



Falconry – Inscribed by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Hawk Board held on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

The Chairman opened the meeting at 13:00

Present:

Cameron Balfour (CB); Nick Havemann-Mart (NHM); James Legge (JL); Gordon Mellor (GM); Helen Nakielny (HN); Jimmy Robinson (JR); Barbara Royle (BR); Martyn Standley (MS); Rachelle Upton (RU); Mark Upton (MU)

Apologies:

Gary Biddiss; Jim Collins; Don Ryan

Minutes of last meeting / Matters arising:

Minutes approved.

Matters arising were all completed.

Chairman's Report:

The 'new' Hawk Board have their feet under the table now, having started work last autumn. We have a good representation across British falconry, and we will continue to protect and promote our sport and allied interests.

The challenges that we face are numerous and one in particular is pernicious – avian influenza. The UK and particularly England, has seen a high number of cases in the poultry industry with millions of birds culled. Current legal restrictions are wide ranging and ongoing. Whilst this is to protect poultry, the measures impact upon all bird keepers, falconers and breeders alike.

Migrant bird fatalities have been seen across the UK and it is endemic in some of our resident bird populations. Vaccination looks like the way forward and they are being developed in the EU and North America currently, however a vaccine will not be available for use in the UK until 2024 at the earliest.

DEFRA continue to be excellent in their communications and engagement throughout the AI outbreak, but for all of their efforts, the restrictions have not limited the spread of the virus. Housing orders and prevention zones can be problematic for falconers and it is clear that bio-security measures are necessary for us all because the consequences of our birds of prey contracting avian influenza are catastrophic. Many of us have had our hawking restricted or cut short. My own intermewed tiercel had an unexpected and unwelcome encounter with an obviously sick wild mallard (not a quarry species that he has ever shown

any interest in previously) and I curtailed my hawking. Fortunately, he did not contract the virus but is now ensconced in the aviary somewhat earlier than I had planned.

We still await DEFRA to respond to us over the proposed Modern Zoo Standards that included the banning of tethering on public display. I reiterate that the specialist vets, centre owners, and display givers, had joined us in a robust rejection of the proposals. The department was left in no doubt that there was no support from bird of prey experts and that their approach was not well thought through or supported by any evidence. I am convinced that the standards that we attain in falconry, allied disciplines, and welfare, have never been higher and the need for further restriction is unwarranted.

The Invasive Species Directorate continue in their attempt to impose visits on falconers and BoP centres in order to inspect their premises. This is, according to them, is to establish why birds of prey are lost. They have fixedly avoided engaging with the Hawk Board or our major Clubs in any meaningful sense. I maintain that those so contacted should refuse the requests to visit – these civil servants have neither the remit nor the expertise to enable them to make any useful contribution.

Natural England have conducted a consultation on the status of licences for wild take. The Board, the BFC, and a number of individual falconers, contributed to this and we await the next steps.

The devolved authorities (Scotland and Wales) continue to take a harder line regarding field sports than we are seeing in England. In Scotland there is quite a lot of activity with legislation demanding the licencing of moors managed for grouse and the proposals to introduce 'positive lists', that would determine what species of animals could be kept without licensing. We are engaged in fighting our corner and will report back as the issues progress.

We have already lost the Mountain Hare as legitimate quarry in Scotland and gaining traction in this matter has proven difficult. I have to acknowledge that the petition sponsored by Barry Blyther, has raised the profile of this issue and has resulted in some positive coverage in Scotland. The Hawk Board did not actively support the petition, choosing to work through other avenues, but credit where credit is due, Barry's efforts have been very positive.

It is clear that we need to reinvigorate the Scottish Hawk Board, Cameron is doing a really good job, but we need to bolster this, he is too often a single point of action for us.

Dr Nick Fox hosted a very constructive day for the CITES Secretariat in Carmarthen. It gave us a good opportunity to put forward a positive perspective and constructive proposals to those at the heart of CITES. We continue engagement through these channels.

As we move towards the wild peregrine breeding season, we must be ever vigilant and counter the annual accusations of theft from the wild. Furthermore, the valuable rehabilitation work that some falconers do with the urban bred 'nest jumpers' must be done in compliance with our legislation. There can be no excuses for anyone found with a wild eyass that is not licensed or in the process of being so, no matter any good intentions.

We must conduct our sport unashamedly always seeking excellence, adhering to our legal obligations, our sense of ethics, and promoting the welfare of our birds of prey and quarry at all times. Providing we do so, we can look any critics or opponents in the eye and fight our corner.

GM: I went to the JNCC day at Horizon House in Bristol where we had:

- A low-level overview of CITES

- JNCC – introduction to them and what they do
- Border Force presentation
- Demonstration of Pegasus, the future application process for any CITES needs, e.g. A10's. It is a totally on-line system, unless you can make a case to DEFRA that there are good reasons as to why you can't use a computer or do it on-line. If you have multiple application you will be able to duplicate one to another, just changing ring numbers or application numbers looks straightforward. It is due to start in June and it should streamline applications considerably. A fee revision is taking place and in one sense should lessen their costs once they've developed it, they will need fewer people and it will take less time. There was absolutely no confirmation from them on how that lessening of their costs would be translated into a reduction in application fees, so that was that was. It's something we will have to watch and there will undoubtedly be a revision of fees later in the year so that that was quite interesting. And as I say, that was quite promising.
- We then heard from the compliance team which, and this was the less good bit, they pointed out that most of their work is around, and this is bearing in mind they're talking to all stakeholders, and the vast majority of their visits are orientated towards birds of prey and that seems to be historical as opposed to supported by anything that that they've actually published. But nonetheless they are looking at doing up to six visits a month.

