

Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform

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Rob Gibson, Convener  
Rural Affairs, Environment and Climate Change Committee  
Committee Room T3.40  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP



2 December 2015

Dear Rob

Thank you for your letter of 10 November seeking further clarification on a number of issues relating to the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee's consideration of Public Petition PE01490 on the control of wild goose numbers.

On the funding of goose management schemes, in this financial year the Islay, Kintyre, Solway, South Walls and Strathbeg Local Goose Management Schemes are being supported by the Scottish Government with funding totalling **£1,277,454** for 2015/16 and **£1,287,644** in subsequent years. The details for recent years and for the next five years are provided at the Annex. These figures represent an update to those provided in my letter of 17 February and take account of the agreement reached on funding a further five year programme of support for farmers and crofters dealing with the impacts of wild geese. We have committed to this funding to help provide stability to the schemes.

The Annex also sets out the additional funding that is being provided for adaptive management pilots.

In relation to the estimated cost of undertaking an externally commissioned review, this was based on experience of the 2010 policy review by the British Trust for Ornithology. As I explained in my recent letter, a major externally conducted review would usually only be undertaken every 10 years, with a light touch review carried out by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) conducted at the mid-way point. I can confirm that there is no budgetary provision to commission a full external review at this juncture, hence if we were to agree to do that it would be necessary to draw on the existing budget for goose management, with implications for the funding available for goose schemes. My officials and SNH, therefore, are considering more cost effective options which could also take advantage of some independent input and oversight.



On the question about compliance with State Aid rules, SNH currently has cover from the EU for their management agreements, including those relating to goose management, but is acting on advice to secure an update to its State Aid cover. Their application will include renewed cover in relation to local goose management schemes. It is anticipated that this will be in place to cover the 2016/17 scheme year. We have advised the Local Goose Management Schemes that it has been necessary to split the new five-year schemes into a one-year scheme (for 2015-16), operating under existing State Aid cover, and four-years (2016-17 to 2019-20) which will operate under new State Aid cover assuming that that is secured. This approach avoids the situation, in the event that there were any issues of concern, of having to revise schemes part way through 2015-16 and potentially having to recover management payments already made to farmers, in whole or in part.

In seeking to agree the new schemes, we have made clear to the Local Groups that we would only exercise a break clause after the first year if it is necessary to make changes for the subsequent four years to comply with new State Aid rules, indeed the inclusion of a break clause for this purpose is a requirement of the EU State Aids regime.

Finally, I thought that the Committee might be interested to hear about a conference on the growing challenges linked to goose management within Europe held in October. The conference was organised by the Danish Nature Agency, the Danish Ministry of Environment and Food and Aarhus University. It was attended by national and regional government representatives, managers and experts from across Europe and beyond, including SNH staff. Information about the conference can be found via the link below and I am enclosing the brief outcomes document which lists agreed actions, including a commitment to initiate management planning processes for Barnacle geese.

<http://www.unep-aewa.org/en/document/outcomes-international-conference-goose-management-challenges-2015-27-29-october-2015-gram>

I welcome this initiative which seeks to adopt a longer term solution to goose management and which takes a broadly similar approach to the adaptive management strategy which we have initiated on Islay.

Kind regards

**AILEEN McLEOD**

# **PETITION PE01490: CONTROL OF WILD GOOSE NUMBERS**

## **Budget for Local Goose Management Schemes: 2011/12 to 2014/15**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>
Islay	£735,000	£868,258	£935,719	£935,719
Kintyre	£77,245	£80,628	£80,628	£80,628
Solway	£184,250	£178,125	£173,125	£168,125
South Walls	£16,230	£16,230	£16,230	£16,230
Strathbeg	£60,000	£12,000	£12,000	£12,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,072,725</b>	<b>£1,155,241</b>	<b>£1,217,702</b>	<b>£1,212,702</b>

## **Budget for Local Goose Management Schemes 2015/16 – 2019/20**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>
Islay	£950,192	£950,192	£950,192	£950,192	£950,192
Kintyre	£60,483	£60,483	£60,483	£60,483	£60,483
Solway	£221,840	£221,840	£221,840	£221,840	£221,840
South Walls	£22,939	£23,129	£23,129	£23,129	£23,129
Strathbeg	£22,000	£14,000	£14,000	£14,000	£14,000
Monitoring	0	£18,000	£18,000	£18,000	£18,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,277,454</b>	<b>£1,287,644</b>	<b>£1,287,644</b>	<b>£1,287,644</b>	<b>£1,287,644</b>

<b>Pilot</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/4</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>
Orkney	17,500	18,000	19,500	18,000	18,000
Uist	1,800	2,000	62,600	45,400	35,400
Tiree	0	2,000	23,700	17,700	17,700
Lewis & Harris	0	0	22,790	18,250	18,250
Additional monitoring	0	0	0	9,000	9,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,300</b>	<b>22,000</b>	<b>128,590</b>	<b>108,350</b>	<b>98,350</b>

**Scottish Government**

November 2015



Date: 2 November 2015

## 6<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES

9-14 November 2015, Bonn, Germany

*“Making flyway conservation happen”*

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### OUTCOMES OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

#### “GOOSE MANAGEMENT: CHALLENGES 2015”

27-29 October 2015, Gram Slot, Denmark

### Introduction

The impact of increasing migratory and sedentary goose populations in Europe on economic activities and natural ecosystems continues to grow, becoming increasingly acute in many countries. Additionally, populations of some huntable migratory species are in decline and require coordinated international measures to restore their favourable conservation status. To tackle these urgent issues and move towards the long-term sustainable use of all huntable migratory waterbirds in Europe, it is proposed to establish an over-arching framework for goose management – a European Multi-species Goose Management Platform – ideally under the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA).

