

Petition 1124

Response from petitioners, December 2008

We note that the Scottish Government has expended considerable resources to respond to our petition. We disagree with some of the points raised and note also that some important points in our submission to the meeting of 9 September 2008 have not been addressed.

We are preparing a further detailed response to the Minister's paper, and we will lodge this with the Clerk before the Committee meeting on 13 January. However, we are not sure that it is helpful to continue presenting lengthy papers to the Committee, given that Members are naturally constrained in the time they can devote to any one issue.

Our Petition now stands at 9,454 signatures and we continue to receive returns from the public. A recent public opinion survey showed that support for a complete ban on snaring had risen to 79%. In May 2008, the Minister for Environment stated that he had received 7,192 representations regarding the snaring of animals, of which 7,182 (99.9%) were calling for a ban. Our own survey of veterinary surgeons in Scotland indicated that 75% of vets thought that snares should be made illegal. We have also completed our survey of local authorities and have established that no Scottish council uses snares on its land: as a result of our inquiries, two councils have expressed an interest in establishing a formal no-snaring policy.

We ask the Committee to note that, although both Advocates for Animals and the League Against Cruel Sports agreed to attend a Scottish Government working group to consider the proposals to regulate snaring, this task was re-allocated to a sub-group of the Partnership Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) Scotland of which we are not able to become members.

We respectfully request the Public Petitions Committee to keep our Petition open and to consider the best way that the Scottish Parliament can address the many points of debate and the enormous public concern that attaches to this issue.

Members of the Scottish Parliament have not had a chance to represent their constituents' views in a proper debate. At this stage we ask the Committee to progress the Petition by referring it to a forum – either the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee or the whole Parliament - where it can receive detailed scrutiny and where the serious issue of snaring and animal welfare can be debated.