They were unwilling to say quite what would prompt those visits. Martin Jones pressed them about their current reinvigorated approach to looking at peregrines. That was something that that came out in the Sun Group the day before, we asked for evidence that it was a problem and they said, as I have heard every year that I've been involved in falconry representation, there's a lot of intelligence that this is a problem, and we're dealing with it. You'll see stuff coming to court soon. Well, you know if one held one's breath, one would be long expired. I got quite aerated about it and I do apologise but I did shout at the lady who was who was presenting the stuff on the compliance team and I did say you know we need to see proper evidence, not of individual cases, but evidence where this is a problem because we are constantly being accused of this.

Now I know it's actually not Defra who are accusing us, but they are taking hook, line and sinker what they're being told by the wildlife crime people and others, and so I can only presume we are going to get another peregrine breeding season where you Uncle Tom Cobley and all will be shouting that we are actually involved in taking from the wild in the UK. Now no one is suggesting that these things do not happen. What I'm suggesting is that it is not significant and that it is not something that we are, as a fraternity, guilty of she went on to say, oh, no, we don't believe it it's the significant breed.

I didn't get the impression that there was much expertise, nor indeed sympathy within the compliance team. And so, I can only presume we are going to be looked at very carefully again. And to that end, I would say to all of us, we have to be very aware that you know this is this is ongoing. And that falconry and bird of prey keeping has to be cleaner than squeaky clean in order to not get really jammed with this. It is the second time in some months that we have heard that there is stuff bubbling, the wildlife inspector who accompanied the CITES secretariat down to Helen and Nick's in Carmarthen actually said about this about evidence, he said there is a court case that will blow your argument out of the water to me. So, I think we can expect continued scrutiny and I'm hoping that that if any court cases that come to come to

fruition if, people are robbing from the wild and are actually found guilty good, and I just pray that we can distance ourselves from them.

#### Treasurers Report:

The Hawk Board accounts remain in a stable condition, but we do need to think of new revenue streams.

We have now, finally, had all of the subs for 2022/2023 in.

RU: Oliver Tomlinson, a friend of Jimmy's, has been looking for a way to give something back to the falconry community and to this end has offered the services of his design company, free of charge, to redesign our website. Our current website was very kindly designed by Dean a few years ago and I wondered if the time was right to give it another look - if Dean doesn't mind.

GM: I'm all for a website update.

MU: I've looked at the other websites he has done, and they are very good.

MS: Great idea, maybe he can do the BFC one too!

MU: Hoping to get him to do the BAF one.

GM: I would like to meet him.

MU: We don't want to upset Dean, so I think we should talk to him first.

**GM: RU to update Dean and explain and if he is ok then arrange a meeting with Oliver.**

GM: It could also be a good time to look at updating the HB logo.

#### Avian Influenza:

GM: Avian influenza do we have anything else to add? It appears that the only way out of this for us appears to be vaccination and of course that is accompanied by the fact that they may well have it this year in in the US and Canada, and they may well have it in Europe. We will not have it approved for UK use until 2024 at the earliest.

NHM: Zoos can vaccinate but are unable to get hold of a vaccine – when they do, we might be able to piggyback.

GM: The availability for individual falconers was what I am concerned about, hadn't thought of piggybacking on zoos.

MU: German falconers have told me that DEFRA said they could bring their hawks into the UK if they were vaccinated – they need 2 different vaccines, which they can't get hold of.

GM: DEFRA have been silent on this here, do the IAF have anything on this?

**MU: I can check with the IAF**, it wasn't discussed at the last Council meeting. Other nationalities have been given conflicting advice from DEFRA – vaccine; quarantine; pet passport.

GM: Border Force talked about what was necessary to import live specimen – bringing in a live specimen for any purpose follows the standard procedure.

MU: Don Ryan is trying to setup a subcommittee of the IAF to look into this.

GM: We need to be in the group.

MU: I will try and sit in on it.

GM: There seems to be a little bit of difficulty getting hold of information on the outbreaks in Scotland.

CB: We haven't had as many as England, but we are getting more coming up.

MU: In the Monday meeting with DEFRA I can ask their Scottish Rep why more info is not more forthcoming and also the same for NI.

#### Pilot Non-Native Species Inspectorate:

BR: I spoke to John Phillips in October last year; we had a good discussion and in 10 year's we have not seen HH breeding in the wild. Should we speak to them, I know your advice isn't to.

GM: We took that line as they won't engage with us. They have no BoP expertise; the objective is that they will write a report after visiting a random selection of falconers and then make recommendations. They are not interested in any discussion that doesn't meet their own agenda, they won't meet with HB or any of the clubs. Am happy for the HB to go back to them, but it would have to be by someone else.

MS: Originally GM & NF spoke to them and got nowhere. I had a meeting with him, which lasted 3 hours, where he said, "I agree it's a waste of money, but we have been instructed from above to do this, it will probably go on for another 2 years".

