

Public Petitions Committee
Room TG.01
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

01 August 2008

Dear Clerk,

PETITION 1124

Thank you for this further opportunity to respond to the committee's request. We apologise for failing to respond initially. We do not understand how this occurred since it is our routine policy to reply quickly to such enquiries, and must conclude that this was an administrative error on our part.

At an earlier stage, in January 2007, RSPB Scotland responded to the government consultation on snaring. This response can be viewed at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/174964/0049245.pdf>.

We do not allow the use of snares on our own nature reserves, in part because, on advice from SSPCA and RSPCA, we choose to adopt higher welfare standards than the law currently requires. We would take no issue, however, with the snaring regimes of other organisations or land managers, provided these were within the law in a properly regulated framework. This is essentially because the principle issue, animal welfare, mainly in regard to mammals, is not central to the Society's formal remit.

We do have concerns about animals other than target species being caught, e.g. capercaillie. In our consultation response, we proposed a licensing arrangement with licence applicants and the licensing authority required to take account of the likelihood of by-catch of specially protected species. We further suggested that in cases where a serious risk was identified, alternative legal pest control measures should be deployed. The RSPB supports proposals by the Scottish Government to tighten up the technical specifications relating to snares, since these measures should help to improve enforcement against illegal snaring activity, which we perceive to be widespread.

In general, the RSPB sees predator control as a tool of last resort and prefers to use non-lethal methods or habitat management to mitigate predation. This approach is outlined in our recent report "*The Predation of Wild Birds in the UK: A review of its conservation impact and management*" which can be viewed at http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/Predator%20Report_tcm9-177905.pdf.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julia Harrison" followed by a horizontal line.

Julia Harrison
Parliamentary Officer