

# PE2202/C: Stop the Guga Hunt

## OneKind written submission, 7 January 2026

OneKind is a charity working to protect and improve the lives of all of Scotland's animals. We have a strong track record of working with the Scottish Parliament to that end, providing reliable, evidence-based recommendations to members and committees. We submit this in support of petition PE2202 to end the guga hunt.

One of our concerns is ethical: tradition does not justify the killing of young gannets (or any other animal). Our other concern is that this practice negatively impacts the welfare of the guga, their parents, and other nearby birds.

The Scottish Government response to the petition states that: "Most of the gugas will be killed by a single blow to the head. Where a second blow is required, it is very likely that the first will have rendered the bird unconscious. In our view therefore the method used to kill the gugas does not involve unnecessary suffering."

However, this is based on assumption, not evidence. In practice, manual killing depends on the skill of the operator and the conditions they are working under, and so can vary widely in terms of its efficacy and welfare impact. This contrasts with far more controlled conditions required in slaughterhouses and laboratories, for example. Relying on a blow to the head as a manner of killing will always pose some level of animal welfare risk, as we have previously pointed out in relation to crow killing (following trapping), for example. In the case of men working precariously while roped up on cliffsides, the potential for ineffective stunning is likely to increase.

This Scottish Government response also ignores the suffering caused by the method of capture, which will cause fear and distress to the guga, their parents, and other nearby birds.

A range of egregious harms are currently permitted because they are not considered 'unnecessary suffering' under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. At almost twenty years old it is time to review this Act, including how the unnecessary suffering offence is understood and applied.

Wildlife legislation offers inconsistent protection to animals, because it developed piecemeal over more than a century, during times when animal sentience was less understood and wild animal welfare was not prioritised sufficiently. It is also inconsistent, fragmented, confusing and difficult to enforce.

So, modern legislation with precautionary, ethical, animal-centred provisions is needed to prevent anomalies like this and give more equitable protections to animals. In the short term, we agree with the petitioner that removing the relevant provision from the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 is necessary to prevent the guga hunt from continuing.

Unlike other licensable purposes under that Act, the provision permitting the guga hunt is not related to wildlife 'management'. Also, unlike for other licensable

purposes, there is no provision in the law that a licence shall not be granted unless the licensing authority is satisfied that there is no other satisfactory solution. Effectively, this means that NatureScot will grant this licence if it is applied for, unless they have evidence it will risk the conservation status of the species. As such, legislative change is needed.

Thus, we urge the Committee to press the Scottish Government on this and keep this petition open so that the issue can be addressed fully in the next session of Parliament.