



Falconry – Inscribed by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind

Minutes of the Meeting of the Hawk Board held on 18 October 2018

UCMK, 502 Avebury Boulevard, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK9 3HS

The outgoing Chairman opened the meeting at 12:30

Present:

Gary Biddiss (GB); Graham Irving (GI); Andrew Knowles-Brown (AKB); Terry Large (TL); Paul Manning (PM); Gordon Mellor (GM); Jimmy Robinson (JR); Martyn Standley (MS); Derek Stotton (DS); Mark Upton (MU); Rachelle Upton (RU)

Apologies:

Graham Bennett; Steve Eastwood; Derek Hartshorne; Nick Havemann-Mart; Don Ryan; Dean White

Outgoing Chairman's Report:

The recent period has been dominated as expected, by the new Animal Welfare legislation. It is of course now on the statute book and is law. Many of the fraternity of falconers and hawk keepers are only just waking up to the realities of the new situation. Whilst those of us who have been fighting for a better hearing than we were granted, have been trying to work through what is poorly drafted and contradictory legislation and guidance.

There are still areas where there is no agreement amongst us as to what is 'in-scope' and what is 'out of scope'. For example, I was quite specifically told by DEFRA that pest control and airfield bird abatement was in scope if the operator reached the HMRC £1000 earnings threshold – Raptor Awards believe otherwise and independent advice seems to suggest that being non-exhibition, these activities might be exempted.

Another example of this abject confusion is that I have been informed, again by DEFRA, that the sporting use caveat applies only to display and exhibition but not to breeding – Dr Nick Fox has it is writing from DEFRA that sporting use does apply to breeding and therefor birds bred for falconry are exempted. Here our advice is that unfortunately my understanding is correct.

The Hawk Board has commissioned a legal review of the legislation and guidance and I will have some feedback for the Board, although not the final report, when we meet.

I have talked to the lawyers and seems that we are better informed than they are. They are now on board, but we will have to guide them on what we are paying them for. They are happy to write something on the legislation for us to disseminate to the clubs, etc. They are also looking over the guidelines that Mark Parker wrote with a view to updating them.

Subsequent to my meeting with the lawyers; they have said not to get into testing the legislation in court as there is no good outcome and even if we won it would be unlikely that we would be awarded costs. This could cost 30k or more.

I believe that the only way that we will really find out the scope of the legislation is by testing it in court. This is far from ideal given that it requires someone to fall foul of the legislation in a local authority's eyes for the matter to get to court in the first place.

Interestingly I have had communication from a small number of professional display givers who welcome the legislation, see that they have nothing to fear and asking that all falconers hawk keepers be governed by such.

At the recent HB election the highly influential Jemima Parry Jones MBE stepped down from the Board. A long standing member, former Chair and Vice Chair, she will still offer help and support to us but felt that her other commitments and belief that she should not contribute to global warming by travelling unnecessarily precluded continuation. I would like us to have a vote of thanks and propose that I write to thank her for her commitment to our cause.

DS: I am against this - she never attended any meetings
Everyone else agreed, GM to write to JPJ.

As always we have a vociferous and offensive minority who continue to abuse and vilify those of us who give up our own time to represent falconers and hawk keepers. This is mostly undertaken via social media and it is interesting that at neither the Game Fair in the summer nor at several subscribing club meetings that I have attended recently, not a word of complaint was received in person.

BREXIT continues to loom large on the not-so-distant horizon. From my conversations with DEFRA it still seems to baffle them. I hope that we can be updated by several others of the Board who have met with them under the guise of the SUN group or other forum.

I am once again struck and worried by the number of hawks and falcons that are published as lost by Babs at IBR. She runs a really good service but faces an uphill struggle regarding recovery and return. I think that we ought to push for all hawks and falcons flown loose to have a form of ID beyond the breeders ring. I know many of us do this already but it is evident that a number do not.

TL: I would recommend that all clubs have a presentation from IBR, it is really good and informative.