GM: So, what do we want to do?

MS: I get people calling me and I tell them they don't want them to come due to AI.

BR: I am worried about the report they are going to write.

MS: Look at Barbara's report and see if we can enhance it. They said when they finalise their document, they would like to also send the HB guidelines with it.

GM: Let's get this guidance sorted.

**BR: BR and MS to do the guidance.**

#### Banning Non-Natives for Future Breeding

BR: How does the HB feel about a ban on non-natives for future breeding?

GM: I would suggest that we would be fairly horrified because that would then also cover Hybrid species and that would have a commercial impact on a number of breeders, but equally it would have a major impact and what is available for UK falconers and bird of prey keepers and I'm not so sure we want to return to those days and I'm happy to be told I'm talking rubbish here, but and it probably wouldn't be in my lifetime. But you know these things would be kept non-natives and hybrids would live out their lives, we just wouldn't be allowed to breed. But you know what would happen is that a Falconer, presuming we still exist in the future would have to learn on a kestrel or a Buzzard and we would then, because of the legal situation, have to be in a position whereby we bred enough kestrels and buzzards in order to actually allow to provide the learning material for falconers. The days of us going and being able to take without too much trouble, even comparatively common species have gone, I think, and therefore I would be very, very concerned by these other voices.

JR: Surely there'll be a huge impact on conservation as well. There's a number of private breeders which are breeding endangered species, sticking them in their car, driving them well, that's changed a bit recently, but driving them to Sardinia and letting them go and, and that's part of a huge conservation effort, e.g., the Vulture Conservation Foundation. So, there's an impact not just on falconry, but an impact on endangered species on so many levels.

GM: Positive lists in Scotland could bring this in, James Legg has been involved from the Countryside Alliance and Cameron in Scotland, now my understanding was that animals and birds that were not on the positive list could be accommodated by a licence, but that is something which seems to be a bit debated at the moment, but anyway, we can come back to positive list as part of Cameron's Scottish Update.

#### SUN Update:

See Appendix 1

NHM: I spoke to JC about positive lists and no positive list anywhere in the world has BoP on it.

#### Scottish Update:

See Appendix 2

CB: Moving on to positive lists, I'm happy to go back to Nick or Gordon if they've got something they want to say about.

GM: Not just because we don't agree with them, but I think this is really poorly considered by Scotland in that they failed elsewhere in Europe. We've been facing this threat in Europe over a good number of years and nobody other than Belgium have tried to enact this, and it was thrown out by the Belgian High Court. It is a very retrograde step in our opinion and as Nick said earlier on, there's been no birds of prey ever included. Now my understanding was that in the proposals and they are only proposals at the moment I think there is a facility to licence, but I'm not so sure we want to actually support any legislation that is going to result in any bird of prey keeper or whatever having to licence their bird of prey, their hawk or Falcon? Because we as we have seen around the mountain hare actually the licence is so tight for permitting the mountain hares to be taken that it almost precludes Falconry, and I am quite worried about that.

NHM: The only good thing about the EU at the moment is they repeatedly thrown out positive lists and for the Greens to keep bringing it up in Scotland is just another green attack – nobody in Europe wants it and as Gordon said, there is nothing good about it.

CB: I wouldn't even call them recommendations at the moment because it's just an interim report. So, there is a final report which I was discussing with one of my colleagues the other week and he's fairly confident that if or at the point that they would become proposals there would be an opportunity to be consulted, so at that point we could thoughts in. It's the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission that have written this interim report and yes, they're very much the animal rights group, as opposed to anyone else. In writing this interim report they did speak to or consult with some people. But I'm still trying to work out after reading the website who they consulted.

MU: They promised us consultation before the mountain hare thing came in as well and it never happened. So, we have to be on our toes. Going back to the positive lists, it's being looked at in Germany at the moment and I've had correspondence from German falconers, and they are really quite frightened by it. The German falconers say it is apparently being done with a view of animals spreading illnesses since Covid. German vets have been asked to report on it, it is a German vet that I got the information from and she is concerned that Germany could possibly back it and there is a move in Europe on positive lists, again that had gone quiet, but we need to keep a really good eye on in Europe because it could come and if Germany was going to do it would make a big difference.

NHM: Has Holland got a positive list?

MU: Yes, for animals

NHM: A thing to remember is we do have an awful lot of big commercial breeders, especially up in Scotland.

CB: The problem is the SNP are being propped up by the Greens. So, this not just affects falconry, but field sports in general and that it doesn't really matter what evidence, logic or science you have on your side what the Greens want the Greens get.

CB: GM and I have been discussing reigniting the SHB. What is the opinion on setting up a group that will deal with Scottish issues and the report back to the HB? At the moment it is me, myself and I and I'm getting less and less time to deal with things, so I wondered what everyone's opinion would be on creating a group that would represent and deal with problems in Scotland.

GM: It is in the HB constitution that the SHB has a seat on HB.

MU: Good idea, they could use/adapt our constitution in their setting up.

GM: One of the problems the SHB previously faced was engagement and that is something we have to bear in mind. There must be other issues worrying Scottish falconers that we could help with. I know that Emma Ford still sees herself as the titular head, as it were, but she's not active in any way, shape or form.

