



Falconry – Inscribed by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind

Minutes of the Meeting of the Hawk Board held on 28th February 2022

The Chairman opened the meeting at 13:00

Present:

Cameron Balfour (CB); Gary Biddiss (GB); Jim Collins (JC); Nick Havemann-Mart (NHM); James Legge (JL); Gordon Mellor (GM); Barbara Royle (BR); Martyn Standley (MS); Rachelle Upton (RU); Mark Upton (MU)

Apologies:

Alan Collins; Jimmy Robinson; Don Ryan; Dean White

Minutes of last meeting / Matters arising:

Minutes approved.

GM to sign and send to RU.

Matters arising were all completed.

Chairman's Report:

Another season is behind us, this one punctuated by numerous outbreaks of Avian Influenza. Some 81 cases have been confirmed in the UK (as of mid-January 2022), with the majority being in England. What is clear is that it is endemic across both these islands and indeed Northern and Central Europe.

As last year, falconry has had access to excellent information about this disease and clear advice about how we should behave both at home and in the field. Much of this has been produced by experts within our sport and has been regularly posted on social media, relevant websites, and made available through other sources, not least Honeybrook Animal Foods, that paid for printing and distribution costs. Thank you Nick HM and team.

I am pleased to say that DEFRA and APHA's engagement and regular Avian Influenza updates have been both accessible and regular, proving to be very useful.

We have to consider very carefully how we conduct our sport in the future, given that it certainly looks like the disease is likely to be an ongoing winter visitor, indeed it may actually be present all year round. I am sure that we need to learn to live with it so biosecurity at home and a precautionary approach whilst in the field is important. We must continue our sport and fly our hawks and falcons, but ensure that we do not unnecessarily endanger them or become a vector for transmission of the disease that damages farming interests.

DEFRA CITES are conducting a review of the guidance for A10 and export/re-export paperwork requirements. Falconry in general and the BFC, in particular, have contributed. In addition, the HB has engaged with the same department as they revisit CITES paperwork relating to captive peregrine falcons destined for export.

I believe that their focus on the peregrine has been prompted by the media campaign about alleged peregrine egg thefts laundered for an international trade. Despite it being good copy for sensationalist media, there is precious little contemporary evidence to underpin the subject of British peregrines being stolen for the international wildlife trade.

In the wild in the UK peregrine populations are at saturation point, with available nesting sites being the most profound limiting factor. Our towns and cities have resident peregrines and the nesting density in the likes of London is extraordinary. Peregrines are found in almost all suitable habitats throughout Britain. This is a success story and they not a threatened population, whilst legally registered domestic peregrines breed readily in captivity, providing ample progeny for falconers needs in both the UK and for legal export. The captive bred youngsters are not particularly expensive - less than the cost of a pedigree dog. Whilst extraordinary figures are quoted in the media about the price that falcons demand in the Middle East, these are generally grossly inflated.

We are concerned that the review, prompted with no basis in fact or evidence of a problem, will lead to greater regulation and control. Hawk Board will continue to engage with the department and will report back accordingly.

There are new 30 day quarantine rules for birds moving in and out of the EU to be accompanied by health checks and certification. This comes from the European side as we chart our new relationship with the block. It effectively puts and end to free movement and will be very disappointing news for many falconers.

There is no movement on the situation in Scotland regarding the mountain hare. As you know it is fully protected and can only be hunted when licenced and in very restricted circumstances. We are hoping to contribute to the NatureScot review of the efficiency of the legislation later this year or early next. I am told that there is no appetite to revisit the legislation in any way, in the Scottish Parliament.

The Welsh Government seems to have adopted a policy on shooting, without recourse to consultation or legislation, and without any economic evaluation. We have been told, and I quote from correspondence "... just to be clear, the Welsh Government do not support the shooting of live quarry as a leisure activity." Whilst they have now gone silent on the matter and have been challenged by the BFC President and Dr Nick Fox, this apparently arbitrary policy is cause for concern. We must all be willing to support Welsh colleagues if field sports are threatened in Wales.

The recently proposed Private Members Bill on the Hunting of Wild Mammals with Dogs in Northern Ireland did not become law, and whilst we were assured that it would not impact upon falconry, it certainly had the potential to do so. We made representations objecting, along with IAF and the Irish Club.

After the recent death of Dr Mike Nichols, we have now lost Terry Large, who was for many years a stalwart on Hawk Board, at country shows, and a great source of encouragement and good advice for those wishing to take up our sport. He will be greatly missed.

Treasurers Report:

At present the HB Current and Savings account are in a healthy state.

