

The Committee received 35 consultation responses, in English, related to shooting in Wales. A response from the British Association for Shooting and Conservation - set out below - was accompanied by 34 responses from individuals in support of shooting activities in Wales, points made by BASC about its benefits for businesses and local communities in terms of shooting recreation and jobs, and calls for a Committee inquiry.

### **Response from British Association for Shooting and Conservation**

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) urges the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee to conduct an inquiry into the contribution of shooting activities in Wales to the Welsh economy, environment and rural communities, including analysis on Welsh Governments policy towards shooting in Wales.

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation BASC is the largest shooting organisation in the UK with approximately 150,000 members. Our mission is to promote and protect sporting shooting and advocate its conservation role throughout the UK. BASC's headquarters are based in North Wales and our role is to:

- Provide an effective and unified voice for sustainable shooting sports.
- Benefit the community by providing education, promoting scientific research, and advocating best practice in firearms licensing, habitat conservation, and wildlife and game management.
- Promote the benefits of game as food.

### **Shooting and conservation in Wales**

- Shooting activities in Wales contribute £75 million to the Welsh economy, supporting 2,900 shooting-related businesses across the country and directly supporting the equivalent of 2,400 full-time jobs.
- Across Wales, shooting contributes to an annual spend of £7.4m on conservation, which is the equivalent of 490 full-time jobs or 120,000 conservation workdays. The management practices associated with shooting play a pivotal role in protecting ecosystems and helping wildlife to thrive.
- Shooting has been a legitimate way of life in rural Wales for generations, supporting rural economies, including the tourism and hospitality industries.

- Sustainable shooting fulfils each of the seven Well-being Goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, providing economic, environmental and cultural benefits to Wales.

### **Welsh Government policy on sustainable shooting**

We ask that the committee conducts an enquiry into sustainable shootings contribution to the Welsh economy and rural communities, including analysis on Welsh Governments policy towards shooting in Wales.

The Welsh Government “does not support activity which may lead to animal cruelty as a leisure activity”, outlined in recent correspondence with the Welsh Government Economy Minister.

This followed the Welsh Government’s refusal to award a shooting business the second round of Economic Resilience Funding, despite being eligible and successful in the first round.

This position sets a concerning precedent and demonstrates a lack of understanding of the importance of sustainable shooting to the Welsh economy, environment and communities.

This position is unjustified and will be damaging to businesses across the country. Shooting is a lawful activity and more information is required on how Welsh Government formed this policy position.

The situation is in conflict with Scotland, where more than 100 country sports tourism businesses received crucial coronavirus funding from the government’s £1m recovery fund.

If the Welsh Government maintains this unwarranted position, it will inflict significant damage. Shooting business support rural economies, the environment and communities. Shooting supports tourism and hospitality businesses throughout the year and provides rural communities with an economic lifeline by extending the tourism season into the winter months.

Shooting businesses in Wales have already experienced the effect of changes in government policy. In 2018 Natural Resources Wales’s decision to ban shooting on public land impacted shooting businesses across the country. This decision, in our opinion, was influenced by the petitioning of extreme environmental groups. Many individuals associated with these groups did not live in Wales but had and continue to have significant influence on Ministers and policies through extensive lobbying and the mass signing of petitions.

Within the Programme for Government 2021-2026 the Welsh Government has pledged to ban the use of snares in Wales, a proposal BASC strongly rejects. Increased recognition and understanding of the importance of snaring to protect young livestock, sporting, wildlife and conservation interests is urgently needed. If snares are banned there would be a range of consequences such as a loss of biodiversity and a loss of income to farmers and other land managers through loss of stock. BASC worked with

the Welsh Government and other stakeholders to develop the Welsh Government's code of best practice on the use of snares in fox control. The code sets out legal requirements and gives best practice guidance, seeking to deliver the highest animal welfare standards. The Welsh Government proposal to ban snares despite the industry working with them to develop best practice is very troubling and highlights the concerning direction of the Welsh Government's policy towards the sector.

