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**MEDIA RELEASE FROM NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND, RSPB SCOTLAND,
SCOTTISH SEABIRD CENTRE AND THE SCOTTISH WILDLIFE TRUST**

**Conservation charities call on Scottish Ministers to reject proposed Berwick Bank
wind farm site**

- *National Trust for Scotland, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Seabird Centre and Scottish Wildlife Trust are concerned about unacceptable damage to nature*
- *Developer plans over 300 turbines off Scotland's 'seabird city', St Abb's Head and in foraging grounds for internationally important seabird colonies in Firth of Forth*
- *Polling shows 80% of public agree proposed development should be re-sited*

Leading conservation charities are calling on Scottish Ministers to reject a renewables development that could wreak unacceptable levels of ecological damage – including to vulnerable seabird populations – off Scotland's East Coast.

The National Trust for Scotland, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Seabird Centre and the Scottish Wildlife Trust have set out their concerns about the siting of the proposed new Berwick Bank Offshore Wind Farm in a letter to Energy, Just Transition and Fair Work Minister, Gillian Martin MSP, as Scottish Ministers prepare to make a final decision on SSE-Renewables' application for Berwick Bank. Ministers will have the final say on whether the application is approved once they have received the Scottish Government Marine Directorate's recommendation on the proposal, expected shortly.

The proposed wind farm, off the St Abb's Head National Nature Reserve (NNR) and Bass Rock in the Firth of Forth, would be Scotland's largest, with over 300 turbines covering an area over four times the size of Edinburgh.

While supportive in principle of the expansion of offshore wind generation to combat climate change, the four conservation charities have highlighted a number of worrying concerns about SSE-R's plans to site the wind farm so close to internationally significant seabird colonies and Special Protection Areas. These include the developer's approach to identifying Berwick Bank's impact on seabird numbers, the lack of adequate steps to mitigate its impact and the effectiveness of its proposed compensation measures.

New independent research for the National Trust of Scotland, which cares for St Abb's Head and has a strategic objective to speak up for Scotland's heritage, found that a significant majority of the public living in the local area have objections to a wind farm that can cause this level of harm to nature:

- 80% of respondents agreed that the proposed development should be re-sited offshore to a location where its impacts would be lessened, even if it is more costly for the developer.
- 84% agreed that protecting the natural environment is vital to the local and national economy.
- 66% did not believe that significant damage to seabird colonies was a price worth paying to increase Scotland's renewable energy capacity. Indeed, 82% of people agreed that avoiding impacts on Special Protection Areas was important.

Dr Cal Major, ocean and nature advocate, and ambassador for the National Trust for Scotland, commented: "I strongly back this call for Scottish Ministers to reject the current Berwick Bank proposal and for SSE-R to re-site the wind farm to a less ecologically damaging location.

"Our conservation charity supports the expansion of offshore wind farms, which are a vital component of Scotland's journey to net zero. However, they must be sited in the right places for nature. This location – off St Abb's Head with its precious seabird colonies – is clearly not the right site. Nature and biodiversity are vital assets in tackling climate change, and we must make sure we don't put them at irreversible or unnecessary risk in transitioning to net zero – especially seabirds which are such a vital part of the marine ecosystem.

"One element that especially concerns us is Berwick Bank's likely impact on seabirds, with predicted mortality rates much higher than other offshore windfarms. For example, seven times as many Kittiwakes will be removed from the population, per GW of energy produced, than at Hornsea Three where predicted impacts are already considered to be high. It's surely unacceptable to create this additional threat to colonies when seabirds such as Puffins, Kittiwakes, Gannets and Razorbills are already under huge pressure from climate change, dwindling food supplies and avian flu. Re-siting Berwick Bank gives them at least some chance of recovery."

Anne McCall, Director of RSPB Scotland, said: "We cannot address the climate crisis without addressing the nature crisis at the same time – the two are inextricably linked. The decision that Scottish Ministers are about to make will have potentially profound implications for our seabirds, which the latest Seabird Census identifies are under even greater threat than previously thought. The Scottish Government needs to carefully consider whether there are better alternatives to this development, and what the implications of permitting it might be for the many other offshore wind developments that will follow in its footsteps. Scottish Ministers must make the right decisions, with nature foremost in their thinking, and the offshore wind industry must effectively address their impact on nature, as we all seek solutions to the climate crisis."