The Hawk Board election for the 6 specialist members of the Board will take place this year. The announcement of the election will go out on 20th April 2022

Nomination forms will be sent out upon receipt of an application to me and must be returned no later than 15th June 2022. Should we received more than 6 applications then in early July the voting papers and candidate profiles will be sent out**, these need to be returned to the independent verifier no later than the 24th August and the result will be announced on the 31st August. Those elected will serve for a term of 4 years.

** When requested clubs, that have paid their subs, will need to submit the names and addresses of all their voting UK club members, registered in their records on 31st March 2022, by e-mail in a spread sheet. These members will then be sent voting forms, after which all their details will be deleted in line with GDPR.

Avian Influenza:

GM: Not much to add the updates from APHA have been very diligent and cases should drop off as the weather gets better. They have been good in announcing restrictions coming and when they expire. We have seen more reports of AI than in previous years and it is something we are going to have to learn to live with

MU: At the AI meeting before last I did ask about cases involving falconry birds or raptors raptors and at that time the only cases were in wild raptors, from most breeds including Eagles and APHA held falconry up as a good example of behaviour and our dissemination of AI advice. Many EU countries have carried on, through their restrictions. This isn't going away and we can't expect people to carry on like this every year.

NHM: I would like to thank A Future With Falconry for allowing us to use their AI document and to Karl for his welfare document. We do need to work on DEFRA to get a plan for going forward, or it will stop falconry – we have done our bit now they need to give back a bit.

GM: Falconers will learn to live with this, many still flew hawks regardless. If raptors do catch AI they die very quickly.

MU: The poultry industry need to do an even better job and ensure their bio security are more secure and protecting themselves.

GM: I will have a go at opening up some dialogue DEFRA/APHA with them on this one rule for all.

Scottish Update:

CB: There is not that much interesting or exciting going on, unfortunately. I was intending to write to nature Scott and asking for an FOI on how many licences have been issued, how many times falconry's been applied for that kind of thing. Assuming there is no problems from the group.

CB: The only thing that has been going on are discussions around the petition that was originally raised by Barry Blyther and possibly some members of the Females Falconers Club, but it doesn't appear that they've got much traction, so they have asked the Scottish Government to add an exception to the Wildlife and Countryside Act for falconry, the Scottish Government aren't interested. They have gone down the line of asking about animal welfare and not letting birds hunt their natural quarry, again, short answer is the Scottish Government aren't interested.

CB: The one slightly concerning thing that's only come up fairly recently is that the Government has a map that shows the distribution of mountain hares and it reads like if you fly in birds in that area and it is capable of taking hare, then you're legally speaking on shaky territory, I doubt whether any procreator fiscal would take that case, but it's certainly something you need to bear in mind. I think that's pretty much it.

GM: It isn't a good situation and whilst obviously people are at liberty to act with our sort of statutory governing bodies as they see fit, some questions that are asked, with the best intentions, just open up other problems for us and that is something which is a little concerning.

JL: In the context of Scotland and the hunting with dogs Scotland Bill, which will repeal the existing legislation which obviously contains exemptions for falconry most of which have been carried over, and it does however contain a definition of falconry - meaning the use of a bird of prey to hunt for sport. It also contains game shooting - meaning shooting wild animals for sport. Quarry means the wild mammal intended to be attacked by a bird of prey or shot. As far as I can see it both facilitates falconry and avoids having a direct impact on it. I would simply say, as I've said in the past, that when the antis are talking about hunting for sport, your activity is now defined as hunting for sport and the wording quarry means wild animal intended to be attacked by a bird of prey or shot. I mean it it's not a problem in legislative terms, I just wonder whether or not possibly in the future it may come back to bite. You know if you can't use a dog to dispatch a fox, but you can use a bird of prey to attack according to the words of the legislation, a hare I would have thought that that is not a terribly happy place to be when that is what it is defined as in legislation and there's always been this odd difference between the way dogs and birds of prey are regarded and doing what is perfectly natural to both of them. I just raise it on the grounds that I don't think the regime when the bill passes, which I think will probably be in February next year, it does replace your existing regime. Although I don't think substantially the full committee community will be affected, but I just thought I'd raise it.

GM: The use of terminology is very important, and it won't have escaped any of us that attacked by is perhaps a world away from taken by as we might have articulated it previously.

