

**Written submission the Scottish Crofting Federation on Petition  
PE 01490 in response to the Scottish Government letter of 17 February 2015**

We appreciate that the Scottish Government have given a comprehensive reply to the letter from the RACCE of 05 December 2014 and that they have addressed issues raised in the annex, if not in the order raised. However, overall we feel the SG letter is somewhat evasive and incomplete.

We have a few points to comment on that we feel were inadequately addressed or that we feel the SG response to was disappointing. We have added some endnotes which are comments from our local contact.

A general comment is that SG repeatedly refers to Islay where a vast amount of public money is spent on goose management. However, whilst this information is appreciated, the petition subject is the Uists and SG appears to avoid addressing what is happening there.

Following the RACCE order of requests for response:

The RACCE asked for a response to the communications with Netherlands. SG response in their point 3 is disappointing and does not provide the information asked for.

The RACCE's request for a response to the Crofting Commission's point that the goose populations are forcing crofters to be in breach of crofting regulation, appears to be ignored by SG.

SG's response to the RACCE comment that "the current approach and methods of controlling geese require to be reviewed" is inadequately answered in saying that the NGMRG "is still at an early stage in some of the work arising from the 2010 Review". Will time-frames like this "ensure that goose populations, and their impact on agriculture and the environment, are effectively managed"?

SG have supplied a lot of useful information on funding of goose management schemes and research, which is appreciated. Whilst this wasn't specifically asked for the total of £1,041,719 being spent on Islay in 2014/15 against £62,600 being spent on the Uists the same year is startling. The stated Uist budget reduction to £45,400 and then £35,400 in subsequent years is deeply disappointing and SG fails to demonstrate how it would endeavour to make up the shortfall needed to run an adequate control programme in the Uists, as asked for by RACCE.

SG has supplied some useful information in their response concerning adaptive management schemes and training, which is appreciated. It appears that they have still failed to address the crucial points raised by RACCE under this section, that "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" and that 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".

The issue of data-collection in the pilot schemes is, again, inadequately addressed in SG response.

The SG outline of its approach to marketing of goose meat is very thin. It would be a positive approach to the goose problem and is recommended by RACCE. A more comprehensive answer to this would be appreciated.

SCF has been in discussion about attendance of NGMRG meetings and SNH have been very helpful in facilitating this through VC. We will attend in person next week.

### **Endnotes**

1. Numbers of Barnacles in Uists now @4000 ( 90% concentrated in N Uist) in Feb count and same count of pre- breeding pop of greylags was @5600. Pressure on spring bite of grass in N Uist therefore significant. What are explanations for increase in Barnacles according to RSPB? Their management needs to look at pressure from elsewhere and holistic system of control.
2. AM coming to an end. Uists have not hit their targets of 3400-4400. Now at 5600. Why? Has SNH failed to deliver? Maybe some questions about targets for AM being met needed in all regions. And Figures to demonstrate this. No goose count figures supplied from Feb Count. If not met (as I suspect for Uist) how will funding continue to achieve this?
3. Continued lethal scaring of geese will be essential over breeding season. Cereal crops will always be very vulnerable so crop protection needed as well as population control at other times of the year. Uists has different system to Tiree etc with its reliance on machair corn growing ( and this is last bastion of traditional cropping, a sympathetic wildlife management system and key habitat now under threat from geese etc)
4. Goose meat opportunities do not seem to be developed outside Orkney. Why? Some goose meat sales on Uists but could be more and opportunities for use in school dinners/ OAP/care homes etc have not been developed/researched. Research new markets. Sales on island only too restrictive? Use of goose meat in public services could be adopted in Harris and Lewis.
5. Suggestion that sport shooting can help to control geese is optimistic. Figures for Uist are wrong (table does not add up) Suggests 2700 (should be 950) geese to be shot by sport pa. If this is to be the case, how to work better with estates to secure this figure. Not realistic. Better results on Tiree where goose shooting is encouraged by Duke's factor.
6. What is tourist potential of geese? Eg: Barnacles on Uist.

We thank the RACCE for their interest in this vital issue that has such a devastating effect on crofters and ask that the issues raised above be pursued with Scottish Government.