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UPDATE ON SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT BRACKEN WORKING GROUP ACTIONS

I am writing to update the Committee on the work of the Scottish Government Bracken Working Group.

The Group provides a forum for engagement on bracken management, helps identify research and evidence needs, and advises Scottish Ministers. One of its main tasks was to develop a Scottish Bracken Map to document current bracken coverage, support understanding of bracken impacts and treatment options, and enable future monitoring.

I would like to draw the Committee's attention to the recent publication of both a geospatial map of bracken cover in Scotland and a report on bracken presence and management in Scottish agricultural grassland. The report is available at https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781807755676 and an interactive viewer of the Scottish Bracken Map can be accessed at https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/613d2abdcd964aefbdcb7784e0f122df.

These resources will improve understanding of the distribution of bracken across Scotland and the approaches used to manage it, supporting the aims of the Scottish Bracken Working Group.

The Scottish Bracken Map uses 2024 satellite and aerial imagery to show the extent and likelihood of bracken occurrence in 10-metre squares across Scotland. The mapping identified approximately 208,000 hectares of bracken, with an overall accuracy of 85%. The map metadata has been made available under the Open Government Licence and can be downloaded and used freely by interested parties.

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The report presents the findings of a survey covering 97,000 hectares of Scottish agricultural grassland. Bracken was recorded on approximately 3,500 hectares, of which 322 hectares were subject to management, with mechanical control methods being the most commonly used approach.

I hope you find this update useful.

Yours sincerely,



JIM FAIRLIE

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