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Deborah Long
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Our Reference: 202500485061
Your Reference: Letter from Scottish Environment LINK - 8 September 2025

26 September 2025

Dear Deborah Long,

Thank you for your correspondence dated 8 September regarding The Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill (the NE Bill).

The Scottish Government agrees with Scottish Environment LINK that the biodiversity crisis affects everyone - we all depend on biodiversity for providing our food, helping to prevent flooding and soil erosion, and purifying our water. The natural environment also contributes to our well-being by providing recreation and a sense of place. The twin crises of climate change and nature loss are linked and we must tackle them together, that is why we must be Net Zero and Nature Positive.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Scottish Environment LINK for compiling and sharing the 40 Voices for Nature booklet. The messages within it serve as a powerful reminder of the profound connection the people of Scotland, and beyond, have with nature, and why addressing the twin climate and biodiversity crisis is so important. I note in particular some of the messages contained within the voices of Nature booklet from the Highlands, where my constituency is based, which highlight the importance of taking action to address these crises:

"I was brought up in the highlands and loved walking in the highlands. At the time I thought that I was in wild nature, but since visiting areas such as Glen Affric I am now aware that I was really looking at a bit of an over grazed desert. How magnificent the Scottish countryside could be with correct stewardship to aid recovery. Would it not be fantastic to be proud of what we can achieve, a chance to lead the UK and Europe if we are forward thinking". Ray, Highlands

"As someone who lives and works in the countryside it is of paramount importance that we drastically reduce deer numbers.... This poor situation has been ongoing for decades too long". Alistair, Highlands

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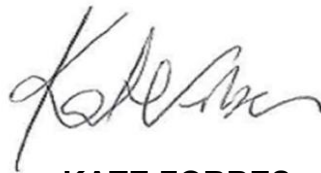


As you note, the NE Bill has now been introduced to the Scottish Parliament and includes provisions to establish a framework for statutory targets to improve biodiversity, provisions to modernise the way in which national parks and deer are managed, and provide powers to update environmental impact assessment and habitats legislation to support delivery of our net zero and biodiversity goals. The targets included in the Bill form a key element of the Strategic Framework for Biodiversity, which also includes the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and the 6 yearly rolling Delivery Plans.

Please be assured that I recognise that this Bill is essential to support the actions that are required to meet the Scottish Government's priority of tackling the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, and to meet our ambition to restore and regenerate biodiversity across the country by 2045.

My fellow Ministers and I look forward to continuing to work closely with Scottish Environment LINK and its members, towards our shared goal of a nature positive future for Scotland.

Yours sincerely,



KATE FORBES

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