



Falconry – Inscribed by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Hawk Board held on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

The Chairman opened the meeting at 12:30

Present:

Cameron Balfour (CB); Gary Biddiss (GB); Jim Collins (JC); Nick Havermann-Mart (NHM); Graham Irving (GI); Karl Jennings (KJ); James Legge (JL); Gordon Mellor (GM); Jimmy Robinson (JR); Martyn Standley (MS); Mark Upton (MU); Rachelle Upton (RU); Amy Wallace (AW)

Apologies:

Graham Bennett; Don Ryan; Dean White

Minutes of last meeting / Matters arising:

Approved

GM to sign and send to RU

Chairman's Report:

This period has been dominated by Avian Influenza, the Mountain Hare issue in Scotland, and numerous social media reports about lost hawks (many with furniture attached).

Good engagement with DEFRA and APHA in the context of AI, has enabled us to articulate our concerns and challenges in the face of this annual or perhaps ever-present, virus. Those who represented us were able to both learn from and educate our legislators. This has shown glimpses of a collegiate interaction that we have not seen for a number of years. A tangible output has been some really effective information for falconers, produced initially by FWF.

The situation in Scotland where the Mountain Hare is now fully protected, is very difficult. Using a trained bird of prey will be permitted, where a licensable take is identified. However, the conditions for granting licenses are very restricted and no widespread hare hawking will be possible.

Whilst we heard the usual complaints this Spring, that peregrine eggs were being stolen to be sold into the illegal falcon trade, the clamour was slightly reduced this year. Perhaps because, despite the rhetoric, there is precious little evidence to support such claims and few prosecutions. Of course, we all welcome the apprehending and successful prosecution of anyone linked to this pernicious crime that does us all so much damage.

Whilst I recognise that social media is often misleading, the frequent reports of lost hawks and falcons is cause for concern. Falconers and those who fly birds of prey have a clear welfare duty to their birds to minimise the risk of loss, through good husbandry and handling skills, careful training, and the use of telemetry. If a bird is lost, every effort must be made to recover it (yes, using social media is one such tool). I have a suspicion that a good number of losses are the result of inexperience. We must all work to achieve standards that reduce the risk of loss to the very minimum.

A number of raptor breeders have reported that the provision of A10s and export permits is very slow this year. DEFRA are taking steps to clear the backlog, but we are warned to expect delays.

I hope that your birds of prey are well in the moult, that breeders have had a decent year, and that preparations for the coming season are being made. Please promote raptor conservation and educate the public about the role that falconry and raptor keeping plays where you can and where is appropriate. Fly your hawks and falcons with pride.

#### Treasurers Report:

The HB finances are in good order.

Sun subs: We have increased our contribution to SUN from £1,000 to £1,200.

Subscription letters have been sent out, but no subs have been received yet.

We ran at a loss of £3,337.00 last year and are due a corporation tax liability of £3.61, although our Accountant has said that whilst this is due January 2022, he wouldn't expect HMRC to try and collect it.

GM: Did you get any feedback about the rising of the SUN subscription?

RU: The only feedback was positive, and all agreed that we should raise the subs.

#### SUN Update:

See Appendix 1

JC: Apologies, I will skip off at about five to two as I've got a DEFRA meeting at 2 o'clock. There's nothing additional to my report so if I just take you three briefly through the main items.

GM: That would be great.

JC: Thank you, so I guess the first important one is the general feeling from DEFRA is that we have probably won the battle in terms of over-the-top restrictions from DEFRA despite the initial thinking and statements of a number of senior politicians and influencers. DEFRA civil servants have been responsive to well-argued submissions based on good science and a knowledge of how trade actually works, and this has been invaluable in us now seemingly having arrived at a more pragmatic approach and a less judgmental one in terms of what they think about wildlife trade.

So, though it's not to do with birds of prey it might give you a feeling for it, I had a couple of hours with Zach Goldsmith (DEFRA Minister) on a virtual meeting concerning primates and a potential ban on their private ownership. He made clear - consistent with his many statements prior to becoming a Minister - that in essence he was not supportive of the keeping of non-domesticated species and very wary of any kind of wildlife trade - which is not something we didn't already know but it being reconfirmed is obviously of interest.

