

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

1st Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Wednesday 19
January 2022

PE1888: Full Legal Protection for Hedgehogs and Moles

Note by the Clerk

Lodged:	27 July 2021
Petitioner	Joseph Allan
Petition summary	Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to grant full legal protection to hedgehogs and moles.
Webpage	https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1888

Introduction

1. This is a continued petition last considered by the Committee on [3 November 2021](#).
2. At its last consideration, the Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Wildlife Trust, the Hogwatch Scotland project and the Mammal Society to seek their views on the action called for in the petition.
3. Responses have been received from Hogwatch Scotland and the Scottish Wildlife Trust.

Background

4. During its last consideration, the Committee considered submissions from the Scottish Government and the petitioner.

5. In its submission, the Scottish Government confirmed its commitment to enhancing biodiversity and to protecting vulnerable species in Scotland. The Scottish Government submission stated that the hedgehog is listed on Appendix III of the Bern Convention and Schedule 6 of the 1981 Act which makes it illegal to kill or capture them using specified methods.
6. The Scottish Government also said that there were no plans to extend the legal protection for hedgehogs or to their breeding sites, nor did it have any information to suggest that the species is in danger of extinction in Scotland.
7. Similarly, the Scottish Government confirmed it did not have any definitive data to show that the mole population was declining and asked the petitioner to provide further information about his concerns in this respect.
8. The Scottish Government stated that it will carefully consider any recommendations made by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee following review of Schedules 5 and 8 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) through a legislative process known as the Quinquennial Review (QQR). This process is required under the 1981 Act and aims to ensure that the list of protected species is up to date. The conclusions of the latest review are due to be published in Spring 2022.
9. In response to the Scottish Government, the petitioner explains that moles emerge from beneath the ground once a year for mating purposes. The submission continues by stating that the moles have to work hard to construct a complex structure of tunnels to provide their food supply of earthworms and that continual construction is destroying their natural habitat.
10. Regarding hedgehogs, the petitioner explains that the loss of natural habitat means that areas are more prone to flooding. Although hedgehogs are good swimmers, they cannot easily get out of water and often drown.

Stakeholder submissions

11. Since this petition was last considered, the Committee has received stakeholder submissions from the Hogwatch Scotland project (operated by The Conservation Volunteers in Scotland) and the Scottish Wildlife Trust.
12. In their submission, Hogwatch Scotland explain that their Citizen Science project is funded by the British Hedgehog Preservation Society and is focussed on the recording and protection of hedgehog numbers in Scotland.
13. According to Hogwatch Scotland, Hedgehog numbers in Britain have fallen from an estimated 30 million in the 1960s to just 1.5 million in recent years and numbers continue to decline. This resulted in hedgehogs being added to the list of JNCC

priority species for conservation action in 2007. However, Hogwatch Scotland advises that the Scottish biodiversity list categorises hedgehogs in the “Watching Brief Only” category. This means hedgehogs are considered of “less concern” and only require monitoring, rather than active management to prevent further declines at present. Hogwatch Scotland considers that the declines already shown by current estimates require a more proactive approach.

14. Hogwatch Scotland has engaged with over 147 volunteers since it began in 2019 and has recorded over 400 sightings of hedgehogs. Through its work with nearly 60 schools and community groups since July 2020, it believes that the level of engagement it receives from the public regarding this project indicates that the public and local communities have an interest in protecting hedgehogs. It also believes that increasing the level of protection afforded to hedgehogs in Scotland and raising awareness about their conservation could drive conservation efforts from the public, particularly in urban settings.
15. In its submission, the Scottish Wildlife Trust (the Trust), explains that it is very concerned about the decline in hedgehog numbers, which is highlighted by the fact that it is currently considered vulnerable to extinction on the [Red List for Scottish Mammals](#).
16. Furthermore, the Trust would like to see concerted action to protect Hedgehogs and other vulnerable species by increasing legal protection and directly addressing the causes of their decline such as changing land use and agricultural intensification, predation and road accidents.
17. The submission states that in the Trust’s view, there does not seem to be evidence to suggest that moles have experienced similar declines to those of hedgehogs. The submission concludes that given the general trends in biodiversity in Scotland as illustrated by the State of Nature Report, the Trust believes that more needs to be done to mitigate the impact that human activity has on all biodiversity. The Trust believes this is especially important if we are to achieve the Scottish Government’s ambition to address both the nature and climate crises together.

Action

The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerk to the Committee

Annexe

The following submissions are circulated in connection with consideration of the petition at this meeting –

[PE1888/B: Hogwatch submission of 6 December 2021](#)

[PE1888/C: Scottish Wildlife Trust submission of 8 December 2021](#)