MU: That last bit that Cameron said about maps showing danger areas where we could be prosecuted, that is a very serious change in a way. Every grouse moor I hawk on has protected species that I could catch by mistake. If we start getting banned from hawking in areas where we might catch something by mistake that would finish falconry. I was quite pleased with what James just said about the quarry intended to be caught, because that is what we are doing - when we are on a grouse moor we are intending to catch grouse, when we are on a partridge estate we are intending to catch partridge. Very occasionally a hawk might chase something it shouldn't, but that's through no intention of the falconer, but the fact that Cameron said that there are maps being produced where we shouldn't fly hawks in the off chance that they might catch a hare, is really very dangerous for the sport.

GM: I agree, I can see it is a concern without a shadow of a doubt. I know that Scotland and England differ slightly but to get a prosecution you might have to show intent and that is actually quite a difficult thing to do in law.

JC: I just wondered if we've heard any news about the review into positive lists in Scotland. The reptile folks are saying that they've heard some whisperings from a couple of vets involved saying that they are pushing ahead with the idea of having a positive list, which would be quite restrictive and but I've not heard anything from anywhere else.

GM: Well, I didn't receive any response or acknowledgement from the communication that I sent.

JC: I'll try to push again.

GM: If you get no response come back to me and I'll resend what I've written.

CB: I can send the link to this map then and what the government has actually said to everyone after the meeting.

Want to know it would seem these people in Scotland?

MS: The Countryside and Wildlife Act has always had mention of catching protected species, and as you said we have got a defence that we do not intend to catch a protected species, if we do it is accidental and trying to prove it in court is a different matter. I feel it is just scaremongering.

GM: I hope you are right. We have good cause to be suspicious of what is going on. I also just wanted just to say that there was some quite damning publicity around the forthcoming

case that Andrew Knowles-Brown is facing, that did make the Scotland national press and we will have to watch that, as Andrew used to be a Vice chair of the Hawk Board and is quite highly respected. But this has run and run for several years now and we all need a lid put on it. I believe the case is now due to be heard in March having been delayed multiple times due to the pandemic.

SUN Update:

See Appendix 1

JC: On CITES nothing much has happened yet they have until late June, July to get all their submissions in so we haven't been able to find out whether Peregrine has been listed up again by Canada, if it does come through, it would be by Canada, but I think the feeling is that they probably will not try - that's the general view from the UK authorities, at least as they haven't heard anything, but obviously I'll keep you informed. I think probably of more pressing relevance is all the discussions on further controls of captive breeding and the requirements for registration which the anti NGO's have been pushing very heavily for and there is a periodic review. I've managed to get on the working group and I've made quite a lot of email contributions because they're trying to rush those through so that they're ready basically by the COP, which is in November.

JC: Luckily the COP has been moved from Costa Rica to Panama - it was going to be a nightmare because in Costa Rica because they're the 1st Country in the world to have banned all non-domestic species from captivity and they made a big play about it as well. Panama certainly do ship amphibians, so you know CITES amphibians around, so they certainly aren't as anti as Costa Rica and the point being that home advantage is a big thing, the NGO's really push the home country to put forward proposals because pretty much nobody wants to vote against the home country.

JC: The Kept Animals Bill - I've been lucky in the sense that they've been contacting me, I don't know why, but particularly they've been contacting me for ideas on what additional species they should add other than primates to be a potential source of, you must be a registered breeder or keeper in order to have the licence and they told me that they haven't consulted anybody else yet. They seem to be pinging me emails pretty much every week. Now what I'm saying is we don't need to add any and that they shouldn't have been doing primates. I've been using some of the local authorities to help in that regard, because they're already panicking about the extra workload they'll have from primate registration and licencing. What they would do if, for example, they added Birds of prey to this requirement they would have grandfather rights for people they believe are not really up to it, so if you were really lousy they'd confiscate the animals, that's what they're going to do on the primates. If you're below par, but they believe you are massively compromising welfare, they will allow you to keep, but not sell, breed or exchange and then if they think you're up to what they're saying, is a zoo equivalent standard, then you are applicable for registration and then essentially you can do everything a Zoo can do so sell, exchange, breed and I do know that the antis have been making big submissions as to all the things they think should be subject to that, and I do know for a fact that Birds of Prey are on it. So, they are pushing for Birds of Prey and for a huge range of birds in general - all bigger parrots, macaws, cockatoos, so along those lines, hummingbirds and things like that. In reptiles they're asking for chameleons, monitor lizards again and things that are now very commonly kept and bred. So, this is a really dangerous one, and the quicker we can see Zac Goldsmith out of office the better, because he is very much driving this.

GM: Last year I was told the zoos were being consulted by DEFRA and were putting forward a position paper which I was promised and then never received, when I asked several times for it had still not received it. Has anybody got any insight into where the Zoo proposal to Defra together might have gone?

