

PRESS RELEASE

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SCF Welcomes Additional Funding Announced to Support Greylag Goose Management in Uist and Barra

The SCF has welcomed today's news that the Scottish Government has confirmed an additional £20,000 in funding for greylag goose management in Uist and Barra, increasing the annual budget for control measures in the area to £30,000.

For crofters in the Uists and Barra, and for the Scottish Crofting Federation both locally and nationally, achieving a significant reduction in the size of the greylag population remains the priority.

In recent years, sustained grazing pressure from geese has caused extensive damage to traditional machair crops. A growing concern is the potential shortage of traditional seed stocks, largely due to repeated crop damage. If this continues, crofters may be forced to source seed from mainland suppliers in order to secure sufficient silage for winter livestock feed.

Such a shift would bring additional costs and environmental consequences. Mainland seed typically requires mineral fertilisers and micronutrient treatments such as manganese. Crucially, it would not contain the diverse mix of native grasses and wildflowers naturally carried forward from previous machair harvests, a process that underpins the internationally recognised biodiversity of these coastal systems.

The Uist Local Goose Group has also welcomed the Minister's decision to increase funding. The regular £10,000 allocation has historically been used to pay marksmen to control greylag numbers. The additional support will allow more meaningful population reduction, rather than simply keeping pace with continued growth.

Donna Smith, CEO of the Scottish Crofting Federation, said:

"We are very pleased that the Minister has listened to the concerns raised and acted given the urgency of the situation. A significant reduction in the greylag population on Uist and Barra remains essential. Crofters want to protect the machair and continue traditional cropping practices that sustain both livestock and biodiversity. Ongoing support at this level, sustained over a number of years, will be necessary if we are to achieve lasting balance and avoid returning to the same pressures in future."

The Scottish Crofting Federation has engaged with NatureScot and the Scottish Government on this issue over many years. The organisation recognises that traditional crofting practices on the machair not only provide vital winter feed for livestock, but also play a central role in maintaining one of Scotland's most distinctive and ecologically important landscapes.

Ensuring that crofting and wildlife remain in balance is critical for the long-term future of both island communities and the machair habitat itself.

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For further information or interview requests, please contact mike@crofting.org or donna@crofting.org

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

About the Scottish Crofting Federation

The Scottish Crofting Federation is the only organisation solely dedicated to supporting crofting in Scotland. Our mission is to ensure the sustainability of crofting for future generations and advocate for crofting so that its value is recognised from within communities to government. We support crofters to meet the challenges of a changing world and champion the need for crofting to remain accessible and affordable for young people in crofting communities. As a member-led organisation, SCF works to secure a thriving future for crofting, rooted in community, culture and care for the land.