



The Moorland Association

Paul Kissack
Permanent Secretary
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

24 August 2026

Dear Paul,

Evidence gathering on the possible licensing of recreational gamebird shooting and release

The Guardian reported on 23 August 2026 that the RSPB was preparing documents for submission to Defra through what the article described as an “evidence sprint”, in connection with the possible licensing of gamebird shooting and release.

The Land Use Framework for England commits Defra to work with the sector and other stakeholder groups when exploring such measures. The Moorland Association represents owners and managers of grouse moorland who would be directly affected by any licensing of driven grouse shooting and should therefore be included from the outset.

The Moorland Association has received no information about the reported process. I would therefore be grateful if you could clarify:

1. whether an evidence sprint, or any other formal evidence-gathering exercise, is now under way or planned.
2. its purpose, scope and the questions it is intended to address.
3. whether the exercise is examining whether additional regulation is necessary, including alternatives to licensing, or only the possible design of a licensing system.
4. the timetable and any deadlines for submitting evidence.
5. which organisations have been invited to participate and how they were selected.
6. how the evidence will be assessed, and whether the submissions and conclusions will be published.
7. which Defra team and officials are leading the work.
8. whether any invitation, call for evidence, terms of reference or supporting material has already been issued to participating organisations and, if so, whether the same material can now be provided to the Moorland Association.

The Moorland Association would welcome the opportunity to participate fully and at the same stage as other interested organisations. We can provide scientific evidence and practical experience relating specifically to driven grouse moor management, including wildlife outcomes, existing regulatory controls, wildfire resilience, peatland management and the possible unintended consequences of further regulation.

Moorland Association members are proud to maintain over a million acres of open heather moorland across England and Wales - some of the rarest habitat on earth. Through a combination of innovation and research our members have proven they are best at protecting and maintaining it.



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We support the highest standards and effective action against wildlife crime. It is nevertheless important that the evidence-gathering process distinguishes between driven grouse shooting and the release of pheasants and partridges, identifies precisely what regulatory gaps are said to exist, and considers whether licensing would be necessary, proportionate and effective.

Please treat this letter as the Moorland Association's formal request to participate in this work and to receive the same questions, materials and deadlines provided to other participating organisations. An opportunity to respond to a later public consultation would not be a substitute for equal participation in the pre-consultation evidence-gathering stage.

Given that evidence is apparently already being prepared, I would be grateful if Defra could confirm within five working days whether such an exercise is under way, identify the officials leading it and confirm that the Moorland Association will be included. A fuller response to the remaining questions can follow as soon as practicable. We would also welcome an early meeting with the officials responsible.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Gilruth

Chief Executive

Moorland Association

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