

T: 0300 244 4000  
E: [scottish.ministers@gov.scot](mailto:scottish.ministers@gov.scot)

Ariane Burgess, MSP  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

[Ariane.Burgess.msp@parliament.scot](mailto:Ariane.Burgess.msp@parliament.scot)

08 November 2023

Dear Ariane,

When I attended the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee on 1 November 2023 to give evidence on the Wildlife Management and Muirburn (Scotland) Bill (the “Bill”), you asked me if I intended to bring forward amendments to change the date for the end of the muirburn season, from 1 April, as set out in the Bill, to either the 15 or 31 March.

I am aware from my discussions with stakeholders that some are of the view that, due to changes in breeding patterns for some bird species, the date for the end of the muirburn season should be brought forward to March, in order to protect ground nesting birds from the risk of nest destruction and human disturbance during the breeding season.

I have asked Scottish Government officials and NatureScot for further advice on the issues relating to the season date and will consider this, and any recommendations made by the RAI Committee in its Stage 1 report, as part of the bill process.

However, I would like to highlight that Section 16(3) of the Bill contains an enabling power for Scottish Ministers to change the dates of the muirburn seasons by SSI in relation to:

- climate change
- for the purpose of conserving, restoring, enhancing or managing the natural environment; or
- for the purpose of preventing, or reducing risk of, wildfires causing harm to people or damage to property.

This power would enable Scottish Ministers to respond to any urgent need to amend the dates of the muirburn season, in order to mitigate the impact of such changes, ensuring that dates for the open season align with weather patterns and wildlife breeding cycles.

I am copying this letter to the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee for information.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gillie Ma". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gillie" written in a larger, more prominent script than the surname "Ma".

**GILLIAN MARTIN**

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St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG  
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