The shooting community wants to maintain its place at the forefront of conservation and environmental protection. BASC and eight other rural organisations are encouraging a transition away from lead and single-use plastics in ammunition used by those taking all live quarry with shotguns by 2025. We urge the Welsh Government to support this voluntary approach understanding that self-regulation and progression should prevent more punitive legislation in the future. Raising the profile and increasing awareness of the transition is an important part of ensuring its success, and we strongly believe this is an important initiative that our elected representatives should take an interest in and actively support.

The production and eating of game meat are core elements of sustainable shooting. Game meat is a sustainable, inexpensive, delicious and a healthy source of protein. With more emphasis on sustainably-sourced food, game meat is sourced from natural landscapes, the animals are not intensively farmed and are often locally sourced so the carbon footprint of the game industry is relatively small, with very few miles from field to fork.

BASC continues to urge the Welsh Government to reconsider their unwarranted approach towards sustainable shooting in Wales. Shooting is an integral part of Wales's cultural, economic and environmental fabric. We ask that the committee conducts an inquiry into the contribution of sustainable shooting to the Welsh economy and rural communities, including analysis of the Welsh Government's policies on shooting in Wales. We believe that this inquiry should be a committee priority for the term of the sixth Senedd.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee consultation and more information on BASC's policy priorities for the sixth Senedd can be found in our [manifesto for sustainable shooting](#).

#### **Further diverse points made in individual responses include:**

- Where I live on Anglesey we have an annual Holyhead & Anglesey show which is supported by associated shooting businesses and we have gundog trials showing the skills of the dogs and trainers at a local and national level, some whom compete at an international level.
- My background is as a conservationist who shoots occasionally. Until retirement I was a full time doctor in the NHS for 40 years. I manage and own 2500 acres of heathland.
- Welsh government seems unaware that shooting contributes £80 million annually to the Welsh economy and supports about 2500 jobs (wte). It is a significant component of farming diversification and

enables people to remain in the uplands in particular. It also makes a huge contribution to conservation. Welsh Government policies of refusal is unfair and will contribute to a Welsh version of the Clearances in Scotland. This policy is based on prejudice and will be seen as such.

- As a working class man from the Rhondda valley, I am astonished that my Welsh Government should oppose legal field sports such as shooting. I trust that the policy will be reviewed and that a more realistic attitude is taken to this disciplined outdoor sport.
- The need to get outdoors and be more active has been brought into stark relief in recent years. With obesity and mental health issues being seen as a real and growing concern the need to get out into the countryside has never been greater. Shooting live quarry, be it for pest control or leisure has a part to play in creating opportunities to get out into the countryside.
- Since moving to Wales in 2016 I have been actively involved with the rural community, undertaking pest control for local farmers; particularly rabbits and crows. I therefore believe an urgent review is needed to scrutinise Welsh Government policy and ensure that the shooting industry is sustainable for future generations.
- Government should not be eroding the importance of shooting and field sports, especially when it does not understand the importance of all that takes place, and in particular, the enjoyment and education it brings to so many.
- I live in the Wrexham area and have shot in North Wales for many years, including rough shooting, driven game, deer management, pest control and wildfowling. My current shoot welcomes participants from across Europe providing employment to those who live in the local, rural area and business for the hospitality sector and others.
- Shooting is a well-established and important part of the social fabric of the countryside, bring together people from across the regions to participate in shooting, beating, picking up, and generally enjoying the social aspects of rural life.
- Given the Welsh Government's prejudice against this rural lifestyle and their public statements opposing the shooting of live quarry as a leisure activity, it would seem that the shooting community is being targeted from a political / 'moral' standpoint with little or no consideration to the impacts on those whom this prejudice will affect. The Government has repeatedly demonstrated that it is urban centric and has little knowledge or interest in rural matters and this is yet another example of this.
- Whilst shooting and other rural sports are not relevant to some (personally I could care less if Football was banned!), they are a vital part of many people's lives and social networks. Shooting is a safe and well managed activity that has long taught youngsters the importance of responsibility, teamwork and how to manage the land for generations and should continue for many more to follow
- I personally receive many requests from local farmers to help out with pest control which I carry out in my leisure time free of charge. I am

not a professional pest controller. This is a leisure activity you wish to stop. This would undoubtedly result in greater crop damage, livestock and poultry loss.

