

Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson Cùisean Dùthchail agus na h-
Àrainneachd
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Ur faidhle/Your ref:
Ar faidhle/Our ref: 2011/1021908
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Dear Tannis

Thank you for your letter and enclosures of 20 October to Stewart Stevenson, Minister for Environment and Climate Change, on behalf of Scotland's Moorland Forum about asulam and the control of bracken. I am replying as pesticides fall within my portfolio.

I am very aware of the invasive nature of bracken, and the threat it poses to heather moorlands and rich grassland habitats throughout Scotland.

In view of the importance of asulam to Scotland's land managers, I wrote to the Minister at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, urging him to take all possible action to ensure it remained on the market. I also wrote to the European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy emphasising asulam's importance to Scotland's farmers and rural areas, and urging him to intervene.

It was, therefore, deeply disappointing that the European Commission decided to withdraw asulam from the market after the end of 2012. This was despite scientific evidence of asulam's safety provided by Scottish and UK Government Ministers.

The Scottish Government welcomes the news that the company which manufactures asulam is working on a re-submission for the substance's re-registration in the European Union (EU). However, this process will take a few years before it is complete.

In the meantime, we are keen to work with the agriculture sector on the options available to it to control bracken. This could include, in due course, applications for emergency authorisations of asulam made to the Chemicals Regulation Directorate (CRD).

I understand Simon Thorp, Director of The Heather Trust, updated Forum members with details of a recent meeting with the manufacturer of asulam, CRD, the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), and stakeholders. The meeting provided initial guidance on emergency authorisations, with stakeholders encouraged to submit co-ordinated applications when the time comes. No action is required at the present time.

Forum members will also be aware that CRD will issue further guidance on the application arrangements nearer the time. Additionally, Scottish Government officials will provide assistance, as required, in the processing of any Scottish applications for an emergency authorisation of asulam.

The Scottish Government strongly supports the reinstatement of asulam. As members of the Moorland Forum, we are pleased to note the Forum's efforts to promote asulam's re-registration, and the interim measures, until the EU process is complete.

I hope this is helpful.

*Regards,
Richard*

RICHARD LOCHHEAD