



NEWS RELEASE

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Crofters call on Scottish Government to reveal its plans for goose management in Uists

The Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) Board and Council endorsed support for Uist crofters in their campaign for Scottish Government to fund reduction of wild geese which are devastating the grazings and the environmentally sensitive machair.

"At a recent meeting of the SCF's Board of Directors and our advisory Council of Representatives, it was unanimously agreed that SCF is 100% behind the Uist crofters in their struggle to get meaningful support from the Scottish Government to reduce the wild geese that plague them," said SCF chair Russell Smith. "We had assurances from Scottish Government that an action plan would be published before now, so we really need to see this happen.

"Senior officials from Scottish Natural Heritage attended a recent meeting in the Uists where they heard first-hand how serious the situation is," Mr Smith continued. "It is clear from crofters comments that not only is 'the joy gone from crofting' due to goose damage but that if nothing is done to control goose numbers, crofting that is particular to the Uists will end within 5 years, with the consequent irrecoverable loss to the acclaimed machair ecology."

David Muir, Secretary of the SCF Uist & Barra branch added, "We have been told that the £10,000 'challenge fund' that was to be split between Orkney, Lewis & Harris, Uist & Barra and Coll & Tiree to 'transition to self-help' could be increased but we have yet to see the promised action plan and a realistic figure to fund the reduction of goose numbers. The Scottish Government budget for goose control in the Uists has consistently diminished year on year and the last year of the funded scheme had a budget of £40,000. To say £10,000 split between all the islands involved in the scheme, or indeed were it £10,000 for Uist alone, simply is nowhere near enough to halt the explosion in goose numbers and the resulting devastation."

END

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