- As you are obviously unaware the Deer population in Wales and the rest of the UK have no predators to control their populations. It is generally up to leisure shooters qualified in deer management and control to control the population, which if unchecked are responsible for tens of millions of pounds worth of woodland, forestry and crop damage annually.
- The hard facts are Labour has no interest in traditional country ways, merely wanting the land to become a massive theme park /bike park; whose participants provide no conservation money, in fact wrecking the environment. This I can witness in my locality with the development of biking on a major scale, do these people have wildlife at heart, or even know of its existence? I think not .
- Born and bred in a working class South Wales area where my family were miners and smallholders respectively, and also confirmed socialist by birth. Despite this always participating in field sports for example, training gun dogs and shooting. The Welsh Labour party should concentrate on true working class ideals such as promoting and protecting employment and not following its misinformed "toff" bashing agenda. The vast majority of the Welsh population who shoot are ordinary working people or moderately well off, indeed, a good deal less well off than Senedd members! It is about time Welsh Labour stopped taking advantage of its majority to take a stab at the shooting community in Wales, stop pursuing trendy values, that do not promote real income or conservation for the Welsh countryside or for the population who love and respect its traditional values.
- I am a taxidermist working in North Wales. A second-generation Taxidermist. We have and do work for all manner of shooting sports along with film and TV. Our work has been used in many situations from publicity to Hollywood blockbusters, Harry Potter, The National Theatre and the list goes on and on. Our company was set up by my father in 1964 and has employed over 100 people over the past 50 years of trade. The shooting industry in Wales including our area of North Wales, provides a vast array of work for the rural economy. Hotels, Restaurants, pubs, direct employment of land managers and workers. The diversity of the countryside, diversifying to survive. What is next? Farming? I am sure that an animal cares little for the reason for its demise, although without either activity these animals and birds have no life at all. The rural economy needs every aspect of diversity it can offer. Without it, the rural economy dies. Income diminishes and there is more pressure on government to provide subsidy, grants and financial support.
- When considering the rural economy do not underestimate the financial benefits of shooting and country sports. As a community we are a vital part of the economy attracting tourists and sportsmen and sports women from around the globe. I am disabled and was

welcomed into the shooting community with lots of encouragement and support with the local target rifle club and local clay shooting ground making me feel welcome. The clubs changed their infrastructure so I could participate fully and I engaged with people of all backgrounds and disabilities in a friendly, safe environment. I also owned a pub and restaurant that relied on the local shoots throughout the winter seasons. The shooting community supports the local businesses throughout the year and are invaluable to thriving local economies and the levels of employment with associated industries cannot be underestimated.

