



## SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

---

Deputy Minister for Environment & Rural Development  
**Allan Wilson** MSP

Pentland House  
47 Robb's Loan  
Edinburgh EH14 1TY

Alex Fergusson MSP  
The Scottish Parliament  
Rural Development Committee  
George IV Bridge  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

Telephone: 0131-556 8400  
scottish.ministers@scotland.gsi.gov.uk  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk>

Our ref: Petitions 187 and 449

13 March 2003

---

I am responding to your letter of 26 February following the evidence I gave to the Rural Development Committee on 25 February on Petitions 187 and 449 submitted by the Scottish Gamekeepers Association.

As I made clear in my evidence, I intend to ensure that policy decisions on this and related issues are firmly based upon sound, scientific evidence. Where there are gaps in our knowledge, we will undertake further work. Such work should draw from as many sources as possible and should contain the element of independence which the Petitioners sought.

I welcome the Committee's view that the Moorland Forum, and the broad interests and membership it represents, offers the potential to commission a number of studies which would enhance our science base and better inform our decision making. My officials have already begun discussions with Scottish Natural Heritage on those areas where the Rural Development Committee has felt more information was required. The Moorland Forum has a specific research function and is well placed to take forward the Committee's request for more work. I shall ask the Forum to advise me on those aspects of the Committee's deliberations where it feels that the work is better undertaken outwith its own remit to make recommendations on how, and by whom, such research might be progressed. I will be writing to the Chairman of the Forum to this effect.

**ALLAN WILSON**