So, we had quite a heated first half hour where basically I said he was talking tosh and that he would get almost zero compliance if that was going to be the attitude he was taking and that would therefore lead to counterproductive outcomes in terms of animal welfare where people will be unable to take their primate to the vets for example, for fear of being dobbed in. At the end of the two hours, he thanked me and said that I had put forward sensible and practical objections to a complete ban. He was, I think, still completely unconvinced on why people should want to keep non-domesticated animals but accepted they did, and he wanted an outcome therefore, that was favourable to them, and then subsequent to that, and you may have seen this in the press, they did come out with basically legislative recommendations, which to be frank, I could have written quite happily.

So, they will ban pet ownership, which I've always been opposed to anyway, in the sense of a primate in a cage in somebody's living room, but they are expressly going to allow private keeping of primates through a Specialist Keepers Licence which will give them the rights of any zoo, so they can buy, they can sell, they can breed, they can swap, they can do whatever and the antis are far from happy with this outcome as their ideological bent was that they simply didn't agree with private ownership. So, I guess the upshot is that even Ministers with an animal rights disposition will listen even though they kind of start from a bad point they do come round if they are persuaded. I guess that's that that's something that we can work on for the future, because I think I mentioned in the report that when the Queen's speech came out, there was a horrible caveat at the last sentence. Basically, under the primate section of the Kept Animals Bill appears a statement saying that DEFRA were amenable to being approached for other species that might be subject to a specialist keepers only keeping and I didn't know about that in advance but I have been talking to the DEFRA team that are responsible for this area.

You can guarantee that the "antis" will be inundating them with written up reports suggesting X, Y & Z should be on this specialist keepers licence because the animals are at least as difficult as primates, and I think that's part of the problem we face is that primates are not actually particularly difficult to keep. Keeping a big dog is probably more challenging to keep than a pair of marmosets, so it's a challenge because they can now genuinely say, well, you banned primates and you therefore need to ban general ownership of this and that and so forth. The stake is in the ground and the "antis" absolutely won't miss that trick, I think they will be all over DEFRA in the next year or two coming up with lists of species that are at least as difficult as primates and I think we can pretty much be assured that birds of prey will be on that list from at least some of the "antis", so I guess it's what we need to be wary of.

JC: I asked about the Scottish Parliament's review into Positive Lists, I don't know if anyone else has heard anything, but I am really in the dark as to where it has gone.

GM: I have had no update on that other than because of the Scottish elections there was quite a long shutdown in much activity. But I can only extrapolate from the blue hare or the mountain hare issue is that you know we received information from them late and largely ended-up as a *fait accompli* really. Much promising of consultation and what have you, but actually promising consultation when decisions have already been made. I absolutely get that in Scotland's case it is largely because the SNP have to have to cow-tow to the Greens, but it is problematic, and they have taken us for a little bit of a ride over the mountain hare and there seems to be not much we can do about it. So, I have no insight into what they have planned or what is going to be discussed and proposed actually ahead of time.

JC: My fear on this is that we could literally be, as you say, set up with the *fait accompli* here because the remit was considered whether positive lists are a good idea and if so what will be on them and I just have this fear that it's going to come up with a yes this is a good idea and this is our restrictive list, then we're going to be asked well this is what we decided what do you reckon?

GM: They have certainly got a track record for that. As I said I have not received any information that gives me an indication one way or another about this. We just know that it is in their thinking and the fuss over Sturgeon and Salmond has abated the election has gone, Boris isn't going to grant an indyref 2 at the moment, therefore they do have some time to start putting their mind to other matters.

JC: A potentially good thing on the invasive species side, I've spoken to the Secretariat on the GB's Non-native Species Directorate. They are quite amenable to the suggestion of looking at some species being removed from the banned list now that we can consider the UK specific situation is not lumped into consideration of countries with widely different climate and habitats (as was the case pre-Brexit). We will continue therefore to liaise with the authorities as to pragmatic ways forward on this issue. I think the upshot for the bird of prey side of things is that it is now highly unlikely that we will see listing proposals for birds of prey from a UK perspective.

