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Your Reference: SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT BUDGET – FUNDING FOR STATUTORY ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCIES

5 December 2023

Dear Members of Scottish Environment Link

Thank you for your correspondence of 09 November 2023 in relation to funding for Scotland's environment agencies.

I understand that since 2010 our environment public bodies have made significant progress in their roles as leading organisations both raising awareness of, and taking strategic action to mitigate, the climate and nature crises facing Scotland, and indeed our planet.

I am sure you will understand, as you allude to in your letter, that the fiscal context is an extremely challenging one. We have in recent times supported businesses, individuals and the NHS through the pandemic, we have felt the economic impacts of increased fuel prices, energy prices and the war in Ukraine, and we have seen significant, almost unprecedented, increases in inflation. All of this combined has led to a cost of living crisis affecting many across the country, including businesses and individuals, and in particular those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

It is also important to note that, unlike the UK Government, the Scottish Government does not have borrowing powers and we must therefore apportion our budgets very carefully and appropriately. It is within this challenging context that budgets for 2024-25 will be set and agreed by Parliament.

That being said, please be reassured that tackling the nature and climate crises remains a key priority to this Government. We continue to work towards the implementation of the Environment Strategy which seeks to end Scotland's contribution to climate change and that Scotland's nature be protected and

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restored, with flourishing biodiversity and clean and healthy air, water, seas and soils by 2045. We also remain committed to upholding the commitments of the Bute House Agreement and Programme for Government in the short term, both of which recognise the importance of ongoing action.

It is also important to note that in addition to core funding for each of these bodies, we have provided significant supplementary funding over the years to deliver on many other projects, all of which contribute towards these aims, such as funding for peatland restoration and the Nature Restoration Fund.

In setting the budget, which will be agreed by the Scottish Parliament, we will of course ensure our nature and environment agencies remain appropriately resourced. This will be considered in the existing fiscal context and against all of our essential and statutory duties such as support for the NHS, our legal and policing services, social security, transport and education.

I hope this response outlines our ongoing commitment to supporting nature and net zero during these challenging financial times.

Yours sincerely



SHONA ROBISON

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