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Dear Kersti and Liz

Many thanks for your time on Thursday 13 September. It was very good to catch up. We have always found quarterly meetings with the Director of ENFOR very useful and I'm keen to carry this forward. I think previous Directors did too! With your predecessors, I have had 1:1s as well as meetings with relevant members and am happy to remain flexible with that approach.

We discussed wildfires and I shared our concerns around what can be perceived as softening or weakening of language around the muirburn code (changing must to should etc) following lobbying from other sectors, and its implementation through the Wildlife Management Act. This is highly concerning across our members, not just those who own and manage land already being severely affected by wildfires but also those who work in land management and are seeing decades of work going up in smoke to the detriment of future resilience. I understood you are wanting to commission some research into the costs benefits of muirburn. The report from Naturescot's Scientific Advisory Group's sub group on muirburn in March 2026 has already provided a useful start.

Our members contributed to the development of the Wildlife Management Act and the muirburn code and welcomed the Act becoming law with the statutory underpinning of the code and licencing. We will watch with interest how the code and licences are implemented on the ground. Our members also contribute to the Wildfire Forum and we will look out for a consultation on the Wildfire strategy in Autumn, which will be important.

On nature restoration, we agreed that the NRF is fundamental to ongoing progress towards the nature targets and SBS delivery. Its excellent progress is something we and our members regularly reflect, most recently during the summer visits the Cabinet Secretary has been able to make. I noted that further site visits to NRF projects would be welcome and I am talking to members about how we can help facilitate more of those. I voiced our concerns around lack of progress towards SBS targets across other sectors, and the concern that NRF could, but should not, be used to reverse impacts of perverse subsidies. This is something we will be keeping a close eye on, given that NRF alone is insufficient to deliver the scale of restoration Scotland requires and can ill afford. Our Programme for Government asks includes NRF and we and our members will continue to support NRF, looking for it to be fully retained and ideally expanded.



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We discussed nature targets and timelines outlined by the Cabinet Secretary in her recent letter to the Climate Action Committee. I expressed our disappointment at the speed of the process to set targets, which we see as a real issue to sufficient progress to meet them by 2030. We have noted the letter this week from ESS to the same effect. We will continue to support you and Naturescot to speed up the process so that targets are in place with as much time as possible to drive action across all stakeholders and not just government. Without agreed and defined targets, all the energy and resources that government and non government actors are putting into nature restoration risks being diluted because our agreed end points, the targets, are not clear. This is crucial if Scotland is to achieve sufficient progress in an area for which we are internationally regarded, our natural environment.

In terms of your new role, we discussed the importance of ambition and the scale and pace of change required. There is an ongoing cultural shift, and our evidence to date shows that the public are ahead of government on the need for more action on nature restoration. We commissioned [a poll](#) in 2024 which showed this and we have just commissioned further polling that reflects the same. I will share that with you as soon as we can. You are keen to explore incremental change, which is understandable, but the pace of change given the impact of climate change and nature loss is such that we and our members are struggling to understand how incremental change will achieve what is needed. I would welcome further conversations with you on this, perhaps once we have the guidance of the Programme for Government announced and we have assessed public opinion a little more closely?

Our Programme for Government asks are [here](#), in case you haven't seen them: we tried very much to keep these to achievable actions with maximum impact for Scotland's environment. The specific ask on a rapid response fund for INNS is supported by [this briefing](#).

I look forward to seeing you again soon and hope we can stay in touch in this fast moving situation where working with and supporting you to ensure the environment is at the centre of policy making is hugely important to us.

Best wishes



Dr Deborah Long
Chief Executive



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