

Rural Affairs and Islands Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

24 December 2024

Dear Convenor,

I am writing to you to ask if you might have capacity to conduct a committee review of the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Act guidance that NatureScot created and now administer.

The guidance that NatureScot designed has never entirely been fit for purpose and differs from the Act that was passed by parliament. Licences are exceptionally difficult to achieve, and NatureScot have considerably raised the threshold that is to be met. We do not believe that this was the intention of the Minister when the Act was passed. The Act itself is largely workable, but the guidance that now accompanies it renders the granting of a licence to operate more than 2 dogs almost impossible to achieve.

The Scottish Countryside Alliance has written to NatureScot on several occasions and has received very little in response. Almost no answers to our specific questions have been given and applicants are contacting us on a daily basis for help. One applicant had so much opposition from NatureScot over applications that she has now left her job, losing both her income and home. This is a direct result of the unnecessarily difficult process that NatureScot employ when considering licence applications.

The Scottish Countryside Alliance would be very pleased to furnish the committee with any information it requires in order to scrutinise this process and subsequent failings where the application and consideration process is concerned. We mainly seek to simplify issues relating to cover and licence timeframes as these seem to be the main sticking points that should be simple to administer, yet these currently ensure that this system fails to protect livestock and red-listed species.

**T** 0131 608 4534  
**E** [info@countryside-alliance.org](mailto:info@countryside-alliance.org)  
**W** [www.countryside-alliance.org](http://www.countryside-alliance.org)

21 Young Street  
Edinburgh  
EH2 4JB

We have recently been approached by an MSP to assist in helping to protect and promote ground-nesting birds in Southern Scotland. This is a large part of what we are trying to do, yet we are unable to do so effectively because of how the current guidance is administered.

In a recent letter to you from the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity, Jim Fairlie MSP, he stated “NatureScot are currently reviewing the hunting with dogs licensing scheme and are looking to make efficiencies which should help those requiring licences to gain them without unnecessary effort.” Having spoken with NatureScot directly, we have been informed not to expect any significant changes.

The Scottish Countryside Alliance would very much appreciate your consideration on this matter and will offer assistance where required.

Yours sincerely



Jake Swindells

Director for Scotland