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By email only

24 April 2020

To those working in the waste and resources sector,

I am writing to thank you for working so hard to keep essential services running in communities across Scotland and for protecting the environment during these unprecedented times.

COVID-19 is the biggest challenge we have faced in our lifetimes and the measures we are taking to deal with it reflect its magnitude. It remains absolutely vital that we continue to adhere to measures to slow down the spread of the virus, protect the NHS and save lives.

The waste and resources sector in Scotland has adapted quickly and professionally in order to sustain key waste management services and I want to let you know that your efforts are recognised within the Scottish Government - we are extremely grateful for all you are doing in difficult circumstances. The impact of the Coronavirus on Scotland has been profound. The lockdown has had an unprecedented impact on our economy and we understand this has caused deep uncertainty and hardship for many businesses, including within the waste sector.

The Scottish Government is determined to continue to do whatever we can to support you. As well as publishing guidance on measures to protect the health of the public and staff, to date we have rightly focused efforts on protecting as many businesses and jobs as possible. Our support for business now exceeds £2.2 billion and complements UK Government schemes. We recognise that there may still be gaps and we are keen to engage further with businesses, including the waste sector, to understand specific needs. In addition, we continue to press the UK Government to extend or improve existing arrangements, for example to improve the flexibility of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Understanding your views on this is critical.

Alongside Health Protection Scotland guidance, we have published guidance on implementing physical distancing at work to ensure that when you're doing your job,

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you can do so safely. Your willingness to share views on issues and potential solutions has been critical and continues to inform ongoing waste contingency arrangements.

I welcome the commitment many of you have made to work collectively with partners across the commercial and public sector in order to support the resilience of service provision in communities across Scotland. As many of you will be aware, to facilitate this, Zero Waste Scotland has launched an online platform to support the sharing of information between commercial waste management operators and local councils in order to make best use of any existing spare capacity.

The ongoing conversations between your industry representatives and my officials through the Waste and Resources Sector Forum have highlighted the challenges that you continue to face. I intend to host a discussion as soon as possible with a number of representatives from the industry to hear first-hand about your experiences, perceived impact of measures taken to date and ongoing issues or concerns. My officials will be in touch directly with industry representative bodies to make arrangements and I look forward to those discussions.

In the meantime, thank you again for your continued efforts. These are challenging times but we will get through them, together.

Yours sincerely,



ROSEANNA CUNNINGHAM

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