Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity
Fergus Ewing MSP

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Graeme Dey MSP
Convenor
Environment, Climate Change And Land Reform Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

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Dear Graeme,

Significant efforts have been made in recent months to revise and redevelop the Environmental Co-operation Action Fund to make it compliant with EU audit requirements. However, to do so would add too much complexity for applicants and would alter the original scope of the scheme, reducing the overall benefits that any successful projects would bring. In consultation with the Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, I have therefore determined that we will be unable to re-launch the Fund later this year. Instead, we will seek to deliver similar objectives through enhancements to other existing programmes.

Funding opportunities to support the facilitation and delivery of landscape-scale environmental management and collaborative approaches are available through the Agri-Environment and Climate Scheme, Forestry Grant Scheme, Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund (KTIF), LEADER, Peatland ACTION and the Water Environment Fund (WEF). Enhancements are being developed for the Agri-Environment and Climate Scheme to further support collaborative or landscape-scale applications.

Decisions about the reallocation of the funding for ECAF will be taken as part of future budget rounds. I am aware this will be disappointing to stakeholders and especially, potential applicants. Arrangements are in place to engage with them to ensure they are aware of other existing funding opportunities and of enhancements to existing schemes. Every effort will be made to support appropriate applications to ensure that we are able to fund future projects that meet similar objectives. I wish to assure you that Roseanna Cunningham and I remain committed to supporting and encouraging landscape-scale environmental management in Scotland.

Yours sincerely,

FERGUS EWING