GM: That's positive at least.

JC: They have made it clear that they feel no obligation at all to follow the EU additional listings for the future which is great.

JC: CITES is halfway through on the Animals Committee, so we had some last week and we have some on the week of the 22nd/23rd June. So far, no great surprises it's a very curtailed agenda compared to normal so only doing shortened days as opposed to the extended days and a lot of it is being deferred even then, so they're kind of bringing the items for consideration, saying that they've not had enough time to deal with it because of the intersessional work compromised with the Covid19 situation and therefore we will seek a deferral for another year. So, I don't see anything negative on it so far, the biggest challenge so far has been to try to stop the "antis" putting additional species onto this approved appropriate destination for CITES 1 species which obviously could impact on things like Peregrines, (at the moment the remit to the Animals Committee only covers elephants and rhinos), but the CITES legislation technically allows for any species on CITES 1. The protectionist NGOs are obviously keen to increase the remit of that recommendation out of the Conference of the Parties to encapsulate work on all species that are on CITES I. Obviously, if successful this would mean that if you wanted to keep, say, a Peregrine then you have to prove that you were doing conservation work for example in order to have it, which is what they have for the elephants and rhinos, you cannot receive live elephant and rhinos anymore unless you can show an overriding conservation benefit. It's a good way for the NGOs to try to deter trade in those species.

GM: Is their focus on the signature species and that's why you mentioned Peregrines?

JC: Not specifically, I think peregrines really because this is an example for you guys. I don't think that Peregrines are going to be anything more likely than say some rare reptile. It's pretty clear that our opponents will come back to try to reopen the debate on these issues especially at next year's Conference of the Parties. I will see I will include a full Animals Committee write-up for the next Hawk Board meeting.

MU: I was just wondering on the peregrines CITES - there have been a few rumours within the IAF that Canada will ask for it to be moved down to CITES II as they tried previously.

JC: I've heard the same rumours.

MU: That would obviously solve the problem with the Peregrine if it was down a listing it then wouldn't come up with the rhinos and elephants.

JC: Certainly, the Canadians are reputed to be coming back for another bite of the cherry on that one, but it will very much be the EU that swings that boat one way or the other. So, they should be making their submissions by autumn through to Christmas time for the Conference of the Parties and we will get to see if Canada have pushed forward on that. My guess is that they are speaking off the record to the EU to find out what the EU stance is going to be, so last time they were equivocal and, in the end, voted against and that sunk the proposal, basically. But they kind of hinted that if Canada came back with a revised

version, they might be more amenable. And I suspect the UK might well vote in favour now we get a separate vote.

Legal/Guidelines Update:

GI: Jim and I have been on the working group looking at the CITES legislation review which has been very productive – we've talked about scraping A10's completely and utterly, we've talked about sooner rather than later A10's going for species hybrids, but obviously on the other side of the coin is going to be the anti CITES users. The sorting out of this by a statutory instrument has, I think, got to be laid by September/October, so hopefully we will get an idea shortly before that of what exactly is going to change with CITES becoming UK driven rather than EU driven.

GI: In relation to the working groups as soon as something comes into me I am getting it fired out on social media.

GM: Can I just ask the UK CITES will we still be using the template of the EU and diverging from them in detail, or are they looking at this with a completely fresh tape?

GI: So as far as I am aware, they are looking to construct their own UK CITES legislation. I can't say for definite, that some of the stuff the EU uses won't be in there, but it certainly sounds very promising that they want to make it as much UK driven as they can rather than still having influence from the EU. The same is going to happen with the wildlife legislation - Wildlife and Countryside Act, Deer Act, Badger Act and all that kind of stuff – as and when they get round to updating or combining those the plan is going to be that they may still use some of the licensing purposes - birds directive or the HABs regs – but they will definitely want to move away from being heavily steered or driven by EU legislation

GM: It just gives us some indication perhaps and I think that that's largely positive.

