

Cross-Party Group on Sustainable Upland Management

Tuesday 6 September 2022, 18.30-20.00

Minute

Present

MSPs

Alexander Burnett MSP
Paul McLennan MSP

Invited guests

Dr Penelope Whitehorn (Highlands Rewilding)
Lianne MacLennan (Scotland's Regional Moorland Groups)
Mark Ewart (Scotland's Regional Moorland Groups)

Non-MSP Group Members

Kaley Cochran (Office of Brian Whittle MSP)
Ian Thomson (RSPB)
Michael Thornton (Lothian & Borders Raptor Study Group)
Patrick Krause (Scottish Crofting Federation)
Peter Clark (BASC)
Robbie Douglas Miller (The Hopes Estate)
Ross Ewing (Scottish Land & Estates)
Tim Baynes (Scottish Land & Estates)
Stephen Young (Scottish Land & Estates)
Simon Ritchie (Scottish Land & Estates)

Apologies

Chris Wernham (British Trust for Ornithology)
Claudia Rowse (Naturescot)
Davy McCracken (SRUC)
Gemma Cooper (NFU Scotland)
Helen Todd (Ramblers Scotland)
Jake Swindells (Scottish Countryside Alliance)
Max Wiszniewski (Revive)
Mike Daniels (John Muir Trust)
Nora Casey (RSPB)

Agenda item 1

Apologies were recorded as above.

Agenda item 2

Minutes of the last meeting (8 February 2022) were proposed by Stephen Young and seconded by Ross Ewing.

The convenor welcomed everyone and said a lot of work had done into organising some excellent speakers for this evening's meeting. Convenor proposed we keep all Q&A to the end of the three presentations, and this is reported here as a separate agenda item.

Agenda item 3

Highlands Rewilding – an overview by Dr Penelope Whitehorn

Agenda item 4

The Hopes Estate: A view on managing Scotland's uplands for shooting and farming by Robbie Douglas Miller

Agenda item 5

Scotland's Regional Moorland Groups: An Overview by Lianne MacLennan and Mark Ewart

Agenda item 6

Q&A

A discussion followed about the three presentations. Attendees made the following points:

- Grouse moors can bring certain benefits but care must be given to accurate reporting. For example, when talking about raptor persecution, we must remember the likelihood that reported and investigated instances do not account for all crimes; undetected crimes are an unknown quantity.
- Rewilding efforts must be funded by a range of sources and not rely overly on the sale of carbon credits

- Current upland management practices are often unsustainable and consideration should be given to introducing apex predators to balance numbers of perceived “pest” predators such as foxes.

Agenda item 7

MSP update

The convenor explained that the Scottish Government had announced its 2022-23 Programme for Government (PfG) today. The PfG contains a commitment to introduce a Wildlife Management (Grouse) Bill.

Agenda item 8

Date and topic(s) of next meeting

The date of the next meeting will be confirmed in due course. It will need to be an AGM, and take place before 27 November.