

PE1615/D

Scottish Moorland Group and British Association for Shooting and Conservation letter of 7 November 2016.

Following our previous correspondence to the committee prior to the meeting on October 27, 2016, we watched the evidence session regarding PE01615 with keen interest.

To us, the evidence amounted to little more than an attack on grouse shooting rather than an objective presentation of facts from the petitioners on their perceived need for a licensing system for all gamebird hunting and how that would operate.

In our view the petitioners made a number of serious but unsupported allegations about grouse shooting, most notably that it is an industry 'sustained by criminality'. This kind of ill-informed invective served only to traduce estates, gamekeepers and land managers who work hard and conscientiously not only creating rural enterprise and economic activity in these remote areas, but also undertaking much needed species conservation and habitat management.

We do understand that the role of the Public Petitions Committee is to assess whether a petition is admissible rather than to examine the merits of the case in fine detail at this stage. However, we would respectfully suggest that in the interests of fairness some balancing evidence is considered by the committee before it makes its decision to refer onwards or otherwise. For example, we believe it would be helpful for the committee to be appraised of the progress of existing regulatory measures and initiatives.

If you find it suitable, we would welcome the opportunity for representatives from the Scottish Moorland Group and British Association for Shooting and Conservation to attend the next meeting of the committee to provide short oral evidence on these matters and address briefly the misleading criticisms of the shooting industry.

We appreciate the committee has indicated it is likely it will refer this petition to the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee in due course and believe that it is in everyone's interests for there to be balanced evidence at each stage of the parliamentary process.

Yours sincerely,

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