- Any decisions should be based on scientific evidence and not on the whims of anyone that does not like shooting. It is not fair that an activity should be banned or curtailed just because others do not like it. Shooting provides opportunities for social interaction especially in rural settings. This social interaction is good for the well-being of the people involved. Shooting Ranges provide an accessible form of Sport for disabled people to participate in, many of whom are ex-military service personnel. This often includes older gentlemen who would not otherwise socialise.
- I have become very concerned about the development of what appears to be opposition within the Welsh Government to the shooting of live quarry, and I would entreat the Committee to resist internal pressure to legislate against a legal hobby that has been part of the fabric of rural life in Wales for hundreds of years. There is a perception that shooting is a sport undertaken by a wealthy, privileged elite spending thousands of pounds shooting more birds they can ever eat and being helicoptered in and out of Wales and doing little for the rural environment and economy. This is simply not the case and is a caricature of shooting activity in most of the country. My own shoot is much more typical; a small group of men, women and children who work all year round to raise a few hundred pheasants and provide them and all the other birds on our farms with a diverse and rich environment. We put out over four tons of grain on our shoot over the winter which provides a vital source of food not just for game birds but for the hundreds of wild birds which visit our feeders. We plant a couple of acres of mixed seed crops which also provide shelter and food for myriads of birds and other animals, and of the 600 pheasants we release, the majority are not shot; our return is typically around 35%. The members of my shoot come from all walks of life; some are retired, others still work and we have youngsters involved who are still at school, but none of them are the cartoon 'toffs' of public perception and they all share a love of the countryside and all of its residents and work hard to care for and improve the habitat under their stewardship. All the game we shoot, which is as free-range and healthy as anything you can buy, gets eaten. Nothing is wasted. We also work closely with our farmers to help them prevent crop damage and attacks on young stock and poultry. There is also no doubt that shooting sports bring a

lot of money into Wales, but for me this is a moral argument rather than an economic one.

- I began shooting as a teenager, not for leisure purposes but to put food on the table in situations, for example, where my mother's widow's pension of 4 guineas a week would run out because she had to pay rates to the Council, or pay a gas bill. So shooting something to eat in the middle of a week could make a difference between us having some meat in the middle of the week or living on mainly potatoes until the end of the week when her pension was due. I am sure there are people in rural areas and coastal areas where the same is still true to this day – even if it is 60 years later. It is also a fact that people who shoot are very aware of the environment and wildlife around them – a valuable pool of knowledge. It is also a fact that areas that are shot over and there is some predator control, that the numbers and variety of small birds thrive, whereas in other areas the numbers of eg magpies, jackdaws and carrion crows is escalating at the expense of the small bird population.
- my experience of land developed for quarry means it's often excellent for song birds & birds that struggle on swaths of mono cultured land. Land for quarry provides cover, such as shrubs/scrub, hedgerows, woodlands etc one might say it's biodiverse. More people are being encouraged into the outdoors to connect with their natural environment for health & wellbeing. Shooting provides this for many including 'Help our Hero's' for whom the shooting community do a lot of work.
- I have reached my three score years and ten and have a lifetime of shooting experience. During those years I have noted the wholly positive contribution shooting has made to the rural economy, both in Wales and in England, where I lived for some time. It always intrigued me how lacking in understanding of what went on in the countryside the vast majority of the mostly urban population, had. I would point out to people, features in the landscape connected to game shooting, such as ploughed strips alongside woods, waiting for game cover to be planted. Game cover growing in season. Woodland, preserved for the rearing of game birds during the winter months. The rest of the time, nine months usually, unused by man, yet cherished and thoughtfully managed with nature in mind. The richness of nature was abundant in these environments. If there was no need to preserve woodland for game shooting in the brief winter shooting season, then the woods would be cut down and the wood sold on for chipping in wood burners. The operators of the wood burners collecting huge sums of money as subsidies while doing so. This is madness. No trees will be replaced, at least not fast enough to see the results in an average lifetime, assuming the trees are replaced with trees at all. The natural environment, once rich and diverse, sharing its features with the shooting man, will disappear. All shoots I have had any connection with, from five thousand acre estates in Oxfordshire, to five hundred acre farms in Wales ALL cherished and cared for the natural environment and did ALL that was needed, and more, to preserve it.

We know that without a strong natural environment which is rich in game, in season, will support a huge and diverse natural population the rest of the year as well. I am a photographer as well as a game shooter. My shoot syndicate ground is diverse. It consists of woodland, stream, wetland and ponds. All the ponds have been built by syndicate members over the years. I photograph all year round. I can tell you now, if it was not for our syndicate management, the area would NOT be as rich and diverse as it is. While going to feed this morning, I watched a young fox stalk a young pheasant. We realise we will lose a small percent of our young pheasants to natural predation. We build in a 15% to 20% loss factor in our ordering of young birds. We do not mind.