

Rural Directorate
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Chief Executives of Local Authorities and SEARS Bodies

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Dear Colleague

The International Year of Biodiversity: 2010

As you may know, the United Nations has declared 2010 as International Year of Biodiversity with the slogan "Biodiversity is Life". Later this year the 10th Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity will discuss the extent to which the agreed targets for reducing global biodiversity loss have been met and set future targets and objectives.

Roseanna Cunningham, Minister for the Environment, launched the International Year in Scotland on 13 January 2010. At that launch she was clear that we have the opportunity and should have the ambition to maintain and further develop our reputation for biodiversity conservation. She also emphasised that to achieve this we would need to secure public support through the engagement of partners across the private, public and voluntary sectors.

It is now widely understood that healthy ecosystems and biodiversity underpin healthy societies. In Scotland alone, the natural environment is worth over £17 billion to our economy, supports more than 240,000 jobs and provides the basis for many things which we can too easily take for granted like flood protection, soil formation and carbon storage. As well as being integral to our economy and to social well-being, our relationship with the natural world is also an important building block of our cultural identity. The International year of Biodiversity gives us a unique opportunity to build on these themes and embed ecosystem thinking in our policies and initiatives. To do this we need a greater appreciation at all levels within government and wider society of the importance of biodiversity conservation.

Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, it is the duty of all public bodies in exercising their functions to further the conservation of biodiversity. The International Year of Biodiversity provides an opportunity to work towards this by tapping into the resources that have been developed to support it. To that end, I am attaching the Key Messages Document for International Year of Biodiversity 2010 and encourage you to consider how your authority can contribute to the aims and objectives. You may wish to consider:

- Signing up to the International Year of Biodiversity UK Partnership and consider where you can use the logo and messages www.biodiversityislife.net
- How biodiversity issues cut across a range of different activities and how they can be effectively integrated with other business or responsibilities e.g. grounds maintenance, land management, outdoor learning
- Building the key messages and 6 'things to do' from the communications plan into existing or new campaigns and activities
- Playing a full role in Scottish Biodiversity Week (15-23 May, 2010)

Part of the rationale behind the International Year of Biodiversity is the understanding that if we are to conserve the values delivered by the biodiversity and ecosystems around us for the benefit of future generations, we must act now. I hope you will be able to support the approach endorsed by the Minister for Environment which emphasises that conserving our biodiversity is fundamental to future prosperity and well-being in Scotland and that your authority will do all it can to support the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010.

If you would like any further help or advice on what your authority can do to support 2010 activities in Scotland please contact Gareth.Heavisides@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely



PETER RUSSELL