



# ANIMAL CONCERN

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Tuesday, 27 March 2007

Ian Walker Esq.,  
Secretary,  
Scottish Seals Forum,  
SEERAD,  
Area G-H93,  
Victoria Quay,  
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

Scottish Seals Forum

Dear Mr. Walker,

Thank you for your letter of March 16<sup>th</sup> in reply to our application to join the Scottish Seals Forum and the internal Working Group within the Forum. You say in your letter that you have been asked to review the current membership of the Forum with a view to reducing overall numbers. Can you tell me who has asked you to carry out this review and reduce overall numbers?

You say you are unable to offer Animal Concern a place on the Forum. I thought that your Department provided a Secretariat to the Forum and that the Forum took its own decisions. Can you tell me under what authority you have decided not to offer Animal Concern a place on the Form?

You say in your letter that there are no less than four representatives of animal welfare interests on the Forum (Scottish SPCA, IFAW, Advocates for Animals and BDMLR) and that another would not be in the interests of a healthy balance. Even including the Scottish SPCA (who have said they do not oppose seal culling so long as they can monitor it to ensure it is carried out humanely) I fail to see where you find a healthy balance.

As far as I am aware current Forum membership includes the Anglo-Scottish Fishermen's Association, Association of Salmon Fishery Boards, Atlantic Salmon Trust, Highlands & Islands Fishermen's Association, Kyle of Sutherland Fishery Board, Salmon and Trout Association (Scotland), Salmon Net Fish Association, Scottish Anglers National Association, Scottish Fishermen's Federation, Scottish Quality Salmon, Scottish White Fish Producers Association and the Spey Fishery Board. That makes twelve groups which have either supported calls to cull of seals in Scottish waters and/or whose members are actively involved in shooting seals. A ratio of three to one does not, in my humble opinion, a healthy balance make.

I respectfully suggest a more accurate name for the Scottish Seals Forum would be the Scottish Seals Management Forum as membership is substantially weighted in favour of bodies which have expressed a vested interest in the reduction of the number of seals in Scottish waters.

I hereby make a formal request under the Freedom of Information Act for the following:

Copies of all correspondence both internal and external (including meeting notes/minutes, letters, e-mails and any telephone call transcripts) which led up to the creation of the Scottish Seals Forum. A copy of the letter of invitation to join the forum, a complete list of all those organisations invited to join the forum both initially and subsequently and a complete list of current members of the Forum.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,  
Campaigns Consultant