

28th June 2021

Dear Ant Maddock, Andy Brown, Liz Halliwell and Sally Blyth,

Re: 7th Quinquennial Review (QQR) of Schedules 5 and 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981)

We are writing this open letter to you in response to the decision by the QQR Review Group (consisting of JNCC and the three country nature conservation bodies and representatives of the non-governmental sector) to change the eligibility criteria for which species will be included on Schedules 5 and 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. This change means that an animal or plant species will only be protected when it is in imminent danger of extinction as defined by the highest categories in the IUCN red listing process, or those identified as European Protected Species. This decision has been made without due consultation and to date has not considered concerns raised by NGOs. In fact the NGO's that have raised concern about the changes have been told that the decision has been made and can't be questioned. It also fails to consider the consequences of such changes to the eligibility criteria which would mean that large numbers of species will now no longer be protected against killing and sale by law.

We have numerous serious concerns regarding this decision and the decision making process. These include but are not limited to:

- Removal of protection will mean that these species will legally be allowed to be killed. This will enable building developments to take place with no consideration of the impacts on formerly protected species such as slow worms and water voles if a case cannot be made to keep them listed. It also means that it will once again be legal to persecute adders, pine martens and mountain hares – despite all of the costly efforts to try and conserve these vulnerable species.
- Removal of protection will mean it would become legal to trade wild-caught British species including amphibians and butterflies – which as well as directly causing population declines would also pose a huge biosecurity risk, since this could result in wild animals being moved around, and entering into captive collections alongside animals imported from elsewhere in the world. This is of particular concern for widespread amphibians that are at serious risk from Chytrid and Severe Perkinsea Infection which have wiped out populations of amphibians worldwide and have both been found in captive collections in the UK.
- Whilst very valuable, the GB IUCN red listing process is not suitable for this purpose. It is complex and requires high levels of evidence of population trends. This in turn requires high level species surveys and analysis of the data to determine population trends at a national scale. There has been no provision made as to how this will be resourced and an assumption that NGO's will take on the burden of this work. IUCN guidance specifically identifies automatic use of Red List categories in policy as an "inappropriate use" of the Red List; and the IUCN Red List category "Vulnerable" is a "Threatened" category, which means it is "facing a high risk of extinction in the wild".
- The changes that have been decided by the QQR Review Group remove the opportunity to prevent species decline. Under the changes outlined we will only be reacting to catastrophic species declines.

We would like to formally request that the QQR Review Group carry out a public consultation on the decision to change the eligibility criteria before proceeding with the planned timetable.

We await your response.

Yours Sincerely,

The Froglife Trust

People's Trust for Endangered Species
(PTES)

Amphibian and Reptile Groups of UK
(ARG UK)

Glasgow Natural History Society

Trees for Life

Black2Nature

Biological Recording in Scotland (BRISC)

British Hedgehog Preservation Society

Vincent Wildlife Trust (VWT)

Bat Conservation Trust

Sussex Wildlife Trust

Pesticide Action Network UK (PAN UK)

Marine Conservation Society

The Wildlife Trusts

Freshwater Habitats Trust

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty
to Animals (RSPCA)

Friends of Glasgow's Local Nature
Reserves

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation

Citizen Zoo

Scottish Badgers

Wildlife and Countryside Link

Scottish Environment LINK

Bumblebee Conservation Trust

Scottish Wild Land Group

Rewilding Britain

Badger Trust

Wales Environment Link

RSPB

The Zoological Society of London (ZSL)