Susan Davies, CEO of the Scottish Seabird Centre, said: “We are facing a nature crisis and must ensure that green energy is secured in ways which do not contribute to further loss. SSE-R have forged ahead with proposals that are not in an appropriate location or scale, ignoring their own modelling which predicts significant losses to seabirds. This does not seem to be the actions of a responsible developer.”

Jo Pike, CEO of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, added: “It is disappointing to see that SSE-Renewables did not take the opportunity to address the concerns that several nature charities have been highlighting to them since March 2023. We are not opposed to the expansion of renewable energy as long as it’s in the appropriate location for people and nature. However, the highly concerning negative trends observed in most seabird populations need to be taken seriously and we need to see proposals put forward that adequately tackle both the climate and nature crisis.”

End

Notes to Editors

Images available at: <https://www.flickr.com/gp/133918740@N04/iNV5J5y62C>

1. The National Trust for Scotland commissioned the research to explore local opinions on proposals for development of Berwick Bank. The poll was conducted by ScotPulse, with a sample of adults living with areas affected by recent offshore wind development proposals: East Lothian, Borders, Fife and Angus. Fieldwork was conducted 26-30 January 2024; 811 respondents.
2. Interim results from SSE plc show that SSE-Renewables made an operating profit of £86.8 million in the six months to 30 September 2023 – an increase of 479% over the equivalent period in 2022/23: [SSE reports and results](#)
3. The full letter to Gillian Martin MSP, Minister for Energy, Just Transition and Fair Work is available at: <https://we.tl/t-Zh1We2iw76>

About the National Trust for Scotland

Established in 1931, the National Trust for Scotland is Scotland’s largest conservation charity and cares for, shares and speaks up for Scotland’s magnificent heritage. Over the last 92 years the Trust has pioneered public access to and shared ownership of some of the most magnificent buildings, collections and landscapes in Scotland. It cares for more than 100 sites, from ancient houses to battlefields, castles, mills, gardens, coastlines, islands, mountain ranges and the plants and animals which depend upon them. In March 2022, the National Trust for Scotland launched Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone, its ten-year strategy which sets out the ambitions of the charity over the coming decade. From speaking up for Scotland’s heritage which doesn’t have a voice, to improving the lives and wellbeing of people across the country, and responding to the climate and biodiversity crisis, the Trust will build on its work in

recent years to grow its impact and conserve and restore more of Scotland's heritage, as it moves towards its centenary in 2031. Scotland's largest membership organisation, the National Trust for Scotland relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work. For more information on the National Trust for Scotland visit www.nts.org.uk The National Trust for Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410.

About the RSPB

The RSPB is the UK's largest nature conservation charity, protecting habitats, saving species, and helping to end the nature and climate emergency. For over a century we've acted for nature through practical conservation and powerful partnerships, campaigning and influence, and inspiring and empowering millions of people, including almost 1.2 million members. Our network of over 200 nature reserves sits at the heart of our world leading science and conservation delivery. Nature is in crisis, but together we can save it.

About the Scottish Seabird Centre

The Scottish Seabird Centre is an award-winning marine conservation and education charity whose purpose is to inspire and educate people about the Scottish marine environment and motivate them to care for it by supporting conservation projects. The charity's work is supported by its visitor experience. The Centre contains a wide variety of exhibits and interactives that enable people to experience and learn about the spectacular wildlife that Scotland's marine environment supports. They have led a range of high-profile conservation and education projects including the SOS Puffin initiative in the Firth of Forth.

About the Scottish Wildlife Trust

For 60 years, the Scottish Wildlife Trust has worked with its members, partners and supporters in pursuit of its vision of healthy, resilient ecosystems across Scotland's land and seas. The Trust successfully champions the cause of wildlife through policy and campaigning work, demonstrates best practice through practical conservation and innovative partnerships, and inspires people to take positive action through its education and engagement activities. The Trust manages over 100 wildlife reserves across Scotland and is a member of the UK-wide Wildlife Trusts movement.