

Ref: 20231003RAI

03 October 2023



**Finlay Carson MSP**  
**Convenor of the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee**  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

Dear Convenor,

**Letter from land managers regarding proposed ban on snares and cable restraints**

Today 150 members of the land management community have written to the Environment Minister, Gillian Martin MSP, to set out several concerns in relation to the intention to ban snares and cable restraints.

The letter – which I have appended to this correspondence for your reference – corrects several assertions made by the Scottish Government in relation to the availability and efficacy of alternative wildlife management tools, namely shooting and the use of live-capture traps. It also calls on the Minister to retain humane cable restraints under licence for conservation, protecting livestock and research – a position land managers view to be a reasonable compromise.

Given the deep-seated concern among land managers about this matter, I am sharing the appended copy of this correspondence in full on their behalf for consideration by the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee as part of its stage one deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

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

**Ross Ewing**  
**Director of Moorland**  
**Scottish Land & Estates**

## APPENDIX

Our Ref: 20231003GM

03 October 2023

**Gillian Martin MSP**  
**Minister for Energy and the Environment**  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

Dear Minister,

### **Snares and Humane Cable Restraints**

We write to you today united in our concern about the Scottish Government's intention to ban snares and cable restraints under the Wildlife Management and Muirburn Bill.

All signatories to this letter are members of the land management community – including gamekeepers and farmers – and we consider ourselves to be the subject matter experts when it comes to the use of such devices, and indeed managing predation pressures more broadly. We write to you today to correct several assertions that the Scottish Government have made about the use of snares / cable restraints, and to implore you to retain humane cable restraints (which are distinguishable from conventional snares via three unique characteristics) under licence for conservation, protecting livestock and research.

The Scottish Government stated the following in its consultation paper<sup>1</sup> on banning snares and cable restraints:

*“The Scottish Government is satisfied that other, more humane and efficient methods of predator control such as shooting and trapping are available to land managers and that a ban on the use of snares would not prevent them from undertaking necessary wildlife management.” (p.8)*

Further, in response to a written parliamentary question from Kate Forbes MSP, you stated the following:

*“We have not seen any evidence so far of any situations where no other form of predator control other than snaring is available to land managers.” (S6W-21118)*

The above assertions caught land managers across Scotland by surprise. Indeed, on the diverse landholdings we manage, there are numerous places where – due to woodland expansion, thick cover, topography, access constraints and other factors – snares and cable restraints are unequivocally *the only wildlife management tools available to us*.

We understand that your predecessor, Mairi McAllan, was invited - during a meeting with Scottish Land & Estates on 28 February 2023 - to visit an estate where the use of humane cable restraints is integral and,

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<sup>1</sup> The Scottish Government (2023) Wildlife Management and Muirburn (Scotland) Bill: use of snares and powers of Scottish SPCA inspectors Consultation. Available here: [Supporting documents - Wildlife Management and Muirburn \(Scotland\) Bill: use of snares and powers of Scottish SPCA inspectors - consultation - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2023/09/Supporting_documents_-_Wildlife_Management_and_Muirburn_(Scotland)_Bill:_use_of_snares_and_powers_of_SPCA_inspectors_-_consultation_-_gov.scot)

without which, predators simply could not be managed. It is regrettable that you have not been able to take up such an invitation which would have perhaps avoided the erroneous sentiments we have highlighted above.

To be clear, shooting in thick cover is not safe, nor possible, for reasons we hope you can appreciate. Land managers will not take chances when it comes to the use of high velocity rifles, and there are no circumstances under which a shot would be taken unless it was evident and apparent that a safe backstop was in place. In thick cover or undulating topography, the determination of a backstop is often impossible, rendering shooting out of the question.

The consultation paper also makes reference to trapping being a “more humane and efficient” method of predator control. We feel compelled to point out to you that both humane cable restraints and live capture traps have met the same humaneness standard under the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTS), so it is inaccurate to state that live capture traps are “more humane”. Moreover, it is completely fictitious to state that trapping is more efficient. Of those GWCT live capture traps deployed on 26 Scottish estates managed for driven grouse shooting between 2021 and 2023, none have actually trapped a fox which speaks to their inefficacy. They are by no means a viable replacement for the humane cable restraint.

With all this in mind, we hope you will consider retaining the humane cable restraint under licence from NatureScot for the purposes of conservation, protecting livestock and research. It is our assessment that failure to do so will result in irreparable harm to rural businesses and biodiversity. The position we have set out in this letter constitutes a reasonable compromise which we very much hope you will be minded to accept.

