



ANIMAL CONCERN

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Tuesday, 20 February 2007

Rt. Hon. Jack McConnell MSP.,
First Minister,
The Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

Dear First Minister,

I write concerning Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the use of public funds by that body.

Earlier today SNH announced a major U-turn on the culling of hedgehogs in the Uists. They will now relocate hedgehogs to the mainland instead of killing them. This humane, common sense alternative to lethal controls is something Animal Concern and other organisations proposed before culling started. At the very least SNH should have conducted a trial relocation project instead of leaving it to animal welfare charities to do this.

I read in the newspapers at the weekend that SNH are granting over £250,000 to the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) to help run Mar Lodge Estate. It is claimed the grant is conditional on NTS promoting deer stalking and grouse shooting on the estate. I had to take Andrew Thin to task on deer shooting when he first became Chairman of SNH and called for deer stalking to be made more easily available to ordinary people. Deer culling should not be left to paying tourists but carried out humanely by expert guns.

I am also very concerned that although the law calls for SNH to determine whether or not specific circumstances validate the issue of SEGEN licenses to kill certain species of birds, the organisation carries out no scrutiny at all of license applications and allows them to be downloaded from the SEERAD website without any scrutiny or checks. In one incident a major supermarket chain was persuaded by a member of the public to install screens to keep birds out of its Inverness store – SNH should have done this instead of allowing birds to be shot under the provision of a license downloaded (illegally in my opinion) from the internet.

I believe SNH has wasted public money killing hedgehogs in the Uists by refusing to even try the alternatives which were available. I believe SNH intends misusing public money by encouraging the killing of deer and grouse at Mar Lodge – it is not the SNH's job to promote shooting. I believe SNH has neglected its duty to protect birds from being shot by allowing SEERAD to issue SEGEN without any scrutiny from SNH.

Animal Concern asks that you initiate an independent investigation into the management and running of SNH and the use of public funds by that organisation.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,
Campaigns Consultant