

Finlay Carson MSP  
c/o Clerk to the Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

27 May 2022

Dear Mr Carson,

**PETITION PE1490: Control of wild goose numbers**

Thank you for your letter in relation to the above petition.

In response to the key issues you have raised, please see the detail below:

**Goose Management Projects**

NatureScot currently run 6 goose management schemes for wintering geese in Islay, Solway, Kintyre, Tiree & Coll, Uist and South Walls. These help land managers to support populations of wintering geese associated with neighbouring Special Protection Areas. The current schemes end in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, we also administer, on behalf of Scottish Government, funding for greylag goose management in the areas that have participated in adaptive management pilots since 2012. This is in place for 2022 and 2023.<sup>2</sup>

**Impacts on biodiversity**

Cropping is critical to the management of this very special habitat and high densities of geese can have an impact on it. In response to crofting and farming concerns, the focus was on management to reduce goose numbers, and the associated agricultural impacts, under a series of adaptive management pilots. These pilots did reduce the goose numbers in all but Orkney, where increases in numbers were contained. Scottish Government have, therefore, provided an additional 2 years of funding to support a further reduction cull.

Over the past 2 years, shooting effort has been reduced due to Covid restrictions and greylag numbers have increased again, so it has not been possible to measure the impacts of reduced goose numbers on either agriculture or biodiversity.<sup>3</sup>

### **Goose Policy Review**

The Commissioning Statement for the Goose Policy Review will be submitted to the Minister for approval shortly and we expect the work will be completed before the end of the year. We anticipate that the Minister will ask us to consider all of the issues raised in this petition and will set out recommendations for future goose management.

Yours sincerely,



**Francesca Osowska OBE FRSE**  
Chief Executive

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Annex: Useful links for further information.

<sup>1</sup> A review of the adaptive management pilots is available here:

<https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2019-05/Goose%20policy%20-%20Adaptive%20Management%20Pilots%20for%20Resident%20Greylag%20Geese%20in%20Scotland.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Further information on goose management schemes is available here:

<https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/land-and-sea-management/managing-wildlife/managing-geese>

<sup>3</sup> The impact of geese on the biodiversity of the machair is briefly described here:

<https://machairlife.org.uk/machair-life-wildlife-booklet.pdf>.