

PE2202/H: Stop the Guga Hunt

Murdo MacRitchie written submission, 6 March 2026

With regards to the above petition, can I ask that this petition be removed for consideration by the Committee?

This petition is ill informed and not grounded in facts.

The hunt is actually a harvest as every bird killed is consumed, there is no waste.

The term 'baby' has been used on so many occasions when the reality is the bird is of similar age to a regular chicken when it is harvested. If the age of the animal is an issue then this is something that needs to be applied across the food chain. Why is the guga being singled out?

The rate of despatch is approximately 1 bird every 3 seconds. The period from being caught to being killed is over in seconds. A single blow to the head to stun the animal followed by immediate decapitation. If the method of despatch is an issue then it should be compared to what happens in abattoirs where the animal goes through prolonged duress before being slaughtered. By comparison, the guga is treated way more humanely. Despite how our community has been portrayed, we are a community of animal lovers and no one takes the remotest pleasure in killing any animal, let alone the guga. It is completely wrong to suggest otherwise.

For years, decades and even centuries the guga has been harvested on a sustainable basis. It is not in our interests to decimate the stocks. As a community we have been self regulating as well as working with NatureScot to safeguard sustainability. We have built up specific knowledge of gannet numbers. The impact of avian flu in 2022 was horrendous. We saw the dead carcasses on our own shores around Ness. No license was applied for between 2022-2024 because we knew ourselves that it wasn't the right thing to do. We have a strong sense of stewardship and care over sula sgeir. Our team are transparent and open with the NatureScot team and work very well together as we both share a common goal of gannet sustainability. The team were accepting of the 75% quota reduction in 2025 and we look forward to the right time to get that number reinstated to 2000. If there are future outbreaks of Avian Flu then we know we will have to respond like we did in 2022.

The guga is a nutritional food source, rich in pelagic oil. It is a good, natural food source that has been part of our community for centuries. We find it deeply insulting to be told to buy alternative food in Tesco (like many have shouted at us to do). This just isn't right.

Can I also highlight the sustained attack our community has come under since this petition came into being. We have been vilified and denigrated by animal rights extremists. An orchestrated campaign of terror that has even seen NatureScot's offices in Edinburgh and Inverness vandalised. Photos of the men who take part in the harvest have been doctored and put online with salacious accusations. These

are men with young families who now fear for their families' safety. How can that be allowed to happen in one the most peaceful and gentle parts of our country?

To give credence to this petition is to give credence to misinformation and eco-terrorism. I ask that the Scottish Parliament dismiss this petition forthwith.