

**PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF, AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS, THE CONTROL OF WILD ANIMAL SPECIES IN SCOTLAND**

The Scottish Economic Policy Network (scotecon) today publishes a report on public attitudes towards the control of wild animal species in Scotland. The report, by Dr Lorna Philip and Dr Douglas Macmillan of the University of Aberdeen, is based on an innovative method of valuing some of our rarest wildlife. It focuses on public preferences and willingness to pay for complex and often controversial wildlife management programmes.

The principal objectives of the report were to:

- Determine public attitudes to wildlife management in Scotland.
- Determine the level of support and willingness to pay for four particular projects;
  - controlling hedgehogs in the Western Isles,
  - eradication of the American mink,
  - reintroduction of the European beaver, and
  - conservation of the capercaillie.
- Assess 'value for money' of wildlife conservation projects paid for by the tax-payer.

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**Key Findings**

- That wildlife is valued for non-commercial reasons.
- Over 75% of participants were in favour of humane culling of mink and hedgehogs in the Western Isles, and only 18% supported returning them to the mainland.
- The most popular wildlife management proposal was saving the capercaillie from extinction with an average willingness to pay of £28 per household per year for 10 years.
- Reintroduction of the beaver was supported by 72% of participants, with an average willingness to pay of £24 per household per year for 10 years.

**Participants**

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University of Stirling  
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**Policy Implications and Research**

The report shows that:

- The public are willing to pay for management programmes even if the species has no commercial value.
- The strong views of animal rights groups on culling species are not shared by the public, who show a more pragmatic attitude.

- There is a need to broaden the wildlife management debate beyond the dominant self-interest groups, since this research shows that the public have a strong interest in these issues.
- Scottish parliamentarians should be reassured that wildlife management and conservation, for example when related to tourism, are seen by the public as representing good value for money.

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**Notes for editors:**

Scotecon is a network of economists based in Scotland's universities, which aims to stimulate academic research on the Scottish economy, particularly in those areas of interest and concern to the Scottish Parliament. Scotecon is funded by a Research Development Grant from the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council.

Copies of this report entitled "Public Perceptions of, and Attitudes Towards, the Control of Wild Animal Species in Scotland" are available to the press from **Scotecon**, University of Stirling, FK9 4LA (e-mail: [deirdre.kennedy@scotecon.net](mailto:deirdre.kennedy@scotecon.net)). A full version of the report will be available in PDF format on our website ([www.scotecon.net](http://www.scotecon.net)) from Tuesday, 28 October 2003.

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