JC: I absolutely agree what Graham said both in his report and in his response just there. I suspect like most of these negotiations we're not going to get 100% of what we're after, because they have two completely opposing feed ins as Graham was suggesting. So, we know that the NGOs on the opposite side of the argument are asking, for example, that all CITES II species have to have possession controls as well as CITES 1, which of course is the case in a good number of European countries already and they're using the "why the UK is falling behind argument", along those lines and we are saying we want rather less legislation. So, if we win it won't be as dramatic as we might hope, because I suspect that if the DEFRA civil servants come up with too radical a support for us that they will get severely reprimanded by Zac, he's made it quite open that born free get to see him pretty much every week so we're not going to get away with too much without it coming across his view which makes life a bit difficult. So, I think our arguments will need to be really, really strong, scientifically valid and given the kind of pragmatic get out, one of the things they clearly looking for is they want to save money. That is probably one of our biggest arguments, it's not an ethical argument as such, but it is one that actually works for us - we can save you a lot of money, take off peregrines for example, and then you can get rid of three or four licencing officers – it's that that kind of argument and they've been quite honest in saying that that is part of what they're looking at is ways to consolidate and have had less people around, but otherwise absolutely agree with what Graham's just said.

NHM: I've just got a query over the pet bird scheme; I've recently been shown a letter from APHA/CITES team stating that European Falconers can bring their falcons into the UK to go hawking in the UK for 2 weeks without an import licence. All they would need is 10 days in isolation prior to leaving and an AI swab, they don't have to come through a BIP, all they have to do is on their A10 have them categorised as P for pets. As far as I can see these is no such categories as P for pets and surely if this is correct it's brilliant as it means we can go into the EU to go hawking in the same way. But I understood if you wanted to bring a CITES 1 species into the UK you had to go through a BIP, have an import licence and go

into quarantine. It appears that APHA/CITES team have completely rewritten the rules – is that correct?

GI: So first of all is that a UK falconer that has had that correspondence or a EU falconer who has had the conversation with their countries CITES team?

NHM: That is an EU falconer who has had correspondence with someone in the UK CITES office, the letter originated from the UK and is signed by someone in the UK CITES team.

GI: My first comment on that is it goes completely goes against everything they've been sending out on .gov and to the SUN group, it was the February or March meeting when they hammered home about import and export paperwork, 10-day quarantine, Avian Influenza vaccinations and I've certainly not seen or been sent anything by DEFRA anywhere near suggesting that.

NHM: No nor have I which is why when they said to me this is what we've got from DEFRA I was amazed, because if I wanted to import birds as a UK resident under the pet scheme I would have to provide details of where I was housing them and they would be put on a P for personal rather than T for trade and as I understand it I wouldn't be able to move them from the establishment where they were registered to, there were lots of restrictions on the pet bird scheme. But apparently now there are no restrictions on the pet bird scheme, you can bring it in, not through a BIP, no import licence, keep it for 2 weeks and then take it home.

GI: Is there any way you can get a copy of the letter, because I think that is something for SUN to throw straight at their contacts at the top of DEFRA, because that goes completely against everything that they have published.

NHM: Well I'm certain that it goes against everything that has been published, but I was shown the letter rather than being given the letter.

JC: It sounds to me Nick that perhaps someone at a low enough standard thought they were being helpful and haven't really read their rules. Because certainly the feedback meeting with SUN I could summarise it as saying guys forget about walking in Europe for another 18 months.

GI: We asked a question 4 or 5 months ago about what would be an acceptable premises for quarantine and they have come back to us twice already and said we don't know yet and if the people setting up the quarantine rules and guidance don't have a clue then I don't see how someone else can send a letter out saying you don't have to worry about quarantine.

NHM: The letter clearly states that there is no quarantine, all they have to have is a temporary address in the UK.

JC: If you could get a precis of the letter, we could draft something up, because if it is true or we can persuade them that it is true then all well and good.

NHM: If it works both ways that we can go hawking on the continent under the same pet bird rule then that is fine.

MU: A little bit to add to that, I'd heard rumours from European falconers trying to come in that the problem is with Europe and that our CITES people are quite happy to work on this and then yesterday there was an email from Don in Ireland as to whether the IAF could be involved, which I am sure we can organise – but is that so, do we need to lobby Europe?

