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Animal Concern Advice Line (ACAL) is a recognised Scottish charity: No. SC030982. Animal Concern Advice Line was established in 2001 to take on the charitable work of Animal Concern which was founded as the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society in 1876.
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To all ACAL, Animal Concern and SOSF supporters.

Hi,

Yet again I'm starting with an apology to those of you awaiting a reply to an e-mail or a letter. I had two days off and also spent a few days dealing with things for the AGMs. I'm now working through the backlog and should be up to date in the next week or two. It is currently taking me circa 3 weeks to answer non-urgent e-mails and letters. If you wait longer than that feel free to send me an arse-kicker (aka a polite reminder).

My main reason for writing is to bring you some very welcome news. As you may know we have been trying to get the Scottish Government to appoint a Minister for Conservation and Animal Welfare. We started lobbying on this when the devolved Scottish Government was established and it became apparent that our Environment Minister was also Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, playing the role of both poacher and gamekeeper.

It was ridiculous to see successive Environment Ministers campaigning for increased fishing quotas in Brussels. On several occasions our Environment Ministers "protected" our marine environment by going to places including New York and Beijing where they took on the guise of international fishmongers, flogging salmon from the mainly Norwegian- owned filthy floating factory fish farms fouling our sea lochs and killing our wildlife.

For me the last straw came about a year ago when Dr. Aileen McLeod, then Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, presented the prize for Young Gamekeeper of the Year at an event organised by the Scottish Gamekeepers Association (SGA). In her oration praising the `keepers Dr. McLeod scored a spectacular own goal by thanking the SGA "for all the long term support which you have provided to Scottish Government in various areas of policy, development and implementation and making sure we are implementing best practices of conservation and wildlife (sic) and wildlife management....".

After that performance I asked Dr. McLeod if she would ask the SGA if any of the gamekeepers convicted of wildlife crimes including illegally killing birds of prey were members of the SGA. My request was refused!

A few weeks later an advisor to the Government on wild salmon conservation (not an SGA member) was removed from that advisory position but only after I publicly made a bit of a fuss about the suitability of someone convicted of several counts of breaching salmon conservation legislation as an advisor on salmon conservation legislation!

If you give one Government Minister the job of protecting wildlife and the environment, while at the same time asking them to represent farming, fishing and bloodsports interests you give them an impossible task and that is why, for the last seventeen years, we have campaigned for these portfolios to be split.

In December last year I wrote to all the political parties in Scotland asking them to include such a commitment in their manifestos for the Scottish general election in May 2016. Manifestos are contracts between politicians and the electorate. A manifesto tells you what you are going to get if you elect a specific party to Government. The weird thing about this year's Scottish General Election was the lack of manifestos. Some were not published until a few days before polling day. Parties sought election on personalities and political patter power, not on policies.

When the SNP regained office I immediately wrote to First Minister Sturgeon asking her to split Ag/Fish and Environment/Conservation/Animal Welfare into two separate government departments. I wrote to our supporters and I know several of you sent excellent e-mails and letters to the First Minister adding your support to the call for a new approach. As far as I know we were the only organisation to lobby for this fundamental but common sense change in Government.

It appears we have, after seventeen years of lobbying, achieved at least partial success. When Nicola Sturgeon unveiled her new Cabinet she had indeed devolved the rural portfolio. She appointed Roseanna Cunningham MSP Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform with responsibility for "Climate change, flood prevention, water quality, land reform, physical and marine environment, sustainable development, biodiversity, natural heritage, environmental protection, environmental and climate justice, national parks, Scottish Water and The Crown Estate". We will lobby Cabinet Secretary Cunningham on numerous issues including persecution of wildlife, conservation of wild animals and fish and protection of the natural environment.

Fergus Ewing MSP was appointed Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity with responsibility for "Rural Scotland, Highlands Islands Enterprise, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, aquaculture, food and drink, crofting, transport, connectivity including 100 per cent broadband." We will be lobbying Cabinet Secretary Ewing on farm animal welfare, live transport, aquaculture and the culling associated with forestry.

You will have noticed that "Animal Welfare" is not specified in the portfolio of either Cabinet Secretary. That is a great pity, especially as animal welfare continues to be one of the most common issues people contact their politicians about. It also means it is unclear as to which Cabinet Secretary we should lobby on issues such as animal act circuses, puppy farms, dog fighting and the like. I think we will start with Roseanna Cunningham and see how it goes from there.

You are due another pat on the back for supporting the campaign to ban air weapons in Scotland. This was my first campaign back in the 1970s when I was a volunteer with the fledgling Friends of the Earth (Scotland) and it was one of the first initiatives taken on by Animal Concern. Some of you will know how long ago that was when I tell you that Frankie Vaughan supported our campaign. We didn't get the full ban we wanted but licensing of air weapons comes in this December and

guns are currently being handed in for destruction.

I'm not one for blowing trumpets or exaggerating the results of our work but I am proud to think that we have had some influence on these major changes in Government policy.

To contact any Minister in the Scottish Government please send your e-mail to: scottish.ministers@gov.scot From there your e-mail will be delivered to the Minister to whom it is addressed. Add this address to your e-mail list now.

If you live in Scotland please also make yourself an e-mail list of your own MSPs. To get their details please go to: <http://www.parliament.scot/help/32438.aspx> Once you have that list you could drop them a brief note congratulating them on being elected and letting them know that you will be contacting them on various animal related issues which you hope they will be able to support.

You might also want to complete your politician contact list with your MP (details here: <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/>) and your Members of the European Parliament (though you may want to wait until after June 23rd just in case this is no longer necessary).

If we are still part of the EU on June 24th you will find your MEP details here: <http://www.europarl.org.uk/en/your-meps.html>

Why not invest half an hour in creating your own politicians e-mail address book? It will save you a lot of time in the future as I will be seeking your help to do a lot of lobbying in the next few years. I'll write to you again soon with details of our first lobby of the new Scottish Government.

Cheers 4 now,

John

PS If you can think of anyone else who might find this e-mail of interest please pass it on. If for any reason you do not want to receive our e-mails in future just hit reply and put unsubscribe in the subject line.