

A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen Scheme (11 November 2018 09:19)

Extract taken from the correspondence of 11 November 2018 to the First Minister of Scotland as the other material is out of scope of the request.

Name and address have been redacted under regulation 11(2) of the EIRs (personal information).

11th November 2018

The Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon
First Minister
Scottish Government
St Andrew's House

Dear First Minister

Re: A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen Scheme

I am writing to you in relation to the Transport Scotland's recently held public consultations on the proposed East of Huntly to Aberdeen routes for the A96 Aberdeen to Inverness Dual Carriageway. I wish to raise the following concerns primarily in relation to the proposed routes north of Inverurie (Blue, Green & Violet).

BIODIVERSITY

The Blue-Green-Violet route(s) will either destroy the habitat or reduce the habitat connectivity of a number of protected species which are listed on the Scottish Biodiversity List and which have been recorded in the area including:

Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*
Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus*
Red squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*
Common pipistrelle bat *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*
Wildcat *Felis silvestris*
Soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*
Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentoni*
Eurasian otter *Lutra lutra*
Whooper swan *Cygnus cygnus*
Barn owl *Tyto alba*
Skylark *Alauda arvensis*
Tree sparrow *Passer montanus*
House sparrow *Passer domesticus*
Dunnock *Prunella modularis*
Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*
Siskin *Carduelis spinus*
Spotted flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*
Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*
Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*
Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

Grey partridge *Perdix perdix*
Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*
Redwing *Turdus illiacus*
Song thrush *Turdus philomelos*
Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*
Starling *Sternus vulgaris*
Swift *Apus apus*
Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Many non-listed species are also present including Tawny owl, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Rook, Jackdaw, Carrion crow, Great spotted woodpecker, Roe deer and Badger. Several sites in the affected area provide important overwintering grounds for migratory species such as the previously mentioned Whooper Swans, which can often be seen in sizeable flocks on the Kintore floodplain and pink-footed geese (*Anser brachyrhynchus*), which graze on pasture and winter stubble fields in the area and roost around the pond by Bourtie House Estate which would be severely impacted by the development.

This list is not exhaustive, and a complete picture of species records can be found from the North East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC).

There are three Nationally designated SSSI in the affected area around Inverurie: two are of geological interest - at Barra Hill and Pitcaple & Legatsden Quarries, and one of biological interest at Wartle Moss.

Wartle Moss and some of the surrounding area also has a local designation as a Local Nature Conservation Site, and there are a further three LNCS which could be adversely affected by the choice of route at Burreldale Moss, Pitscurry Moss and Sunnybrae Moss. These are all wetlands or wet woodlands, and as such there is the potential for habitat destruction to be caused by road developments affecting the drainage of water either to or from these sites. Draining the sites would lead to habitat loss through drying out and inappropriate siting of any new road could affect water quality through runoff contaminated with oils, road residues and de-icing salts.

The Green route G3 runs through Sunnybrae Moss LNCS. Wartle Moss SSSI is very close to the Blue B2 route and the LNCS part of Wartle Moss is traversed by route B2. These LNCS contain habitat types such as wet woodland, lowland fen, reedbeds and ponds which are all listed as priority habitats in the Scottish Biodiversity list.

It is hard to see how the proposed road development would contribute to the Scottish Government's stated aim of protecting and improving Scotland's habitats and biodiversity given that some of the route options would destroy or seriously impact on designated sites.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. I look forward to hearing from you and, should you feel any of the matters raised require further discussion, I will happily make myself available.

Yours faithfully

Name has been redacted

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 25 September 2018 12:10
To: First Minister
Subject: Fwd: Clashindarroch Forest, urgent!

Dear Mrs Sturgeon,

I am still awaiting a response to email below dated 19/07/2018.

Previous responses from the Forestry Commission have proved to be unsatisfactory as they simply continue to try and justify their actions.

The only thing that has changed is that yet more time and money has been wasted with their continued attempts to carry on regardless.

The petition to save Clashindarroch has now reached over 350,000 signatures, people who believe not enough is being done to save Scotland's iconic symbol of the wilderness.

It is a very poor reflection of Scotland's attitude to conservation when we continue to put financial gain ahead of such a rare creature. It is also ironic that a Wilderness area such as Clashindarroch is set to be further carved up in the name of green energy.

