

Finlay Carson MSP  
c/o Clerk to the Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh EH99 1SP



31 October 2022

Dear Mr Carson

**Petition PE1490: Control of wild goose numbers**

In response to the email dated 22 September 2022 from the Assistant Clerk to the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee, we would like to make the following comments in addition to our response to the Committee on 20 June 2022.

As you are aware, Mairi McAllan MSP, Minister for Environment and Land Reform, provided Scottish Government funding of £50,000 for the current and next year to the former Adaptive Management Pilot areas for control of greylag geese. Taking the islands of Uist as an example, the allocated amount of £6,000 has been used by the Local Goose Management Group to shoot 750 geese during the Spring cull. It is anticipated this will again occur in Spring 2023 but no funding is in place thereafter. Storas Uibhist, the community landowner of South Uist and parts of Benbecula, has also provided financial support for shooting as their Chief Executive detailed in our previous response.

The most recent count of greylag geese undertaken during September has found some 7,050 geese, a reduction from the 2021 count of almost 8,000 birds. Although the 2022 count was carried out in poor weather conditions (wind and rain which tends to depress numbers of geese found) this represents a downward direction of travel which is desirable. On analysis of where geese were found there seems to have been reductions in numbers on the land owned by Storas Uibhist that may demonstrate the larger amount of money they spend has had better results than farther north where numbers remained static.

Since our previous response NatureScot together with RPID has undertaken a consultation questionnaire for the first stage of the National Goose Policy Review which included specific questions on the management of greylag geese. We are hopeful the review will help develop policy and methods that provides effective reductions in greylag goose populations in the former Adaptive Management Pilot areas. But such an approach must recognise the damage geese cause, in many cases, to High Nature Value and the world-renowned biodiversity which crofting and farming agriculture provides. Financial support has to be more equitable, for example, the Islay Goose Management Scheme has a budget of around £1m per year whereas Uist receives zero amount directly from NatureScot.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Krause  
Chief Executive