



Cairngorms  
National Park  
Pàirc Nàiseanta a'  
Mhonaidh Ruaidh



# UK National Parks Conference 2026

Wednesday 16 to Friday 18 September 2026

Macdonald Aviemore Resort, Aviemore

## Our host



### **Megan McCubbin**

Megan McCubbin is a zoologist, wildlife TV presenter, author and campaigner. Best known for co-hosting BBC Springwatch and Animal Park, Megan is so passionate about our natural world and enhancing our relationship with it.

Trained as a scientist, she has worked around the world as a bear behavioural specialist and shark researcher, before growing her career in the media as a science communicator. She has released two books, so far, and is known for lending her voice to campaigns for animal welfare, climate change and social justice.

## Speaker biographies (alphabetical)



### **Craig Bennett OBE, The Wildlife Trusts**

Craig Bennett OBE is Chief Executive of The Wildlife Trusts and has been described as “one of the country’s top environmental campaigners”.

He is an Honorary Professor of Sustainability and Innovation at Alliance Manchester Business School, an Associate Fellow of Homerton College (Cambridge) and a Fellow of the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership. He is also a Commissioner on the UK Government’s Clean Power 2030 Advisory Commission.



Formerly CEO of Friends of the Earth, he led major campaigns on bees, fracking and against airport expansion. He has vast experience of designing and contributing to executive education and leadership programmes globally.

Craig received an OBE for services to the environment in the King's New Year 2026 Honour's List.



### **Jonnie Hall, NFU Scotland**

Jonnie Hall is the Deputy CEO and Director of Policy with NFU Scotland, where he has led on all aspects of policy work for over 19 years. Prior to that, Jonnie spent nine years with what is now Scottish Land and Estates.

His career in agricultural and rural development policy now extends to well over 40 years, having graduated from Newcastle and Oxford universities with three degrees in agricultural economics in the 1980s. An academic and consultancy career then followed.

Jonnie has lived in Scotland since 1998, during which time he has worked with the Scottish and UK governments, as well as scores of other stakeholders, on everything and anything that impacts on farming and crofting in Scotland and the UK.

Over the years, Jonnie has also done his fair share of lambing and general farm work, but these days he tends to run over hills without a stick or dog.



### **Sarah-Jane Laing, Scottish Land and Estates**

Sarah-Jane Laing is the Chief Executive of Scottish Land and Estates, the organisation representing land-based businesses, landowners, land managers and rural enterprises across Scotland. As the first woman to lead SLE, an organisation established 120 years ago, she oversees its work to influence policy, support sustainable land management, and champion the contribution rural Scotland makes to the nation's economy and environment.



With more than two decades of experience in public affairs, Laing is widely recognised for her expertise in rural policy, housing, planning, wildlife management, climate change and land use. Her career has been defined by her ability to navigate political complexity, build constructive relationships across government and industry, and ensure that rural perspectives are heard in national debates. Before joining SLE, she spent a decade working in local authorities and housing associations, specialising in housing research, rural housing strategy, and policy development. She lives on her family farm in the Scottish Borders, maintaining close ties to the sectors and communities she represents.



**Dr Deborah Long, Scottish Environment LINK**

Dr Deborah Long is Chief Executive at Scottish Environment LINK, the network for environmental NGOs in Scotland. She leads this active and growing network of eNGOs, who work together to build a sustainable Scotland, being a strong coherent voice for Scotland's environment, its people and the planet.

Deborah is an active board member of charities in Scotland, in conservation, environmental rights and community development.

In February 2023, Deborah became a Just Transition Commissioner, providing advice on working with communities to achieve a just transition to net zero and nature positive.



**Fiona Milden, Oxygen Conservation**

Fiona Milden is Director of Built Property at Oxygen Conservation, a UK-based company which invests in the acquisition of land to protect and restore natural processes. Fiona is a Chartered Town Planner with over 17 years of experience working with communities to deliver major development of all types.

With skills honed in multidisciplinary property consultancy and 10 years at a PLC housebuilder, Fiona joined Oxygen Conservation to manage all built property aspects of the growing portfolio.



Extending to over 300,000 sqft, 150 buildings provide homes, sustainable tourism accommodation and operational spaces across Oxygen's estates – delivering social and economic impact. Fiona works with estate managers to identify development opportunities through strategic land, new build and conversions to add value to the portfolio and to support local rural housing markets.



**Prof David Reay, University of Edinburgh**

Prof Dave Reay is Chair in Carbon Management and Education at the University of Edinburgh. He is an advisor on climate action for a range of governmental and non-governmental organisations across Scotland and the UK.

Dave has worked on climate change for over 30 years, with much of his research focusing on climate change mitigation in land use and agriculture. He is especially active in efforts to enhance the provision and accessibility of climate education.

Dave chaired the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan steering group in Scotland, the UK Climate Change Committee's workforce and skills expert advisory group, and was part of the Green Jobs Taskforce for the UK Government. He was appointed as co-chair of the Just Transition Commission in 2023.

Previous to joining the Just Transition Commission he was executive director of the Edinburgh Climate Change Institute and policy director of Scotland's Centre of Expertise on Climate Change.



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## Further information

If you would like to book a place, or have any questions about the event, please contact us on [enquiries@cairngorms.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@cairngorms.co.uk) or call +44 (0) 1479 873 535.