



**Scottish  
Wildlife  
Trust**

Martha Rojas-Urrejo, Secretary General; and  
Tobias Salathé, Senior Advisor for Europe,  
Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention  
Rue Mauverney 28  
CH-1196 Gland,  
Switzerland

17<sup>th</sup> August 2018

Dear Ms. Rojas-Urrejo and Mr. Salathé,

**Threat to Ramsar Site 897 Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet – Ramsar Advisory Mission**

We are writing to update you on the threat to the ecological character of the Ramsar Site 897 Dornoch Firth and Loch Fleet, in East Sutherland, Scotland.

Our organisations previously wrote to advise you of a proposed golf development that would cause significant ecological damage to the listed features of the Ramsar Site. In our letter dated 5th July, we highlighted that the Highland Council had moved to grant consent to the development.

Scottish Ministers have now been consulted on the proposals and had until the 1st August to decide on whether to 'call in' the application for their own consideration. This deadline has now passed and Scottish Ministers extended this period by an additional 28 days. They have already had over two additional weeks of this extended period to make a decision.

It is incredibly worrying that Scottish Ministers have still not taken action to 'call in' these proposals despite clear advice from their statutory advisors Scottish Natural Heritage that there would be adverse impacts to listed features of the Ramsar Site. The IUCN World Commission for Protected Areas have also expressed significant concerns about these proposals.

In a [press statement](#), the developers indicated that they are 'ready to start work on the development'. If Scottish Ministers decide not to 'call-in' the application, Highland Council will approve the application and works could start almost immediately.

We were pleased to note that this site will be discussed at the Ramsar Convention's 13th Conference of the Parties in October, as part of the update on the status of listed Ramsar sites. However, we are very concerned that any decision at that meeting to take further action to prevent ecological damage to the site may by that time be too late.

Given the imminent threat to the Ramsar site, we therefore urge you to instigate a Ramsar Advisory Mission to investigate this proposal as a matter of urgency to ensure significant and irreversible damage to the site can be avoided. We understand that Ramsar Advisory Missions are usually carried out at the request of the Contracting Party, but we strongly recommend that the Secretariat discusses this option with the UK National Focal Point.

## Protecting Scotland's wildlife for the future

We appreciate your time and support in ensuring the continued protection of this site.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you require any further information

Sincerely,



**Jonathan Hughes, Chief Executive, Scottish Wildlife Trust**

Signed on behalf and with the support of:

Craig Macadam, Director, Buglife Scotland

Paul Kirkland, Director, Butterfly Conservation Scotland

Calum Duncan, Head of Conservation Scotland, Marine Conservation Society

Alistair Whyte, Head of Plantlife Scotland

Anne McCall, Director, RSPB Scotland

Stuart Brookes, Head of Natural Heritage Conservation Policy, National Trust for Scotland