



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## **RURAL AFFAIRS, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

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5 December 2014

Dear Aileen

### **Petition PE01490 on the control of wild goose numbers by Patrick Krause on behalf of the Scottish Crofting Federation**

The Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment (RACCE) Committee gave further consideration to Public Petition PE01490<sup>1</sup> on the control of wild goose numbers at its meeting on 12 November. At this meeting the Committee considered both the former Minister's letter of 1 October 2014<sup>2</sup> and the Petitioner's response<sup>3</sup> to that letter. The Committee agreed to write to you expressing its disappointment, shared with the Petitioner, that the former Minister's letter did not address many of the direct questions and recommendations made by the Committee in its letter of 9 August 2014<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Petition PE01490. Available at:

<http://external.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/controlgoosenumbers>.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Minister for Environment and Climate Change, 1 October 2014. Available at: [http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4\\_RuralAffairsClimateChangeandEnvironmentCommittee/General%20Documents/2014.10.01 - Minister response to petition.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_RuralAffairsClimateChangeandEnvironmentCommittee/General%20Documents/2014.10.01_-_Minister_response_to_petition.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Petitioner, 31 October 2014: Available at: [http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4\\_RuralAffairsClimateChangeandEnvironmentCommittee/General%20Documents/2014.10.31 - SCF response to the Ministers letter.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_RuralAffairsClimateChangeandEnvironmentCommittee/General%20Documents/2014.10.31_-_SCF_response_to_the_Ministers_letter.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Letter from RACCE Convener to Minister for Environment and Climate Change, 9 August 2014. Available at:

[http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4\\_RuralAffairsClimateChangeandEnvironmentCommittee/General%20Documents/2014.08.09 - Convener to Minister re Geese.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_RuralAffairsClimateChangeandEnvironmentCommittee/General%20Documents/2014.08.09_-_Convener_to_Minister_re_Geese.pdf)

In particular, the Committee and the Petitioner do not think that a number of the issues raised were adequately addressed in the previous response and would therefore welcome a response from you to all of the following issues—

- detailed information on the funding of goose management programmes;
- whether any feedback has been received from the Netherlands with regards to the communication from the Scottish Government about goose management measures;
- the Government's view of the current size of goose populations in coastal crofting areas and the impact this has on the ability to maintain crofts as per the legislation;
- the recommendation that the current approach and methods of goose management be reviewed to ensure that the impact on agriculture and the environment are adequately managed;
- your views on making the current voluntary bag reporting scheme mandatory.

The Committee also agreed to seek your views on two additional issues—

- the effects that geese are having on other parts of the country outwith the crofting counties, such as the Solway and Aberdeenshire; and
- updates from you on the work between SNH and the local Pilots to ensure that we gather the information relating to the relationship between goose numbers and agricultural damage and the possible effects on water quality in lochs and reservoirs; and also the work Scottish Water is doing with SNH on Orkney to investigate this further.

I refer you to discussion on the petition by the Committee on 12 November, the transcript of which is contained in the Official Report<sup>5</sup> of that meeting.

For ease the issues listed above, which we believe have not been addressed or have only been partly addressed, are set out in detail in the Annexe.

Yours sincerely



Rob Gibson MSP  
Convener

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<sup>5</sup> Scottish Parliament Rural Affairs, climate Change and Environment Committee, *Official Report*, % November 2014 Available at:  
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9632&mode=pdf>

## Issues still to be addressed

### Goose species, populations and the international context

The Committee is also pleased to note that the Scottish Government has written to the Netherlands to enquire about the goose management measures that are currently being undertaken. The Committee looks forward to receiving this information in due course.

The Crofting Commission stated that the current size of the goose population in some coastal crofting areas is unsustainable for continuing productive use of crofts, and is a serious disincentive to crofters to cultivate and maintain their crofts which is a legal duty under crofting legislation

The Committee considers that the current approach and methods of controlling geese require to be reviewed to ensure that goose populations, and their impact on agriculture and the environment, are effectively managed.

