

Global warming, King Charles and Balmoral – the opportunity for change

Description



Grouse feeding station with the peat left to oxidise into the atmosphere, Balmoral, 2020. Elsewhere on his land King Charles has been paid by the Scottish Government to restore areas of bare peat to help mitigate carbon emissions.

Letter of the Day: A chance to plant new id

13th November

Letter published in The Herald

We exclusively reported last week that the Scottish Government is to delay its blueprint for cutting harmful emissions in the fight against climate change, pointing the finger at the UK Government's recent reversal of net zero measures.

Read our report here 

Today one of our readers argues that this might be no bad thing as long as we use it as an opportunity to reset some of our policies, especially towards land use – and has some suggestions for the King.

Dave Morris of Kinross writes:

"Some delay to Scotland's efforts to tackle global warning may not be a problem. Forthcoming events could lead to a better plan.

Later this month King Charles will give the opening address at COP28, the annual climate change summit for **world** leaders. Perhaps he will return with a determination to demonstrate, on his own land, how to mitigate the impacts of climate change through better land use. In the uplands capturing carbon through appropriate management of grazing animals and vegetation should become a primary objective. This requires fundamental changes to the way that the deer and grouse are managed on Balmoral estate. Such changes are essential if the royal family is to maintain its reputation as a significant voice in efforts to solve the climate and biodiversity crisis.

On his return from Dubai the King should be in early discussion with our First Minister. They need to agree what action to take at Balmoral. No doubt it will be explained to King Charles that the report of the Deer Working Group, commissioned by the Scottish Government and published in early 2020, highlighted Balmoral and its neighbouring estates as probably the worst area in **Scotland** for overgrazing by red deer, destroying the natural regeneration of montane and forest habitats. Such damaging land use, along with the widespread and continuing burning of grouse moors has to stop. These estates occupy the headwaters of many rivers in eastern Scotland, including the Dee, Don and Tay, with downstream communities greatly affected by what happens upstream. Stopping over-grazing and burning will bring immense relief to these communities and elsewhere. Regenerating all our uplands is urgent, before the next intense rain storms arrive, bringing further flooding and misery.

A delay in producing the next climate change plan will also give the Government the opportunity to propose fundamental changes to the financial incentives that support agriculture and forestry. Planting trees in the uplands, most of which involves the cultivation of peaty or organic soils, releases more carbon to the atmosphere, over decades, than is captured by the growing trees. This undermines other efforts that are being made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve net zero by 2045. Soil cultivation in the uplands needs to be minimised as planting grants are replaced with new incentives to employ more stalkers and gamekeepers to better control grazing and wildfires. The lowlands should become the focus for new tree planting.

The expansion of all field margins in the lowlands must be at the core of the new grant system. Planting trees for timber, fuel, shelter and wildlife fits well with other measures to create new habitats by limiting the application of artificial fertilisers and pesticides around field margins. And, with public rights of access to all field margins in Scotland, we could design the perfect system for increasing public contact with nature as well as improving the financial support base for all land managers.”

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. access rights
2. balmoral
3. Deer
4. forestry
5. grouse moors
6. landed estates
7. Scottish Government

Date Created

November 18, 2023

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