CB: I have only spoken to EF once, maybe twice right at the start of the Mountain Hare issue, but I've not had contact with her since.

GM: If the board supports this, I will write to both AKB and EF to let them know that we are looking to reinvigorate the SHB and see what they have to say.

MU: I think a lack of engagement isn't an excuse for not doing anything.

HN: I think it's a great idea as things could get harder for Scotland and it would give support to CB.

**GM: We will look at rescoping our constitution for CB and the SHB.**

IAF Update:

See Appendix 3

GM: I would like to promote our relationship with the IAF more than we do at the moment.

Countryside Alliance Update:

See Appendix 4

JL: I don't have anything to add to the update other than I thought I might just supplement the remarks regarding Scotland. First of all, using a bird of prey as the means to dispatch a wild mammal flushed under the exceptions in the bill survived. Although there were hostile amendments from Labour which sought to remove all use of birds of prey, including the specific exemption for what they call falconry for sport in section 6. So, there are now a number of issues if you are acting under the exemption in the bill, you can use a bird of prey as the means of dispatch and if you are simply undertaking "falconry" for sport and be clear about which one you're operating under. If you're questioned, you can do so and that wasn't successfully removed. The minister stood against it, but the comments, both of the committee stage one report in terms of the bird of prey and means of dispatch and the comments of Labour and the Greens are were extremely unhelpful and hostile and had they been successful and not resisted by the Minister, that would have been more or less the end of falconry in Scotland, at least where dogs were involved.

JL: I can't think of anything else particularly, I just thought it is something that everybody ought to be aware of, and as far as I can see you can carry on more or less as usual, the only requirement obviously under the specific for sport exemption is that if there are more than two dogs involved, that there's more than one person present and the dogs can't come together as a pack. But as was rightly pointed out by Cameron there is this sort of grey area, which applies to rough shooting too as the point at which they might be said to be operating as a pack and we are expecting guidance on rough shooting from the Minister. I'm not sure whether or not it's something we will get some guidance on with regard to falconry, or whether and I think my inclination is that Cameron is in a much better place than I am to comment, I would suggest probably just leaving it below the radar.

CB: Absolutely, I think from my understanding of it, the guidance will relate to the use of dogs as opposed to whether you're shooting, stalking or Hawking them and so, for the purposes of the guidance, I don't know if it'll make a difference whether you have a bird or you have a shotgun. You know you're still hunting mammals.

JL: Obviously we'll be having discussions with Nature Scott, and I hate that, and Cameron and Jake and I once Jake's back next week I think we've got a meeting haven't we to discuss the lists and how we get through positive lists and how we get through to the Scottish Government?

GM: That would be very welcome.

JL: Thank you and that's all I have unless everyone has any questions.

GM: That's a good and comprehensive report James, thank you very much indeed.

AOB:

BR: In July 2020 AW walked away from the FFC and left it in a mess, she refused to engage in the handing over. I don't think she thought the club would carry on without her, However I asked a lady called Gwen Smith to take the president's position, which she agreed to do, and she has turned it around and is running it like a business. She has rewritten the constitution and we are redoing our membership packages and, obviously, reviewing our

Hawk Board membership as well. We also had to let the treasurer go and Gemma stepped down as vice-chair. So, we had a real shuffle of the committee and it has just been a bit of a nightmare, I can't discuss it now but I'm sure you will find out. Amy did leave us in a mess for some bizarre reason, I think she just thought the thing would fold, but it hasn't. So, I just thought I would let you know that the FFC does have a new committee and we will be reviewing quite a lot of stuff and on that note can I ask when your statement of accounts would be available to view?

RU: I can send you last year's, as this-years won't be completed until the end of the financial year – but they are confidential and not to be shared with anyone else.

GM: Thank you for that Barbara. It is a shame that there was such an upheaval – I thought it was only me that Amy didn't like, but it's obviously not confined to just me!

BR: Amy just wanted to run it as Amy wanted it to run and you can't do that with a club, you've got to work as a team and that obviously wasn't happening. That is largely how she fell out with me and the Hawk Board really, she is a young woman who, if she doesn't get her own way, is sometimes rather confrontational.

GM: It's good that you are back on track, certainly from my own perspective it is very welcome addition to the UK falconry scene.

HN: On profile/fund raising if HB would like to do something a Vowley – talk, symposium, dinner, etc – you would be very welcome. It is on the 16/17 September.

GM: Well, I think that would be a really a really good opportunity. I mean obviously we need to think through what we could reasonably deliver, but thank you, Helen. I think that is very, very positive. If nothing else I will go and be a sort of visible body.

BR: There will be no falconry village at the Game Fair this year because the sponsors didn't pay last year, and Charlotte's got no sponsorship.

GM: That is a shame, are they putting on any displays?

BR: Charlotte is still doing her own display, but there will be no falconry stands or anything like that.

GM: That is a pity, and particularly upsetting for Charlotte given how much work she has done in that area.

JR: At the last meeting we spoke membership and I think with Martyn in particular about centres joining the Hawk Board and I just wanted to sort of check the avenues for doing that if somebody was interested.

GM: Yeah, I think at the at the moment and Rachelle will correct me if I'm wrong, but at the moment we're almost entirely fixated on individuals, aren't we? I don't know that we've ever gone down the route. We may well have planned it once, but I don't think we've ever accepted a sort of body onto the board. We could easily change our paperwork to allow that.

