

Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity
Ministear an Àiteachais agus Ceangal
Jim Fairlie MSP
Jim Fairlie BPA

 Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Finlay Carson MSP
Convener
Rural Affairs and Islands Committee
c/o Clerk to the Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

01 July 2024

Dear Convener

Petition PE1490: Control of wild goose numbers

Thank you for your letter of 4 June 2024 on behalf of the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee seeking an update from the Scottish Government on the resources currently being allocated to support local goose management schemes and other control measures in Scotland.

The Scottish Government currently spends a significant amount of funding on goose schemes and goose management. The total funding allocated is just over £1m each year. The majority of that funding is focused on providing compensation for farmers and crofters hosting highly protected goose species of high conservation value (barnacle and white-fronted geese). **Table 1 in Annex A** provides a breakdown of the funding provided for hosting these species.

A smaller amount of funding has been provided since 2012 to prevent and mitigate damage to agriculture from resident greylag geese. Increasing populations of resident greylag geese is a more recent issue and the support provided for the management of resident greylag geese was initially setup to run from 2012-2017 through four pilot projects. This funding has never been provided as compensation for the damage to farmland caused by resident greylag geese. Greylag geese are not protected to the same extent as other species and the support provided was to demonstrate how local goose management groups could control resident greylag goose populations.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE[™]
We invest in people Silver



This support has been extended to Uist, Lewis and Harris, Coll and Tiree, and Orkney in each year since then to reduce the impact of resident greylag geese. The ongoing payments beyond 2017 recognised the difficulties in dealing with the ending of financial support at a time when Covid-19 reduced the numbers of visiting wildfowling who help with goose management, and income streams from sale of goose meat have not been as much as had been hoped.

NatureScot also continues to support the local goose management groups to deliver ongoing control by offering advice and by maintaining representation on local goose management groups.

The pilot projects have shown some success, each of the local goose management groups on the Western Isles were able to achieve reduction culls with the support given through the pilot projects. On Orkney, the local goose management group was almost able to contain the size of the resident greylag goose population, but did not have the capacity to reduce it. NatureScot therefore worked with the Orkney local goose management group to develop new approaches to goose control (focussing on corralling). Further to this, an increase in support provided in 2023/24 has yielded results in reducing populations in all areas where data is currently available.

Alongside the ongoing funding provided through goose schemes, NatureScot has also introduced a number of measures which were requested through PE1490;

- The Petition asked that the law is changed to allow graylag geese to be controlled year round. Greylag geese are a quarry species and have been on the General Licence for the past 2 years. They can be shot, outwith the normal hunting season, to prevent serious agricultural damage.
- The Petition asked that the law is changed to allow graylag geese meat and products to be sold. NatureScot have licenced the sale of greylag goose meat. That licence has been issued to cover a 5-year period from 2022.
- NatureScot have also supported the development of novel control methods for resident greylag geese on Orkney in 2021 and 2022, including corralling and spring rifle shooting.

I have provided further information in **Table 2 and 3 in Annex A** which sets out the levels of grant that have been allocated for resident greylag goose management schemes and other control measures in Scotland and the resident greylag goose populations in these areas.

The 5 yearly goose management policy review, which was published earlier this year, informs support provided by the Scottish Government to crofters and farmers to host and manage geese on their land. One of the recommendations of the review is to “*continue to explore mechanisms to manage populations of resident greylag geese*”. This will be taken forward through the delivery plan and we will continue to review the support provided to farming and crofting systems to help them host and manage goose populations effectively.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE[™]
We invest in people Silver



NatureScot are currently working on publication of the delivery plan for the review of goose management policy and expect to have this completed and published by the end of this year. In the meantime, NatureScot will continue to work with stakeholders on the management of resident greylag geese.

Yours sincerely,

JIM FAIRLIE

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE[™]
We invest in people Silver