Can we open up the debate over the tethering of the smaller species of owl in display and exhibition? Despite our guidance stating clearly that the smaller species should not be tethered, it is clear that many are and some show no signs of this being stressful. We have all seen the unacceptable, but where the environment is suitable and the owl well manned, I struggle to see that it is a problem. Indeed at many of the game fairs, good display givers exhibit smaller owls and it is clear that the public love to see them. I think that the blanket restriction in our guidance rather brings it into disrepute. I would like us to consider this emotive issue carefully.

MU: We need to be careful making statements in Guidelines.

GM: The Stroud Animal Welfare Officer got in touch with the HB for advice on a licence application. This is a good thing and it would be great if more Welfare Offices use us.

Derek Hartshorne Email:

Can I report a couple of conversations I have had which add to /support the Chairman's report (as I am unable to attend in person this time).

On the subject of bird control and airfield abatement I have had two fruitful conversations both of which support our understanding that the new Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 do not include any aspect of pest control / abatement using birds of prey.

First, James Legge (CA) gave me call and we discussed this subject. James is totally convinced that these activities are out of scope.

Second, I have been in conversation with the technical team at the BPCA (British Pest Control Association), and again, they are totally convinced that using birds of prey in this context is definitely out of scope.

The relevant part of the regulations defining what is in scope is Part 6 of Schedule 1, which reads:

10. Keeping or training animals for exhibition in the course of a business for **educational or entertainment** purposes—

(a) to any audience attending in person, or

(b) by the recording of visual images of them by any form of technology that enables the display of such images.

(The bold letters are mine)

Sadly we know of at least one training course for Inspectors where this question arose, and the trainer specifically informed the trainee inspectors that it was in scope 'because the raptors were performing for the handler'. Clearly rubbish.

Interestingly, both James and the BPCA team would have been happy to have bird control included had they have been consulted, as indeed would we. Many of the bird controllers who are in our network have also expressed the same view, which supports Gordon's report about positive comments he has received from some professional display givers.

The so-called 'breeding for sporting purposes exemption' was also discussed when James Legge spoke to me. Again it is clear from the regulations that the sporting exemption is contained within, and applies to Part 6 of Schedule 1 solely, and not to any other part of the regulations.

Part 2 of Schedule 1 is the relevant part for the 'Selling animals as pets' regulations. No such 'sporting' exemption is given in Part 2 despite DEFRA's letter to Nick. Exemptions from Part 2 would only apply where animals are not sold as 'pets', for example as food, or perhaps as laboratory test animals. My thinking is that Racehorses can be viewed as analogous, and would also be covered by the new regulations as 'pets' - as this is an industry with lots of money I wonder if they are lobbying DEFRA? There is no mention of racehorses in the regulations and no specific exemption for them.

I am afraid that the written and spoken advice by DEFRA cannot be relied upon. Indeed I have a copy of a Letter from Lord Gardiner that contains a further serious mis-interpretation of the 'Business test'. Sad isn't it?

In the circumstances we can only hope that the fog clears over time.

Have a good meeting

Regards

Derek Hartshorne

GM: Nick Fox wants to fight for the sporting exemption. Raptor Awards, James Legged (Countryside Alliance) and GM believe it does not stretch across the legislation. Falconry is in as a sporting exemption, but only in the section that covers education.

GB: One of our members has been told they don't need the licence, so definitely a need for solicitors guidance.

GM: Anyone told they need not apply/out of scope needs to make sure they get it in writing.

TL: Lots of councils are putting this on the back burner.

GM: It is now the law of the land so cannot be put on a back burner – you must still apply.

MS: We need an idiots guide as to what the legislation means.

GM: 1st instance only relates to those earn more than 1K after costs. The Lawyer did say it wont be HMRC who come searching it will be Trading Standards.

MS: What are the negatives?

GM: Don't look at this as welfare legislation it is licensing and beauracracy.

GM: It is in law now, as and when they review it we need to ensure we are involved.

MU: It makes no sense that within the same clutch, one chick will be legislated one way and another one another way.

JC: Animal rights are already on to Welfare about this.

MU: Some of the worst offenders are those that won't be caught up in this.

Election of new Chairman and Vice-Chairman:

GM: I am willing to stand as Chairman, but if elected I will only stand for 1 more term.

GM only candidate

Vote: unanimous

AKB automatically elected as a Vice Chair due to his position on the Scottish Hawk Board.

