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Peter McGrath,  
Clerk to the RAE Committee,  
The Scottish Parliament,  
Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

20<sup>th</sup> February, 2009

Dear Peter,

At the last meeting of the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee Angus Yarwood, Convener of our Woodland Task Force, undertook to gather views about the issue of muirburn for the Committee. I write to fulfil that undertaking.

The National Trust for Scotland, the Woodland Trust Scotland, the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland, the Scottish Wildlife Trust, the Mountaineering Council of Scotland and WWF Scotland have all indicated that they are in support of the evidence already provided to the Committee by RSPB Scotland.

Several additional issues arose in the course of discussion of the matter.

- Member organisations all looked for continued strict adherence to the muirburn code.
- It was hoped that further research might be carried out into the effect of muirburn on soil erosion and water pollution.
- The temperature of the burn and the possibility of areas of peat catching fire if best practice was not adhered to was a grave concern for many of our members – it being felt that the normal practice was largely carbon neutral but that any damage to peat was a very serious addition to carbon emissions. It was hoped that this matter would be the subject of continued monitoring.

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- In addition to the heather beetle, muirburn might also assist in the control of the spread of the fungus *Phytophthora kernoviae* which can cause serious damage to heather.

I hope that these views are of assistance to the Committee. If there is any other assistance we can give please do not hesitate to ask.

Best wishes,

Andy Myles  
Parliamentary Officer