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Dear Kevin

Thank you for your time last Thursday. It was very good to meet with you in your new role, alongside Jo and Colin. Your presentation was very helpful and although we didn't manage to have as long a conversation as we needed, it was the start of an ongoing conversation.

The key issue that we have raised with Colin, and of which you are very clearly aware, is that of the balance FLS is adopting to deliver both its public duties, specifically the biodiversity duty but also access, and its role as a productive timber business. In trying to balance delivery of services that the market does not reward, our concern remains that the casualty in the transition is the environment and biodiversity in particular. The scale of the potential impact on the conservation status of important species on FLS land is worryingly large - species such as red squirrel, goshawk and honey buzzard are examples of protected wildlife that will require high levels of care if they are to pass through this transition without the loss of important local populations. Earlier investments, made over many decades, on the National Forest Estate must be protected and not lost.

As charities we very much understand the difficulties in delivering aims, charitable in our case, public duties in FLS case, in a world where the market won't pay for them. We are all too familiar with the need to maximise efficiencies in delivery and cut costs wherever possible but we cannot do that at the expense of our charitable objectives. And neither should FLS.

We do not need to rehearse with you the reasons for ongoing biodiversity decline and the urgency of action for all of us to not only halt that decline but to reverse it. FLS own or manage 10% of Scotland and therefore must be a critical player in 30 by 30 and SBS delivery. We have not yet been reassured that there is enough focus on that in the developing FLS strategy, without which there is a danger of making the situation worse and harder and more expensive to correct. Indeed, as we noted in the meeting, habitat and species diversity are not a constraint but they are actually an opportunity to develop multi functional forestry ahead of the rest of the forestry sector and ready for an undeveloped market that is coming and which will be harder to adapt to than to shape.

We fully support your drive to deliver under UKWAS, although you will also be aware that in our view UKWAS is insufficient too to deliver the scale of action the environment requires. We will continue to put effort into improving UKWAS so that it can help the forestry sector achieve the standards that the future needs.



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Our members have supplied Colin and his team with real examples of where forestry operations are causing serious issues for protected species, where wildlife is in danger of being treated as collateral damage. We will continue to raise these issues with you. These include incidents that are potentially in breach of NatureScot approved licensing status and other incidents involving Police Scotland. As Ellie noted, our members are usually alerted when things go wrong rather than when they go right but as you also requested, we will celebrate where things go well. We have regularly done this with the excellent leadership FLS has shown on deer management, where we will continue to publicly support your approach on deer. One example is [here](#), for instance.

Finally, we would underline to you, as we have done with Colin, the huge expertise and high quality staff you have in FLS Environmental and Recreational teams. They clearly do not have the capacity to be able to provide the level of advice that current felling operations require. They are, however, fundamental to FLS as they deliver FLS biodiversity and access duties and they are your opportunity to lead in multi function forestry.

We understand that in your first few months you have been meeting the different stakeholders you work with and we would like to take this opportunity to invite you to come out on a site visit with us, so we can reflect on together what future forestry looks like. When would suit you to do that?

Yours sincerely

Deborah Long, Chief Officer, LINK

Alan McDonnell, Head of Nature Restoration, Trees for Life, Convenor of LINK's Woodland Group

Duncan Orr-Ewing, Head of Species and Land Management, RSPB Scotland, Convenor of LINK's Deer Group

Thomas Widrow, Campaigns Manager, John Muir Trust, Member of LINK's Woodland Group

Dr Elspeth Stirling, Trustee Scientific Evidence and Representation, Scottish Badgers, Member of LINK's Woodland Group

Hazel Forrest, Species Advocacy Officer, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Vice Convenor of LINK's Deer Group



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