



From the Chairman: **Prof. Colin Galbraith**
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Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your letter dated 28th June 2021. We have been actively engaging stakeholders to address the concerns set out in your letter.

In the QQR6 report to governments in 2014, recommendations were made to refine the criteria because of lack of clear definitions of terms in the relevant sections in the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) and the listing of species on Schedules 5 & 8.

As a result, the QQR Inter-Agency Group (comprising JNCC, Natural Resources Wales, NatureScot and Natural England) was asked by Defra and the Welsh Government to review the selection criteria to ensure a consistent approach across all species groups. A QQR review group was established in 2014. In 2018, the group proposed clearer definitions relating to selection of species.

The first phase of QQR7, data gathering, is now complete. This has been an “informal” process involving the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (SNCBs) and a range of non-governmental organisations to gather views and evidence to inform our formal consultation.

In helping to frame the advice from JNCC to governments, we will apply a precautionary approach in evaluating both species conservation status and conservation dependence on the protection they are afforded by the schedules. In particular, if any species were to be proposed for removal from the Schedules in the formal consultation phase, which is later in the process and will inform our advice, then evidence will need to be provided to demonstrate that there will be no deterioration in the population status of that species and that the benefits received from being on the Schedule are no longer needed, or that it is no longer threatened overall.

Please note that in Scotland, European Protected Species are protected through The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) rather than listed on Schedules 5 & 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

A statement on QQR7 has been posted on the JNCC [website](http://jncc.gov.uk). JNCC and the SNCBs will carry out an open and collaborative stakeholder engagement and consultation in the next stages of the work. We look forward to working with you as part of this process.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Colin A Galbraith
Chair

Dr Gemma Harper
Chief Executive