NHM: I have it and can try and send it. Honeybrook are a member of BIAZA and have got Karl Jennings on their committee and he is looking into these welfare things.

GM: If Karl is representing you and or us, the fact is that he would raise real concerns very quickly.

RU: Could we co-opt Karl?

GM: We might be able encourage Karl to do a bit more for us, but because of his time constraints he wouldn't be able to regularly attend HB meetings.

RU: Co-opted members don't have to attend every meeting.

MU: Karl has done more for us recently than any other vet.

JC: 2 International bits: Spain and Germany, one is reasonably positive given the circumstances and one is really quite lousy at the moment. The lousy one is clearly Spain, people might have seen there was a very large demonstration in Madrid they anticipated about 100,000 people marching and it was under rural pursuits, so it was everything from bull fighting and I'm sure Falconry would have been there, pet ownership, hunting, shooting, the lot and indeed farming because the minister is also vegan who told people they shouldn't eat meat more than once a week and he is the minister for Agriculture, so that that's quite a worrying one. I think falconry could be potentially caught in both ways, one is on the anti-hunting side of the minister's remit and the other is on what they are very strongly pushing forward, which is a very very restrictive positive list - the ministers actual wording was it should resort only to what we would commonly have kept when we were children. So basically, he has in mind Canaries, budgies, hamsters. So, I think on both of those areas the Falconry side are really quite heavily exposed.

JC: Germany is the one that actually is quite positive given what's happened everybody knows there's a red, green and yellow coalition in Germany and the Greens were unfortunately given the ministerial top positions for the two areas that impact on us. So, conservation on the one hand and welfare on the other. They're both green ministers, so on the face you might think this is potential disaster and when they made their initial statement you would have thought indeed this is going to be horrendous. It looks like they have been reined in a bit by the Social Democrats, who are the senior partners in the coalition so when they put out their road map for the next four years, basically what they want to be judged on and if they don't deliver on that they expect a rough ride they have not included positive lists, even though they had it in their manifesto. So that that was that was very significant, and I think that in part that's that partly because of the BNA, which is the big organisation equivalent to Sustainable Users Network in in Germany they made some very strong representations and were able to get in front of a series of ministers, not just the two that are directly involved but ones to do with human rights and with industry.

IAF Update:

See Appendix 2

MU: There isn't an awful lot to mention that wasn't in my report. Matt Gage is going to be an enormous loss to the IAF, he was a great supporter of the IAF and he did a huge amount of important work – more so with the previous two presidents than this one. The present president didn't realise how good Matt was and didn't use him as much. Otherwise not much has been happening, I have been asked and I was hoping Graham or Jim might be able to update me as to whether there are any more regulation coming in with the import/export on the UK side, I think it is just this quarantine being brought in by Europe, but the Europeans are fighting their side, but want to know what the UK stance is and if anything is going to be changed here.

MU: This year's IAF meeting is due to be in November in Pakistan, but we will wait to see if that will happen as it has been cancelled in Pakistan in the past for political reasons. But there will be a meeting in some form.

NHM: Does the EU quarantine apply equally to EU and UK citizens? As I understand it at the moment if you have a POC (personal ownership certificate) you can bring your falcon into the UK without any quarantine or import/export licences, but you can't take it back into the EU without quarantining it, would you also need an import licence, an export licence from the UK, because realistically this is going to really impact upon falconers and is really going

to stop UK falconers travelling. Nobody from outside Europe wants to travel into Europe with their falcons, it is only the UK that this is acting against.

GM: If Graham does not appear, it might be worth me having a conversation with him, but I think this is something we have to ask about, isn't it? We have to, actually, I am not absolutely convinced that DEFRA will be in a position to make any difference to this, but I do take the point so I will raise it in the first instance with Graham.

MU: We have a committee set up in the IAF by Don Ryan looking at this. Various continentals needed lots of paperwork for import/export at both ends, but it wasn't looked at. Also heard rumours that AI quarantine may be waived in some countries if classed as pets.

NHM: There is no science behind this as no one has been able to prove that a raptor can be alive after 30 days with AI, everyone knows all around the world that you've got 48 hours maximum before they die.

MS: Does the draft guidance you asked us to look at does that not cover export, I know part was A10's, but the other part was to do with export wasn't it?

NHM: It was just to do with import/export paperwork and how to apply for the permits.

