



NEWS RELEASE

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Crofting Federation says funding promised for goose control is welcome but 'bitter-sweet'

The Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) has welcomed the announcement of some funding for goose control, after concerted lobbying, but points out that it will barely keep numbers static let alone reduce to a sustainable figure.

"We have brought the problem of geese to the attention of Scottish Government on countless occasions, most recently with the minister for environment Mairi McAllan", said Donald MacKinnon, chair of the SCF, "and it is encouraging that there has been acknowledgement of the threat to crofting and to biodiversity, and the promise of some funding. However, realistically the amounts we are being offered for the islands that support this biodiversity are derisory. It will barely keep the present numbers static let alone reduce them. There are far too many birds to be sustainable so, whilst it being a step in the right direction, the amount needed to reduce the goose population is far higher than that offered. And this funding is only for 2 years so what happens after that?"

"For example, let's look at Uist, where crofting agriculture is High Nature Value and the resulting biodiversity world-renowned. The adaptive management scheme on Uist used to have a budget of £40, 000 per year. This was reduced until it tottered along with about £10,000 per year. Then this was cut to zero. Crofters have agreed that they can live with about 2500 birds, and occasional rises to 4000 may be tolerated for short periods. We now have over 8000 birds grazing, trampling and polluting the crops. Crofters in Lewis, Harris, Coll and Tiree face a similar situation. It's sad that the unique biodiversity of these islands is not valued by Holyrood more highly.

"So, yes, an annual £6,000 promise for each of these crofting areas is something", concluded Mr MacKinnon, "but it has a bitter-sweet taste – is it really a genuine attempt to help or is it window-dressing?"

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