

Letter from Scotland

A pride of lions has appeared in The Meadows, not to terrify the citizens of Edinburgh, but to warn them that nature is in decline across the world. And it's been a week when the "Lion Rampant", Scotland's second flag, has been waved defiantly over environmental and constitutional issues.

The lions in The Meadows are the work of the [installation artists](#) known as Gillie and Marc who were commissioned by the animal charity "Born Free Forever". It arises out of the famous efforts of George and Joy Adamson to save lions in Kenya under threat from poachers, loss of habitat and climate change. The charity calculates there are only 20,000 lions left, the number falling by half in the last 25 years.



Lions rampant in the Meadows

The latest “Living Planet” report from the WWF campaign says global wildlife populations have fallen by 70 per cent since 1970. Here in Britain, the three big conservation organisations, the National Trust, the Wildlife Trust and the RSPB, have called on the new Truss government to halt its “attack on nature”. Specifically, they promised public demonstrations against “fracking”, the new licences for oil and gas fields in the North Sea and the loosening of planning regulations in the new investment zones.

The Scottish Government, of course, opposes all of these, as it does the new rush to nuclear power in England. Figures out this week show Scotland’s renewable energy production grew by a third in the last year and capacity by 10 per cent.

And the approach to nature and climate change are not the only dividing lines. Nicola Sturgeon probably spoke for most Scots when she said she “detests the Tories”, a remark later

clarified as detesting Tory policies. In particular, she was referring to Liz Truss' tax cuts for the rich and the likely "austerity" to be imposed on public services and welfare benefits. A press conference on Friday is expected to announce another U-Turn on the Kwasi Karteng/Truss mini-budget.



Prime Minister Liz Truss at PMQs on Wednesday 12 October PHOTO UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor

Then there is the small matter of "independence". This week the UK Supreme Court began hearing evidence in the case that will decide if The Scottish Parliament has the legal right to stage a second independence referendum. The five judges are expected to take several months to wade through the 8,000 pages of written evidence.

Meanwhile, the economy is going to wreck and ruin, north and south of the border. The Fraser of Allander Institute forecasts that Scotland will go into recession in the last two months of this year and the first three months of next year. The Bank of England has conceded that the UK economy is already in decline.

Unemployment in Scotland may be down to just 3.3 per cent, but that's because many people of working age have dropped out of the employment market. Still, around 75 per cent of the working population are in employment, including a record number of women. The problem is that wages are not keeping up with inflation. Hence the looming winter of discontent.

We've heard a lot this week about students being unable to find lodgings at anything like affordable prices. Earlier in the year the Students Union published a survey which revealed that 12 per cent of students in Scotland had experienced homelessness during their years of study and a third had considered dropping out. This week the Union urged the government to intervene in particular areas of housing shortage like Glasgow and St Andrews.

In future, universities will have to consider only accepting students if they have already arranged accommodation. The old Scottish tradition of attending your local university may well have to return.

Oh dear, it's not been a good week for Scottish football, or should that be Scottish foot fall. Our ladies team was knocked out of the World Cup qualifiers by Ireland. Celtic went down to R B Leipzig 2-0, Rangers fell to Liverpool 7-1 at home at Ibrox and Hearts lost in Florence by 5-1.

We needed a story of international hope to cheer us up. It was provided by Andrea Fraser (30) a human rights lawyer from Edinburgh who has gone to Ukraine to deliver a car load of maternity equipment to hospitals and bomb shelters across the country. She will then cycle all the way home to raise funds for the charity which provided the equipment, [Baby Lifeline](#). She said: "I have to do something to draw attention to the ongoing human suffering caused by the Russia's invasion."

Thank goodness we are still a country which can produce such brave and fit ambassadors.

I'm on an adventure to raise ££ for Ukrainian mums and
[#ukrainianbabies](#) [#babylossawarenessweek2022](#) [#BabyLoss](#)
[#UkraineRussianWar](#)

Please share if you can. DM's open <https://t.co/wX39z7vAN8>

– Andrea Fraser (@AndreaMayFraser) [October 13, 2022](#)