

Ms Anne Peat
Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
Room T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP



Your ref: Petition PE1124

22 May 2012

Dear Ms Peat

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1124

Thank you for your letter of 18 April 2012 on behalf of the Public Petitions Committee (PPC) seeking a response to the following points that were raised at their meeting on 17 April 2012 in their consideration of Petition PE1124.

- The report of the work on snaring undertaken on behalf of DEFRA has now been published. What is the Scottish Government's view of the report's findings and the extent to which problems and issues identified in that report exist in Scotland?
- What actions does the Scottish Government intend to take and to what timescales?

We were interested to read the report. We believe that many of the issues identified in the report have already been addressed in Scotland. We have gone further than other parts of the UK in addressing animal welfare considerations through strengthening of the law on snaring and through the promotion of best practice.

The Scottish Government has been working with the land management industry over the last four years to improve the animal welfare aspects of snaring in Scotland. The industry code of practice 'Snaring in Scotland – A Practitioners' Guide produced by BASC Scotland, the Scottish Gamekeepers Association and the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust is reviewed and amended as necessary, to take into account of any legislative changes to the law on snaring in Scotland. The recommendations in the Code, now have legal effect through the changes brought in by the Snares (Scotland) Order 2010 and the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act 2011

The Snares (Scotland) Order 2010 introduced measures to improve animal welfare in snaring, such as the compulsory fitting of stops, and prohibiting the setting of a snares in locations that could lead to a captured animal drowning, or could be liable to entanglement

which could lead to a slow strangulation. It is also illegal to possess or sell self-locking snares in Scotland

Snaring provisions contained in the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act 2011 include snaring operators attending a compulsory snaring training course and the introduction of unique identification numbers and tagging system for snares. The Independent Working Group on Snaring noted that there could be high numbers of non-target species caught in snares, but this could be reduced through training and careful attention to best practice. The requirement for snaring operators to attend a compulsory snaring training course, which will be introduced shortly, and the technical improvements that have been made should reduce the number of non-target species caught and allow any that have been accidentally caught to be released unharmed. Snaring operators will also be required to keep specific records. These include the location of every snare set, the date on which the snare was set, and details of any species of animal caught which will make snaring operators more accountable.

The PPC also ask what actions does the Scottish Government intend to take and to what timescales. At present our intention is to allow the the changes in the regulations to take effect and to assess their impact when we review the regulations on snaring in Scotland in 2016 as required by the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act 2011. A report on the findings will be required to be laid before the Scottish Parliament.

While we believe that we have done more in Scotland on this issue than in other parts of the UK, we are not complacent. We intend to keep a close eye on technical developments in snaring and on proposals for improving animal welfare that emerge from consideration of the issue in other comparable countries.

I am copying this letter to Dave Thomson, Business Manager, Rural and Environment Directorate, for his information.

Yours sincerely

John Gray