

PE1859/VV: Retain falconers' rights to practise upland falconry in Scotland

Petitioner written submission, 11 November 2025

I write in response to the Minister Jim Fairlie's submission of May the 13th 2025.

Most specifically, I note his comment about my successful application for a licence to take a limited number of mountain hares for a very specific purpose. This is true, but is incredibly niche and will not assist 99.9% of the admittedly small number of falconers wishing to practice upland falconry and hunt hares for the purpose and method, falconry. My licence does NOT assist the wider falconry community.

The points about having NatureScot produce a map of safe zones where hares are absent or in low number are as the Minister suggests, unhelpful because they do NOT address the aim of petition PE1859 which seeks an amendment to legislation to allow falconers to continue to practice upland falconry with a small number of mountain hares as the legitimate, natural and legal quarry.

With a number of falconers feeling very strongly about, and a smaller number actively wishing to return to upland falconry in Scotland, it is true that there is very strong support for the amendment to legislation to allow this form of falconry to continue as it has since pre-history. This is supported by over 9750 signatures so far on PE1859.

The Minister suggests that due and fair consideration will be given by the Government to an amendment to a Bill that would rectify the poor legislation that caught falconry as a bycatch following a harshly criticised Stage 3 amendment that created this intolerable situation.

Regardless of the personal opinions harboured by individual MSPs, any such amendment should be supported simply to correct this embarrassing procedural error allowed by Government and that sits as a stain on its reputation for fair governance and procedural respect.

On the point of the unfavourable - inadequate status listed for and retained for mountain hares, may I please clarify that this is in fact a little careful 'adaptation' of the numbers provided to Government by NatureScot. The report actually says the population is unfavourable - inadequate due to insufficient data. In short, they don't know how many there are because there is not enough data, so they have to show caution. When the report is used for propaganda, the 'insufficient data' part is left out for added gravity, and the NatureScot explanation is left out. This is not the responsible way, indeed it is a scurrilous way to use data to shape such far reaching legislation with massive repercussions for a minority activity, the participants of which were never given a voice during the process.

An amendment to a current Bill is being prepared now and will be lodged at the correct, responsible, and conventionally acceptable Stage 2. I urge the Committee

and Government to work to ensure that this amendment is fully supported in a bid to correct the grievous consequences inflicted on the falconry community, and to show willingness to put right what went wrong.