Time is very much running out for the Scottish Wildcat, large amounts of money have been wasted. Why is it that with a government backed, lottery funded, 20 partner organisation people in the UK still know more about the plight of Tigers, Pandas and Orangutans than they do about Wildcats? Even then, any "official" information on Wildcats available to the general public is misleading and contradictory.

I would be extremely grateful for a response on this as soon as possible and whilst I appreciate the Forestry Commission CEO taking the time to respond previously I don't now think it is appropriate that he does so.

Yours Sincerely

[REDACTED]

Begin forwarded message:

From: [REDACTED]
Date: 19 July 2018 at 09:45:13 BST
To: Firstminister@gov.scot
Cc: Chief Executive Fes <chiefexecutive@forestry.gsi.gov.uk>
Subject: Clashindarroch Forest, urgent!

Dear Mrs Sturgeon,

Thanks to Mr Owen, interim Chief Executive of Forest Enterprise Scotland once again for responding to a letter which as I'm sure you and he are aware is not directed to him as Forest Enterprise Scotland have so far proved to be unable to satisfactorily address the issues mentioned. Instead appearing to hide behind yet another corporate answer as expected.

I would kindly insist that my letters are no longer intercepted by the organisation whose actions I believe are causing grave concerns for the last of the Scottish Wildcats. A belief supported by almost 230,000 members of the general public.

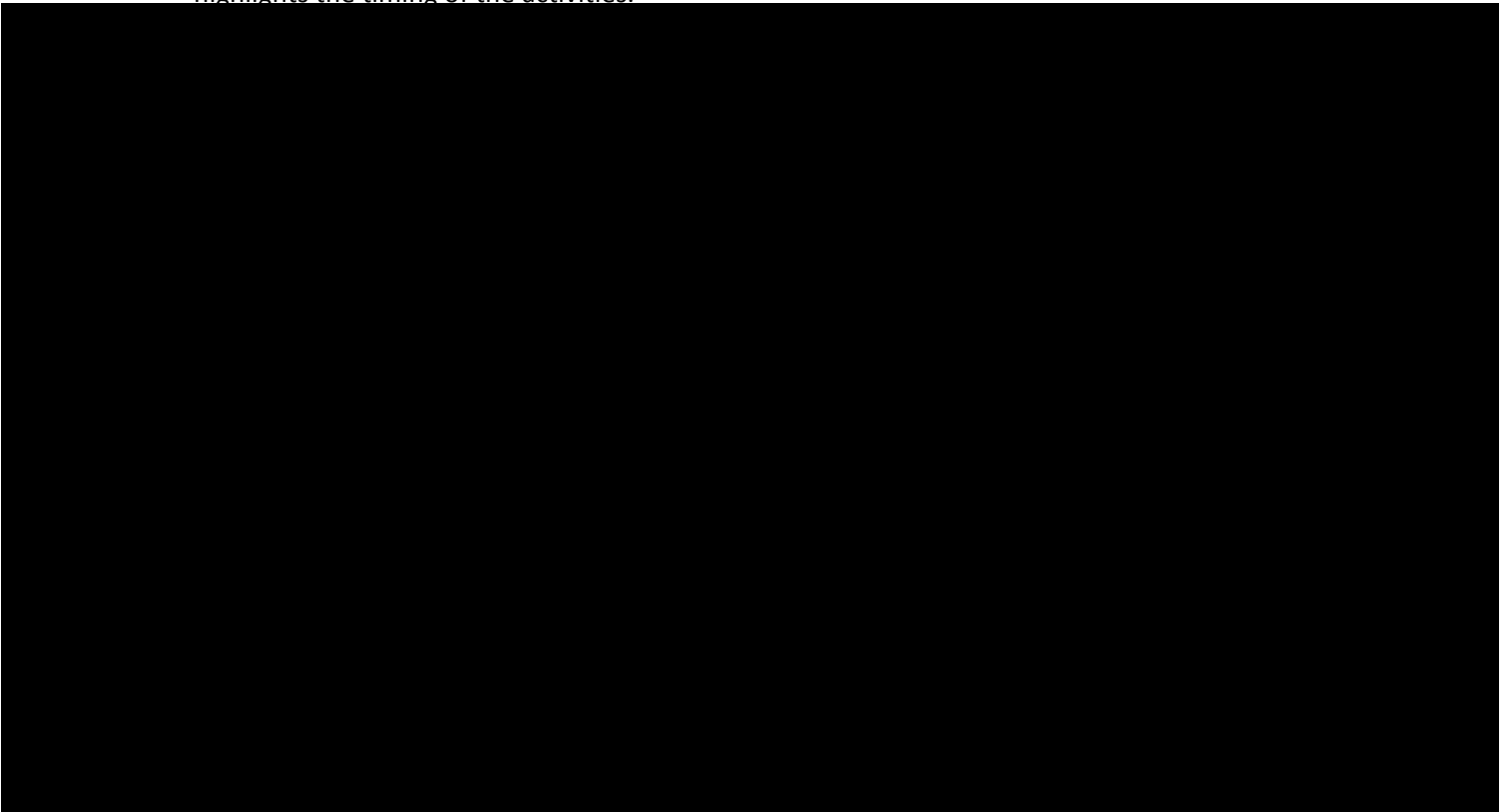
My "claims" referred to from my previous correspondence are not "claims" but facts of which I know FES are already aware. However, the evidence is easily available to support these facts but perhaps as all those involved are already aware of this evidence time would be better spent formulating a way forward.

