



Dr Deborah Long
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Our Reference: 202000075899

Your Reference: Follow up to June meeting - green recovery options

11 September 2020

Dear Dr Deborah Long,

Dear Deborah,

Thank you for your letter of 10 August following up on your meeting with Roseanna Cunningham back in June and for sharing your ideas around youth employment and green recovery.

While our response to this crisis remains our key focus, we must also keep our eyes on the future. We must, in our recovery from COVID-19, seize the opportunity to build a greener, fairer and more sustainable society and economy. The challenge of biodiversity loss and the climate emergency have not gone away and we remain entirely committed to action in this regard.

As you discussed with Ms Cunningham, Covid-19 has had a devastating impact on the economy. Our Programme for Government, published on 1st September has outlined how we will continue to suppress Covid-19 but that with a laser focus on creating new, good and green jobs. We are determined that Covid-19 will not define our future. The Programme sets out action to promote lifelong health and wellbeing; and tackle inequality and help young people to grasp their potential. As part of this we plan to boost youth employment opportunities and target future skills and capacity requirements in nature and land based jobs by expanding apprenticeship and undergraduate schemes in public agencies. We will work with Scottish Forestry, Forestry and Land Scotland and NatureScot to double their existing commitments to provide opportunities for young people within their organisations. We are also working with NatureScot on a skills audit which will lead to a strategic programme of skills in the natural environment that will be needed in the next decade.

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Our Programme for Government also announced: £100 million to a new Green Industry and Jobs Fund; a £60 million Youth Guarantee, including 'green' apprenticeships across the public sector bodies; a £25 million National Transition Training Fund; and a commitment to publish the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan. As your report highlights, there is a strong appetite for this amongst young people and these interventions will drive demand in low carbon markets, including natural capital, and align our skills system to deliver the skills and training for people to access these green jobs.

Beyond the PfG, since its initial publication in 2009 the Scottish Land Use Strategy has set out the Scottish Government vision for sustainable land use and how it is working to achieve this. We are now working to develop the third iteration of the Land Use Strategy, with publication due in March 2021. As you are aware, the Scottish Government is also committed to establishing Regional Land Use Partnerships. The Scottish Land Commission are leading on the development of proposals and on making recommendations to Scottish Ministers. They have already written and published an interim report, which is currently being used to stimulate discussions with stakeholders across Scotland. The feedback we receive will inform the Commission's final report to Scottish Ministers which is due in the Autumn of 2020.

Scotland's landscape and rich biodiversity is one of our most valuable assets. We are committed to increasing our efforts in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss. We have committed to publishing a high-level statement of intent on biodiversity before the end of the year which will, in the context of the postponed COP15 to the Convention on Biological Diversity, set out our approach to maintaining delivery and momentum, while also continuing to engage internationally and with the UK Government on the development of the new global biodiversity framework.

Scotland has been putting in place an ecological network approach for many years and we will continue to address ecological connectivity and habitat fragmentation through existing nature networks such as our network of designated sites including Natura 2000, SSSIs, SACs, SPAs, MPAs and NNRs. We also already support a number of other projects which connect nature, for example the partnership project 'Cairngorms Connect' which you reference in your report, our woodland expansion and peatland restoration targets, the Central Scotland Green Network which remains Europe's largest greenspace project, and the development of 'Greenway' along the John Muir Way which creates ecological links between pollinator hubs – as well as encouraging active travel. Thank you for setting out some examples of projects where there are more opportunities to build on this work.

As you will be aware, our Programme for Government also announced continuing support for biodiversity, including the Biodiversity Challenge Fund, with £3 million funding in 2021-22 to augment a wide array of other biodiversity delivery activity as we seek to improve the state of nature in Scotland, and help support our push for green skills and job opportunities. We will also commission a pilot of 'Miyawaki' mini-forests to trial this innovative approach to restoring biodiversity and fighting the climate crisis.

Thank you again for following up to the meeting with Roseanna Cunningham with your ideas about youth employment and green recovery. I look forward to further engagement with you and Scottish Environment LINK in future.

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Yours sincerely

Kate Downen
FED : Environment & Forestry Sponsorship Hub

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