
 - [Explanatory Notes](#)
 - [Delegated Powers Memorandum](#)
 - [Financial Memorandum](#)
 - [Statement on Legislative Competence](#)

Background on the Bill

2. The Bill contains 5 Parts and includes a total of 37 Sections. The Bill aims to support the protection and restoration of Scotland’s natural environment, and to assist the delivery of the Scottish Government’s net zero and biodiversity objectives.
3. The Policy Memorandum defines the ‘natural environment’ as:

“all naturally occurring living things, which we call biodiversity. Biodiversity is the web of life. It is the variety of all living things and the ecosystems where they live (on land or in water). It comprises the living organisms in a particular space, whether in a window-box, garden, park, meadow, peatland, river, loch, estuary, ocean, beach or mountain top”.
4. A summary of the provisions within the Bill are as follows:
 - **Part 1 (Nature targets)** – makes provisions regarding the creation of nature targets, as well as imposes duties on Scottish Ministers regarding the conditions, objectives and process through which targets must be developed, and process by which progress towards targets should be monitored and reviewed.
 - **Part 2 (EIA/HR modified)** – confers regulation-making powers to Scottish Ministers to reform environmental impact assessment legislation and habitats regulations for certain allowable purposes, including the purpose of achieving statutory targets around climate change and biodiversity, as well as to improve and simplify the operation of the law.

- **Part 3 (National parks)** – introduces a number of amendments to current National Parks legislation to amend the statutory aims of National Parks, creates duties for public bodies to facilitate the implementation of National Park Plans, as well as confers new regulation-making powers to Scottish Ministers to develop a fixed-penalty notice regime for in relation to National Park bye-laws.
- **Part 4 (Deer management)** – makes a number of provisions regarding the aims and purposes of deer management in Scotland. This includes changes to the current regime of deer management plans, control agreements and control schemes. New investigatory powers are also conferred on NatureScot to intervene in cases of damage caused by deer. The Bill also makes amendments to authorisations for a number of activities regarding deer management, liability in relation to stray farmed deer and licencing of dealing in venison.
- **Part 5 (General)** – definition of public authorities, auxiliary and commencement information

RAI Committee meeting on 5 March

5. At its meeting on 5 March, the Committee will hear from Scottish Government officials involved with developing the various provision within the legislation.

**Clerks to the Committee
February 2025**