DS: I would like to stand as Vice Chair as I can attend lots of external meetings.

DS the only candidate

Vote: unanimous

Minutes of last meeting / Matters arising:

Approved

Co-Opted Members:

Campaign for Falconry – Terry Large

Eagle Specialist – David Fox

Education Working Group – Mike Nicholls

IAF Liaison – Mark Upton

SUN Co-ordinator – Jim Collins

The above were all approved to continue as co-opted members, RU to write to them to officially ask if they would like to continue.

When GM writes JPJ to thank her for her work on the HB over the years he will ask that if can call on her support as and when required.

Veterinary Adviser - ?

GM: We can't disqualify a vet on his support of the Animal Welfare Bill.

DS: I will speak to Richard Jones and sound him out.

MU: Vets don't see the good side of hawk keeping, only the bad.

GM: We have 4 falconry friendly vets and we should cultivate them all

JC: Vets will speak to the powers that be and be listened to.

Treasurers Report:

At present the HB Current account and Savings account have sufficient funds.

2 clubs have not paid their subs as yet; both have promised to, they have until the end of October

Knights Solicitors have been paid £1,000 towards their costs for looking into the Animal Welfare Act on our behalf.

In future external meeting expenses will be paid on receipt of a claim form and a report of the meeting attended.

MS: We need to look into fund raising at the next meeting.

PM: Most people in here when they talk amongst themselves degrade other falconers, we need to change that mindset.

AKB: This is not HB's remit it is why the CFF was set up, they are meant to be the fund raising arm of the HB. HB does what it does and the clubs should disseminate the information.

PM: HB support 100% of falconers, but are only supported by 10%.

MU: We need to promote ourselves more.

AKB: We need to set up a sub committee for fund raising/self promotion.

Sub committee of TL; MS; PM and JR

AKB: External people can be co-opted onto the sub committee if required.

MU: I am happy to design and layout of leaflets/pop-ups for free.

Election:

MS: People are asking why the numbers from the election have not been published.

AKB: They don't need to be published.

RU: The HB have never published the numbers, I don't see the need to start now just to please a few.

Vote: unanimous not to publish the figures

Performing Animals Licence/Animal Welfare Act:

Discussed during the outgoing chairman's report.

SUN Update:

See Appendix 1

JC: Quick update on Alien Invasive Species. A list of the most popular things in each category has been produced and Harris Hawks are on it. The list was sent out at the end of July to be published in September, they have been told that the timescale is too short. This has now been pushed back to January and will take a year.

Legal/Guidelines Update:

See Appendix 2

Email from Defra Technical Notices, sent on 12/10/2018 13:43 (GMT+00:00)

Good afternoon,

Today, the government is setting out further technical notices outlining preparations for a 'no deal' Brexit, following the three tranches of notices already published.

The government does not want or expect a no deal scenario and is committed to achieving deal with the EU. However it is right that, as a responsible government, we continue to prepare for all scenarios, including the unlikely event of no deal.

These technical notices are designed to provide businesses and individuals with more information on the considerations they should undertake in the case of a 'no deal' Brexit.

The fourth tranche of these notices have been published today, which include the following Defra technical notices. These cover the following issues and can be found at the below links:

- [Breeding animals if there is no Brexit deal](#)
- [Commercial fishing if there is no Brexit deal](#)
- [Control on Mercury if there is no Brexit deal](#)
- [Control on persistent organic pollutants if there is no Brexit deal](#)
- [Maintaining the continuity of waste shipments if there is no Brexit deal](#)
- [Plant variety rights and marketing of seed and propagating material if there is no Brexit deal](#)
- [Regulating pesticides if there is no Brexit deal](#)
- [Taking horses abroad if there is no Brexit deal](#)
- [Trading and moving endangered species protected by CITES if there is no Brexit deal](#)

We will continue to engage with industry over the coming weeks and months as we further develop plans and preparations, and as we have further information to share. In the meantime, please do contact the below teams if you would like to discuss these notices further:

- Food Chain team: (foodchainengagement@defra.gsi.gov.uk)
- Environment team: (EnvRegsEUExit@defra.gsi.gov.uk)
- Fisheries team: (FishEUExit@defra.gsi.gov.uk)
- Animal movements: (BFPEUExit@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

Best,

Iain

IAF Update:
See Appendix 3

CA Update:
See Appendix 4

A.O.B:

MS: I received an email about a dog that has been attacked by an Eagle. The Falconer gave the equivalent of the vet's fees to the charity of the dog owner's choice and said he wouldn't fly there again. The dog owner sad that the Eagle is being flown in the same place again, this is an area with lots of walkways/paths that dog walkers and parents with young children use.