GI: From what Don has been saying and what I have been seeing on social media it is predominantly Netherlands and Belgium falconers making posts who maybe don't have CITES management teams as effective as we have and are dragging their heels and ignoring things. I do think the quickest way to get this sorted out is that we get every EU falconry club to ping an email and/or letter of to their CITES management teams to say what is going on, as far as you are concerned, with us being able to move our birds of prey from home to the UK and back again, and put the onus on the relevant CITES teams at individual country level to respond and then if we do start to get conflicting advice and guidance then that is when the IAF need to get involved big time.

MU: I actually brought this up with Gary and IAF office back in early spring, they were a bit against doing anything. And I fought it because I think this is something that the IAF should really be seen to be doing for falconers. My only hesitation doing anything myself as I thought it might be counteractive to come from the UK and it would be better coming from European clubs and my idea was that the European clubs should work together.

GI: Do we have a friendly European falconer that is impacted by this that we can ask to sow the seeds?

MU: I think Don is willing to from Ireland and Ireland could get it moving and I could soon get some others on board from Germany; France; Belgium and The Netherlands.

GI: That is the way to go.

MU: The IAF doesn't ever move on anything until they have a letter of request from a member club, but Don said that he could do that for Ireland.

MU: Earlier, Graham you said they were looking at scrapping A10's, if they do what would replace them?

GI: There would be nothing to replace them, but one of the interesting comments from the NWCUC was that within the W&C Act it's a reverse burden of proof for ownership, so if you haven't got paperwork to prove that they are captive bred then it is down to the bird owner to prove the legality of it.

GM: We have always been told in the past that it is not the job of legislation to protect us. We might have to think of some other ways to actually to provide decent levels of proof.

MU: I assume the A10's will still be available for people who want to import and export.

GI: If you are a UK falconer and want export, say to Poland, then the A10 will come in at the other end.

JC: The issue here is there's two different parts of government thinking on completely opposite angles at the moment, so even though they're both within Defra. So there's one which therefore argues very much against having A10's retained and then there's the kind of more environmentalists attitude, that Zac Goldsmith himself would have, which is we need to have more legislation and those two are impossible to properly reconcile, but they are two valid strands that are going through DEFRA's thinking at the moment, and because they're looking at A10's or giving up A10's as a win message from Brexit.

MU: So it's wait and see.

GM: If A10's go what is plan B?

GI: Obviously it's not just going to be Falconers; reptile keepers, etc will also be concerned

MU: So whatever registration system instructions comes the costs will fall back on us and we would have to finance.

GM: It would have to be recognised as, if not fool proof, actually authoritative, and that is not something that would be cheap and cheerful.

MU: There is serious legal aspects to this as well – if somebody was registered and then prosecuted by government how would registration people stand in that situation? There is a lot involved.

GM: I don't think we can solve that on the hoof, but I think that is something that we are going to have to think about because I think it's almost inevitable that A10's will go, they may well be replaced by something else, or retained in a in a modified manner. Will have to think about, however, protecting our own interests going forward and this is something which is either a massive risk or a very, very big opportunity and I wouldn't care to be drawn on it at the moment.

#### Avian Influenza:

GM: DEFRA have run a number of meetings which my take on them, and I was only at the first one and I apologise for that, one is that I am grateful that they saw fit to open them up to us to actually have them, and that a good number of representatives actually attended. The second point is it's a little bit staggering how little insight into what we do, and the demands the birds of prey they actually hold but then maybe that's to be expected. Point 3 where does it leave us? I think that it has been positive I will hand over now to those of you who were at more than my meeting, my observation is that perhaps sometimes we are not our own best friends in meetings, I think it is interesting that we don't speak with one voice, but then we know that. James you represented me at last meeting. I know that Karl was there,

Nick has been there, Mark was at the second meeting as well – what do we think of these meetings and how they have gone

KJ: I kind of agree with what you just said in that I think it was useful to open the meetings up to everyone and it is also quite shocking as you said that they actually know almost nothing about what we actually do. But, also your last point as well in that when we have these meetings there isn't one clear voice when we go ahead. So, I think when we are invited to these meetings like we had the pre meeting and their discussion group there for the last one and I think it is useful to always meet beforehand so we do have one clear voice because it wasn't certainly at the first meeting, there was a couple of contradictory things said throughout the community, so I think we do need to be clear on what we're trying to stay in these sorts of meetings. But ongoing I think the whole gist of the meetings that they requested was because they've got no clue as to what's going on in our community and also they've got no idea with how to come back if we do get more outbreaks so the gist I got was they were almost putting the onus on us as a community to try and sort it out and get the message out rather than having anything forced on us?

