

Deborah Long – Climate Roundtable  
Scottish Environment Link  
[deborah@scotlink.org](mailto:deborah@scotlink.org)

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5 September 2023

Dear Deborah

Firstly, thank you for meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition and me on 15 August, where I reiterated that my government is committed to maintaining Scotland's ambitious and world-leading record on climate action. I look forward to engaging further with environmental NGOs as we continue on our path to reach net zero and, of course, in the lead-up to COP28.

In April, I set out the three missions that define this government's work – equality, opportunity, and community. Through these missions we will tackle poverty and protect people from harm, build a fair, green, and growing economy, and prioritise our public services ensuring they are effective and efficient.

I know that these missions can only be achieved through the Scottish Government working in partnership with the extraordinary talent that exists across society, including our business community, local government, and third sector.

We are embedding this approach through for example ensuring closer collaboration with business on government policy through the New Deal for Business and redefining how we work with local government through the Verity House Agreement. I hope you'll see that in today's [Programme for Government](#) we are committing to continue this approach and building stronger partnerships to deliver the best results for the people of Scotland.

That is why I wanted to contact you directly to share a short overview of the priorities at the heart of my first Programme for Government, which sets out how we will deliver on our key missions in the year ahead.

I have published a Programme for Government that is unashamedly anti-poverty and pro-growth. Today my government and I are committing to:

- Putting an urgent and ambitious response to the climate and nature crises at the very heart of this government whilst also seizing the new economic opportunities presented by our climate change and just transition plans to secure a climate resilient future and grow our economy.

- Reducing poverty and protecting people from harm offering practical help and support, particularly to those most in need society.
- Attracting investment, driving innovation, and growing our wellbeing economy – playing to our strengths in areas such as data and technology, energy, financial services, food and drink, and tourism.
- Reforming and modernising our public services to ensure they are effective and efficient, helping to tackle the aftermath of the pandemic and supporting the recovery of key public services including our NHS and education.

In relation to your work and the government's commitment to reaching net zero, I firmly believe that tackling the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss is the collective fight of our lifetime, and the lifetime of generations to come.

To that end, the work my government is committing to for the next year is crucial. From consulting on a new Heat in Building Bill, to providing financial support internationally, publishing a Biodiversity Strategy and the first five-year delivery plan, and continuing to support use of public transport, the policies laid out in this Programme for Government show our ambition, underpinned by our 2023/2024 investment of £2.2 billion to deliver a just transition to net zero and nature restoration.

As you are aware, a key early step in this has been publishing our draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan. We have followed this with discussion papers on three other key sectors as well as extensive engagement to ensure our forthcoming draft Just Transition Plans are co-designed and robust. Through our Just Transition Fund, we are enabling pioneering work in a range of sectors including EV battery recycling, offshore green hydrogen production and large-scale carbon sequestration and habitat restoration, and are continuing to support the renewables sectors, including updating guidance to further streamline offshore wind consenting processes and ensure the most efficient management of both pre-application and post-consent processes to shorten timeframes.

Meanwhile, we are taking bold and ambitious action in the transport sector to help us reach net zero, building on our commitments to decarbonise passenger rail travel by 2035 and leading a shift from cars – not least by supporting children and young people to travel on buses for free. In addition, our £20 million Active Travel Transformation Fund has brought forward the delivery of ambitious local authority-led infrastructure projects for the people of Scotland.

We are determined that our homes and buildings will be cleaner, greener, and easier to heat, and so improving how we heat our homes is a top priority. We paved the way for heating decarbonisation by laying a new build heat standard and introduced new regulations to accelerate heat networks.

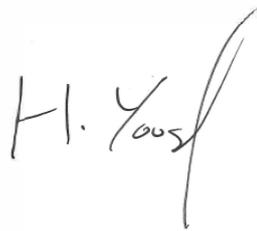
We know that tackling the climate crisis goes hand-in-hand with tackling the biodiversity crisis. We are committed to creating a nature positive Scotland and supporting people and communities to take the opportunities presented by restoring and protecting our natural environment. That is why we have also scaled up our investment in nature restoration and are securing the future of Scotland's rainforest.

Looking ahead, we will set out how we will continue to drive down emissions in a draft Climate Change Plan, with bold action across transport, heat, our natural environment, and other areas, demonstrating how our ambition will be realised while maximising opportunities for the economy, job creation, and health. We will also publish Scotland's Biodiversity

Strategy and first five-year delivery plan, and taking forward the Circular Economy Bill. In addition, we will continue to protect and restore our natural environment on land and at sea through our commitment to invest £500 million in our natural environment to drive landscape scale change, including through our £65 million Nature Restoration Fund and through new financial support for Nature Networks.

And internationally, we have committed to continuing to play a leadership role in the global fight against climate change. In line with this, I announced on 24 August the start of the £24 million Climate Just Communities programme. The programme will work with local communities in Malawi, Zambia, and Rwanda – including with marginalised groups – so that they can identify their own priorities and build their resilience to the climate crisis. This programme will make a real difference to the communities we are working with, and represents a further sign of Scotland's determination to be a good global citizen and to do our bit in tackling the climate crisis here in Scotland and across the world.

I believe these and other actions demonstrate my government's commitment to taking the action needed to act on the climate and nature crises. My officials and I look forward to continuing to work with you as we implement these commitments in the year ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Yousaf', with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the signature.

**HUMZA YOUSAF**