Countryside Alliance Update:

See Appendix 3

JL: Much as my report, we've got the Sentience bill going through and the Kept Animals Bill, which is on hold at the moment and the Sentience Bill should complete its passage through Parliament on Monday. Our proposal at the moment is to table a whole series of amendments raising the same issues we raised in the Lords, but the Government are not prepared to move one iota. I think under the current ministers I don't see the Animal Sentience Committee being a huge problem, but I do think that longer term were the committee to be stuffed with people who might give cover to perhaps difficult government policy under a future government then I think it could be very problematic.

JL: As ever if anyone has any questions or issues or things that they think I've missed and should be looking at then please let me know.

GM: Being updated on both the Kept Animals and the Sentience Bills progress is something that I would welcome.

AOB:

GM: It has been raised with me that we should be looking at the legal status of Birds of Prey to try and ensure that they are considered to be wild animals, in light of what has been said here today we may want to question this, rather than what was an attempt some years ago to get captive bred birds considered as domestic. Now I think, certainly under English law, it's fairly ambiguous as to what the status is, if it is indeed important. The question is, however, should we be looking at this? It came in conjunction with a concern that domestic animals were increasingly in the spotlight – I cannot say I would agree with any of this going forward, but I think it is interesting that we have falconers now raising the status to safeguard our activity, I think if we had listened to some of the reports that we had today maybe those who have raised this might have a slightly different perspective. I just wanted to ask is this significant, is this the status of a Bird of Prey be it domestic captive bred or considered wild, and as they were once considered, regardless of where they've been Bred.

GB: I think there is some significance, I remember a couple times when people have had hawks killed by pigeon fanciers or whether there was some sort of defence there that they had killed a wild bird.

MU: I recall Nick Fox had very strong views on this and has worked hard at trying to get hawks classed as domestic/pet. They've been bred for a number of generations, so his argument is why are they different to a chicken which is bred in captivity. I think where the problem comes, and Jim will know more about this, is CITES refused to have any of these things, that are so called wild animals that are bred in captivity classed as domestic.

JC: That is the sticking point, but they have done it in the past. If you think in the terms of birds, cockatiels is one they agreed to take as domesticated, so they're on CITES, but you don't need any papers at all, but that seemed to be in a more pragmatic era and now I think the NGOs are so well organised that they just run a while when it's suggested. I do know that if you look at an example outside the bird world with royal pythons which are bred in the 10s of millions across the globe and almost every single specimen is basically different from the wild form - all manner of mutations and clearly are domesticated in that sense, it's a quick turn-around time in terms of generations, so many, many generations and most of them don't even look like a wild type or bite, but they have still refused to consider more royal pythons being removed from CITES, so I think that's the sticking point. It's just so tough now to get the NGOs to be even remotely considerate.

GM: Good point and probably a door we don't want to open anyway, particularly at this point.

JC: With Graham not being here I thought if I just mentioned that some of the discussion that's going on with DEFRA in terms of contact with the EU and what might change for the future. So that they seem to be caught at the moment in a in a kind of halfway house and they don't want to push too hard because they don't know what bigger scope of things in terms of stuff outside of animal keeping, you know trade in general with the EU is going to be. So they've got this agenda that they want to benefit from Brexit and along those lines you've got a stream of DEFRA/APHA folks who are saying now well, the obvious thing is let's ditch A10s as they are not required by domestic legislation, it was something we inherited from the EU and so therefore we could ditch A10s and that would be something that we could say we had deregulated on from having had the opportunity of Brexit. On the other hand, you've got a bunch of folks in DEFRA/APHA who were saying, well, we don't want to do that because we're actually seeking some kind of way of reunifying with the EU on CITES matters and they won't be at all pleased if we've done away with A10s. So, they're kind of anticipating some kind of rapprochement for trade in general with between the UK and the EU, and therefore that would better facilitate an agreement on CITES. Literally you can kind of name the people. It's a strange situation where you've got two different sets of people having very fundamentally different outlooks for the next year or so, and as a result, it seems to be of OK well, let's go very, very slowly and see how things pan out.

JL: We've got the Animals Abroad Bill which we're expecting and the issue about trophy hunting which isn't specifically an alliance matter, barring the issue of the deer cull particularly in Scotland. But our argument has always been that most of the species involved are already heavily regulated under CITES, so it's quite interesting that that issue is also being raised with regards to other areas.

MS: I just want to say a few words about wild take of Birds of Prey for falconry in England. I have been preparing for this year's license application by the new form that was introduced last year after some pressure. Whilst I am doing this I am in contact with Gary Wall and he had a letter saying that all applications are suspended this year and they won't be processing any this year, and they're going to hold consultation into wild take. Also, as you will be aware, in Northern Ireland the IHC/BFC had a member applied and had several responses and the refusal for Sparrowhawks were that populations were in decline. But interestingly, they don't seem averse to issuing licences for one or two peregrines every year. In any case the BFC will make a request to take part in the consultation and the Hawk Board should as well.