<https://www.change.org/p/scottish-government-save-the-scottish-wildcat-by-protecting-clashindarroch-forest>

Please see below for an image of a track being created during the breeding season in Clashindarroch. You may note that it has been carved through the very habitat type that FES partners SWA have claimed is essential for Wildcats, albeit based on flawed theories mentioned in my previous letter. I have no idea why this track was created, presumably to facilitate further forest harvesting or perhaps to facilitate construction of the the new wind-farms? These wind farm proposals don't yet have planning consent although the tone of the FES emails made available through FOI suggest that they are keen to allow it.

There is, or was, clear evidence very close by of the presence of Wildcat, this was either known about before commencement or completely missed by the claimed robust surveys carried out by FES or SWA both of which options are completely unacceptable.

This picture taken in April 2018 and featured in a Guardian article of 13th May on this subject highlights the timing of the activities.



In addition, details of the meetings I mentioned at which I and FES employees were present are easily available. (Meeting between 3 senior FES reps and 3 Wildcat Haven Reps held on 15th May 2017 and a Wildcat Haven meeting held in Tullynessle near Alford on 18th August 2017)

I can also provide witness statements to support the complaint that was made to FES and a list of some of the attendees at the second meeting, members of the public who also saw the various video clips of Scottish Wildcats.

I will also reiterate that the complaint lodged with FES was investigated by FES , however FES found that by interviewing FES staff there was no complaint to uphold.

Just for reference, see below for press clip showing the statement made by a senior FES employee after having been witnessed to have seen several video clips of different Scottish Wildcats in Clashindarroch. If there was still any doubt of the fact that FES and SWA attended, this meeting is also referenced in the SWA steering group meeting minutes held shortly after.

Article in Times newspaper of 13th Dec 2017.

"We have had one video clip shown to us by Wildcat Haven. They undertook to show us further evidence which has not been done," said Kenny Kortland, a species ecologist at FES.

The species ecologist attended both of the meetings mentioned previously.

Any further evidence of the presence of Scottish Wildcats can be seen in the short films made as part of the hugely supported Wildcat Haven campaign to protect this habitat and its rare wildlife and more information can be found here.

<https://www.facebook.com/scottishwildcathaven/>

Despite the manner in which FES employees have conducted themselves I have no interest in undermining the general work done by Forest Enterprise Scotland of which I am sure there are many good examples but my aim is to highlight that in this particular case by applying normal routine operations they are adversely affecting the survival of Scottish Wildcats.

However, Forest Enterprise Scotland having made the decision to carry on normal operations regardless can be in no doubt as to what has been highlighted to them and can be in no doubt as to the implications of their ongoing actions supported by Scottish Wildcat Action and Scottish Natural Heritage. According to the rules set by themselves and by Scottish Natural Heritage it is an offence to recklessly disturb Wildcats or damage Wildcat habitat.

The sad fact is that it may already be too late but do we want to be the ones on watch when this magnificent animal becomes nothing more than a historical reference and another statistic? Shouldn't we be bending over backwards to save it rather than looking for ways to carry on normal operations in the hope that it may just cling on?

What does it say about Scotland as a nation if we let this animal with its fierce independent nature which has long featured in Clan mottoes and folklore disappear?

When these activities are taking place in the jungles of Borneo or Rwanda or the Bamboo forests of China UK conservationists are outraged!

Despite all the obfuscation and references to irrelevant scientific studies in Europe this is not complicated. The Clashindarroch population of Scottish Wildcats may represent the last hope for the species. If Scottish Wildcat Haven, nearly 230,000 people and I are wrong the consequences are that there is a delay to harvesting operations and construction of two new wind farms.

If Forest Enterprise Scotland, Scottish Wildcat Action and Scottish Natural Heritage are wrong, the consequences are extinction of Scotland's last native large predator.

Perhaps it's time to choose which option is preferred?

Yours Sincerely

[REDACTED]

On 17 Jul 2018, at 13:03, FES Chief Executive <chiefexecutive@forestry.gsi.gov.uk> wrote:

[REDACTED]

Please find attached letter from [REDACTED]

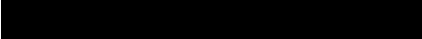
Regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Forest Enterprise Scotland
Forest Enterprise Scotland Head Office
1 Highlander Way
Inverness Business Park
Inverness, IV2 7GB

[REDACTED]


0300 067 6000 (switchboard)

www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland

www.facebook.com/forestrycommissionscotland

Forest Enterprise Scotland is an agency of the Forestry Commission managing Scotland's National Forest Estate.

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<Response to S Sleigh SEC-18-88.pdf>

Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP
First Minister of Scotland

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
T: 0300 244 4000



[REDACTED]
3rd Currie Guides
c/o [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



Our ref: 2015/0020499
June 2015

Thank you for your letter about the protection of wildlife, which I received on 27 May 2015.

I am delighted that you are taking such an interest in wildlife both here in Scotland and around the world. Protecting wildlife and the environment are fundamentally important for the health and well-being, and even the economy of our country and tackling wildlife crime is a key priority for the Scottish Government. I would like to tell you how we are tackling this issue.

The Scottish Government absolutely condemns wildlife crime and we have worked hard to develop a broad partnership approach. The Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) Scotland includes law enforcement, conservation organisations and land management organisations. You can learn more about PAW Scotland at the following link, as well as sign up for their newsletters: www.PAW.Scotland.gov.uk.

There are six priority areas that PAW Scotland focuses on - the persecution of certain species (bats, badgers, freshwater pearl mussels and raptors), poaching and coursing of deer, fish and hares, and finally the illegal trade in endangered species. This is covered by CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species).

We provide funding for the UK National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) which is based in Livingston. Wildlife Crime Officers from the NWCU and Police Scotland work hard to investigate and prevent all types of wildlife crime including the illegal trade in endangered species. They search markets, shops and the internet to find people who are illegally trading items such as ivory and they will take enforcement action. The NWCU also work with their counterparts in Interpol. Scottish police officers have even travelled to Nepal to provide training and support for their police service.

Scottish Government staff are also bringing their world-renowned research and expertise in scientific techniques to tackling wildlife crime.

The Wildlife DNA Forensics Unit at Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA) provides free analysis for wildlife crime investigations, including those offences relating to CITES listed species. For this type of investigation, the identification of species from seized items is often required - particularly when morphological characteristics (this means the form and structure of the anatomy of an animal) are not available or obvious. Examples include identifying DNA from imported products suspected of containing wool from the Tibetan antelope, and identifying the origin of a carving that was thought to be from rhinoceros horn. Identifying DNA to establish the species of elephant has also been achieved from an ivory sample.

In addition to this work, the unit at SASA is also involved in a pro-active project to setup a rhinoceros DNA database. This was launched in April 2013 because of an increasing number of thefts of rhino horn from museums and also threats to animals in zoos or wildlife parks. This database will store a unique DNA profile from each sample submitted, making the horns traceable by enforcement authorities and so act as a deterrent to thieves.

Dating ivory samples requires radio-carbon dating technology and this has been carried out on ivory samples at the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre (SUERC) in Glasgow. This technique determines whether samples that are being traded can be done so legally.

Turning to wildcats, you might know that hybridisation with domestic and feral cats pose the greatest threat to the Scottish wildcat. Also, the close proximity to feral and pet animals exposes wildcats to certain diseases, e.g. Feline Influenza. Although these diseases are treatable in feral and domestic animals, they can be fatal to the wildcat as they have no natural immunity to them.

The wildcat in Scotland has recently become the subject of a concerted national conservation effort under the Scottish Wildcat Conservation Action Plan, launched in September 2013. You can read more about it at the link below, but a captive breeding programme has been proposed as one of the key points to underpin a wider conservation programme and to halt the decline of this important species:

<http://www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/search-the-catalogue/publication-detail/?id=2050>.

The final comments in your letter say that people who kill animals illegally should get high fines and 1 year in jail. When people are convicted in court, the sentence that they get is decided by the Judge. For many wildlife offences, there is already in place a maximum limit of a £5,000 fine and / or 6 months in prison. There is currently a review group which is looking at penalties in Scotland, to see if these are adequate and / or a deterrent to those people who commit these crimes, and they will make their recommendations in the near future.

I hope you find this response helpful and that it shows the wide variety of work that the Scottish Government is doing to tackle wildlife crime and also support our native species.

NICOLA STURGEON

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 24 October 2018 13:03
To: First Minister
Subject: The murder of goats on Islay

Importance: High

Dear First Minister,

I read today of a number of people proudly boasting of hunting 'feral' goats across Scotland, as trophy kills. It seems their may be some loophole in the law, which allows anybody who wishes to come to Scotland, and take pot-shots at any goats they see, provided they are deemed to be 'feral'.

The whole world has seen the photos online proudly boasting of the trophy killings, here in Scotland, creating a terrible reputation for Scotland. Besides, travelling all the way from the USA to take pot shots at goats in Scotland is just barbaric, if not also pathetic. Apparently the pathetic people behind this, do it for fun. They also apparently trophy shoot Scottish sheep.

I have honestly never been so angry, as I am over this matter. It damages Scotland, it encourages other american morons (and their are many) to travel here to take pot shots at goats, and it creates a truly awful image of what Scotland is and what we as a people stand for. I am sickened by this, but also sickened by the fact that apparently this is legal. What next? shooting Scottish wildcats or red squirrels?

If numbers need controlled (as is the case with some species), then that should be done by properly licensed gamekeepers. It should NEVER be for these sicko (and they are quite, quite sick, murderous people) trophy hunters from America.

This 'trophy hunting' has no place in Scotland. Please can you establish a change in the law to stop this kind of 'trophy hunting' tourism from gaining ground even more. It is wholly unacceptable.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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This email has been received from an external party and has been swept for the presence of computer viruses.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED] >
Sent: 07 September 2018 09:59
To: First Minister
Subject: www.wildcathaven.com -Steve Pipers Petition "Scottish Government: Save the Scottish Wildcat by protecting Clashindarroch Forest"

Dear Mrs Sturgeon,

The latest report on this petition advises that neither you or your Government have responded on the concerns raised and also the actions of the Forestry Commission Scotland.

I am very concerned with this issue and would like to know why no response is being made to the petition.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 27 May 2015 17:38:31
To: Ministerial Correspondence Unit
Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: MR for FM GH

Attachments: u208868_27-05-2015_17-21-01.pdf

MCU,

Please can the letter below from 2 girl guides be added to MACCs as an MR for FM.

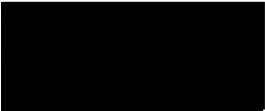
It is about wildlife crime.

Copying in [REDACTED] in case they have advice on the policy officer best placed to respond.

If you would like the paper copy letter to scan on to MACCs let me know.

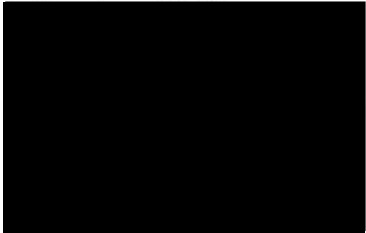
Thanks for your help,

[REDACTED]



Dear First Minister

I enclose a letter from [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] of 3rd Currie Guides. I would appreciate if the
response could be sent to:



Yours faithfully

RECEIVED
27 MAY 2015



Guider
3rd Currie Guides

Dear Ms. Nicola Sturgeon,



We are writing to you to complain about the poaching issue going on here in Scotland and Worldwide. We think here at 3rd Currie Guides that action needs to be taken immediately because there are as few as 10 white rhinos and just 38 ^{amur} leopards. Here in Scotland if you haven't noticed there are only 35 scottish wild cats. That's why we support WWF fully. We are appalled that even though it is against the law that people still do it! We think there should be a high fine & in jail for 1 year.

Yours sincerely

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

From: [REDACTED] >
Sent: 13 August 2018 10:17
To: First Minister
Subject: Scottish wild Cats, Profit and Greed

Dear Nicola Sturgeon,

I am extremely concerned for the future of the endangered Scottish wildcats found in Clashindarroch Forest, Aberdeenshire.

Forestry Commission Scotland logging has failed to identify territories and clear felled them as a result, even in breeding and kitten season.

The disturbance this creates is against the laws that protect wildcats, their habitats, dens and resting places.

Many other rare species live in this forest and are also threatened by the logging and the disturbance it causes.

Planned wind farm installations at Clashindarroch will flatten even more of the forest, though there are so many other places wind turbines could go.

I have joined over 200,000 other people on Change.org asking for this forest to be protected for the wildlife that lives there.

Please intervene and protect Clashindarroch from logging activities and other commercial exploitation so that future generations can enjoy living alongside animals like the Scottish wildcat.

Please put the environment before profit and greed.

Yours Sincerely

[REDACTED]

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

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[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 07 November 2018 22:19
To: First Minister
Subject: Shooting estates Scotland

I am writing with huge concern over the disgraceful activities on going in Scottish shooting estates. As highlighted by petition 'Ban trophy hunting in Scotland' now supported by hundreds of thousands of decent people.

While we all know that since Victorian times the rich have enjoyed shooting 'game' and collecting 'trophies' from their idle adventures in the colonies of the British Empire, returning to hang on the walls as a status symbols.

Now in the 21st century it seems that with the explosion of Scottish tourism the idle rich are still the same, bringing a sinister, unprecedented growth of wildlife trophy hunting visitors to our beautiful Scottish country, wielding high powered weapons.escalated by the speed of international travel.

This activity is enabled by the unscrupulous & deliberate manipulation of wildlife stocks ie.allowing over breeding and saving the most beautiful beasts for 'open season' so to maximise profits Estate management companies and mercenary style game keepers promote & advertise online to a world wide audience,selling anything,from the chance to kill these beautiful animals through to flogging clothing ranges..

Spinning false information re.conservation thereby promoting the need for shooting and deflecting critics.

Disguising these activities as conservation is completely dishonest ,Shooting and accommodating wealthy hunting parties **are for profit**,the only protection and conservation going on is not for the wildlife but to greedy immoral pockets

Surely how we treat and respect all our animals reflects on society as a whole .

One of the biggest most beautiful wilderness in the United Kingdom , Ardnamurchan is well and truly in the grip of these industrial scale hunting estates(the home of the last Scottish Wildcats)

The management of Scottish wildlife must be moved over fully (ie.numbers and health) to the responsibility of the state and any culling required be monitored and carried out my registered residents of this country.(Any stalkers I've met derive very little pleasure from ending the life a sick or aged animal never mind one in the full prime of life)

The law enabling visitors to hold gun licence or carry a gun on short holiday trip must be suspended immediately.

As per the Firearms laws in Scotland just now,how does killing for 'fun' as Ms Switlyk clearly expressed on her instagram account constitute a 'Good reason?' (See excerpt from online firearm regulations below)

Good Reason

Applicants must have a 'Good Reason' for all firearms they may wish to possess. This may be evidenced by having authority to shoot over land, or membership of a Target Shooting Club. In respect of renewals, 'Good Reason' will be shown through regular use of all firearms possessed.

There is a huge demand by peaceful tourists and Scots alike, to marvel at wild animals in their natural habitat.

These type of estates should be pressured to offer educational tours ie. non-kill stalking, tracking tours, real conservation business models ideas allowed to develop

Exploiting wild animals in their herds for profit because you own so much wild habitat are facts and that need properly addressed with the 21st century ethics we all hope for in Scotland and without the bend of corruption.

Please consult with experts who have **zero vested interest** .

Yours sincerely



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