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Edward Mountain MSP
Convener
Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee
Scottish Parliament
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1 Novemehr 2022

Dear Edward

I am very grateful to the Committee for their letter and the views shared in it. The consultation on the draft Strategy closed on 12 September and officials are now analysing the responses carefully. I am pleased that there has been an overall positive response to the vision and ambition set out in that consultation. However, I recognise the concerns expressed by the Committee that stakeholders wish to see more detail on the actions that will be taken to deliver on this high ambition.

As the Committee is aware, and as noted in my letter dated 17 June 2022, the underpinning delivery plans will be where these crucial actions will be set out in detail. Officials are working with stakeholders on the development of those delivery plans. As well as identifying the priority actions, this will include identifying delivery partners, mechanisms for delivery, and the targets and indicators needed to successfully deliver those actions. I see the strategy and delivery plan as two essential parts of our overall biodiversity framework, with the Natural Environment Bill forming the third crucial piece. I note your comments on governance, monitoring and evaluation, which we are considering as we prepare the final draft strategy and delivery plan.

I am very mindful of the opportunities offered by CoP15 both to share our high ambition and to learn from best practice across the world. Accordingly, we now intend to publish the strategy *in draft* at CoP15, which will give us the scope to make further amendments that may be required once the global framework for biodiversity is finalised. I am also following closely the development of the EU Proposal for a Nature Restoration Law and am keen that we learn from the approach being taken by our European partners. As the Committee rightly points out, biodiversity loss is a global problem and it is essential we play our part, alongside the international community, in tackling this crisis.

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I also note your comments on the costs of restoring biodiversity and the need for imaginative solutions to bridging the funding gap. We know that both public and responsible private investment in Scotland's natural capital will be essential to deliver on our climate change targets, the reversal of biodiversity loss and wider land use policy objectives. That is why we have committed to the development of a values-led, high integrity market for responsible investment in natural capital in Scotland, as set out in our National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET). Our Interim Principles for Responsible Investment in Natural Capital are an important early action to support delivery of the NSET commitment on natural capital markets. We will use the Interim Principles to underpin discussion with stakeholders, to help ensure our policy development responds effectively to the rapid pace of market development external to Government. As part of our stakeholder engagement, we will develop an evidence base to promote best practice in responsible investment and to inform how we set the rules of the market, including consideration of potential enforcement mechanisms.

We plan to consult on the delivery plan in the first half of 2023, alongside the draft strategy. We hope that this approach of inviting stakeholders' views on these two essential pieces of the framework at the same time will be more meaningful and allow more comprehensive responses.

I will be happy to provide the Committee with more detail in advance of publishing the further draft of the Strategy and our response to the Consultation, including setting out in more detail how the specific points raised have been considered.

Kind regards

LORNA SLATER

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