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Gillian Martin
Convener of the Environment,
Climate Change and Land Reform
Committee
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

8 June 2020

Dear Gillian

Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Bill

At the Stage Two debate of the Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Bill on 26 May 2020, I said that I would write to the Committee with more information about the formation of a taskforce to consider the possible extension of powers to the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA) powers to allow them to investigate wildlife crimes.

As you know this topic has been discussed before the Committee on various occasions and the First Minister has stated in Parliament that the Scottish Government will consider the powers of the SSPCA.

I have also written to the SSPCA on this matter and they have replied to say that they welcome the approach that the Scottish Government is taking. I have included a copy of my letter and their response for your information in Annexes A and B of this letter.

Remit

While the remit of the taskforce is still to be finalised, I expect that they will examine, amongst other things, whether the current legislation is sufficient to enable the Scottish SPCA to carry out their existing functions in relation to the investigation of welfare offences against wild animals and whether the Scottish Government should give consideration to extending the powers of the SSPCA to enable them to carry out additional functions in relation to the investigation of wildlife crimes.

Membership

The membership of the group is still to be finalised, but I expect it to comprise of an independent chair, Scottish Government officials, and experts in law enforcement and

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criminal justice, and will take evidence from interested groups including those involved with animal welfare, land management and conservation.

Timeline

I would expect the taskforce to convene later in the summer and that they will be in a position to conclude their review and submit a report of their recommendations before the end of the current Parliamentary session. However, for reasons I know the Committee will understand, these timelines may be subject to change due to the ongoing impact, and practical implications of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and preparations for EU exit at the end of this year.

As I said when I spoke on this matter during the Stage 2 debate, I believe it would be inappropriate to pre-empt the findings of this taskforce by seeking to bring forward any legislative changes at this stage.

I hope this information is helpful, I will of course continue to keep the committee updated as we progress this work.



MAIRI GOUGEON

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Correspondence to the Scottish SPCA

Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural
Environment
Mairi Gougeon MSP



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Kirsteen Campbell
Scottish Society for the Prevention of
Cruelty to Animals (Scottish SPCA)
kirsteen.campbell@scottishspca.org

06 June 2020

Dear Kirsteen,

Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Bill

At the Stage Two debate of the Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Bill on 26 May 2020, I said that I would write to the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee with more information about the formation of a taskforce to consider the possible extension of powers to the Scottish SPCA to allow them to investigate wildlife crimes.

I would also like to provide you with an update on that work. While the full membership and remit of the taskforce is still to be finalised, I expect that they will be looking into, amongst other things, whether the current legislation is sufficient to enable the Scottish SPCA to carry out their existing functions in relation to the investigation of welfare offences against wild animals and whether the Scottish Government should give consideration to extending the powers of the SSPCA to enable them to carry out additional functions in relation to the investigation of wildlife crimes.

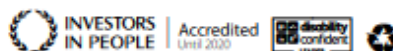
The taskforce will have an independent chair and will include representatives from the Scottish Government and experts in law enforcement. And of course I would expect that the Scottish SPCA will be an active participant in the work of the group.

In terms of timescales I hope that the taskforce will convene later this summer with a report and recommendations to follow in the New Year.

As I explained during the Stage 2 debate I do not wish to pre-empt the findings of this taskforce which is why I have not brought forth any amendments in this Bill that would alter the existing powers of the SSPCA. However, I can assure you that I will give my full consideration to the findings of the taskforce and any recommendations for legislative change that it may make.

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I hope this information is helpful and my officials will be in touch to discuss this matter further with you in due course.

Finally I would once again like to extend my thanks to you and your team for all the work you do in protecting Scotland's domestic, farm and wild animals, and for all the support you have provided during the passage of this Bill. I look forward to continuing to work with you in the future.



MAIRI GOUGEON

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Correspondence from the Scottish SPCA



Building a better
world for animals
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Ref: KC/HT/009

8 June 2020

Mairi Gougeon MSP
Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment

Sent by Email

Dear Mairi

Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Bill

Thank you so much for your letter and update on the formation of a taskforce to consider the possible extension of powers to the Scottish SPCA to allow us to investigate wildlife crimes.

As you know we warmly welcome the establishment of a taskforce to review this issue and the Scottish SPCA would be delighted to be an active participant in the group.

I note the timescales set out and greatly appreciate your commitment to consider the findings of the taskforce, including any recommendations for legislative change it may make. We look forward to progressing the matter further with your officials.

Finally, many congratulations on the Bill and we hope for its continued safe passage through parliament. We are absolutely delighted to support the progressive changes it will introduce. It is not overstating it to say it will improve the lives of animals and people the day it comes into force and for generations to come. I can't tell you how thrilled everyone in the Scottish SPCA is about that. Our fantastic team sees every day the difference these changes will make.

Mike, I and the whole team look forward to continuing to work with you and your officials and would like to thank you so much for all your support for animal welfare in Scotland and for the Scottish SPCA.

Best wishes,

Kirsteen Campbell
Chief Executive

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