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Dear Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform,

Nature Restoration Fund 2021.

We are delighted by the announcement from NatureScot of the £10 million Nature Restoration Fund for 2021. This, alongside your government's Statement of Intent on Biodiversity, the First Minister's personal commitment on the importance of addressing the biodiversity crisis alongside the climate crisis and leadership on the Edinburgh Declaration, all stand clearly as the very welcome lead Scotland's government is taking on this fundamental issue. We have promoted this year's fund to our members and will be working with NatureScot and your government to achieve the level of action we all need to see for nature restoration. Investing in nature restoration, as we all know, tackles both the climate and nature crises at once and provides considerable opportunities for today's society and future generations to live a quality of life everyone deserves.

While the £10 million fund is a great kick start to Scotland's ambition on this, and we congratulate you on getting this agreed in the last budget, we want to raise with you the risk we see with the fund this year. The scale of action required to halt the decline and drive the recovery of Scotland's nature is monumental and it is long term. Our main concern is that this year's fund is limited to projects that can spend that funding in full by 31 March 2022. Biodiversity restoration takes time, is complicated, and provides no quick wins though it is of fundamental importance. Delivering the transformational changes we need, on timescales of a few months is simply not achievable and our worry is that this funding will not be spent in the most efficient or productive way.

We are asking for you to work with your colleagues in Cabinet to find a way to enable organisations to deliver transformational change for nature restoration by committing to this funding going forward over a longer time period, in the same way that your government has committed to the Peatlands Restoration Fund. With a long-term investment commitment, and the ability to act over timescales of 5 years or more, we will be able to deliver transformational change and begin to see areas of restored nature. What can be achieved in a few months may well demonstrate a direction of travel, but the opportunity will not be maximised if longer term and larger scale projects cannot be supported.

We are asking you to help put Scotland's nature where it needs to be, at the centre of government and with the commitment to fund the restoration of our amazing nature for future generations.

Yours sincerely,

Deborah Long, Chief Officer at Scottish Environment LINK



Scottish Environment LINK the voice for Scotland's environment

