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Our Reference: 202500490949
Your Reference: Deer Management

11 December 2025

Dear Helen MacIntyre,

Thank you for your correspondence dated 27th October regarding Part 4 of the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill and for sharing the views of the Association of Deer Management Groups (ADMG) on Section 6ZB, which introduces a new ground for intervention in relation to deer management for nature restoration.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the vital role that ADMG and its members play in delivering sustainable deer management across Scotland. Your collaborative efforts in supporting peatland restoration, native woodland expansion, and reducing deer densities—are central to achieving Scotland's biodiversity and climate objectives and the Scottish Government greatly values this contribution.

The intention behind Section 6ZB is to ensure that NatureScot has the necessary tools to address situations where voluntary measures alone may not deliver the outcomes required for nature restoration. I want to reassure you that this new power will not replace the existing collaborative approach. It will operate within the same framework as current intervention processes, beginning with voluntary deer management plans or control agreements and escalating only where necessary to compulsory schemes. The provision is not open-ended; it can only be applied when specific statutory tests are met.

To provide clarity and certainty, NatureScot will be required to set out in the Code of Practice on Deer Management the circumstances in which it may intervene under this new ground. This will help landowners and managers anticipate when intervention might occur and maintain transparency in decision-making.

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Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

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As I set out at the Stage 2 debate on the Bill regarding the provisions in Part 4, the Scottish Government is committed to striking a fair balance between safeguarding the natural environment and supporting those who manage land and deer when developing legislation. We believe the updated legislation will help secure a sustainable future for deer management in Scotland, ensuring it remains environmentally responsible and welfare-conscious while continuing to respect the voluntary framework that has delivered so much to date.

I appreciate your concerns about proportionality and clarity, and would like to assure you that these principles will guide the implementation of the new provisions. We remain committed to working closely with ADMG and other stakeholders to ensure that the legislation supports collaboration rather than undermines it and I look forward to engaging with you further as the Bill progresses through Parliament.

Thank you again for your engagement on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,



JIM FAIRLIE

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