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Dear Charles

Thank you for your letter of 10 May 2021 to call for the appointment of a Cabinet Secretary for Nature and Biodiversity.

I have upheld this government's manifesto commitment to appoint a Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport. Additionally, a Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform has also been appointed, in recognition of the biodiversity loss crisis.

The Scottish Government recognise the central importance of our natural environment. Restoring biodiversity is central to our Green Recovery from COVID-19 and we are committed to addressing the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change. We recognise that globally, nationally and locally, an enormous effort is required to tackle these closely linked issues.

A Biodiversity Programme, co-led by the Scottish Government and NatureScot, has been established to oversee activity on biodiversity. This will bring together all the existing activity on delivering our current 2020 biodiversity strategy at <https://www.gov.scot/policies/biodiversity/scottish-biodiversity-strategy/> to raise our international profile, to influence the shaping of the new international targets and to boost communication and public engagement.

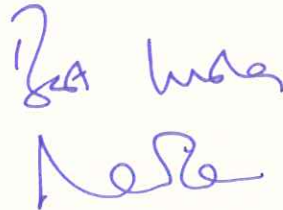
As you have mentioned, our statement of intent at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-biodiversity-strategy-post-2020-statement-intent/diversity> sets out our priorities for Scotland in tackling biodiversity loss, and announces a new, post-2020 biodiversity strategy. We will publish the strategy within a year of the 15th meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity Conference of Parties (CoP15) which takes place in China in October 2021. The strategy will take account of the new global biodiversity framework, goals and targets and also the emerging EU biodiversity strategy.

We are taking an active role in the development of the post-2020 biodiversity framework and targets for the next decade, which will be agreed at COP15. Our work and leadership of the 'Edinburgh Process' is informing the upcoming Convention on Biological Diversity meetings to develop the new global biodiversity framework, ahead of COP15.

We have made significant funding commitments to protect and restore biodiversity, and included projects to tackle biodiversity loss in our Programme for Government. Furthermore, in the last budget we announced an additional £10 million capital funding for biodiversity through a new Nature Restoration Fund. Officials are working at pace with the sector to develop an agreed set of priorities for the fund.

I hope this information reassures you of our unwavering commitment to address biodiversity loss across all Ministerial portfolios, and of the many actions we are taking to address the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss in Scotland.

I know that you already work closely with my officials, and have built a good working relationship with both Mairi Gougeon, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, and Mairi McAllan, Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform, who value your input on their portfolio interests. I hope this strong, cooperative relationship continues and I look forward to working with you to achieve our shared goals.



NICOLA STURGEON