GM: Some of the some of the articulation around the Northern Ireland application and refusal was quite worrying in that you know, it's sort of suggested that because NGO's might be upset with it they weren't going to proceed and I think that is that's something that we need, perhaps, to test, because you know that opens the door for any critic of what we do, not only in terms of wild take, but in terms of hunting and what have you, you know the antis and others would very soon raise voices objecting if that became a reason for government department not to grant a licence, and that is a concern.

MU: My question overlaps on this a little bit. I was wondering if there had been anything heard following on from the meeting we had with DEFRA relating to Peregrines and why they were looking at Peregrines before any other species and they actually admitted to us in the meeting that it was because of the pressure from NGOs on protecting the Peregrine Falcon. Which I find ironic, because as far as I can see the main reason for the decline in Peregrine Falcons in the north of Scotland is where they're being killed by white tailed Eagles being released by the RSPB - Jim, have you heard anything back from that because we haven't as Hawk Board

GM: I wrote to Sarah, or something, just before she went on maternity leave and she acknowledged my submission, but I have heard nothing since.

JC: Nothing official, but I had a pretty solid unofficial chat which basically indicated that the civil servants don't really believe much in this one at all, but they are pretty much forced to go along with it because it was such a concerted effort from the NGOs. So, I suspect that the civil servants will try to back this one into the long grass, but they'll have to be seen to have done it.

MU: So that actually could be quite good for us that they took on board what we said, even though they're under a lot of pressure from the NGOs.

The meeting closed at 14:26.

Next Meeting: 12.30pm TBC June 2022

Location: TBC

Rachelle Upton, Co-coordinator – 7 March 2022

SUN Report from Jim Collins

Although the past quarter has included the lead-up to the Christmas and New Year periods and the vacation period itself - all of which usually sees a slowdown in legislative activity - workload has remained at a high level especially as the preparation for the forthcoming CITES Conference of the Parties progresses and the associated e-mail Working Groups push to try and complete their work streams. Likewise, in the next few months we will see the submission of proposals for species listings and resolutions for a wide range of issues on matters such as Non-detriment Findings, Periodic Review of the Appendices, Live Animal Transportation, CITES in relationship to Livelihoods of people in Developing Countries, etc. It will be interesting to see if Canada resubmit their proposal to downgrade the Peregrine Falcon from CITES I to CITES II.

The EU continue to push ahead with the listing of species on the Invasive Alien Species Directive and although the UK will no longer automatically follow such new listings automatically, it is important to stay engaged as our opponents will undoubtedly use EU listings to lobby UK politicians to implement the same as 'best practice'. We will hopefully see a more pragmatic and scientifically valid way of putting forward listing proposals in the UK. and expect to see the first steer from DEFRA and it's Invasive Non-Native Species Secretariat within the first half of this year - SUN has been engaged in trying to ensure a proportionate, pragmatic and enforceable approach. We would like to see the list to be as limited as possible in extent - so focus can be made on truly invasive species - and consideration be given to registering owners of 'banned' species such that registered owners could continue to breed and supply to other registered owners. Blanket bans never work, instead they bring the law into disrepute and are unenforceable and in most cases are unjustifiably disproportionate - as I've said to lawmakers in the past, one can guarantee that when we are all dead and buried there will still be sprightly specimens of Raccoons and Ring-tailed Coatis in captivity across Europe (both currently banned species) that have mysteriously acquired the attributes of eternal youth.

SUN and the Hawk Board have been integral in supporting DEFRA/APHA/JNCC in their review of Guidance for CITES applications (most specifically for birds-of-prey requiring A10's or Import/Export Permits) and the finalised documentation has been issued by the authorities. It is fair to say that almost all our input has been taken on board and the documentation should prove to be of considerable benefit for the future.

In respect of the COTES Review, delays are still in place with no time for when the requirement of stating the certificate number on advertisements will be enforced - currently it is specifically not be enforced with statements to that effect from DEFRA/APHA. Detailed discussions continue with the authorities regarding movement of CITES specimens to/from the UK and EU, health certification and such like. It is to be hoped that full clarity will be forthcoming in the next few months on these issues, likewise for extending the number of designated Border Control Posts for Animal By-Products.

