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*Dear Dr. Long,*

Thank you for your letter of 1 May to the First Minister on the subject of climate change and the natural environment. Your correspondence has been passed to me in view of my portfolio responsibilities.

I was very pleased to receive your support for the First Minister's declaration of a climate emergency. You will be aware that we have acted immediately, in line with advice from the Committee on Climate Change (CCC), with amendments to our Climate Change Bill to set a net-zero target for 2045 and increase the targets for 2030 and 2040. Scotland will have the most stringent statutory targets in the world, and our contribution to climate change will end, definitively, within a generation.

The CCC makes it clear that our ambitions are contingent on the UK adopting an increased target for 2050, as Scotland cannot deliver net-zero emissions through devolved policy alone. I have written to the Minister of State for Energy and Clean Growth, Claire Perry MP, urging the UK Government to act immediately and legislate for a UK net-zero greenhouse gas target for 2050 at the latest.

Earlier this month, I made a statement to the Scottish Parliament on Scotland's response to the global climate emergency. I confirmed that the Scottish Government will be placing climate change at the heart of everything we do, and that it will be at the core of our next Programme for Government and Spending Review. We have already committed to updating the Climate Change Plan within 6 months of the Bill receiving Royal Assent, and are now looking across our whole range of responsibilities to make sure we continue with the policies that are working and increase action where necessary. As advised by the CCC, meeting a target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions will require extensive changes across the economy, unprecedented in their overall scale.

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Clearly, these ambitious plans cannot and should not be delivered by Government alone. Going forward, it will be increasingly important to ensure that businesses, organisations and communities across Scotland are engaged and active participants in Scotland's transition to a net-zero emissions economy. Over the summer we will engage in a discussion about what more can be done.

The recent global assessment by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services clearly illustrates the links between climate change and biodiversity. The report is a significant step on the way to the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to be held in China in late 2020, where world governments will agree their response to the new evidence. Scotland is playing a role in the development of that response and we have agreed with the CBD that a key conference of regional governments, which will help develop the response, will be held in Scotland early in 2020 in the lead up to the China Conference of Parties.

The protection of Scotland's biodiversity is a key priority for the Scottish Government and we are committed to doing more to safeguard our biodiversity, species and habitats. We have set out these ambitions in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, The 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity. However, following the release of the global assessment, we will consider the findings carefully and will look to ensure that our actions produce the transformative change that is needed. We are committed to carrying out a thorough analysis of what we are already doing, what more we need to do and what we need to do differently. We want Scotland to be leading the way.

Responding to the climate emergency will not be easy, and there will be risks and challenges to overcome to achieve the transformative changes that are needed. There will also be tremendous opportunities, not only in reducing emissions but in growing and diversifying our economy, improving the wellbeing of our people, and protecting and enhancing our natural environment. I very much welcome your commitment to support us in leading the way, and in finding innovative solutions, and look forward to continuing to work with you.

Yours  
R. Cunningham

**ROSEANNA CUNNINGHAM**

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