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Hannah Mary Goodlad
Minister for Public Finance
Scottish Government

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Dear Minister,

I am writing on behalf of Scottish Environment LINK to warmly welcome you to your role as Minister for Public Finance. We look forward to working with you at an important moment for Scotland's planning system, as it sits at the centre of delivering both climate action and nature recovery.

Scottish Environment LINK brings together over 50 environmental organisations, collectively representing the support of over half a million people across Scotland. Our members are working to ensure that planning policy and practice enable sustainable development within environmental limits, while restoring nature and supporting high-quality places for people.

A key priority for LINK members is ensuring the consistent implementation of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), particularly its requirement that development should conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity. While this policy provides a strong foundation, there is growing concern that its application is inconsistent in practice, including within energy consenting decisions. We see a clear need for stronger guidance and clearer expectations to ensure that biodiversity enhancement is consistently delivered, rather than applied variably on a case-by-case basis.

This is particularly important given the scale of development being brought forward through Scotland's energy transition. There is a significant opportunity to ensure that major infrastructure not only avoids harm but actively contributes to nature recovery through measurable and enforceable biodiversity enhancement. At present, this opportunity is not being fully realised.

We are also keen to see Nature Networks move beyond mapping and become a practical driver of land use change. This will require adequate ecological capacity within planning authorities and stronger alignment between planning decisions, public investment and nature restoration outcomes.

More broadly, LINK members are concerned about proposals that could weaken environmental requirements in the planning system, including changes to development categories or streamlined processes for smaller sites. Evidence does not suggest that policy complexity is the primary barrier to delivery. Instead, the key challenges lie in implementation, resource and consistency. NPF4 already provides a proportionate framework and further dilution risks undermining Scotland's nature and climate commitments while reducing public confidence in planning decisions.

We would instead strongly support efforts to improve guidance, particularly on biodiversity delivery, and to strengthen implementation of existing policy, alongside ensuring planning authorities are properly resourced to deliver it effectively.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you early in your tenure to discuss these issues further, including how planning can more effectively support both housing delivery and nature recovery in a joined-up way.

Once again, congratulations on your appointment, and we look forward to working with you.

Yours sincerely,
Deborah Long

Chief Executive
Scottish Environment LINK



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