### Goose management schemes and the Machair Life Project

The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government works with SNH and other stakeholders to find a way to secure the additional funding required to continue the crop protection element of the Machair Life project on this basis. The Committee looks forward to hearing how this has been progressed.

The Committee encourages the Scottish Government to work with stakeholders to identify the need for further funded schemes of this type to be implemented in key areas of biodiversity. *(This is addressed briefly in paragraph 4 of the Minister's letter, the Committee require additional detail)*

### Adaptive Management Plans

Whilst funding may be available via the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) the Committee considers that due to the competitive nature of the SRDP and the localised nature of goose impacts the SRDP may not be the correct vehicle to deliver additional support. The Committee is of the view that this is a national problem that requires to be addressed by the Scottish Government as a matter of urgency. - *(This has only been briefly addressed in paragraph 12 of the Ministers letter. The Committee would like to add that it believes that as CAP reforms begin and the single farm payment reduces there will be less incentive to remain in these schemes)*

The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government reconsider its approach to the funding of goose management programmes and allocate additional resources to crop protection and Adaptive Management Plans, ensuring that these programmes follow best practice in terms of stakeholder involvement, management, design, implementation and monitoring. *(This is a recommendation made by the Committee that has not been addressed).*

The Committee notes that there are varying views on the effectiveness of non-lethal scaring methods and notes the Scottish Government's willingness to listen to stakeholders views on alternative approaches. However, the Committee believes that the Scottish Government, in conjunction with SNH, should take a lead in seeking solutions, in discussion with stakeholders. (*This has not been addressed*).

The Committee welcomes confirmation that training is being made available, if required, to those shooting geese and welcomes further information on how the take up of that training is being encouraged and supported. (*This has only been partially addressed. The Committee awaits confirmation on how the take up of the training is being encouraged and supported*).

### **Data gathering, the environment and public health**

The Committee welcomes confirmation from SNH that prior to the AMP's starting, a habitats regulations assessment considering all species of conservation interest was undertaken for each area. However the Committee is concerned that unless the baseline biodiversity data and monitoring of agricultural damage is also included then it will be difficult to understand the impacts and measure the effectiveness of the AMP's in preventing environmental and agricultural damage. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government considers what can be done to collect this data within the existing pilots and ensure that this is included in any future pilots as it is important that the effectiveness of the pilots and the requirement for shooting can be demonstrated. (*This is a recommendation that has not been addressed. The Committee also seeks an update on the work that is being carried out with SNH to determine the relationship between goose numbers and agricultural damage*).

The Committee considers that sporting sectors hunting bag data is important in meeting the AMP targets in the pilots and as such needs to be accurate to enable an assessment of the success of the pilots. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government considers how gathering of hunting bag data can be improved and considers making the recording of this data mandatory. (*This recommendation has not been addressed*).

The Committee understands the concerns in relation to the potential impacts of lead shot on grazing wildfowl and welcomes confirmation that it is illegal to use lead shot over wetlands. The Committee acknowledges the Government's work in this area and would welcome an update on progress in due course. (*The Committee awaits an update*).

The Committee is concerned that fouling can have a potential adverse effect on the natural environment, on other species, and can impact on available pasture for grazing. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government investigates how the impact of goose fouling on public health and the environment could be effectively assessed and considers what action can be taken to minimise this. (*The Committee requests more detail on the work that is being undertaken with Scottish Water*).

## Market Opportunities

The Committee agrees that the primary focus should remain on the control and management of goose populations to ensure the continued successful conservation of the species. However it believes that expansion of the market, while still protecting the species, could help crofting incomes and the broader rural economy and act as an incentive for crofters to apply for the appropriate licences. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government holds discussions with stakeholders on how this could be achieved and provides an update to the Committee in due course. *(This recommendation has not been addressed).*

The Committee would welcome further information from the Scottish Government assessing the contribution of sporting and non-sporting activity to the control of goose populations in the AMP pilot areas. The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government take the issues of sporting rights and ownership, and their impact on the control of goose populations, into account via the current land reform and agricultural holdings reviews. *(This recommendation has not been addressed. We note your comment in respect of issues identified by the Land Reform Review Group however the Committee are recommending this matter is taken into account).*