

Shona Robison MSP  
Acting Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP



**SCOTLAND**

20<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

The upcoming budget will be the most consequential in recent memory for Scotland's nature. After years of difficult decisions, the Scottish Government has been allocated an additional £3.4 billion worth of funding from the UK Treasury in a real-terms budget increase. It is vital then that part of this uplift goes towards the targeted restoration of Scotland's nature-depleted habitats.

Investing in nature is fantastic value and makes good economic sense – a recent report into Scotland's 'natural capital' found nature supports £40.1 billion of economic output, and around 261,600 jobs both directly and indirectly. Scotland's world-renowned industries like our food and drink and tourism sectors rely on nature, and we have already seen the economic harm that damage to our natural environment can cause through flood risks and soil degradation. This latest budget can be effectively used to restore biodiversity and protect against damages by investing in habitats such as our native woodlands, which need an additional £9 million to increase native woodland creation up to 9,000ha.

Particularly important to this budget is the issue of agriculture. The end of ringfencing by the UK Government has left the ball entirely in the Scottish Government's court, and the Scottish Government must respond by investing in nature-friendly farming as a matter of urgency. With 75% of Scotland farmed, agriculture has a critical role to play in responding to the nature and climate crisis, and without nature-friendly farming many species that rely on farmland will disappear. RSPB Scotland has been involved in trailblazing projects by farmers and crofters from Shetland to Galloway, helping protected species like Lapwing and Curlew. An increase of £53 million to nature friendly farming would support the Organic Action Plan, provide advice and training to farmers, support farmer and crofter collaboration, as well as supporting agroforestry and farm woodlands using native species. We know that Scotland's farmers want to do their bit to restore nature, and the benefits that collaborative working can bring, but what they need is significant budget support for nature-friendly farming to make it happen.

It is our hope, and the hope of our over 70,000 RSPB Scotland members, that the Scottish Government will seize this opportunity to invest in nature and help to build a stable foundation for future Scottish budgets going forward.

Yours sincerely,

Anne McCall, Director, RSPB Scotland

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The RSPB is part of BirdLife International, a Partnership of conservation organisations working to give nature a home around the world.