



SCOTLAND

WORKING FOR THE SCOTTISH SHEEP INDUSTRY

Thursday, 26 February 2026

Dear Jim Fairlie MSP,

Concerns Regarding the Emerging Lynx Reintroduction Narrative in Scotland

I am writing on behalf of the National Sheep Association in Scotland to share evidence-based concerns raised by sheep farmers following several recent stakeholder sessions on potential lynx reintroduction. NSA Scotland is committed to constructive engagement in all discussions relating to biodiversity, land use and rural livelihoods, and wishes to contribute openly and positively to the understanding of practical considerations for farming communities.

Across multiple events, farmers and NSA representatives observed that information about ecological impacts and predation risks was presented inconsistently. In some discussions, risks to sensitive species were recognised, while in others the same risks were minimised or downplayed. Similarly, it was acknowledged that lynx would not significantly reduce deer numbers, despite this being a commonly cited public justification for reintroduction. These inconsistencies have made it difficult for farmers to feel fully informed.

A number of the proposed mitigation measures were also reported as being impractical for Scottish hill and upland systems. Suggestions such as fencing off woodland or shelterbelts are simply unworkable on the scale and terrain typical of Scottish farms. Proposals involving temporary human presence as a deterrent do not align with the realities of extensive grazing or year-round vulnerability of livestock.

Concerns were also raised about long-term funding. While representatives suggested that costs would be covered for 5–10 years, it was not made clear whether this period begins from any future release or whether it includes years already elapsed since earlier feasibility work. They have indicated that, once their own funding period ends, any ongoing financial responsibilities are expected to fall to the Scottish Government. Predictability and transparency on long-term support are essential for farmers when considering the implications of an apex predator in the landscape.

There is also uncertainty around the role and purpose of the questionnaires issued at these events. Farmers repeatedly noted that the questionnaires appeared heavily weighted towards positive outcomes, offering limited space to record practical concerns or conditional views. In addition, it has not been clearly explained how these responses will be used, what influence they will have in any

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assessment process, or how they will feed into wider evidence gathering. At the same time, some participants were told that Scottish Ministers' publicly stated opposition to lynx reintroduction "does not matter" because the final decision lies solely elsewhere, creating further confusion about how different sources of input will be considered and how democratic oversight fits into the process.

NSA Scotland fully supports the ambition to restore nature and is actively involved in delivering habitat, peatland and biodiversity work across the country. Farmers are essential partners in this progress. However, the introduction of an apex predator raises significant questions about livestock welfare, business resilience and confidence in continuing existing environmental work. These concerns are not theoretical; they are grounded in farmers' lived experience and deserve full and transparent consideration as discussions continue.

Our intention in writing is to support a balanced, evidence-driven conversation. NSA Scotland would welcome the opportunity to contribute further insight, share farmer perspectives or support future engagement activities to help ensure that discussions are as informed, open and constructive as possible.

Thank you for taking the time to consider these issues. We look forward to ongoing, collaborative dialogue.

Yours sincerely,

Faye Bryce

Policy Officer, Scotland

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