

30 May 2018

Dear Committee Members

Animal Aid would like to thank the Committee for considering petition P-05-816 Say NO to pheasant shooting on Welsh public land.

We would like to make the following observations in relation to the letter from Cabinet Secretary Lesley Griffiths that was sent to the Committee.

Regarding NRW's Shooting Review, the Committee may not be aware of a recent development in relation to the consultation. Specifically, Animal Aid and the League Against Cruel Sports have requested that the two independent reviewers – Dr Hillyard and Professor Marvin – employed to oversee the consultation, should be removed from the process. This request was prompted by the discovery that Dr Hillyard goes shooting and that Professor Marvin's research papers demonstrate an interest in 'country sports'. I have attached a recent article from the Western Mail which substantiates our case.

Secondly, Ms Griffiths' letter makes reference to the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Gamebirds. There are two issues arising from this. Firstly, the Code does not take into account the most basic needs of the birds who are used by the shooting industry. Keeping breeding birds in cages deprives them of their need to fly and results in stress and even mortality. Game farms are not routinely inspected by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and visits to game farm establishments only appear to take place if a complaint has been made.

Animal Aid's investigations at game farms have revealed that the Code of Practice is often disregarded. Just this year, Animal Aid found birds kept in barren cages at Bettws Hall game farm in Wales. We reported our findings to the Minister, the Animal and Plant Health Agency and the local Trading Standards department. A 2nd April email from Powys Trading Standards stated, *"I have been in contact with APHA Wales who have informed me, that, in response to your E Mail, they have carried out an inspection of the premises and that they found no breaches in legislation. I therefore have to advise that on this occasion Trading Standards will not be taking any further action in relation to the matter."* This is despite Animal Aid providing clear photographic evidence of barren cages in use at Bettws Hall.

On 24 May, Animal Aid's investigator returned to Bettws Hall. Our investigator checked 20 units used to hold breeding pheasants. All but two of the units were barren, in breach of the Code. Of the two 'enriched' cages, one had a

green plastic privacy curtain and the other had a brick inside. We have, once again, reported our findings to the relevant authorities.

It is therefore our opinion that the Code of Practice is not fit for purpose as it fails the birds under the Animal Welfare Act. Furthermore, the Code is not adhered to by some farmers and reporting breaches of the Code does not appear to result in any action being taken to safeguard the welfare of the birds.

NRW has also stated that it is not currently able to check where the birds shot on its land are sourced from, and whether the birds have come from an establishment that is compliant with the Code of Practice, or not.

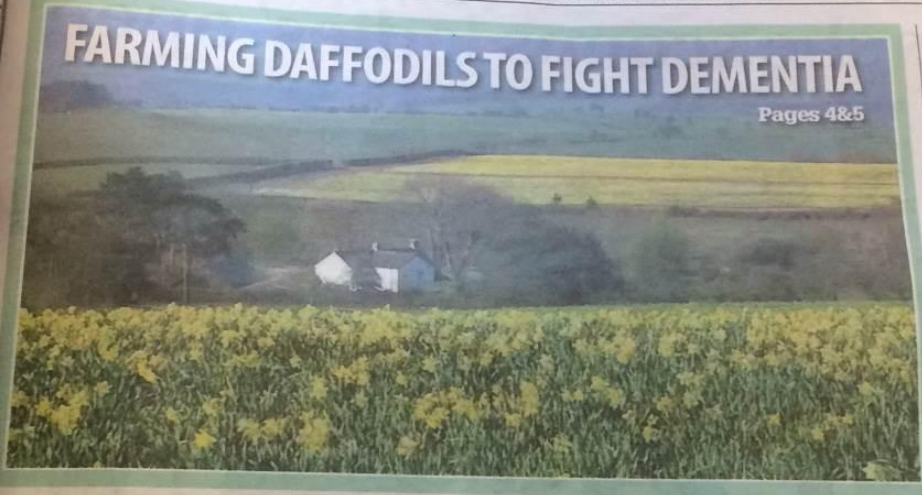
On a final note, it is important to note the level of public opposition to the shooting of birds for sport. In addition to the 12,700+ people who signed the petition that will be considered by the Committee, a poll commissioned by the League Against Cruel Sports and Animal Aid found that 74 per cent of people polled in Wales thought that the shooting of birds should be made illegal. After learning how chicks are bred for sport shooting, 76 per cent said they oppose the shooting of game birds for sport on publicly owned land in Wales.

Thank you again for your consideration of our petition.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Pereira
Campaign Manager, Animal Aid.

Enc: letter to Lesley Griffiths



FARMING DAFFODILS TO FIGHT DEMENTIA

Pages 4&5

Shooting consultation's experts come under fire

ANIMAL rights groups have criticised Wales' biggest quango for hiring an academic who herself goes shooting to evaluate a consultation on whether the killing of birds for sport should be permitted on its land.

