

Baroness Hayman of Ullock
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

12 October 2026

Dear Minister,

Call for Evidence on Gamebird Release, Shooting and Welfare During Rearing

We write on behalf of organisations representing rural businesses, land managers, farmers, gamekeepers and sporting interests. We ask you to extend the deadline and improve the design of Defra's call for evidence so that those managing gamebirds and their habitats can contribute fully.

Whilst we appreciate the Government's aim of understanding the environmental, social and welfare implications of gamebird rearing, release and shooting, we are concerned that both the timing and format of the call for evidence risk losing evidence from those responsible for managing habitats, monitoring wildlife and delivering conservation on the ground.

As you know, the period for submissions falls during the shooting season, when gamekeepers, estate staff and shoot managers have an acutely limited capacity to produce detailed submissions.

An extension would also allow complete 2026/27 records to be collated and assessed, giving Defra a fuller account of current practice.

You will be aware of ongoing engagement from organisations with Defra on the design of the call for evidence and this letter reflects a shared view that improvements are needed if practitioners are to contribute fully. Members of all of our organisations report that questions are ambiguous, imprecise or appear to prejudge the evidence. The questionnaire also combines scientific research, operational records and personal experience without making sufficiently clear which questions practitioners should answer, particularly in Section B.

We therefore ask Defra to:

- Extend the deadline to 30 April 2027. If that cannot be agreed, extend to 28 February 2027 and accept supplementary 2026/27 evidence until 30 April 2027.
- Revise ambiguous or leading questions and publish clear guidance on the questions relevant to individual practitioners, land managers and rural businesses.
- Explain how operational records and practical experience will be assessed alongside published research, using transparent criteria.
- Provide a clear route for direct submissions alongside a simpler questionnaire, enabling practitioners to contribute without relying on representative organisations.

Our organisations are ready and willing to support members' participation and work with your officials to improve the process. We would be happy to meet with you to discuss this matter further

at your convenience, but would ask that we receive a response to our request urgently before the call closes, so respondents have certainty about the arrangements.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah-Jane Laing
Chief Executive
Scottish Land & Estates



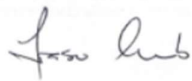
Isabella Murfin
Chief Executive Officer
Country Land & Business Association



Andrew Gilruth
Chief Executive
Moorland Association



Alex Hogg MBE
Chairman
Scottish Gamekeepers Association



Fraser Lamb
Management Committee
Scottish Association of Country Sports



Mark Ewart
National Engagement Manager
Scotland's Regional Moorland Groups