



UK Health Alliance
on Climate Change

Shona Robison MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government
Scottish Government

Copy to: Gillian Martin MSP, Acting Cabinet Secretary of Energy and Net Zero

28 August 2024

Dear Ms Robison,

We as health leaders are concerned at recent reports on the reallocation of funding from the Nature Restoration Fund to cover the pay offer to local government employees.

We support workers being properly paid and recognise that the country has severe financial constraints, but you make a serious mistake in diverting funds from restoring nature, which is essential to our health and wellbeing.

Scotland is already one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. Diverting funds from vital work to protect and restore our natural environment devalues the essential role it plays in protecting and promoting good health.

Lack of access to good quality green space, poor air quality and poor water quality all bring risks to health, including a higher risk of non-communicable diseases, poor mental health outcomes, and lack of social cohesion. It is the poorest in Scotland who have the least access to nature, and diverting funds from nature is likely to increase health inequalities and worsen Scotland's already poor record on health. Diverting the funds is also likely to increase demands on the struggling NHS.

The First Minister has said that a priority of the government is "to enable the people of Scotland to live happier, healthier lives." Diverting the funds is likely to work against those priorities.

The UK Health Alliance on Climate Change, an alliance of 48 health organisations representing more than one million health professionals across the UK, has produced a policy report on [Biodiversity, climate change and health](#) that lays out the impacts of biodiversity loss on land and oceans for human health with recommendations to reduce biodiversity loss, restore nature, and achieve climate goals for the benefit of health.

We encourage you to use your powers in government to ensure that the vital resources needed to protect and restore Scotland's natural environment are met.

Kind regards,

Richard Smith CBE FMedSci, Chair of the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change
Professor Andrew Elder, President Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh