



T: 0131-244 [REDACTED] E: 0131-244 [REDACTED]
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In 2014 Scotland Welcomes the World



Our ref: [REDACTED]
16 October 2014

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and the Environment regarding the black rat eradication project on the Shiant islands. I have been asked to respond as the non-native species policy office for the Scottish Government.

The Scottish Government takes the threat of non-native species seriously and the black rat is not native to the islands – or indeed any other part of Scotland. The context for considering control of this non-native is that seabird populations are declining in Scotland. In addition the Shiant islands are designated as European Special Protection Areas for their seabird colonies and we therefore have a responsibility to maintain the condition of those seabird colonies. As you correctly point out, Scottish Natural Heritage are supportive of the project and are contributing to the funding of the eradication. They are doing so because they have considered the impacts that black rats are having on the islands and have determined that removing them is the best course of action – both to support the existing colonies and to encourage the return of other seabird species. They have considered non-lethal options but have found none that were suitable.

While I understand the concerns that surround lethal control of any animal, I can assure you that that has been weighed against the benefits of removing the population. That is why both Scottish Natural Heritage and the Minister for Environment and Climate Change support the project.

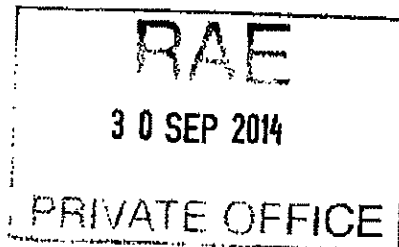
I hope that this clarifies the Scottish Government's position on the Shiant islands project.

Yours sincerely



Scottish Government





29th September 2014.

Richard Lochhead MSP,
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and the Environment,
Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

Protecting Scotland's Black Rat Population

Dear Mr. Lochhead,

I am writing in connection with a project, due to take place in the winter of 2015-2016, to eradicate the Black Rat population of the Shiant Islands. The purpose of the project is to increase the number of seabirds on the islands. I understand that the project is funded by the European Union, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Scottish Natural Heritage.

There are thousands of seabirds on the Shiant Islands, despite the presence of the Black Rat population. And while seabirds are found at dozens of other locations across Scotland, my understanding is that the Shiant Islands are home to Scotland's entire Black Rat population.

I have the following concerns about the project:

1. The project is cruel on the individual Black Rats as poison is to be used to eradicate them.
2. It is unfair for one species of our fellow creatures to be regarded as less worthy of survival than others.
3. As I am unaware of any other sites in Scotland where Black Rats survive, eradication of the population in the Shiant Islands will lead to their extinction in Scotland.

I am therefore asking if your Department can do anything to help protect our Black Rat population and I look forward to receiving your reply.

Thank-you.

Yours sincerely,