TL: Speak to David Fox about this.

JR: HB Meetings. Are they fixed to a particular venue or do they move? Is basing "x" amount of meeting elsewhere more productive to the HB's aims eg. Defra and CLA bases being used for meetings at relevant points of the year.

GM: We would move but it would depend on venue costs. DEFRA is no longer an option, and CLA/Game Fairs there is no time for discussions or private areas to do so. ICBP and BAF have both offered their venues for free, but it is tricky for people to get there.

JR: Representation. From bird of prey centers, rehabilitators, pest control companies, licensed 'zoos'. Is the current emphasis on club representatives really working nowadays? There's a big world of people working with raptors, who does the HB represent and collaborate with in a modern world going forward.

GM: There is very little representation. The HB model was for falconry clubs, we are trying to expand this and have changed the constitution so that others can be included.

JR: Information. What is the HBs position on the dissemination of relevant information (eg. New legislation) how does the HB filter through new and relevant information to falconers and keepers across the UK and is there a more productive way to increase the presence of HB

GM: We are poor at this, eg we were meant to turn the minutes into leaflets and Honeybrook offered to put a leaflet in every box of chicks, but this didn't happen.

PM: We could do a sheet of what the HB has achieved and sent that out with Honeybrook's chicks.

GB: We are short of time because we re constantly fire fighting.

MS: We are here waiting for draft legislation – who monitors what happens.

GI: I get lots of alerts of things coming up. Everyone could get the information for consultations, its on the Gov. web page.

AKB: This is the 1st legislation that we have missed and even SUN were kept in the dark.

GM: We need to be surer of ourselves. We can't trust the relationship with Gov. organisations. The only and best route to DEFRA is via SUN – SUN has regular meetings with DEFRA.

JC: DERFA claim to have learnt from this legislation and will involve more knowledgeable groups in the future.

JR: Strategic plan. Is there a strategic plan for HB to look forward and reach aims/targets and secure its future and increase it's following and support.

GM: We don't have one and we should.

JR: Raptor Awards. I admire Derek for picking up and taking the Lantra awards forward but how do we get falconers on board with the initiative. To get a sum of money out of falconers over for a seminar of a mean feat!

GM: Would like RA to be more inclusive.

JR: Communication. People have complained about transparency etc. The social media platforms seem to be working well but is it showing our 'hand' too much in public? Is annually announcing accomplishments and losses through HB objectives a better solution? Could the campaign for falconry be brought back into the limelight and would it be beneficial with new legislation to fight.

GM: We have to be better at it. We can't fight the legislation as it is now law.

JR: Record-keeping. Is there an archive of HB Minutes and responses to consultation documents available? With the increasing use of digital media, is there any permanent store of past information, policies and decisions taken that we can refer back to and does it need converting to a digital format?

GM: We do archive the minutes and responses.

RU: Since taking over as co-ordinator everything is kept digitally and backed up onto an external hard drive. I am also scanning in old paper documents, but there are boxes and boxes of paper documents that I inherited, so it will take some time.

MU: I was also given a lot of paperwork from the previous co-ordinator for BAF, that will eventually be scanned in and documented.

JR: Does the HB fight for freedoms or increased legislation? The Animal Welfare debacle has shaken confidence that has spilled out and caused confusion, especially via social media, this sadly resulted in questions being asked if the HB really is fighting for falconry and hawk keeping.

GM: We fight for both and we use our best judgment.

GM: Hacking of falcons. It has been spotted that Mark Avery has a very popular wildlife protectionist blog and that he is concerned about large white falcons being hacked in NE Scotland. It didn't go far but caused questions at Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), they responded within hours that native species don't require a licence for hacking, but non-native and hybrids do. As Gyrs occasionally visit the UK they are considered native.

