

RE: To clear: media enquiry - protection for seals

03 February 2021 08:28

Subject	RE: To clear: media enquiry - protection for seals
From	[Redacted]
To	[Redacted] Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment
Cc	Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism; [Redacted]); Communications Rural Economy & Environment; [Redacted] MS Marine Licensing; [Redacted] ; MS Communications; [Redacted] [Redacted] ; Palmer MR (Mike); [Redacted] [Redacted] News Desk; McAllan M (Màiri) (Special Adviser); [Redacted]
Sent	02 February 2021 19:12

[Redacted]

[Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment](#)

The Scottish Government | Web: www.gov.scot

Tel: [Redacted] | Mobile: [Redacted] | Email: MinisterRANE@gov.scot

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From: [Redacted] @gov.scot>

Sent: 02 February 2021 17:42

To: Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment <MinisterRANE@gov.scot>

Cc: Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform <CabSecECCLR@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism <CabSecRET@gov.scot>; [Redacted]

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<Newsdesk@gov.scot>; McAllan M (Màiri) (Special Adviser) <Mairi.Mcallan@gov.scot> [Redacted]
[Redacted]
Subject: To clear: media enquiry - protection for seals

Hi [REDACTED]

We have been approached by the Ferret with a query regarding protection for seals.

Comms, spads and policy are content with the lines below.

Grateful for Mr Macpherson's clearance.

A Scottish Government spokesperson said:

"The Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protection and Powers) (Scotland) Act 2020 has amended the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 to remove two specific grounds for which Scottish Ministers can grant licences to kill or take seals. These are for the purpose of protecting the health and welfare of farmed fish and for preventing serious damage to fisheries and fish farms.

"The Act also increased the penalties associated with the offence of killing, injuring or taking a live seal (intentionally or recklessly) in line with the most serious wildlife offences. Those found guilty of breaking the new laws could face a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment, an unlimited fine, or both.

"We would urge anyone with any information about wildlife crime to contact the police."

Background

The changes came into effect on 1 February 2021 at the end of the current licensing round. The Scottish Government will be publishing guidance associated with the remaining licensable purposes in Section 110 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 shortly.

FULL ENQUIRY

I'm writing a report for The Ferret about a charity called Animal Concern which is offering a £5,000 reward for "information leading to the first successful prosecution under new legal protection for seals".

John Robins, Secretary of Animal Concern, said: "Most salmon farms are in remote areas and the shooting of seals was never monitored while it was legal and I am sure it will still not be policed now it is illegal. The only successful prosecution of a salmon farmer for killing seals was as a result of one of our campaigns. The farmer involved was fined £200 on 1st August 1989 for using a shotgun instead of a rifle to kill seals at his farm on Skye. That prosecution was only possible because farm workers turned whistle blowers and gave me the evidence needed to gain a conviction."

"Scottish Government Ministers and officials have bent over backwards to protect fish farmers and keep their persecution of wildlife and environmental damage out of the

public eye. Last year there were at least two incidents where Police Scotland officers abused their power to stop campaigners legally gaining evidence of the suffering caused to salmon in these floating factory farms.”

“Fish farms are in remote areas and with Covid restrictions there are even fewer people likely to see what is happening around the salmon cages. Farm workers and local people may be afraid to speak out for fear of reprisals. They can pass information to us in strict confidence and we will take whatever action we can to secure a prosecution. If we obtain a successful conviction we will gladly pay the £5000 reward to the person who supplied the information.”

“Shooting is no longer the cheap option for dealing with seals. Salmon farmers will now have to use some of their profits to create new jobs installing and maintaining the predator exclusion nets we have been asking them to use for the last thirty years. These are expensive but not as costly as a very heavy fine and/or five years in jail.”

I wondered if anyone would comment in response to Mr Robins?

[Redacted]

Scottish Government, St Andrew's House

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m: [Redacted]