To discuss the growing challenges linked to goose management within Europe, the Danish Nature Agency, Danish Ministry of Environment and Food and Aarhus University hosted a three-day international conference at Gram Slot, Denmark. The meeting was attended by national and regional government representatives, managers and experts from Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, France, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, the UK and the USA as well as the Wadden Sea Forum, the European Commission and the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat.

### Background/Discussion

Six of the 25 recognised goose populations within the AEWA Agreement area are declining and require actions to restore them to a favourable conservation status; 18 are creating societal conflicts because of increasing population levels and expanding ranges.

As geese have benefitted from the abundance of food provided by intensive agriculture, so growing populations have reduced some crop yields, impacted on biodiversity, elevated airport airstrike risk and created health and nuisance issues in urban areas. Yet, geese provide important consumptive and non-consumptive values to other sectors of society, have cultural importance and have long been the focus of past conservation activity. The resolution of these and other societal conflicts created by goose abundance requires structured decision-making, as well as coordinated interventions, especially because all populations move between multiple countries during their annual cycles.

The conference reviewed the way in which those countries present currently attempt to resolve these conflicts nationally as well as the various levels of satisfaction across stakeholder groups with the outcomes. The meeting agreed that internationally coordinated management plans were essential for effective integration and delivery of conflict resolution at all scales.

These were most effective when based on evidence-based decision-making frameworks resulting in clear management objectives, and preferably organised within adaptive management frameworks.

The example of the AEWA Pink-footed Goose International Single Species Management Plan demonstrated the value of setting favourable reference values (e.g. a socially constructed target population size range). The meeting also recognised the need for the effective implementation of these population plans at national, regional and local levels. It is of fundamental importance to engage all stakeholders from the outset to establish clear objectives, transparent governance, and effective and integrated monitoring mechanisms to enable effective follow-up and adjustments of actions taken.

## **Conclusions/Recommendations - Establishment of a European Multi-species Goose Management Platform**

- The overall goal is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of all goose populations listed under AEWA.
- International flyway solutions are needed for the management of both decreasing and increasing huntable goose populations in Europe - regardless of whether harvest is used as a management tool (including derogation shooting) or not.
- There was unanimous support from those countries present for the development of a European Goose Management Platform under AEWA (although subject to the commitment of other relevant Range States). It was agreed that any approach should be flexible - allowing for modification to ensure that the process delivers on objectives and future additional species/populations.
- Long-term commitment to the adaptive harvest management processes for the various populations will be required from all Range States along the flyway(s) before their development can begin. Government representatives were encouraged to promote the establishment of the platform to the Range States not present – in particular those outside of the EU, such as Russia.
- In addition to the already established process for Pink-footed Geese and the AEWA Single Species Action Plan developed for Taiga Bean Geese, the meeting supported developing AEWA International Management Plans for Barnacle Geese (three populations) and northwest European Greylag Geese as proposed by Denmark and France, respectively. These six populations will be the initial focus of the European Multi-species Goose Management Platform.
- Regarding the collection of annual population data necessary for running adaptive harvest management processes, it was stressed that much of the relevant data for the countries present at the meeting was already available and merely required compilation from individual countries and data-holders.
- The lack of information on harvest bag numbers in many countries - a crucial component to any adaptive harvest management process - was highlighted as an issue of concern. It was agreed that assistance from FACE and the hunting community was essential to ensure that relevant and comparable harvest bag data was available. Involvement of the hunting community and managers in goose monitoring, harvest reporting and the adaptive harvest management process was seen as essential.

- The meeting requested that the costs of the establishment and running of the Goose Management Platform be presented in the context of the very significant current and potential future national subsidies/compensation costs for damage in the face of increasing goose populations.
- The meeting recognized the increasing pressure in many countries – particularly in Denmark and the Netherlands – to reduce the number of conflicts related to Barnacle Geese as well as to reduce the amount of subsidies/compensation paid.
- It was recommended that all three Barnacle Goose populations (breeding in Greenland, Svalbard and Russian/Baltic/North Sea, respectively) as well as resident breeding populations be included in any future International Management Plan – although the objectives and management approaches would have to be tailored to each population. Separate management planning processes should be run for each population and they should not be inter-dependent timewise.
- Initial discussions on possible objectives for the Russian/Baltic/North Sea Barnacle Goose population suggested a step-by-step approach, setting a relatively high initial population target to avoid the potential risk of overexploitation. Population targets set within the adaptive harvest management process could be adjusted over time, depending on the population trends of each population and related conflict resolutions.

**The following actions were agreed:**

- Seek a mandate for the development and establishment of a European Multi-species Goose Management Platform from the 6<sup>th</sup> Session of the Meeting of the Parties to AEWA in Bonn, Germany (9 - 14 November 2015).
- Secure buy-in and the long-term commitment from all relevant Range States to the process - including financial commitment - on the basis of further detailed planning in early 2016.
- Establish an adaptive harvest management process in early 2016 for the Taiga Bean Goose following adoption of the Action Plan at MOP6.
- Initiate the management-planning processes for the Barnacle and Greylag Goose once Range State commitment has been secured (in the course of 2016).
- Engage in legal discussions with the European Commission on derogations with respect to hunting and other management measures for the Barnacle Goose (which is currently on Annex I of the Birds Directive) in the EU Member States.
- Launch the European Multi-species Goose Management Platform in the course of 2017.
- Incorporate both the Pink-footed Goose and Taiga Bean Goose plans under the European Multi-species Goose Management Platform.