AKB: A private individual can privately hack 2 falcons of any type, (only in Scotland).

PM: What are the losses from hacking?

AKB: Not known.

GM: It is impossible to get information, I have contacted various breeders but they wouldn't answer how many they hack. I did open up a conversation with one breeder, but the only information he was willing to divulge was that they all wear tags.

GI: There is no legislation for an English licence to hack.

MU: HB and IAF should keep this in mind in case something does come up.

GM: Private falconers do not want to lose the ability to hack hawks.

The meeting closed at 16:10

Next Meeting: 12.30pm Thursday, 14 February 2019

Location: UCMK, 502 Avebury Boulevard, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK9 3HS

Rachelle Upton, Co-coordinator – 21 October 2018

Sun Report from Jim Collins

As is the usual case, July and August had very little activity within either the UK legislative process or that of the European Union given the vacation recess of both the UK Parliament and European Commission.

Nevertheless, the past six weeks have seen a significant amount of activity with a great deal of communication with the EU on the Invasive Alien Species Directive, meeting with DEFRA/APHA/JNCC and the passing of the Animals Activities Licensing legislation into law, (1st October) plus all the potential implications of Brexit looming.

On the matter of Brexit, we have had regular meetings with DEFRA - both the CITES Policy section and the non-CITES Animal Movement/Animal Health sections. It remains worrying just how ill prepared the authorities are for whatever Brexit scenario transpires. We continue to be told that the intention is for there to be absolutely no change in CITES and animal movement legislation for the transition period (March 2019 through to 31st December 2020) with the mentioning that these transition arrangements might even be extended a further year until 31st December 2021 depending on what is negotiated with the overarching Brexit agreement. What would happen after the termination of the transition period is completely up in the air.

However, as the prospect of a No-Deal Brexit scenario increases in likelihood, the UK Government has started to issue Technical Notices on a raft of legislation advising stakeholders of what will happen in the event of a No-Deal. Although one for the movement of live animals and animal by-products as yet to see the light of day, that for the trade of CITES Species to/from the UK and remaining 27 EU Member States was revealed on 12th October. It reiterates what we have been told at the various meetings, namely that in the event of a Brexit No-Deal, CITES transfer with the EU Member States will be treated in exactly the same way as CITES trade is with say Kuwait or the U.S. i.e. the UK will be treated as a Third Country to the European Union. This will then necessitate the issuance of both CITES Import and Export Permits before a trade can take place.

SUN's Coordinator was able to have a 1:1 meeting with the scientific and management leads within DEFRA in respect of Invasive Alien Species. This proved to be a very useful two hour meeting with the opportunity to stress how disillusioned keepers and traders are with the EU's Invasive Alien Species (IAS) Directive (both in the UK and on the Continent) and to suggest a number of ways that the whole process could be modified and better legitimised. It was clear that the UK officials share the majority of the concerns expressed by the SUN Coordinator and hopefully these will be voiced at forthcoming meetings of the IAS Scientific Forum and Management Committee. In liaison with a number of EU Member States' representatives it does seem that several countries are concerned that the IAS Directive is becoming too cumbersome and too easy to list species without any great rationale, so hopefully the European Commission will get pushback on these matters.

The Animal Activities Licensing regulations came into force on 1st October and already appear to be causing confusion and widespread inconsistency in declared implementation across different local authorities. As we predicted, some local authorities appear ready to take a very strict interpretation of the AAL criteria and seek to impose licensing on anyone selling animals with a net income of over £1K whilst others are taking the more pragmatic approach - now more openly requested by DEFRA - of balancing the criteria before deciding whether or not licensing is required. The next 6-12 months should give us the answer as to how this legislation is going to land.

As of the time of submitting this report there are no species proposals for the CITES Conference of the Parties (COP) but, nonetheless, the COP looks to have a lot of interest to bird-of-prey keepers and breeders - most especially the further consideration of captive-breeding in the context of CITES species, additional controls, etc.