GM: I would agree

JR: I agree with Carl, the meeting I sat in on wasn't a tricky one, but I think the representatives associated with birds of prey were acting almost like individuals not as a group. What I took to be the biggest point as far as Raptor keepers were concerned was the potential threats of feeding contaminated food to Hawks which I think echoed across most of the meetings anyway and in the way of communicating via Hawk food like a leaflet or something which could be put into distribution to send out to spread the word to basically say that if you are running your Hawks on food which is sat in your freezers, which might well be infected with avian influenza, it is not safe to feed it and that could potentially open up a can of worms as far as the spread, but the general consensus was that birds of prey are the end of the line, and so they are not travelling round and spreading the disease, especially falconry birds. That is what I took away from our meeting, but I think I sort of overlap with Martyn and I wasn't aware of the leaflet which is currently in development to be distributed and so Martyn jumped in and mentioned it.

MU: I think Karl is quite right that we should have a meeting before these meetings so we can talk with one voice, we won't be able to completely because obviously anybody can join and we can't stop the odd individual joining the meeting, but I think this is a job where Hawk Board should be the main body talking with the backing of the BFC and other clubs. It is what we were put in place for in the first place, we have to talk with one voice that is really important. The real positives, I thought, was that we were actually talking to DEFRA, which hasn't happened very much in recent years, and they were pleased to talk to us, they wanted our input. They were, in my opinion, others might disagree, impressed with our input and that we had already put stuff in place to contact falconers to let them know the dangers and the leaflet that were producing and all of this sort of thing they were really impressed with. Also, as you said they had no idea what we do really and they were quite impressed we were the end of the line and there was a danger of us getting AI from our feeding, but we could do something about that. The way we keep hawks wasn't going to transmit it on unless we had gatherings which had been put on hold anyway. We still need to get the leaflet printed, Nick you were going to send it out with Hawk food, have we got anywhere with the printing?

GM: Nick and Honeybrook were going to look into printers, but we should look into it as well, but we can do that outside this meeting will take as we have already agreed that we are going to do it.

JC: Just looking back at my notes from the meeting there was a couple of points which I wanted to pull forward, which I think I emailed through, there was a lady, I can't remember her first name, but I think it was J Comish, from APHA and was very keen to collaborate with the board and look at the various social media groups. We can't overlook the fact that the falconry hub for example, which is probably the biggest of the falconry groups, has 10s of thousands of falconers, the majority of which are from the UK and it is a very good way to communicate a message quickly and she said she struggles to find the right groups and

places to share the latest information from APHA. And my second point, which I took away was that APHA would need to be notified of potential gatherings and events because there is potential for spot checks of large groups of birds being held in the same place.

KJ: Just to add to the point in that the one thing which us falconers need to realise is it's not our individual hawks which are the problem or even what animal health are worried about it's the wider economic impact that one of our Hawks gets Avian Influenza then that's not a problem, the problem is what happens to the whole of the rest of the country on import, export and economy. So that's why I think they're interested, not the health of our Hawks, but the wider implications.

GM: Absolutely Karl and I think that was going to be my closing gambit on this topic.

NHM: I was just going to say from the positive side is that the number of outbreaks caused by Falcons and the keeping of Raptors was the third highest degree of risk and that is why we were targeted. Realistically there were 3 outbreaks in commercial poultry and 2 in domestic Raptors and every time somebody reports it and it closes the poultry industry down it absolutely crucifies them, no import and export and the culling of thousands and thousands of things that are worth thousands just because someone has been feeding a dead duck.

