

## Scottish Government Response to UK Government Digital, Culture

**From:** [Redacted] - Section 11 (2) - Personal Information@culture.gov.uk>

**Sent:** Monday, December 9, 2019 11:37 AM

**To:** [Redacted] - Section 11 (2) - Personal Information @gov.scot>

**Cc:** [Redacted] - Section 11 (2) - Personal Information @gov.scot>

**Subject:** Re: [UK] State of conservation of the World Heritage property 'St Kilda'

Thanks very much [Redacted] - Section 11 (2) - Personal Information. I will cc you in to my response.

[Redacted] - Section 11 (2) - Personal Information On Mon, 9 Dec 2019 at 07:41, [Redacted] - Section 11 (2) - Personal Information @gov.scot> wrote:

Hi [Redacted] - Section 11 (2) - Personal Information,

Please see below some information for your response. Apologies for the delay in getting back to you.

The Soay sheep of Hirta, St Kilda, originate from the population on the island of Soay where they have been treated as a wild population for hundreds of years, unmanaged save for periodic hunting by the archipelago's inhabitants. A small population of Soay sheep were introduced to Hirta in the early 1930s after the islands were abandoned and prior to the islands' coming into the care of the National Trust for Scotland. These too are treated as a wild population, subject to minimal intervention. As a feral population, the lifecycle of the sheep undergoes natural peaks and troughs, unlike domesticated livestock.

The Soay sheep are a rare living reminder of our prehistoric past. Their feral and unmanaged state presents a unique opportunity for study and research. The Soay Sheep are therefore an important part of Outstanding Universal Value of the St Kilda World Heritage site. Their management as a feral flock occurs under the management Plan for the Islands, led by the National Trust for Scotland with support from a wide range of partners and stakeholders.

The Soay sheep on St. Kilda have been much studied as an example of an unmanaged population subject to natural population fluctuations. Although this involves occasional gathering and ear-tagging for identification, the population is regarded as effectively 'wild', is unowned and is not subject to any routines management, veterinary treatment or population control. Animals protected under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 are defined as those that are:

- “(a) of a kind which is commonly domesticated in the British Islands;
- (b) under the control of man on a permanent or temporary basis; or
- (c) not living in a wild state”

Previous advice from the Scottish Government when this issue has been raised is that:

(a) can be considered not to apply as although sheep as a species are commonly domesticated in the British Islands, the current populations of sheep on St Kilda, through an accident of history, can now be considered as distinct **kinds** that are **not** “commonly domesticated” in the British Islands.

(b) would only apply if and when sheep are gathered up for a particular procedure – otherwise they are not under control as they are free to move anywhere.

(c) does not apply as the sheep are feral animals “living in a wild state”.

The St Kilda sheep are therefore for the purposes of welfare legislation regarded in the same way as an unowned and unmanaged population of wild deer or other wild animals would be.

I hope that is helpful. Please do give me a ring if you’d like to discuss.

Best wishes,

**[Redacted] - Section 11 (2) - Personal Information**

Scottish Government **[Redacted] - Section 11 (2) - Personal Information |**

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