

Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill Ministerial Meeting

Wednesday 6th January 2010 at the Scottish Parliament

Present

Lloyd Austin, RSPB and WNE group

Paul Walton, RSPB and LINK Biodiversity TF

Susan Guest, LINK and WNE group

Roseanna Cunningham, Minister for Environment, Scottish Government

Ian Hooper, Landscapes and Habitats, Scottish Government

Hugh Dignon, Head of Species Management, Scottish Government

Apologies

Mike Daniels, JMT and LINK Deer TF gave apologies due to snow.

Background

LINK were originally offer a ministerial meeting jointly with the Animal Welfare organisation, but we asked for a separate meeting as it was unlikely that we would like to talk about the same issues.

Introductions

Following introductions and apologies, the minister apologised that the meeting would have to be cut short due to chamber business.

LA thanked the Minister for the meeting and the consultation process so far.

Deer

It was noted that LINK has no problems with the proposed competence register (including in the relation to the management of deer on NGO-owned land) and has no large interest in the welfare angle.

LA outlined that LINK support the proposal for the abolition of closed seasons, and the shift in emphasis this provides from sport to habitat management.

Statutory Deer Management

LA outlined that we support the approach outlined in the consultation, and would like this approach to go further.

We noted that we had heard that there was opposition to this approach on the grounds of the ECHR. IH and HD, stated that a legal note on this issue had been drafted for the Minister, but that she had not received it

yet. The minister was reluctant to discuss this much further with seeing the legal opinion.

HD noted that the Bill must be ECHR compliant or it would fall, but that they were looking at the issues of Precision (how much detail) and Proportion (what strength of action needed taking and how seriously this would influence) in relation to this.

HD and IH said they believed the important point was to deliver the deer management benefits – and they were looking at other ways to achieve the same result. One option was is the code of practice (or strategy) where non compliance triggers intervention.

With the Minister unbriefed and time constraints it wasn't possible to discuss this much further. LINK indicated that we'd be pleased to continue this dialogue – either by correspondence or with officials or both.

Invasive Non-Native Species

PW outlined that the BTF were very happy with the level of consultation so far, and that we are also happy with the proposals outlined in the consultation

In particular LINK liked the outlining of the principle that nothing could be released unless it was named – this approach would set a precedent both in the UK and the EU, although we had grown to appreciate that this was a tricky area to legislate on.

New Establishments

PW outlined that one area of concern to LINK was the establishment of new invasive species; not here yet, but that could prove dangerous if they were present. (e.g. New Zealand Pygmy Weed). Note was made to Irelands *10 least wanted list*, as one possible option.

PW noted that with relation to INNS the line of responsibility was often hard to define – and that LINK was seeking a duty on public bodies, with clearly defined lead agencies. **IH** believed that the GB risk assessment process was able to fulfil the allocation of lead agency role. **PW** noted that they have a case study of a INNS found at Lochwinnoch (an RSPB location) – where SEPA were reluctant to investigate and escalate.

Gamebirds

It was noted that although LINK is not looking to take action on curbing shooting – the present situation of no legislation leaves us a little uneasy – an approach of listing non-native gamebirds as INNS, but then generally listing them as an exception is one possible approach – this right could then be revoked if/when dangerous or irresponsible practice occurred.



The minister had to leave the meeting at this point – but noted she wasn't keen to start looking at this area.

IH felt that we needed to be clearer on under what circumstances it would be revocable, and how the power was defined.

Other Issues

Further issues were discussed in brief with HD and IH.

- ASP
- Biodiversity and conservation offsets
- Damage to SSSIs

Notes by SG+LA

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