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Dear Fiona,

**CONSULTATION ON PROVISIONS RELATING TO MUIRBURN DATES:
BTO RESPONSE**

Please find a short response from the British Trust for Ornithology (Scotland) below. Please note that we have restricted our response to those questions relevant to our expertise as an impartial ecological scientific research organisation. BTO is happy for our response to be made public, including the name and address of the organisation, and we are happy to be contacted again in future regarding this consultation.

Question 1. Do you agree that in order to adapt to the possible effects of climate change on moorland, it is necessary for the Scottish Ministers to be given powers to vary the permissible dates for muirburn in future.

There is clear evidence that recent climate change is leading to variation in the timing of breeding of some moorland bird species (and indeed other taxa). Assuming that there is a continuing need to achieve a balance between practical management objectives on moorland and nature conservation objectives, then it is important that permissible muirburn dates are kept under review in future and that Ministers have the power to alter these if necessary. Decisions on whether and how to vary muirburn dates in future should be based on a rigorous evidence base however. For birds (the focus of our organisation's expertise), preliminary work has already been undertaken to establish baseline information of importance in the decision-making process. Specific contextual refinements to such work would be possible. See:

Moss, D., Joys, A.C., Clark, J.A., Kirby, A., Smith, A., Baines, D. & Crick, H.Q.P. (2005) *Timing of Breeding of Moorland Birds*. BTO Research Report No. 362, BTO, Thetford (Report to SNH and Defra) (Can be provided upon request).

We have no further comments to add with regard to questions 2 or 3.

With best wishes,

Chris

Dr Chris Wernham
Head of BTO Scotland

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