RU: Martyn Stanley would be the best person because he looked into this quite a bit.

MS: We changed the Constitution so we could accept different groups from the bird of prey community so people bird of prey centres, pest control, breeders and what we decided was that if there was a group of them, they could then elect within themselves, a representative decision. I spoke to Charlie Heap and he was like, "well, personally, nobody cuts the mustard, and I wouldn't want to represent people that are substandard and not up to my standards" and I said, well, have a think about it and come back to me. So that that was the only one I contacted from a centre.

GM: I mean we would, I think without a shadow of a doubt unless there were compelling reasons why not i.e., pending prosecutions or whatever we would welcome centres as members. We will have to actually look at that and how it works and if we could get a little group of them, they could if they so wished, elect a representative to sit on the Hawk Board. Other than that, if they would be able to attend perhaps. I mean, we might have to think this through, but perhaps on the basis that clubs can send a Rep.

RU: We need to do the finance on what they will be charged.



GM: That was a sticking point once wasn't it, I mean how/what we charge. But I think we have often reflected that times are hard for centres; therefore, we can't overcharge them, but equally they are professionals in our area. **Maybe RU and I can look at the sort of schedule of who pays what and I'm sure we could work something out.**

MS: I think I recall something along the lines of: each club pays £5 per head and I think we discussed £5 per employee, but if it's a great big place then £50, that was the kind of thought process at the time.

GM: But do you think enough as a professional entity? I mean, you know a fiver per employee is not that much really.

MU: But do you want people on the board or not? I mean if they're going to pay something, it's helpful, but you know these are the people that go off on Facebook and then when you challenge them or politely ask them why they don't join they don't have an answer.

GM: Fair point.

MU: I was just wondering if we did something like the IAF, because you know it's a similar sort of organisation and setup where the clubs are very important. We have supporting members and Hawk Board is a supporting member of the IAF and so are the archives and others who are falconry related bodies but not clubs. They're not allowed to vote, but they're allowed to take part in meetings, and they actually are in IAF free of charge. I don't think we should allow it for free, but I think supporting Members is quite a good idea because that could encompass any falconry related body that we thought were worth being members.

MS: The difference mark is that the IAF is a falconry organisation and when the Hawk Board was set up, it wasn't just specifically for falconry, so I don't think that approach would work.

GM: I think if somebody, in all fairness, and I feel this in most circumstances really if someone's good enough to join and you know pay their sub, whatever that is, then they ought to have a voice. And if you have a voice you ought to be able to vote if we could get a group of them, so they had a Rep. I would have no bother because our remit as Martyn has just said is about representing bird of prey keepers and allied activities as well, so you know we are slightly different and if I can do it, we can do it. We can just do it in our own.

MU: I agree I didn't mean it had to be like the IAF I just meant we should include them in some way.

GM: Well, that would be helpful, and indeed I looked back to last year when I was at Vowley and actually somebody spoke to me and said he would really have loved to have been in a position to join, but he couldn't - he is a bird abatement operative, he wasn't in a position at the time to actually sort of stand for Hawk Board. In fact, we didn't have anybody stand for Hawk Board other than those of us who are here, but he was saying that he would have liked to have done it. So, there are people in that fraternity who do seem to be interested and I think we should re-enact how we might do this. You know it will not take it will not take very much, I thought maybe we will, on the back of what we are doing in Scotland, maybe we need, and we will have to publicise the need for voices beyond what we've got currently.

MU: Helen at Vowley, could we maybe have a meeting area? Because I was just thinking Vowley has quite a lot of different working groups there, there are abatement people; there are breeders. We might be able to get something around membership organised.

HN: Definitely. I think the more user groups you can involve the better because at the moment people sort of bypass the Hawk Board, voice their concerns on sort of social media and think that's job done. But there is no direct route for them to get involved and have a voice at the moment. We can broaden that and get people involved. It can reinvigorate things across the board, really.

GM: Right, let's have a go. **Let's say anybody who's got any thoughts about what we might do within our gift at for Vowley on 16th and 17th of September stick them in an e-mail either to Rachele or myself and we'll take that forward.** We'll try and work something out.

GM: I don't suppose there's a directory of centres? We just appeal to them all in the Yellow directory, Barbara.

BR: We don't do that anymore, because it wasn't viable because everything's now on social Media. I do have a lot of centres on my database but whether it's all of them and whether they are up to date or not I don't know, but I can have a look if you wish.

GM: You want may need to be a little bit careful about giving us details that you have gathered.

BR: Maybe is it worth putting, a little bit of an information leaflet together that I can post out?

GM: We can certainly do that.

**GM: Right, we'll do that. We'll produce something and make it available to you and use that. Thank you.**

The meeting closed at 16:10

**Next Meeting: 13.00pm TBC April 2023**

**Location: TBC**

Rachelle Upton, Co-coordinator – 10 February 2023

### **SUN Report from Jim Collins**

In previous reports I have highlighted the Proposals and Resolutions submitted at the recent CITES Conference of the Parties. Here I present some reflections on the CITES CoP and some further thoughts on what we might best prepare for in the coming three years leading-up to the next CITES CoP in 2025.

