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Shona Robison MSP  
Deputy First Minister  
Scottish Government

9 November 2023

Dear Deputy First Minister,

cc Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition  
Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity

### **SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT BUDGET – FUNDING FOR STATUTORY ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCIES**

As leaders of organisations working in the Scottish environmental sector, we welcome the priority given by the Scottish Government to tackling the climate and nature emergencies. The Resource Spending Review identified tackling the climate crisis and building a greener economy as priorities for Scottish Government spending.

However, we note with concern that funding for Scotland's environmental agencies has been significantly eroded since 2010. NatureScot has seen a cut in funding from £69 million in 2010-11 to £61.1 million in 2023-24, which equates to a real terms cut of 40%. SEPA has had a real terms funding cut of 26% over the same period. Professor Campbell Gemmill and James Curran, two former Chief Executives of SEPA, have expressed concern over the environmental impact of this erosion of funding.

Our environmental agencies are being asked to do more. The Scottish Government is rightly committed to setting ambitious targets for environmental action. But as the impacts of climate change and nature loss become more strongly felt, simply maintaining current environmental standards will become harder. The longer we do not act, the more expensive and less palatable it will become.

While we recognise that the Scottish Government faces difficult fiscal circumstances, we also expect that the priority given to the environment is reflected in funding decisions. Investing in nature brings many benefits, from fiscal to social and environmental. The proportion of spending on our environmental agencies is very small. In recognition of the vital importance of the work of these agencies, we ask that the upcoming budget is used to protect and increase the funding given to these bodies as the first step in reversing over a decade of real terms cuts.

Yours,

Steve Micklewright, CEO, Trees for life

Alistair Whyte, Head of Plantlife Scotland

Craig Macadam, Conservation Director, Buglife

Calum Duncan, Head of Conservation Scotland, Marine Conservation Society

Mike Daniels, Head of Policy, John Muir Trust

Jo Pike, CEO, Scottish Wildlife Trust

Anne McCall, Director, RSPB Scotland

Dr Deborah Long, Chief Officer, Scottish Environment LINK

Susan Davies, FRSB, CEO - Scottish Seabird Centre

David McKay, Head of Policy, Soil Association Scotland

Brendan Paddy, Director, Ramblers Scotland

Kit Stoner, CEO, Bat Conservation Trust

Kathy Wormald, CEO, Froglife Trust

John Thomson, Chair, Scottish Council for National Parks

Kat Jones, CEO, Action to Protect Rural Scotland

Lang Banks, Director, WWF Scotland



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