SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH WILDLIFE TRUST

The Scottish Wildlife Trust wishes to reiterate its comments to the Session 3 Scotland Bill Committee in relation to only one aspect of the Scotland Bill, Landfill Tax and the Landfill Communities Fund. Our evidence is unchanged from that lodged with the previous committee and has new case studies included in the Annex.

Question 11 – What further views do you have on the Bill at this stage and do you have any suggestions which, in your view, would enhance the Bill and should be considered by the UK Government for inclusion?

The Landfill Tax currently supports the Landfill Communities Fund (LCF), which is an extremely important source of funding for projects to support and enhance biodiversity for the public benefit. Since LCF began in 1996, £74,342,711 has been awarded to good causes including biodiversity enhancement in Scotland.

Conservation-relevant funding under two main grant headings:

- Object D - The provision, maintenance or improvement of a general public amenity
- Object DA - The conservation of a specific species or a specific habitat where it naturally occurs (i.e. biodiversity projects) which was introduced in 2003.

The Scottish Wildlife Trust has been awarded c. £3.6 million of LCF grant aid to date, with £1.2 million of specifically DA funding (although historically many D projects encompass an element of biodiversity work).

Conservation projects supported by LCF over the past 2 years have included:

- DA Cathkin Marsh Community Wetland Project
- D Montrose Basin - Wildlife in Focus
- DA Commonhead Moss Local Nature Reserve Bog Restoration Project
- D Improving Visitor Access at Sourlie Wood
- D Enhancing Visitor Experience at Shewalton Woods
- D Enhancing Access at Perceton Wood
- D Improving Access at Oldhall Ponds Wildlife Reserve
- D Lawthorn Wood Enhancements
- D Corsehillmuir Wood Improvements
- D Ayr Gorge Woodlands Improvements
- DA Fife Conservation Grazing Project
- D Enhancements to Southwick Coast Wildlife Reserve
- D Cathkin Marsh Improvements
- DA Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels (North East Scotland)
- D Cullaloe Access Improvement Project
- D Bankhead Moss Restoration Project
Other Landfill Tax-derived funding has provided essential support to major biodiversity initiatives such as the Scottish Beaver Trial. The current system allows for the funding of projects which maximise biodiversity and conservation benefit disregarding country boundaries within the UK and this has benefited Scottish conservation.

Without LCF it is unlikely that projects which support public policy objectives would have gone ahead. Examples include:

- Urban mountain bike trail integrated into Physical Education curriculum of local schools
- Enhanced access to the countryside via boardwalks, paths, interpretation
- Coordinated efforts to conserve red squirrel
- First (trial) reintroduction of a mammal species
- Habitat management and creation work to protect wide range of LBAP habitat and species

Biodiversity funding – already inadequate – should not suffer from any change in taxation arrangements. The Aggregates Levy, administered within the Sustainable Action Fund, was a significant source of funding for the restoration of the natural environment, biodiversity projects and a range of major projects with a general relevance to aggregates and environmental impact.

Since 2008, Scotland's share of the money raised by the UK Government from the Aggregates Levy is indirectly reflected in the Scottish Government's overall spending review settlement. Environmental spending is a devolved matter and the Scottish Government's plans for environmental spending are set out in its budget. The Budget published in November 2007 outlined that planned spending on Sustainable Development and Climate Change includes the new Climate Challenge Fund. This funding is far more difficult for NGOs to access and as a result funding for biodiversity projects has been reduced.

A change to the Landfill Tax which removes Scottish access to the LCF would therefore mean that safeguarded funding for biodiversity projects would be lost to Scotland.

The Scottish Wildlife Trust urges the Scottish administration to ensure that a Scottish LCF or equivalent mechanism is established which ensures the continuation of this important source of funding for supporting and enhancing Scotland’s biodiversity.

Scottish Wildlife Trust
9 September 2011
Annex

Landfill Communities Fund – Case Studies

**Location:** Red Moss of Balerno, Lothian  
**LCF Amount awarded:** £27,052  
**LCF Distributor:** WREN  
**Project Details:**

Red Moss of Balerno is the only raised bog habitat in Edinburgh and is listed in the Edinburgh Local Biodiversity Action Plan as a conservation priority because of the unique plant and animal communities living there. Red Moss is a popular site for walkers and wildlife enthusiasts from the local community and further afield. The funding from WREN enabled the Scottish Wildlife Trust to enhance the visitor use and understanding of the reserve whilst protecting and improving the biodiversity of the site.

