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Dr Deborah Long
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Our Reference: 202400428341
Your Reference: SE Link - Nature Restoration Funding

11 September 2024

Dear Dr Long,

Thank you for your email of 26 August 2024, to the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Energy, Gillian Martin MSP, setting out your concerns about the redirection of Nature Restoration Fund (NRF) monies allocated to Local Authorities to support the public sector pay deal. I am replying in my capacity as Minister for Climate Action, as the Nature Restoration Fund lies within my portfolio.

The Scottish Government remains firmly committed to tackling the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, and recognises the importance that the natural environment plays in all of our lives. However, we are also taking on significant additional financial pressure, following decisions made about Scotland's funding made at a UK government level. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, Shona Robison MSP, has been clear that painful choices have had to be made as a result.

Protecting and restoring our natural environment is key to addressing the twin crises of nature loss and climate change. Our commitment to the Nature Restoration Fund, and to introduce a Natural Environment Bill which will set a framework for statutory targets to restore and protect nature, are reiterated in our most recent Programme for Government, and over £50 million has already been distributed through the NRF since 2021, supporting 170 projects across Scotland. While capital funding of £5 million from this year's NRF allocation to Local Authorities has been redirected to fund the pay offer, it will be restored in future years.

Scottish Ministers know the vital role local government employees play in delivering local services which are valued by the public. This pay offer demonstrates just how much we value these workers too. It will provide an above-inflation pay increase for all council employees and ensure the most support is focused on the lowest paid. The nature of our funding settlement in Scotland means, however, that meeting such pay demands now means inevitable and immediate pressures on other areas of Scottish Government spend.

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Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

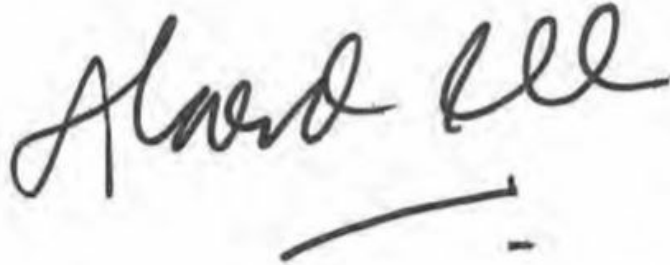


As you are aware, the Nature Restoration Fund is an important mechanism to deliver the aims and ambitions of our Scottish Biodiversity Strategy; halting biodiversity loss by 2030. That is why the Scottish Government has committed an unprecedented £65 million over the course of this parliament to the NRF, enabling multi-year, multi-partner projects across Scotland which have already started to make a real difference. Whilst this difficult fiscal choice has had to be made, NatureScot is providing NRF funding to 14 partnership projects this year, to transform nature, including through river and woodland restoration, rainforest regeneration, restoring coastal habitats, tackling invasive species, and conserving iconic species such as the red squirrel. Further detail of these projects, and others supported by NRF funding, can be found on the NatureScot website - [Nature Restoration Fund - Supported Projects | NatureScot](#).

I look forward to attending the round table meeting, which the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Transport intends to host on 18 September, to discuss priorities for nature restoration, and to hear further the views of Scottish Environment LINK members.

I hope the above helps to reassure you of the Scottish Government's continuing commitment to address the nature crisis in Scotland.

Yours sincerely



ALASDAIR ALLAN
M: Minister for Climate Action

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