A copy of this correspondence has been copied to the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee as part of their stage one deliberations. Thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Craig Jones Southern Uplands Moorland Group	Laura Jones Southern Uplands Moorland Group	Sean Barker Southern Uplands Moorland Group
Steven Nairn Southern Uplands Moorland Group	Gary Scollon Southern Uplands Moorland Group	Rob Hankey Southern Uplands Moorland Group
Dale Craven Southern Uplands Moorland Group	Harry Colthart Southern Uplands Moorland Group	Josh Carrick Southern Uplands Moorland Group
Joseph Gerbhouse Southern Uplands Moorland Group	Drew Dickman Southern Uplands Moorland Group	Jamie Goodall Southern Uplands Moorland Group

Jake Middlemiss Southern Uplands Moorland Group	Conor Kelly Southern Moorland Group	Uplands	James Smith Southern Uplands Moorland Group
Ben White Southern Uplands Moorland Group	Andrew Ainslie Southern Moorland Group	Uplands	Rory Butler Southern Uplands Moorland Group
Pamela Butler Southern Uplands Moorland Group	Craig Dickman Southern Moorland Group	Uplands	Gary Kennedy Southern Uplands Moorland Group
Scott Brown Southern Uplands Moorland Group	Ali Docker Southern Moorland Group	Uplands	Jamie Smith Southern Uplands Moorland Group
Zach Shaw Southern Uplands Moorland Group	Chris Roberts Southern Moorland Group	Uplands	Philip Savage Southern Uplands Moorland Group
Dylan McHale Southern Uplands Moorland Group	Daniel Scobie Southern Moorland Group	Uplands	Ben Purves Southern Uplands Moorland Group
Conor Macintosh Southern Uplands Moorland Group	Craig Gibb Southern Moorland Group	Uplands	Ethan Bulman Southern Uplands Moorland Group
Johnny Fraser Southern Uplands Moorland Group	Matt Beaumont Southern Moorland Group	Uplands	Christian Korsten Southern Uplands Moorland Group
Simon Thurwell Southern Uplands Moorland Group	Hailey Anderson Southern Moorland Group	Uplands	Richard Wilson Southern Uplands Moorland Group
Andrew Buchan Southern Uplands Moorland Group	Dan Waite Southern Moorland Group	Uplands	Jamie Steel Southern Uplands Moorland Group
Stuart Bell Southern Uplands Moorland Group	Nick Tokely Southern Moorland Group	Uplands	Geral Woods Southern Uplands Moorland Group

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Robert Hogarth  
Southern Uplands  
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Philip Woods  
Southern Uplands Moorland  
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Joe Harmeison  
Southern Uplands Moorland  
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Jaap Roell  
Southern Uplands  
Moorland Group

Edward Brown  
Southern Uplands Moorland  
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Ian Elliot  
Southern Uplands Moorland  
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Daniel Smith  
Southern Uplands  
Moorland Group

Mark Ewart  
Southern Uplands Moorland  
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Danny Lawson  
Angus Glens Moorland  
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Colin Lanyon  
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William Curr  
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Alastair Mather  
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Alistair Brown  
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Sean Mccubbin  
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Grant Wyness  
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Martyn Rennie  
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Calum Robertson  
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Lawrie Sloan  
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Finlay Shand  
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Tom Mainprize  
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Martin Taylor  
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Scott Stephenson  
Angus Glens Moorland  
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Finnley Struthers  
Angus Glens Moorland  
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Callum Sommerville  
Angus Glens Moorland  
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James Fairlie  
Angus Glens Moorland  
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Alasdair Saunders  
Angus Glens Moorland  
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Garry MacLennan  
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Jake Swan  
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Lianne MacLennan  
Angus Glens Moorland  
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Connor Gray  
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Finlay Davidson  
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Cameron Low  
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Greg Watson  
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Will Paragreen  
Angus Glens Moorland  
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Ben Gunn  
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Neal Annand  
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Philip Valentine  
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Nadia Flaherty  
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Nicola Hannah  
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Rex Lawson  
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Anthony Bamford  
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Michale Bennett  
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Craig Hepburn  
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Calum Pearson  
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Sean Dillon  
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Arthur Fernie  
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Kevin Hepburn  
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Gavin Hannam  
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