IAF Report from Mark Upton

IAF attended the 41st Meeting of the Bern Convention Standing Committee to make representations on behalf of falconers and science-based bird of prey conservation in November. From a falconry point of view, highlights of this year's attendance included the addition of a positive remark from the Bern Secretariat Report acknowledging falconers as key stakeholders in the deliberative process regarding Invasive Alien Species, "Further, the Standing Committee thanked the European Federation for hunting and conservation (FACE) and the International Association for Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF) for their report on the implementation of the code of Conduct on Hunting and IAS". Extensive work went into preparing this report and this is another positive example of close collaboration between IAF and FACE which has deepened since the signing of the joint Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) 2009 to support each other. Close collaboration with sustainable-use groups at international conventions and conferences has allowed IAF to magnify falconers' voices in deliberations and to foresee and ward off threats to falconry at the international level before they impact falconers at the national level.

The IAF has long worked closely with FACE and the two organisations have a memorandum of understanding. On 24 September 2021, the FACE General Assembly, which represents the views of 7 million hunters, unanimously adopted a new position on Falconry in Europe to guide FACE's work on this topic.

This position advocates:

- To promote the continued growth of falconry in Europe as a hunting art, which safeguards cultural heritage, bringing important conservation and socio-economic benefits.
- To invite national or regional authorities to maintain or introduce (where falconry is not yet present) legal frameworks to allow and promote falconry.
- To support the traditional sustainable and judicious use of wild birds of prey for falconry as described in the Birds Directive.
- To encourage cooperation and solidarity between national hunting organisations and their falconry organisations to ensure the viability of falconry as sustainable hunting and part of a common hunting heritage.

This is a significant move forward for falconry, which is now assured the support of the national hunting associations, as well as FACE itself.

We are seeing a lot of attacks on falconry in Europe this year using welfare grounds, rarity of game species, avian flu, even the pandemic - there is a strong lobby in the EU institutions pushing for trade in ANY animals to be closely controlled and even prevented, whether wild or domestic, just in case a new diseases crosses over into humans.

IAF has provided letters this year for Portugal, Netherlands, Spain and Ukraine, all since Christmas. Spain is probably the most serious where a new welfare bill going through parliament which will effect many activities, except bull fighting which has been given an exemption. Portugal was facing an outright ban on falconry which has luckily been dropped for present because the government fell. But it could easily come back. Netherlands has brought forward a proposal to protect the brown hare and rabbits. Shooters and falconers are fighting the proposal and falconry is hoping that if it does go through they might be able to obtain an exemption for falconry and they have a strong case as Netherlands are signed up to UNESCO and falconry is on their list of Intangible Cultural Heritage. In Ukraine animal

rights groups have come out against falconry. I suspect that might be forgotten about in the present political climate.

This year's IAF Annual Council of Delegates Meeting is planned to be held in Pakistan at the invitation of Pakistan Falconry Association. More details will follow.

The IAF produce a monthly eBulletin which contains a lot of information on what is happening within the association and is posted on the BFC Facebook page. The bulletin can also be subscribed to directly and will be sent to your email address.

CONFIDENTIAL - DRAFT

Countryside Alliance Update

POLITICAL/POLICY

Environment Act

The Environment Bill received Royal Assent on 9 November 2021. The Office for Environmental Protection established by the Act has been formed and is currently consulting on its draft strategy and enforcement policy.

Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill

Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill has passed its Committee Stage and now awaits a date for Report and Third Reading. The Alliance has briefed at each stage of the Bill, including to Committee members on a range of hostile amendments. New amendments have now been tabled in advance of Report that include a proposed ban on the use of animal scents in trail hunting and the licensing of hunting dogs. The Alliance is continuing to brief MPs.

Animals (Penalty Notices) Bill

This is a Private Member's Bill introduced by Andrew Rosindell MP. It is a Government handout bill and therefore expected to make progress. There was no attempt to amend it during its Commons stages. It completed its passage through the Commons on 4 February and now awaits a date for Second Reading in the Lords. Lord Randall of Uxbridge is taking the Bill forward.

The Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill

The Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill completed its passage through the House of Lords without relevant amendment and is now proceeding at pace through the Commons. The Government published draft Terms of Reference for the proposed Animal Sentience Committee which we criticised as extending beyond the remit established in the legislation. During Grand Committee and Report in the House of Lords we promoted a range of amendments in conjunction with a group of co-operative peers, and briefed all peers at each stage; we are now briefing MPs. The Alliance also submitted supplementary written evidence to the EFRA Committee inquiry into the Bill. The Bill is awaiting a date for Report and Third Reading

Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill

The Bill is expected to become law shortly. The Commons is due consider Lords amendments on 28 February. Amendments to address hare poaching were accepted by the Government after a concerted campaign by the Alliance and a coalition of other rural organisations including CLA, NFU and RSPCA.

