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Finlay Carson MSP  
Convener  
Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment  
Committee

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30 June 2022

Dear Convener,

Please find responses below to your request for further information in relation to PE1490: Control of wild goose numbers.

Questions posed to the Scottish Government:

- *The Committee agreed to keep the petition open and to write to both the Scottish Government and NatureScot to ask for an update on goose management projects and to request details of the timetable and likely scope of the 5-year review of goose policy which is scheduled to take place in 2022.*

The scope of the 5-year review of goose policy is being finalised and we will publish further details in due course, taking into consideration the threats and pressures that affect crofting systems as set out in this petition.

- *The Committee would, therefore, be interested to know what consideration NatureScot has given to undertaking an assessment of the impact of geese numbers on biodiversity in order to inform both geese management and biodiversity policy?*

The impact of geese on the biodiversity of the machair is briefly described in [this document](#).

Cropping is critical to the management of this very special habitat and high densities of geese can have an impact on it. In response to crofting and farming concerns, the focus was on management to reduce goose numbers, and the associated agricultural impacts, under a series of adaptive management pilots. These pilots did reduce the goose numbers in all but Orkney, where increases in numbers were contained. Scottish Government have, therefore, provided an additional 2 years of funding to support a further reduction cull.

Over the past 2 years, shooting effort has been reduced due to Covid-19 restrictions and greylag numbers have increased again, so it has not been possible to measure the impacts of reduced goose numbers on either agriculture or biodiversity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mairi McCallan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**MAIRI MCALLAN**