SUBMISSION FROM BILL GARDNER

Please excuse the late submission, but I thought I should speak up for the very, very useful and remarkable role that Landfill Tax has played in developing wildlife tourism in Scotland over the last 12 years. Apart from my own experience I know that literally dozens of other small and large natural heritage projects have benefitted from this source of funding, plus have leveraged in other match funding from the private sector.

The largest recent project I know about was the funding from BIFFA for the re-introduction of the Beaver to Scotland, by SWT.

Way back in 1999 I secured the then largest ever gift of Landfill Tax £400,000 from Haulwaste Ltd (later to become Viridor) to literally close the funding circle of the proposed Scottish Seabird Centre at North Berwick after a long 7 year campaign by myself and others to bring this innovative concept to life at North Berwick's attractive Harbour.

Without the £400,000 from Haulwaste (Dunbar) and the “key money” of £40,000 of private funding given generously by the Bank of Scotland, the funding circle of the necessary £2m needed for this Millennium Project would never have been closed.

The Landfill Tax therefore literally “made” this new venture happen. No other funding was available to match the already secured substantial pledges from the Enterprise Company, Local Authority and Millennium Commission and smaller cofounders.

Since its opening in 2000 the Scottish Seabird Centre has had over 2.5 million visitors and has injected, conservatively some £40m into the East Lothian economy, plus employs up to 50 staff at the height of the summer season, plus numerous all year volunteers.

It’s opening catalysed other remote viewing sites round Scotland and boosted Wildlife Tourism to Scotland as a result, not just from UK, but from Europe and further afield due to the take up of web technologies.

Along with the Aggregates Levy, the Landfill Tax in Scotland, if gathered in by the Scottish Govt, should continue to grant aid similar environmental and community interests in areas near Landfill/Quarry sites (with one exception, Viz there should be no “radius” limit on Biodiversity Projects).

In addition to the current criteria, Archaeology projects should be added, especially Community Archaeology. Both Heritage and Environmental habitat and species projects are very difficult to get funding for. One of the best aspects of Landfill Tax projects was the straightforward project registration and administration and audit processes, which at one time were operated very successfully by Mr James Graham, out of the ENTRUST Paisley office.
I hope this short personal submission can be added to the more learned submissions you have received and would be happy to give more detailed evidence to the Committee about the need for a good, easy to use, source of environmental and community funding for third sector organisations large and small. These range from RSPB/NTS to small community councils keen to assuage the effects on communities by mineral extraction and landfill operations, plus increasing engagement in protecting local heritage and habitats, plus boost local economies.

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Founder of the Scottish Seabird Centre, North Berwick
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