RU: I would like to thank A Future with Falconry and Gemma for the leaflet we are going to use and produce as it was their hard work that put it together; Karl has also done a very good document on it as well.

GM: Yes, indeed we are grateful for those. We have to be very careful; I will go back to something I said, perhaps unwisely, in the very first meeting, but I don't think we have a great deal of compliance within our fraternity. We have all discussed how one takes a risk with keeping, training and flying birds of prey, and therefore we are used to and slightly desensitised to some risks and I'm aware from those falconers that I speak to and see that actually this is really low on their on their awareness spectrum and I think that's a real problem for us because it wouldn't take very much for us to get into real trouble about it and the way back from that is very difficult. How we fix communications and compliance within the falconry community is quite a different matter. But the currently proposed publications are really important, and we need to push those so Rachelle and I will get on with making sure the Hawk Board publishes the FWF leaflet, albeit with our logo on it as well, and we will make sure that it is available.

#### Animal Welfare:

GM: We have the possibility to use a welfare guide/document that was produced by Karl and veterinary colleagues that is much needed, it is an impressive document. It moves us on from the days of saying you keep this species in an aviary that size, it is a whole different order and I think it would be really good to adopt. We have however one issue that I know of that is causing some discussion around it, but does anybody else want to talk about this in general before we address telemetry?

MU: I just wanted to congratulate Carl on the work he has put into this and the AI document and all others involved. I think this document is what we have been wanting, it's much better than the documents that went on for pages and pages listing everything you had to do and I think that the main thing that comes over this document is that if they come and inspect you and your hawks look well and a vet says they look well then your welfare standards are fine. I know it is worded a bit differently to that, but that, I think, is the way we should work welfare. It's ridiculous, say, if somebody has a pen that is a foot too small in one direction, but the Hawks are in fantastic order that they could be prosecuted because of a welfare thing that we have issued and I understand that in the past this might have happened, or could happen, so I would really like us to adopt this, but there is the one thing that we need to discuss and get cleared up, because I think that is the only part of the document which could still be used against falconry if taken the wrong way.

KJ: Thanks for the invite to talk about it as well, I will give you a bit of background as to why we produced it. The other welfare documents out there are rather outdated and certainly welfare is one of the areas which is changing all the time and I know the IAF have got a working group on welfare and they are producing something very similar to the lines that we've just produced. Basically, it came about that four years ago we heard rumours that the zoos were going to introduce a policy of completely banning tethering. Now I know they have just released their document where they haven't done that, but there are still people within their community who still want tethering banned entirely so what we thought we needed was our own document, now this document is for falconry - it's not for bird keeping or displays or zoos it is for falconry. So, we wanted a document that if ever there was a question in law or welfare came up there is something that we can revert back to rather than being forced onto someone else's documents like the zoos.

The whole idea of the document was really to be something aspirational, so it gives people something to aim for rather than having minimum requirements and really it is based on fact, so we tried to remove anything that was personal opinion. Almost all the previous guidelines that we mentioned, an aviary must be XYZ size, there is no scientific evidence for any of those recommendations anywhere, a lot of that is one- or two-people's opinions which are then written down and then taken as gospel. So, the point of welfare now is to effectively let the animals talk for themselves rather than people's opinion state what should be good welfare so what is good welfare for one animal isn't a necessarily goof for another, even though it's written down on paper. So, this document is relatively vague in the details just because we have tried to avoid opinion, the only time that specific requirements are made is when there is specific law on that. Everything else is really coaching people to look at the bird and let the bird do the talking for itself.

We had five avian vets all work on it initially and we probably spent two years on it as a working group before we sent it out to another 20 avian vets around the world and about 20-30 notable falconers and basically, it's taken another two years to collaborate all their input to come up with this one document.

GM: I know that Martyn has some thoughts about the telemetry part of it so we can go straight to him.

MS: It is a good document because it isn't restrictive, and it doesn't go into detail so there is nothing there that can be used against us. So, it is cleverly written to avoid detail but giving us information so that people know what they should be. And it is good that the Hawk Board are issuing documents like this. The only issue I've got is with a sentence or paragraph that relates to the use of telemetry with regard to the law. I know it says we consider using telemetry is mandatory, so saying consider not have too, to ensure compliance with the law.

