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17 August 2017

Graeme Dey MSP  
Convener  
Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

By email only

Dear Graeme

This is in response to your letter of 11<sup>th</sup> July concerning Public Bodies' progress in meeting climate change duties. Our response to your specific questions are as follows:

***a. The steps your organisation has taken to embed consideration of climate change issues strategically and at a leadership level in the organisation?***

Caring for the environment underpins RBGE's community, national and international programmes. As Scotland's botanical institute we are acutely aware of the impact climate change is having on our global biodiversity; environmental sustainability is at the heart of our Corporate Plan.

The Corporate Plan, approved by the Scottish Government, articulates six primary objectives, one of which is "to be environmentally sustainable in our operations". Our Annual Business Plan details how these plans are to be achieved, setting annual tasks and targets, which in turn inform individual work plans. There is a rigorous quarterly reporting system which informs Scottish Government, our Board, management and staff on our progress with delivering these objectives, and where necessary leading to any corrective action.

In addition, as a world leading botanic garden a significant amount of our research and education is linked to the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change nationally and internationally.

The Director of Horticulture and Learning heads up the Environmental Management Group of 16 Area Champions and five environmental management sub groups comprising: Biodiversity, Carbon Management Team, Procurement, Travel and Waste. The Group oversees, supports and monitors environmental sustainability across RBGE.

The primary outputs of the Group are:

- Creating Environmental and Sustainable Development policies and Carbon Management plans and undertaking annual reviews.
- Compiling the annual Environmental Performance report for Scottish Government.
- Making recommendations for environmental improvements within capital and revenue works and operational compliance i.e. travel, carbon management and waste.

***b. Specific examples of how and where this has been done and where it has influenced a strategic decision?***

**Infrastructure:** A recently completed replacement glasshouse facility in the Nursery features the latest energy efficient glasshouse with integrated climate control for optimised plant growing conditions while reducing heating, utility and water costs.

**Strategic planning:** The North East Corner Masterplan is a major capital project for the replacement of our ageing research glasshouse infrastructure and the restoration of our Grade A listed heritage houses. Funding for the project is currently under consideration by the Scottish Government. One of the main drivers for this investment is to provide modern and energy efficient glasshouses that address concerns over the 'continued unacceptable carbon emissions and poor sustainability record from a high-profile element of the Scottish Government estate'. If approved and when work is completed we expect to see a significant reduction in energy consumption and CO<sup>2</sup> emissions.

**Procurement:** RBGE has recently taken the strategic move to use a centralized travel management process within the Scottish Government Framework. Not only is this ensuring best value given our local to global travelling requirements, it is also ensuring that we are able to optimise essential travel and its associated carbon footprint and to provide detailed reports to aid senior management both understand and control the direct environmental impact of our global activities. In addition, this also facilitates more robust reporting for our annual Environmental Performance report.

**Delivery of the Government's Centre of Expertise on Climate Change.**  
Our research involving plant adaptation indicators and narratives has been delivered to the UK's Adaptation Committee, and our work in our botanic

garden sites has been published as case studies for best practice by Adaptation Scotland.

***c. Views on any barriers or challenges the organisation faces in demonstrating climate change leadership and on the support the Scottish Government could provide that might assist you?***

Ageing and inefficient infrastructure is our major barrier with an estimated £15M repair backlog which if funding was forthcoming would significantly help us to improve energy efficiency in such areas as window and door replacements, insulation, energy efficient boiler replacement and upgrading lighting both internal and external to more energy efficient systems.

A failure by the Scottish Government to fund the North East Corner Master Plan would prevent RBGE from achieving a 30% reduction in our carbon footprint. We receive 900,000 visitors a year and therefore are in an excellent position to demonstrate Scotland's leading role in reducing carbon emissions.

While we endeavour to work around limitations in staff capacity (due to real term reduction in government funding) by encouraging staff to take on additional responsibilities relating to the environmental sustainability, the constant need to gap jobs is now having adverse impacts on support tasks including the coordination and implementation of our environmental policies.

If further details are required please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

**Simon Milne MBE FRGS**  
Regius Keeper