On the changes to COTES, DEFRA have confirmed that the UK will not be enforcing the civil sanctions until guidance has been issued and made publicly available. We must be looking-out for this guidance in respect of putting A10 Certificate numbers on advertising for CITES I (Annex A) species. APHA have also committed to relook at the issue of semi-complete certificates and whether they might consider them appropriate in some circumstances, especially post-Brexit.

Legal/Guidelines Report From Graham Irving

New COTES Regs came into force on 01/10/2018
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2018/703/contents/made>

As previously discussed at CSUG, COTES 2018 is primarily a consolidation exercise of the several existing COTES regulations. Some new provisions are, however, highlighted below:

- Allow enforcement bodies a new power to make “test purchases” of specimens where trade in such specimens would normally be an offence
- Inclusion of a provision that a “suitably qualified person” would be able to take non-invasive samples from live animals or other samples, e.g. from dead specimens, parts and derivatives or plants, rather than requiring a vet to do this as was previously the case.
- Enable police to recover expenses linked to seizure of a live specimen in the course of investigating an offence. The court that convicts a person of the offence has power to order the person to reimburse the expenses.
- Allow for ban or suspension from possessing or controlling CITES specimens to be imposed on persons who transgress the Regulations.
- Include a power to designate ports of entry and exit through which CITES controlled species and products can be brought in and out of the UK.
- New offences, to be prosecuted via civil sanctions (existing offences will continue to attract criminal sanctions)
- Advertising specimens for sale- Annex A specimens without inclusion of an EC/Article 10 certificate number [Regulation 6].
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- Failing to properly package and label caviar [described in Articles 64(2), 66(6) and 66(7) of Commission Regulation 864/2006]

Defra Technical Notices Update-

The below link takes you to the latest update on the impact that a “no deal” scenario with Brexit will result in.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trading-and-moving-endangered-species-protected-by-cites-if-theres-no-brexit-deal/trading-and-moving-endangered-species-protected-by-cites-if-theres-no-brexit-deal>

IAF Report from Mark Upton

Little to add since my last report.

The IAF have had representatives at The 1st Chinese Falconry Culture and Heritage Conservation Festival was held at Beijing.

Since the 2015 IAF Council of Delegates meeting, hosted in Posadas, Argentina, a working group has been uniting the South American falconers. May of 2018 saw the formalization of this working group through the creation of GTLA (Grupo de Trabajo Latino America).

IAF representatives from the Czech Republic informed all European falconry clubs of a problem with trained Goshawks dying. It was thought it might be linked to extremely high summer temperatures in Europe and some showed symptoms of West Nile Virus. This was posted on the Club and Hawk Board Facebook pages. Autopsies were being done but I haven't heard of any results.

And as you all know the IAF Council of Delegates Meeting is next week. It is being held at the DFO International Meeting at Bamberg, Germany, Sunday 21st to Tuesday 23rd October. I am attending.

The new IAF president, almost certainly HE Majid al Mansouri who is standing unopposed, will be putting in place a new board of directors and advisory panel. Until that it is in place it is hard to tell what the future direction of the IAF will be. I suspect little will change in the near future.

I have had an enquiry from the IAF about hacking in the UK. It had been noticed that there has been some discussion in the media about hacking and they are interested in Hawk Board's views on the subject. As this is our first meeting since it came up I said I would get back to them at their meeting in Bamberg.

Countryside Alliance Update from James Legge

HAWK BOARD POLITICAL AND LEGAL UPDATE ENGLAND AND WALES October 2018

Parliamentary Update

An update on our campaigning work in Westminster and beyond was sent to all MPs and Peers on 24 July ahead of the summer recess.

Parliamentary Events

A breakfast hosted by Simon Hart MP for Conservative MPs elected in 2017 took place on 26 June. A Christmas Reception will be held in Parliament on 10 December, also involving the Moorland Association and the British Game Alliance.

Conferences

The Countryside Alliance attended each of the three main party conferences. Although no fringe event was held at the Liberal Democrats, a series of useful meetings were held with the key spokespeople. At Labour, the fringe meeting considered the question: Does Labour speak for rural Britain? A similar event was held at the Conservative conference - Do the Conservatives speak for rural Britain? We also held an event at the Conservatives entitled: Do animal rights win elections? All events provoked good debates and were well attended.