Dr Sam Hillyard of Durham University was one of two academics who won the contract from Natural Resources Wales.

The other, Professor Garry Marvin of the University of Roehampton, specialises in the interaction between humans and animals.

NRW is conducting the review following increasing opposition to its policy of allowing pheasant shooting on publicly owned land.

Last month Animal Aid handed in a petition with more than 12,700 signatures to the National Assembly calling for a ban on shooting on land managed by NRW.

A YouGov poll at the same time found that 74% of people in Wales thought that shooting birds should be made illegal.

Fiona Pereira, campaign manager at Animal Aid, said: "We were deeply concerned to learn the identity of the academics assigned to review the evidence presented to NRW's

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shooting consultation. The job should have been awarded to independent scientists who were specialists in the appropriate areas."

Bethan Collins, senior public affairs officer for the League Against Cruel Sports, said: "NRW commissioned this external assurance review because, in their own words, 'Due to the level of stakeholder interest in this area, and the contentious nature of using firearms, we believe that additional independent assessment and evaluation of this evidence was required to ensure that the conclusions we have drawn, which form our recommendations and consultation proposals, are balanced, fair and unbiased.'"

"We feel that in using Dr Sam Hillyard and Prof Garry Marvin to do this work, NRW have not met their own aim. Dr Hillyard is a sociologist whose research interests focus on the sociology of country sports and rural life. In documents that are freely available online, she says that she goes shooting herself.

"Prof Marvin is a social anthropol-

ogist whose research focuses on human-animal interactions and includes topics such as cock-fighting, bullfighting, fox-hunting and trophy hunting.

"In their report, Dr Hillyard and Prof Marvin argue for evidence submitted by a pro-shooting organisation, the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, to be given more weight by NRW and also comment on what they regard as the 'disproportionately cited' evidence of one respondent, Dr Jake Bicknell, who they note 'works for the RSPB' (the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds).

"We question why NRW felt that it was appropriate to contract Dr Hillyard and Prof Marvin to carry out this particular piece of work."

Ceri Davies, NRW's director of evidence, policy and permitting, said: "Our review has been extremely broad, as the new Environment Act requires NRW to plan and manage its work with sustainable management of natural resources as a foundation for all its decisions. The review looked at how we manage our own land as well as the small amount of land that we lease out to third parties.

"All the evidence submitted during our 'call for evidence' stage of the review was given full and detailed consideration.

"The University of Durham and University of Roehampton provided an independent assurance role on the process undertaken in the evidence assessment stage and consideration of any gaps that there may have been in the evidence that NRW considered.

"We did not ask the assessors to make any comments on the contents of the review itself. The contract was awarded consistent with NRW's procurement policy and procedure"

Speaking on behalf of himself and Dr Hillyard, Prof Marvin said: "It's true that Dr Hillyard shoots and that my academic expertise relates to the interaction between humans and animals. It's understandable that the animal rights organisations will make political points about our involvement and I don't blame them for that.

"However, in my work I have never expressed support for any kind of hunting. NRW commissioned us to review the responses to the consultation and we did so professionally."

Tourism in Wales must be protected from Brexit

MEP's view
Jill Evans, Plaid Cymru

WE COULD not have wished for better weather for last week's Wales Tourism Week.

Tourism creates jobs and supports business across Wales. It is responsible for about 172,000 jobs - and this is expected to rise to 188,000 by 2020. Every year, there are more than 10 million overnight stays in Wales; 80% of visitor spending is from outside the country.

Many come from other parts of the UK, but we are also increasing our profile as an international destination - 10% of our tourists come from overseas, accounting for 20% of spend. Visit Wales estimates that its marketing puts an extra £356m a year into the Welsh economy. But it will become very challenging in the months ahead as we leave the EU.

That is why we need assurances that every penny of EU tourism funding we lose will be replaced.

Fifty-six million trips were made by UK residents to Europe in 2016. So while we are concerned about the effects of leaving the EU on Wales, other EU countries are worried too. A major factor in going on holiday in the EU is the Single Market - outside that, travel will be much more difficult.

The tourism and travel industries have expressed concern. There could be fewer flights and we don't know what will happen to our European Health Insurance or the Package Travel Directive which protects our consumer rights. We have taken our ability to travel freely for granted. All that could change.

Pembrokeshire is more dependent on tourism than Blackpool. It is an industry that Wales could develop if we do it sustainably and in a way that benefits our communities and our countryside. To realise our incredible potential, we must have the necessary powers and resources. In today's Wales, that is a big prospect.

I recently visited Ireland to see how they have invested in sustainable, year-round tourist projects. Waterford Greenway is an amazing 46km cycling and walking route along an old railway line across bridges, over three viaducts through a 400m-long tunnel. I hope success which I hope to see well for the Rhondda Tunnel.

The European Committee of the Regions has set up a working group to look at offering support to areas in Europe which will be affected if we leave the EU. It is essential that we have a strong voice on that committee.