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Dear Dr Long,

Response to COVID-19 and the need for a green recovery.

Thank you for your letter of 16th April 2020, to Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland, regarding the the Scottish Government response to COVID-19 and the need for a green recovery. As your letter falls within my remit I am replying on behalf of the First Minister.

Covid-19 poses a significant and unprecedented threat to public health and the action we have taken to stop the spread of the virus has also had a substantial economic impact. The Scottish Government is focused on doing what is necessary to guide the country through this pandemic but despite the scale of this immediate challenge, we remain dedicated to our mission of making Scotland a greener, fairer and more prosperous country.

The Scottish Government is firmly committed to the long term vision set out in our Environment Strategy to restore nature and end Scotland's contribution to climate change. The health and resilience of our natural environment remains fundamental to the wellbeing of our people and our economy, and we will seek to enable a recovery which maintains and builds on that strength.

The State of Nature Report for Scotland 2019 highlighted the decline in biodiversity in our country. We must halt and reverse this decline and improve the health and quality of our air, water, seas and soils. This will help to ensure that our natural environment is resilient, whatever the future may bring.

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Through our biodiversity programme, we will take account of the new post-2020 global biodiversity framework and targets being developed to deliver the Convention on Biological Diversity's 2050 vision of 'living in harmony with nature'.

COVID-19 is already having and will continue to have an extraordinary impact on our society and our economy. The challenges from COVID are significant and our priority must continue to focus on fighting the pandemic. However, once we are able to move beyond the current crisis, our response provides an opportunity to recover in a way that reflects the core tenets of the Scottish Government's long-term vision of an inclusive, sustainable wellbeing economy.

The post-crisis world will be fundamentally different, with different business practices, markets, and behaviours. There is a risk that approaches to the recovery, in Scotland and globally, might lock in pathways that are incompatible with our long-term objectives, particularly to reach net-zero emissions by 2045. The principles accompanying the commitments in the 2019 Climate Change Act will need to be central to the economic recovery from Covid-19. In building our green recovery we will be guided by advice we sought from the Committee on Climate Change, which is expected in the coming weeks.

We must make sure that the short-term response to COVID-19 is compatible with the Scottish Government's long-term objectives. A recovery must be resilient and protect Scotland from future crises, as well as having net zero at its heart.

We thank you for your recommendations and will keep these mind as the Scottish Government continues its work on a recovery from COVID-19.

Yours sincerely



ROSEANNA CUNNINGHAM

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