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MEDIA RELEASE

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RSE CALLS FOR NEW INDEPENDENT ENVIRONMENT ENFORCEMENT BODY POST-BREXIT

The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE), Scotland's National Academy, recommends the establishment of a new, fully independent environmental scrutiny and enforcement body for Scotland to address the challenges in maintaining and improving Scotland's natural environment following the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

In its advice paper '*The Implications of Brexit on Scotland's Natural Assets*' released today; an RSE expert working group on the environment has asked the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament to consider introducing a new Scottish Environment Act which would incorporate key EU environmental principles and instruments in to Scottish law to safeguard Scotland's natural assets. The development and agreement of common frameworks between the UK and Scottish Governments will be critical to this process.

The paper recognises the influential role EU Directives and Regulations have played in shaping environmental policy in the UK, which has coincided with considerable improvement in the quality of the natural environment. Withdrawal from the EU poses challenges to the maintenance and improvement of the quality of Scotland's environment unless current EU arrangements are adopted in UK and Scots law.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the paper encourages both the UK and Scottish Governments to take this opportunity to develop a more integrated approach to the implementation of environmental law and policy. It recommends the development of a new approach for supporting food production in Scotland that takes greater account of environmental stewardship while continuing to ensure a productive and profitable agricultural sector.

Professor Roger Crofts FRSE, Chair of the RSE's Environment Working Group said, "The quality of Scotland's natural environment has improved considerably through implementing EU directives and these improvements have brought benefits to lives and business. "We cannot risk regressing post-Brexit on the environmental standards we have achieved; that is why we strongly recommend the establishment in Scotland of a new independent body with responsibilities for scrutinising and enforcing environmental legislation, policies and standards following the UK's withdrawal from the EU. Its work would need to be underpinned by a new Scottish Environment Act.

“Brexit does, however, provide us with an opportunity to develop a more integrated approach to the implementation of environmental law and policy as opposed to the somewhat fragmentary approach in place currently. It also allows us to rethink our approach to food production influenced by the Common Agricultural Policy and to develop policies which are more advantageous to the environment”.

The paper encourages both the UK and Scottish Governments to explore with EU counterparts how the UK and Scotland can maintain access to key European agencies for the environment, including the European Environment Agency, whose membership extends beyond EU Member States. Given the strength of Scotland’s research base, particularly in the environmental field, the paper restates the importance of securing the UK’s continued direct participation in EU Framework Programmes for Research.

A copy of the advice paper is attached.

Roger Crofts is available for interview by phone or in person on Thursday 29th November and is available on: M: **07803 595267**.

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Notes:

- 1) The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE), Scotland’s National Academy, is a leading educational charity which operates on an independent and non-party political basis to provide public benefit throughout Scotland. The RSE has over 1600 Fellows from a wide range of disciplines. The work of the RSE includes awarding research funding, leading on major inquiries, informing public policy and delivering events to inspire knowledge and learning.
- 2) Key EU treaties and charter have established significant environmental management principles such as precaution polluter pays and no regression. A total of 27 Directives are currently in force. They are focused on both the use and protection of natural resources both for their own sale and benefits arising to people and their social, health and economic wellbeing.