



THURSDAY MAY 30, 2019



SCRR / RSE Peter Wilson Lecture 2019

Francesca Osowska, chief executive,
Scottish Natural Heritage

‘International Leadership for the Environment’

May 30, 2019

UPDATE: please see below for event report.

In her Peter Wilson Lecture given at the RSE on May 30, 2019, Francesca Osowska set out some challenges on how nature should be at the heart of decision-taking in rural Scotland.

She informed an attentive audience that the world had barely a decade to shift to a low- carbon economy before the effects of global heating were irreversible and catastrophic. There were very clear threats facing Scotland, and by implication the rest of the UK, unless radical action was taken by 2030.

Ms Osowska said current levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere meant global heating of 1.5C was almost inevitable, requiring adaptation in the way people lived. To prevent even more heating, there had to be sweeping changes to the way land and seas were exploited for food, towards much more sustainable food production; a marked shift towards sustainable transport; increased green spaces in urban areas; and significant reform of the economy to promote greater equality.

‘Net zero emissions by 2050 would require converting 20 per cent of agricultural land to forestry, a switch to electrically powered transport and increasing renewable energy production by 50 per cent’.

Ms Osowska cited goals set out in a recent report from the Committee on Climate Change (CCC), a government body that advises the UK and devolved governments on climate policy, which has called on the UK to adopt a target of net zero emissions by 2050. The UK government has so far failed to endorse that.

That required converting 20 per cent of agricultural land to forestry, biomass for energy, or expanding carbon-rich peatlands; a switch to electrically powered transport; increasing renewable energy production by 50 per cent; and heavy investment in carbon capture and storage, to pipe the CO2 still being produced underground.

Her final message to the audience was to consider the imperative: ‘Ask not what nature can do for you, but what can you do for nature.’

Following the lecture there was a panel discussion and audience questions. The event continued afterwards with a reception and poster viewing in the RSE upper rooms.



Further information

Please see the event page on the RSE website.

www.rse.org.uk/event/international-leadership-for-the-environment/

Event report

An event report and an audio recording are now available via the RSE website.

Event report by Matthew Shelley (PDF, 169 KB):

www.rse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/RSE_SCRR-lecture-2019_Francesca-Osowska.pdf

Audio recording:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVcfhoOgP-I