The overall nature of the COP was the worst and least scientific that I have ever attended. The animal rights and protectionist NGO's unashamedly used their leverage with certain countries - most particularly a swathe of countries in western Africa - to speak in favour of all the species listing proposals and to do so country after country after country such that it 'appears' incorrectly that the entire committee room is in favour of the proposal. We witnessed the added absurdity of each of them in turn speaking on species they do not have the slightest knowledge of (leading to some ridiculous and funny interventions when, for example, African delegates stated that South American Freshwater Stingrays were becoming rare in their country and must be listed on CITES in order to prevent them becoming extinct)! It would have been laughable if it were not quite so pathetic.

The E.U. I believe needs to urgently change their approach to the CITES CoP's if they are to get back any real power or say in how things are going and although the UK has obviously left the EU we generally have a vested interest in them getting things right since 9 times out of ten they arrive at the same stance as that of the UK delegations. What happened time and time again at this CoP was the E.U. spoke against a Species Proposal but then 20-30 countries from Latin America and West/Central Africa all took the floor to speak in favour. Then the Chairman turns to the E.U. or UK and says 'so many have spoken in favour and only you against, are you willing to withdraw your objection in order to give a consensus?' The E.U./UK then says we will not stop 'consensus' and withdraws the objection and so the species gets added. Of course, the 'consensus' is a false one because the E.U. is 27 countries but because the European Commission refuses to allow the individual E.U. countries to speak (they only allow the Commission themselves or the country holding the E.U. Presidency - so the Czech Republic at the time of the CoP) it does seem to everyone at the meeting that it represents only the one voice!

One of the significant themes was the push by the "antis" supported by some countries to introduce zoonotic diseases as a criteria in the listing of species on CITES - in general a successful fight against the "antis" and this has been kicked somewhat into the long grass and I think will never come through successfully - perhaps just a footnote for countries to consider when making listing proposals. The other big strategic fight was on taking into account local livelihoods when proposing species. This was successfully highlighted as an important factor by sustainable use groups and a range of countries (particularly those in southern Africa) - amazingly the antis clearly stated that poor people's livelihoods should not be considered! - but not successful enough to get this listed as one of the obligations to be fully considered before listing a species. This fight will continue into the next CoP.

We will have a continued fight at CITES to support captive-breeding. Some countries and a host of NGO's are now of a mindset that ex situ conservation has no merits and captive-breeding operations should be phased-out or seriously legislated on. This drift was very evident at the recent Conference of the Parties. In the side-lines I was confided upon by DEFRA colleagues - who then made this public at today's SUN meeting with the authorities - that the CITES Secretariat are under very considerable pressure from some countries (notably the U.S.) and many NGO's to place a non-compliance order against the UK for not making it mandatory to register Annex A Species captive-breeding operations with the

CITES Secretariat (a process fraught with landmines, with many operations refused registration because of questions over the provenance of founder stock). DEFRA informed us today that the emphasis was on bird-of-prey operations and, to a lesser extent, parrot breeding operations. We have made clear we stand ready to assist DEFRA in marshalling arguments against registration with CITES being mandated.

We remain actively involved in the review of the CITES Wildlife Trade Regulations and how they will be impacted upon by the Retained EU Law Act. As people will know who took part today, DEFRA appear to still be generally wedded to retaining the requirement for CITES Import Permits (like the EU but unlike the rest of the world) and we will need to continue to lobby for removal of this additional legislative burden - especially for captive-bred/artificially propagated specimens and/or from countries with well-established authorities such as the Members of the EU, U.S., etc. With the stated intent for deregulation overall we must continue to keep the feet of our DEFRA colleagues close to the fire with an expectation that they will deliver.

On the animal side of things, a disturbing development is the conclusions reached by the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission (SAWC) to recommend to the Scottish Executive that they legislate in favour of the introduction of Positive Lists for the keeping, breeding and sale of species. If implemented this would mean only a few species being permitted to keep, breed and sale a decidedly limited number of species within Scotland (this being a devolved power amongst the four nations of the UK) with all others prohibited. DEFRA Ministers have previously indicated that they were awaiting the conclusion of the SAWC review before making consideration of the desirability or otherwise of Positive Lists for England. SUN affiliates and SUN itself are coordinating a number of vigorous responses to the conclusions of the review - the latter being poor, lacking in scientific rigour and seemingly with conclusions reached before the review was even commenced. Fortunately, the European Commission dismissed the desirability of Positive Lists as a piece of pan-EU legislation twice in 2022 and this will certainly be of benefit to us in the arguments that will be ongoing through 2023.

## Appendix 2

### Scottish Report from Cameron Balfour

#### Mountain Hare

I'd like to start by offering credit where it is due to Barry Blyther and his petition. It has good cross-party support within the petitions committee, and the Minister got a bit of a grilling when she appeared in the committee late last year to give evidence. It is yet to be seen how this committee support will manifest itself into any amendments to the bill. If there was an exception added to WACA for falconry, Hunting with Dogs bill would still be in force.

#### Hunting with Dogs

As I'm sure you have heard "Hunting with Dogs Bill" has passed on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> Jan 2023. Designed to be the "final nail in the coffin for fox hunting" the bill is written to make it illegal to hunt any mammal except under certain circumstances, of which falconry is one. For falconers in Scotland it is now illegal to hunt/flush from cover/etc any wild mammal (other than rats & mice) with more than 2 dogs. Gov't minister will work with industry on post legislative guidance.

