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Your Reference: Letter from ScotLINK following 18 Sept eNGO Roundtable

28 October 2024

Dear members of Scottish Environment LINK,

Thank you for your letter dated 25 September 2024, regarding the roundtable discussion on 18 September.

I would like to thank you for the constructive discussions during the meeting, I always welcome the opportunity to hear your views and feedback.

The biodiversity crisis affects everyone, and we all depend on biodiversity to contribute to our wellbeing and sense of place. The twin crises of climate change and nature loss are linked and we must tackle them in tandem. Restoring nature will reduce carbon emissions, and tackling the climate crisis is essential if we are to prevent extinctions. We must be Net Zero and Nature Positive. The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy sets out our ambitions to make significant progress by 2045. This Strategy will be supported by a series of 5 year rolling delivery plans, the first of which includes ambitious actions to ensure we are on track to halting biodiversity loss by 2030.

The Natural Environment Bill will ensure that we can put in place statutory targets to restore and protect nature. The Bill will also include provisions to modernise the way national parks and deer are managed; and provide powers to update environmental impact assessment and habitats legislation to support delivery of our net zero and biodiversity ambitions.

We continue to invest funds into nature restoration through our Nature Restoration Fund (NRF) and our wider investment in woodland creation and peatland restoration. During this parliament the additional funding channelled through the NRF comes to over £65 million.

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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 mentioned in your letter, earlier this year we ran a public consultation on facilitating marine nature restoration through legislation. My officials are carefully considering all responses to the consultation and we will publish that analysis in the near future. I will be taking a decision on whether these proposals should be taken forward based on responses to the consultation. Marine restoration has an important role to play in restoring and regenerating biodiversity across our land, freshwater, and seas, and also has the potential to contribute to our coastal economies. As you are aware, the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy delivery plan includes a commitment to publish a marine and coastal restoration plan in 2025. I note your concerns that the regulatory environment surrounding restoration can be costly and complex to navigate - these are issues we will aim to consider as part of the restoration plan. Coastal communities in Scotland are at the forefront of marine nature restoration and protection, and we will seek to ensure that the restoration plan reflects the views of diverse groups and interests.

As you state in your letter, many of our internationally important seabird populations are in trouble, which was emphasised in the recently published update to the Birds of Conservation Concern 5 assessment. The Scottish Government takes this seriously and remains committed to improving seabird protections, which is embedded in its commitment to the development and publication of a Scottish Seabird Conservation Strategy. Work on the Strategy is moving at pace, with a public consultation planned for autumn, and we welcome the contribution of your members to the focused working group that is driving forward this work.

Thank you again for the time taken to follow up after our discussions in September, I hope this response is helpful. I look forward to our continued engagement on these issues – collective action will be vital in achieving our ambitious targets.

Yours sincerely,



GILLIAN MARTIN

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