Rural Economy Committee

A call for evidence in July and we produced an online survey to help inform our written evidence to the Committee. Almost 1,000 people took part in the survey, providing useful examples of the challenges facing rural businesses across England. We have submitted written evidence to the Committee and Tim Bonner and Sarah Lee appeared before the Committee on 16 October.

Agricultural Policy Document

The Countryside Alliance produced a short policy document setting out five principles that should be at the heart of our new agricultural policy. This was published to coincide with the publication of the Government's Agriculture Bill, which had its Second Reading in the Commons on 10 October. The Bill will now be considered in committee, before returning to the floor of the House.

Drones

The Department for Transport has consulted on the use, restrictions, and enforcement of drone legislation with a view to bringing forward a Drones Bill later in the year. The Countryside Alliance responded to the consultation and highlighted issues around privacy, trespass, public safety, crime and animals.

Poaching

We are working with the All Party Parliamentary Group for Rural Crime, police, and other organisations, to look at ways of making it easier to prosecute hare poaching offences under the Games Acts.

Natural England

The Countryside Alliance submitted a response to the SSSI Byelaws consultation raising potential impact on shooting/hunting interests. The consultation closed on 22 August. Lord Blencathra has been appointed Deputy Chair. Andrew Sells is retiring from his role as Chair in January 2019.

Electronic collars

The Government has responded to the consultation and confirmed that it will introduce a ban in England but with an exemption for devices used in boundary fence systems.

Animal Welfare Bill

The Government has responded to the consultation and intends to separate the two elements of the draft Bill on sentience and sentencing. Five-year sentences will be introduced “as soon as parliamentary time allows” and the Government will “further refine the proposals on sentience”.

Environmental Principles and Governance after EU Exit

We submitted a response to the consultation on the future of environmental regulations outside of the EU. The consultation closed on 2 August.

Licensing of Activities Involving Animals Regulations

From 1 October this year new laws will apply to five activities involving animals in England:

1. Selling animals as pets;
2. Providing for or arranging for the provision of boarding for cats or dogs;
3. Hiring out horses;
4. Dog breeding; and
5. Keeping or training animals for exhibition.

The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 introduces an updated licensing system in England for the activities listed above. Schedule 1 of the regulations defines the licensable activities for each sector and in all cases except dog breeding; the licensable activity is restricted to businesses or those operating on a commercial basis. In the case of dog breeders, anyone breeding three or more litters of puppies per year (unless they can show that none of the puppies have been sold) and anyone breeding puppies and advertising a business of selling them, irrespective of the number of litters produced per year, will need a licence. This is not restricted to registered businesses and individuals can also be classed as a business depending on the extent of their activities.

All those involved in these activities will need to consider whether they are required to comply with the new legislation. Anyone currently requiring a licence should assume this will continue and be aware that under the new rules there may be additional requirements for licensing in certain situations. The regulations prescribe general licence conditions that will attach to all licences (schedule 2 of the regulations) and specific licence conditions that will apply to individual licences depending on the activity being licensed (Schedules 3 – 7 of the regulations). The new licensing system will be administered and enforced by local authorities and Defra has produced a series of guidance documents for each activity.

These new regulations replace the various licensing systems under the Pet Animals Act 1951; the Animal Boarding Establishments Act 1963; the Riding Establishments Act 1964; and the Breeding of Dogs Act 1973; as well as the Performing Animals (Regulation) Act 1925, which requires individuals who want to exhibit or train any performing animals to register for this purpose under the Act. If you have a licence under the existing legislation that is in force on 1 October 2018, it will continue to be valid until the expiry date shown on the licence. Any registration of a person under the Performing Animals (Regulation) Act 1925 will continue in force, for six months from the date on which these Regulations come into force until 1 April 2019. Prior to the expiry of your current licence, or registration, you will need to make an application for a licence under the new regulations. The Countryside Alliance submitted evidence as part of the review of the legislation and has worked closely with Defra in the drafting of the guidance documents.

Offensive Weapons Bill

The Bill received its Report and Third Reading in the Commons on Monday 15 October and now goes to the House of Lords.