You can only work 2 dogs at a time to hunt, however more can be on leads/left in car/etc to give dogs a rest. It gets more complicated if there are multiple people working dogs, which is where the guidance will come in.

#### Positive Lists

Scottish Animal Welfare Commission (SAWC) has recently published and interim reported with concludes:

"While SAWC has not formed a final view on the positive-list approach, it believes that there is merit in exploring this further, in order to promote the welfare of non-domesticated species kept as pets in Scotland."

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-animal-welfare-commission-interim-report-exotic-pets-scotland/pages/1/>

As always if anybody would like more information or to discuss any other topic further please do not hesitate to get in touch.

### **IAF Report from Mark Upton**

The International Association of Falconry and Conservation of Birds of Prey's annual Council of Delegates Meeting was held in Pinczow, Poland on the 9<sup>th</sup> November. The meeting was a hybrid one, with some delegates attending in person and others using the online conference facility, Zoom. Sadly the IAF President was unable to attend the meeting which was chaired by the Vice-president for Europe in his place. There was nothing very controversial at the meeting where usual problems like European legislation, avian influenza, positive lists, CITES regulations, raptor conservation and biodiversity were all discussed. New Vice-presidents were voted in, Mr Mohamed Mamdouh (Egypt) Vice-president for the MENA Region and Mrs Sue Cecchini (USA) Vice-president for North America. Sue is also the editor of the IAF Journal.

The meeting was hosted by the Polish Hawking Club, at short notice because of the cancellation of the meeting in Pakistan for security reasons. The Polish Hawking Club did a great job of organisation with a very smooth running and well thought out meeting. Their meeting was also celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, along with the inclusion of Polish Falconry on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list. The opening of the Polish meeting included speeches by Polish MP's and local dignitaries, as well falconry and conservation bodies. The field meet was of a very high standard with top class flights and plenty of quarry.

Following 8 years of collaboration in joint conservation projects, the IUCN and IAF have signed an MoU that formalises and promotes this relationship. The IUCN-CEM Sustainable Use and Ecosystem Thematic Group (SUME) will be the contact point with the IAF. To both celebrate and initiate this agreement; the two organisations held a joint conference which was hosted at the Abu Dhabi Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition (ADIHEX). The Conference is titled "The Significance of Indigenous People and Local Communities (IPLC) in Linking Intangible Cultural Heritage and Wildlife Conservation".

The IAF were contacted by Natural England for our views on wild-take in falconry and we took part in the Natural England consultation.

IAF has produced a Welfare Course for Raptors used for falconry which has been shared widely on social media and in previous eBulletins. We are reminding subscribers of the course as it is an extremely valuable resource for improving your own raptor husbandry, and may also be used to highlight the pro-social aspects of falconry.

This course is the culmination of work from multidisciplinary experts in IAF from countries all over the world. It is built upon IAF policy documents and expertise gathered through our work in international conventions and with local stakeholders and falconers. IAF is pleased to provide this comprehensive course free of charge to anyone who wishes to improve their understanding of the welfare of raptors used in falconry. Please click on the link: [https://rise.articulate.com/share/QWVi9c79vdOdo7ubhQ2jPO7J\\_sy1ouHY?fbclid=IwAR1eqd6L\\_m4BcFxnQn2ylcV01WkZIHtnV--wtIPgyeAPLB-mpZbA3uT-HDA#/](https://rise.articulate.com/share/QWVi9c79vdOdo7ubhQ2jPO7J_sy1ouHY?fbclid=IwAR1eqd6L_m4BcFxnQn2ylcV01WkZIHtnV--wtIPgyeAPLB-mpZbA3uT-HDA#/)

World Falconry Day 2022 was a great success with many countries joining the celebrations. Falconers around the world celebrated WFD in different ways, but the vast majority of Associations celebrated with online and face-to-face lectures as well as field meetings and

public relations initiatives. We also received a wide variety of documents signed between falconry associations and governments as well as many photos of individuals using the World Falconry Day logo. It is noteworthy that the events were held in schools, universities, museums and in collaboration with non-profit organizations.

The Education Working Group coordinated a successful Falconry Art Calendar competition, for which 45 entries were received. All submissions may in the future be used for IAF projects and banners.

UNESCO ICH Discussion Group has been launched. Although the inscription of a nation's falconry on the UNESCO ICH list is a great achievement, it also carries some responsibility. Sharing ideas and knowing how other state organisations are helping will be highly beneficial. Don Ryan, who was the principle architect of Ireland's UNESCO listing, has proposed a group for all to discuss how to go forward and make the best use of the successes, to share ideas and materials and to keep up the impetus that UNESCO has given us all.

Between the 28th November and the 2nd December 2022 IAF attended the Bern Convention to make representations on behalf of falconers and science-based bird of prey conservation. IAF sits on three Bern Convention Working Groups and also attends the yearly meetings of the Standing Committee. This allows us to advocate not only for the interests of falconers and birds of prey, but also to work with other sustainable-use organizations to promote sound conservation, based on scientific evidence. Attendance at the Bern Convention is important: this policy instrument administers the Habitats and Birds directive, two of the most important EU policy instruments affecting birds of prey and falconry. From a falconry point of view, highlights of this year's attendance included the positive report to the standing committee of the IKB (Illegal Killing of Birds) Working Group of which IAF is an active member and to whose drafting IAF contributed, as well as developments on a number of open national cases that affect birds of prey.