Table 1. Public expenditure on schemes for highly protected goose species

Goose season	Islay	Kintyre	Slamanna n	Solway	South Walls	Strathbe g	Uist, Coll & Tiree	Grand Total
1999/00	£412,153	*	-	£84,687	£10,413	*	-	£507,253
2000/01	£597,530	£51,541	-	£114,399	£17,789	*	-	£781,259
2001/02	£606,991	£56,151	-	£122,288	£15,449	£47,954	-	£848,833
2002/03	£620,638	£56,284	-	£125,553	£15,977	£45,886	-	£864,338
2003/04	£612,735	£59,107	-	£114,258	£15,129	£46,203	-	£847,432
2004/05	£608,286	£59,417	-	£109,474	£13,836	£45,888	-	£836,901
2005/06	£768,027	£61,371	-	£127,137	£16,575	£52,830	-	£1,025,940
2006/07	£717,600	£67,566	£6,064	£133,921	£17,835	£51,971	-	£994,957
2007/08	£723,901	£60,401	£4,940	£132,501	£17,607	£51,995	-	£991,345
2008/09	£897,063	£77,418	£4,940	£211,119	£19,455	£74,931	-	£1,284,926
2009/10	£910,321	£77,418	£22,422	£217,899	£21,773	£69,339	-	£1,319,172
2010/11	£897,341	£76,998	£10,175	£216,438	£18,365	£72,071	-	£1,291,388
2011/12	£708,016	£75,857	£13,535	£171,363	£14,862	£54,969	-	£1,038,602
2012/13	£841,837	£80,250	£13,377	£167,852	£14,742	£9,331	-	£1,127,389
2013/14	£902,908	£79,244	£13,372	£161,972	£15,052	£9,999	-	£1,182,547
2014/15	£908,980	£79,449	£20,618	£155,422	£14,770	£10,220	-	£1,189,459
2015/16	£913,525	£61,059	£13,377	£195,120	£15,785	£9,998	-	£1,208,864
2016/17	£918,233	£60,379	£13,377	£195,681	£15,947	£9,998	-	£1,213,615
2017/18	£877,259	£53,366	£5,295	£185,251	£15,432	£9,998	-	£1,146,601
2018/19	£862,361	£51,205	-	£186,002	£15,267	£9,998	£7,500	£1,132,333
2019/20	£802,997	£52,167	-	£204,839	£15,485	£9,998	£60,814	£1,146,300
2020/21	£790,114	£55,864	-	£206,216	£15,047	-	£60,814	£1,128,055
2021/22	£773,056	£53,788	-	£199,224	£15,578	-	£56,357	£1,098,003
2022/23	£768,574	£58,014		£178,990	£15,563		£56,956	£1,078,097
2023/24	£685,750	£56,272		£178,902	£15,429		£56,499	£992,852
Grand Total	£19,126,196	£1,520,586	£141,492	£4,096,508	£399,162	£693,577	£298,940	£26,276,461

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Table 2: Public expenditure (NatureScot, Scottish Government and Orkney Islands Council) on the control of resident greylag geese in Scotland

Site/Financial year	Uist	Orkney	Tiree	Lewis	Total
2012/13	£10,900	£19,554	£0	£0	£30,454
2013/14	£9,022	£18,202	£4,000	£0	£31,224
2014/15	£54,901	£19,742	£15,200	£28,132	£117,975
2015/16	£47,119	£13,858	£10,800	£17,519	£89,296
2016/17	£35,412	£17,712	£13,220	£13,904	£80,248
2017/18	£8,500	£9,406	£2,000	£7,800	£27,706
2018/19	£14,500	£5,177	£1,692	£6,000	£27,369
2019/20	£8,500	£14,245	£0	£6,489	£29,234
2020/21	£7,212	£12,319	£2,400	£6,582	£28,513
2021/22	£6,000	£38,181	£6,000	£6,000	£56,181
2022/23	£6,934	£34,847	£6,000	£6,934	£54,715
2023/24	£20,001	£15,792*	£4,000	£10,801	£50,595
Total	£229,001	£219,035	£65,312	£110,162	£623,509

* Expenditure in 2023/24 by Orkney Islands Council is not known

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot



Table 3: Resident greylag goose counts at sites where control has been funded

Site/Year	Uist	Lewis and Harris	Tiree	Orkney
2010	4721	4029	3227	x
2011	4037	3739	2802	x
2012	5976	4481	2296	21367
2013	7500	5850	3003	20242
2014	5906	5063	2397	22911
2015	5671	4096	2612	21354
2016	4435	3599	1772	24250
2017	4955	2677	1954	x
2018	4892	5350	x	x
2019	5314	4560	2287	22956
2020	4711	4430	2303	x
2021	x	x	3152	27013
2022	x	x	3124	23979
2023	6474	4487	2861	23786
2024	6185	Not yet available	2750	Not yet available

*The Uist, Lewis and Harris and Tiree counts were undertaken in the spring, and the Orkney counts were undertaken in August/September.

*Years where counts have not been undertaken are marked with an 'x'.

