

:Shooting of White-fronted Geese in Wales – response to evidence from the Welsh Ornithological Society and from Alun Davies AM to the Welsh Assembly Petitions Committee.

I very much thank and welcome the evidence submitted by the Welsh Ornithological Society who has been of very great support throughout the petition process, along with the RSPB. I fully support and agree with everything mentioned in their statement.

Additionally, I would like to thank the minister for also kindly responding and for any previous correspondence we have had. However, I still feel he has not, as in previous correspondence, addressed why exactly a full ban has not been implemented.

The minister states that there have been no official records of GWFG been shot in Wales in the last decade and very few before that. I just question what is meant by official records – has there been any unconfirmed reports? The Welsh Ornithological society say in their response that the geese are hard to differentiate in the field so there is always potential for accidental mortality to occur and go unnoticed even in the area with a voluntary ban.

I also seriously question the statement that very few of the geese were shot before the last decade. In their response to the petition the Welsh Ornithological Society state that between 1998 and 2010 a total of 29 Greenland White-fronts were shot on Anglesey. In a population where only 55 birds returned from their breeding grounds last year and this has dropped from 167 individuals in 2000 how can the minister justify these comments, as that is clearly a significant proportion of the population.

The minister does declare that he would be prepared to reconsider if he receives robust evidence of a rise in actual shooting of these birds. Evidence shows, of which there is plenty, addressed in this petition and by the Welsh Ornithological Society, the Greenland White-fronted goose study, by the RSPB and countless other researchers that the GWFG is extremely vulnerable to excess mortality and therefore, not just a rise in shooting should be a cause for concern and action, but any reports of shooting whatsoever. The Welsh Ornithological Society, in their response address this with the reports of 29 white-fronts been shot between 1998 and 2010 and this alone should be justification of a complete ban on the shooting of this endangered species.

With a support of currently 3,678 petitioners there is obviously a great support of the need for the ban. The Welsh Assembly themselves admitted in their consultation report that failure to take appropriate steps to reduce as far as possible Greenland White-fronted geese adult mortality could be seen as a failure to meet both international and domestic conservation obligations.

Aaron Davies MSc BSc (Hons)