Recently we learnt of received news of high level approval of falconry in the Greek high court, where anti-falconry NGOs had insisted on challenging proposals to legislate for falconry and apply for UNESCO recognition. This follows a long and difficult battle where the IAF and Greek Hawking Club have worked together on a campaign for falconry in Greece. Last year the IAF and Emirates Falconers Club attended Thessaloniki Fair, where the Greek Prime Minister was introduced to falconry and later this year the IAF has organised a conference on raptor rehabilitation, along with proposed meetings in South Africa and UAE.

## **Countryside Alliance Report from James Legge**

### **POLITICAL/POLICY**

#### **New Prime Minister**

Since the last update Liz Truss resigned as Prime Minister and Leader of the Conservative Party, being replaced by Rishi Sunak.

#### **New Defra Team**

Following the brief tenure of Ranil Jayawardena, Thérèse Coffey MP (Suffolk Coastal) was appointed Secretary of State having previously served as a Defra Minister. Mark Spencer MP (Sherwood) and Trudi Harrison MP (Copeland) continued as Ministers alongside the returning Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane). Lord Benyon remains Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and Defra spokesman in the Lords.

#### **The Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill**

As reported in October, the Bill is still awaiting Report Stage in the Commons. The Government is still looking to take this forward but there remain a series of hostile amendments, including amendments on hunting and working dogs. The Alliance is supporting the Bill in its current form.

#### **The Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill**

This is making progress as a Private Members' Bill with Government support. We have declined to engage directly because the Bill only bans imports related to species covered by CITES.

#### **Equipment Theft (Prevention) Bill**

Greg Smith MP has obtained Government support for this Private Members' Bill, which was drawn up in consultation with the Alliance. It would require motorised agricultural vehicles to be fitted with engine immobilisers and dealers to record details of sales and purchasers to assist investigation and recovery in case of theft. It was given a Second Reading in December and now goes to Committee Stage, date to be announced.

#### **Online Safety Bill**

The Alliance has drafted four amendments addressing ideologically motivated bullying and harassment, thinking specifically of the targeting of those engaged in rural pursuits and rural businesses. We plan to pursue these amendments in the Lords.

### **SHOOTING**

#### **Avian Influenza**

On Monday 9 January 2023 the National Avian Influenza Protection Zones (AIPZs) that cover England, Scotland and Wales, were amended to include new mandatory requirements for those who catch-up gamebirds (pheasants, partridges or ducks). In England and Wales catching-up is legal until the end of the shooting season on 1 February. In Scotland, it is legal until 28 February. The catching-up of any birds is illegal after these dates. There are additional quarantine requirements for birds that are caught up.

#### **Code of Practice for Gamebirds**



Defra still plans to review the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Gamebirds Reared for Sporting Purposes at a time to be determined.

### **Snares**

Defra plans to review the use of snares by means of a call for evidence. A debate took place in Westminster Hall on 9 January following an anti-snaring petition. The Alliance briefed supportive Members. A ban on snares is being proposed in Wales under their Agriculture Bill. We believe that similar to that in Scotland would be a better way to proceed in England and Wales rather than an outright ban.

### **Lead Ammunition**

The Health and Safety Executive has announced that owing to what it termed an 'overwhelming response' to its consultation on restricting the use of lead in ammunition, it would delay the planned publication of its opinions and response by six months. The consultation ended in November 2022 and the Alliance submitted a full response. The socio-economic impact consultation that was due to be launched has also been delayed until 23 July.

## **SCOTLAND**

### **Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill**

The Bill passed its final Stage 3 on 24 January. As the Bill made progress the Scottish Countryside Alliance submitted a significant number of amendments, but few were accepted. Some were technical adjustments whilst others were more significant, relating to trail-hunting, rabbits, terriers and the licensing process itself. The Scottish Government and the Alliance opposed amendments that would have removed the exemption for falconry and the use of birds of prey. A period of consultation on the guidelines for the licensing of the use of more than two dogs will now take place with NatureScot, with the guidance expected in April/May. The Act is expected to come into force and licensing scheme launched in the Summer/Autumn this year.

### **Wildlife Management (Grouse) Bill**

The Scottish Government introduced this Bill in response to the concerns over raptor persecution offences close to areas managed for grouse shooting. Its commissioned Werritty report argued that if offences had not reduced within a five-year period, then the licensing of grouse moors might be considered. Although there has been a significant decrease in reported raptor crimes, and no reports of raptor persecution on grouse moors in 2022, the Scottish Government is pressing ahead with plans to introduce licensing in 2023.

## **WALES**

### **North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner's Report on Hunting**

The Alliance highlighted independent research commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner for North Wales which found that anti-hunting activists were regularly submitting to police "heavily edited" video footage of little evidential value and that saboteurs were more interested in sabotage than in assisting the police. The report also found that despite the zeal of activists there was general apathy toward the issue among the North Wales population who did not regard it as a priority issue.