The Hares (Closed Season) Bill

The Bill, in Richard Fuller MP's name, was not reached on Friday 21 January and has been rescheduled for a Second Reading on 25 February. This is an issue on which the Government has indicated its intention to legislate and is an issue in which the Secretary of State, George Eustice, takes a personal interest, having previously introduced a Bill while out of the Government. Richard Fuller has withdrawn his Hare Coursing Bill, following the Government's amendments to the Police Bill, having similar effect. The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust will be briefing Mr Fuller on a closed season and remains opposed to the Bill.

Animals Abroad Bill

The Alliance responded to the consultation on proposed changes to the law in relation to animals abroad, in particular the possible implication for the UK of a ban on the importation of trophies. A bill is expected.

Transport and Movement of Animals

The Alliance has responded to a consultation on the transportation of animals, which would have implications for the movement of livestock and equines. The Alliance has also responded to a consultation on the movement of puppies into Great Britain. These are both aspects of the Government's Action Plan for Animal Welfare.

Rural Crime Survey

The 2021 Rural Crime Survey results were released in December. The key findings showed that nine in ten people had not seen a police officer in the last week and seven in ten people reported an increase in crime over the last 12 months. With concern about crime in rural areas growing, it is not surprising that 46% of people who responded to our 2021 Rural Crime Survey told us they don't think the police take rural crime seriously or that one in four did not bother reporting crime to the police.

SHOOTING

Judicial Review on Heather Burning

The Court of Appeal refused Wild Justice's application to appeal against the High Court's refusal on two occasions to grant it permission to apply for Judicial Review of the Heather Burning Regulations. On Tuesday 18 January, The Rt Hon Lord Justice Males dismissed this latest legal challenge by Wild Justice, on the grounds that he had found no error of law or principle, and such an appeal would have no real prospect of success.

Controlled Burning Research

New research by the University of Cambridge has confirmed that controlled burning can increase carbon storage in the soil. Its findings reinforce the important role that controlled burning has to play both in preventing wildfires, and for conservation, and they concur with research undertaken on peat soils by researchers from the University of York, Lancaster University and Newcastle University.

Hen Harriers

The Court of Appeal decided on 10 November to dismiss legal challenges bought by the RSPB and Wild Justice's Mark Avery against Defra's trial hen harrier brood management scheme. In 2019, the RSPB and Mark Avery launched a Judicial Review into the scheme, but this was turned down by the High Court, all seven grounds for their application being dismissed by Mrs Justice Lang DBE. It was their appeal of that judgement over the lawfulness of brood management that has now been dismissed, the courts confirming for a second time that the scheme is legal.

Firearms Licensing Statutory Guidance

Statutory Guidance for Chief Officers of Police on firearms licensing came into effect on 1 November. The guidance will help ensure greater consistency by the police in their assessment of the suitability of applicants for the grant and renewal of firearms certificates, including in relation to medical checks.

General Licences

Defra reissued the three General Licences for the control of certain wild birds which came into effect on 01 January, and which are valid for two years to 31 December 2023. NRW has also reissued its three General Licences for the control of certain wild birds in Wales, but these are only valid for six months, from 01 January – 30 June 2022, whilst it undertakes a review into its approach to the permissions it gives for such control, including general and specific licences. Wild Justice are again threatening a judicial review of GL42 and its application to the protection of released game birds.

HUNTING

Fox Control Bill Scotland

The Scottish Government consultation on additional proposals for its Fox Control Bill closed on 15 December 2021. The Bill is expected to be published on 25 February and is expected to include a licensing scheme to allow the use of more than two dogs. The Bill at stage 1 is expected to be examined by the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment (RAINE) Committee, which will report on the Bill's principles and report to the parliament. MSPs will then decide whether the Bill should proceed. The Bill is then considered line by line at stage 2 and can be amended. It then goes back to the parliament for stage 3 where further amendments can be made a final vote is held. The Bill is expected to go to the RAINE Committee in early March.

WALES

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Trail Hunting

Natural Resources Wales have banned trial hunting on land they manage for Welsh Government with immediate effect following their board meeting on 18 November.

Business Wales

A follow up meeting with Business Wales has been held with the Aim to Sustain partners in Wales discussing the refusal of Economic Resilience Funding to shoots in Wales. Whilst the policy position has not changed, Business Wales is now keen to offer other advisory services to shoots in Wales and is set to meet again with the Wales Aim to Sustain group to produce bespoke packages.