A new boardwalk was constructed to ensure that visitors can enjoy the reserve without walking on and potentially damaging this rare habitat. As this new boardwalk is wheelchair accessible, the path to the boardwalk from the road was also made flatter and wider to allow wheelchair access. The boardwalk by the pond was widened into a dipping platform which enables visitors and school groups to study the plants and animals in the pond. In addition, 3 new information panels were installed to raise awareness of the site and its flora and fauna. New dams were installed and scrub cleared on the bog to reduce the rate of water loss and encourage biodiversity. This project has greatly enhanced the experience of visitors to this unique wildlife reserve.

**Location:** Fleecefaulds Meadow Wildlife Reserve; Kilminning Coast Wildlife Reserve; Lielowan Meadow Wildlife Reserve  
**LCF Amount Awarded:** £10,000  
**LCF Distributor:** Fife Environment Trust  
**Project Details:**

These wildlife reserves in Fife host species rich grassland, which provides ideal habitat for a range of wildflowers. Conservation grazing is key to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity on this type of habitat; if the grassland is not grazed, it is overrun by species such as creeping thistle and rosebay willowherb, which shade out more specialist and desirable wildflowers.

SWT has developed a grazing project designed to restore and maintain the botanical diversity of these wildlife reserves and others in the surrounding area. The project established a flock of grazing sheep (the *Flying Flock*) and developed infrastructure to implement a controlled grazing programme. There are now over 400 Shetland and Hebridean sheep in the Flying Flock, managed by experienced shepherds and aided by trained volunteers.
This LCF funding enabled grazing to be carried out on the above reserves by supporting the required infrastructure improvements and meeting a proportion of shepherd salary costs and flock transport, feed and veterinary costs. The project also funded grassland monitoring and demonstration events at these sites. Ecological monitoring of the grazing activities has shown that this has had a significant impact in terms of improving biodiversity on the sites.

**Location:** Nethan Gorge, Lanarkshire  
**LCF Amount Awarded:** £30,000  
**LCF Distributor:** Viridor Credits  
**Project Details:**

The Scottish Wildlife Trust currently manages 2 reserves in the Nethan Gorge; both are Sites of Special Scientific Interest and form part of the Clyde Valley National Nature Reserve. The reserves represent two of the best examples of semi-natural woodlands still surviving in the Clyde Valley and have well-developed ash and elm woodland which support a wide variety of breeding birds and insects. This award will fund the purchase of three areas of woodland and two fields located between these two reserves.

The South Lanarkshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan highlights the fact that the fragmentation of semi-natural woodland in the area threatens its future survival. Buying this combination of woodland and rough pasture will enable the Scottish Wildlife Trust to connect up currently fragmented SSSI woodland and increase the area of broadleaved forest which is being positively managed for nature conservation. Connecting up these Wildlife Reserves will benefit people as well as wildlife. Existing paths will be enhanced and new routes may be developed after seeking the views of local communities and other users.

**Location:** Irvine Woodlands  
**LCF Amount Awarded:** £9,000  
**LCF Distributor:** North Ayrshire Council  
**Project Details:**

LCF funds were awarded towards a four year programme of work to restore and enhance woodland reserves in North Ayrshire. The project is developing the character of 6 woodlands in the area and enhancing community access to and enjoyment of the reserves. This will be achieved through a range of activities supporting native woodland species, access improvements and habitat enhancements.

Much of the work is being carried out by supervised Scottish Wildlife Trust Conservation Teams thereby providing approximately 200 days of valuable training for groups of local unemployed people. Undertaking practical conservation tasks of this nature boosts skills and employability.
**Location:** Montrose Basin  
**LCF Amount Awarded:** £30,000  
**LCF Distributor:** Angus Environmental Trust  

**Project Details:**

Montrose Basin Wildlife Reserve is a wildlife haven situated in the heart of Angus. It is an enclosed estuary of the river South Esk and the mudflats and surrounding shoreline provide a rich feeding ground which attracts over 50,000 resident and migrant birds annually. The reserve offers a spectacular wildlife experience to visitor. The importance of Montrose Basin can be evidenced by its designations; it is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) a Special Protection Area (SPA) and a Ramsar site. Montrose Basin and its Visitor Centre is well used by a range of people in the local community for recreational and educational purposes and also attracts a growing number of visitors from further afield. Over 12,000 visitors come to Montrose Basin annually and the Centre has been rated a 4 star Visitor Attraction with Visit Scotland.

Recent LCF funding has enabled the installation of high definition cameras at 3 key points of wildlife interest on the reserve; the tern raft, Rossie Spit mudflats and the bird feeders. These cameras transmit live images to the Visitor Centre where they can be viewed by visitors and to a much wider audience via streaming of audio and video footage onto the internet, giving people the opportunity to experience the sights and sounds of the rich diversity of wildlife which live and feed around the Basin. This project provides powerful opportunities for learning about the wildlife and biodiversity of the area and is promoting Montrose Basin to a wider audience via the Internet, thereby increasing visitors to the area.