

Minister for Climate Action  
Ministear airson Gnìomhachd na Gnàth-shìde  
Alasdair Allan MSP  
Alasdair Allan BPA



T: 0300 244 4000  
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Anne McCall  
Director, RSPB Scotland  
anne.mccall@rspb.org.uk

18 September 2024

Dear Anne,

I am writing in response to the current RSPB Scotland campaign '*Help us stop the cuts to the Nature Restoration Fund*', in my capacity as Acting Minister for Climate Action as the Nature Restoration Fund sits within my portfolio of responsibility.

Please find the Scottish Government response to this campaign in the annex below. I would be grateful that it be shared with everyone who has taken the time to respond to the campaign, and for this to be published in relation to the campaign.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for continuing to highlight the nature and climate crises across your media platforms, and for encouraging the whole of society to take action to address these crises.

Yours sincerely,

**Alasdair Allan**

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## Scottish Government response to RSPB Scotland Campaign - [Help us stop the cuts to the Nature Restoration Fund](#)

The Scottish Government remains firmly committed to tackling the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, and recognises the importance that the natural environment plays in all of our lives. However, we are also taking on significant additional financial pressure, following decisions made about Scotland's funding made at a UK government level. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, Shona Robison MSP, has been clear that painful choices have had to be made as a result.

We recognise the role that nature plays in helping to reach our net zero and nature positive ambitions - protecting and restoring our natural environment is key to addressing the twin crises of nature loss and climate change. Our commitment to the Nature Restoration Fund, and to introduce a Natural Environment Bill which will set a framework for statutory targets to restore and protect nature, are reiterated in our most recent Programme for Government, and over £50 million has already been distributed through the NRF since 2021, supporting over 200 projects across Scotland. While capital funding of £5 million from this year's NRF allocation to Local Authorities has been redirected to fund the pay offer, it will be restored in future years.

Scottish Ministers know the vital role local government employees play in delivering local services which are valued by the public. This pay offer demonstrates just how much we value these workers too. It will provide an above-inflation pay increase for all council employees and ensure the most support is focused on the lowest paid. The nature of our funding settlement in Scotland means, however, that meeting such pay demands now means inevitable and immediate pressures on other areas of Scottish Government spend.

Working across Scotland, the Nature Restoration Fund is helping to create new green jobs, supporting communities and reinforcing Scotland's green recovery. It is an important mechanism to deliver the aims and ambitions of our Scottish Biodiversity Strategy; halting biodiversity loss by 2030. That is why the Scottish Government has committed an unprecedented £65 million over the course of this parliament to the NRF, enabling multi-year, multi-partner projects across Scotland which have already started to make a real difference.

Whilst this difficult fiscal choice has had to be made, NatureScot is providing NRF funding to 14 partnership projects this year, to transform nature, including through river and woodland restoration, rainforest regeneration, restoring coastal habitats, tackling invasive species, and conserving iconic species such as the red squirrel. Further detail of these projects, and others supported by NRF funding, can be found on the NatureScot website - [Nature Restoration Fund - Supported Projects | NatureScot](#).

We are also investing in nature-based solutions – committing £250 million for peatland restoration over 10 years as part of our climate change plan, which has significant benefits for biodiversity; £213 million through the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS) since 2015; and set out the role, in our Scottish National Action Plan (SNAP3), of nature-based solutions in creating climate-resilient, nature positive communities across Scotland.

Climate change and nature loss are intimately connected. Taking action to address the climate and nature emergencies involves not just government, but the whole of society. We

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all play a role in creating a net zero, nature positive Scotland which is resilient to our changing climate.

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