

OFFICIAL



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By email only

7 February 2023

Dear First and deputy First Ministers

Congratulations on the Restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly

On behalf of the Office for Environmental Protection I want to offer my congratulations on the restoration of the Assembly and Executive, and your appointments as First and deputy First Ministers.

The Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) was created by the Environment Act (2021) and extended to Northern Ireland by the Executive in February 2022. We are tasked to play a full and independent role in protecting and improving the environment, through holding public bodies to account. We have established an office in Belfast, recruited a number of staff locally, and have already engaged extensively with officials on a range of issues.

We have also written to Minister Muir congratulating him on his appointment and requesting a meeting. We hope to discuss a number of matters including the urgency of publishing an Environmental Improvement Plan, which the absence of Ministers has delayed beyond its statutory deadline.

Our environment underpins our society and economy, and yet we know that it is under ever-increasing threat. There is a clear opportunity for local Ministers to set a course to ensure its protection and long-term improvement. This would be a fitting legacy for the new Assembly and Executive.

I wish you all the best in your roles, and look forward to working with you and your officials in the future.

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Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G Stacey', written in a cursive style.

Dame Glenys Stacey
Chair of the Office for Environmental Protection



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