I will go back to the Harris Hawk case, I went to court to defend a guy who had been charged with releasing a non-indigenous bird into the wild, the Welsh authorities were challenged so they employed a barrister and said they don't consider the law to be right and they were going to challenge it with a barrister. Fortunately, we won the case as they stood down, but if the barrister had turned up to court with a document produced by the Hawk Board which said that we consider telemetry to be mandatory to ensure compliance with the law it would have been a lot harder to defend. Now there is a point in that law that gives a falconry defence, it's that the hawk is considered to be trained onto a feeding post or similar. So, the fact that your hawk is trained is our defence because this law wasn't made to capture falconers who are releasing their birds, or display people, or pest control, it was for people who deliberately introducing foreign species into our countryside. So, I don't think we should be highlighting the fact it's a criminal offence to release something into the wild when there is no intent to release it and not retrieve it as the law already gives us a get out of jail in where your hawk is considered trained. I think we should take all reference to this out of the document completely and just put that we consider it good practice to use telemetry.

MU: I think this is a great document and I would like to use it, I do also have concerns about this one little bit, like Martyn. What is great about this document and why I am so impressed with it is that 99% of it doesn't give the prosecution any detail to prosecute us with, but this one line there is the possibility there and I think that we consider telemetry is something that we should always use would just take that little problem out of it and we could use the whole document. But I know Karl is against taking that out, so we are at a little bit of an impasse.

KJ: I'm not against having that take out, as I said when we first we wrote the document we didn't mention telemetry at all. The reason that was worked in was literally 100% of the people we sent the document too asked if we could put something in there saying that we all want telemetry to be compulsory and that is why we worked it in there. Like I say I am not averse to having things reworded so if it is a case of rewording, but as I said at the beginning the plan was for it to be an aspirational document and I still don't think that encouraging people to aspire to using telemetry, even if we just hanker on the aspect that it is a welfare issue trying to get the birds back. As I said I have no issue with rewording things, but I am quite keen as all the feedback was that there is some element of telemetry which is encouraged.

GM: Just to illustrate the complexities around this, I didn't read that section in quite the same way as Martin did, and once they can see it can be read in that way. Because we are not releasing with intent in the wild, I didn't see that it was quite as problematic as being articulated here. We have a very practical issue here in terms of actually perhaps undercutting the veracity of the document. It is not ours, therefore I'm happy that the Karl could say otherwise. The document has been written by him, avian vets and one or two others, I don't know how practically we turn round to them and say we like this but not that bit. So, in some ways I think that we are between the devil and the deep blue here. I think us aspiring to use this document but only aspiring to use it on our terms, and I do think that that is difficult.

KJ: The one thing I would say that is I think the document is irrelevant in useless without the backing of the whole board. So, unless everyone gets behind it, it is a waste of time effectively. If people want that section rewording, then come up with some alternative. I did write an alternative version of it, which I can't remember. Reword it to how we think would be happy with that, but like you Gordon I didn't interpret it, or any of the other people who read it, the same way as Martyn did. Especially for the legality of it was the reason that we got Professor Cooper and Margaret to look at it for Margaret's expertise on the law and they made a few changes which we incorporated, but they didn't find that an issue either. But as I say if it is an issue, we are happy to reword it as the document is worthless without the backing of the Hawk Board and the clubs.

MS: Obviously it goes without saying but I think anyone who flies without telemetry is a total idiot and yes it should be encouraged. You can't be a member of the BFC if you don't use it so yes it should say that telemetry should be used and that it helps in the recovery of your hawk.

GM: Could I ask that Martyn and Karl exchange some ideas around this tiny bit of the document that we are struggling with and propose those and then if Karl will take some feedback from his colleagues, we could adopt it and I think that might be something that is a way around this, it's not a big change I think all parties have articulated that getting the document agreed and published is the most important bit. It would be great if you two could sort this so that we can get it published in time for the Game Fair.

#### Mountain (Blue) Hare:

GM: Despite our best efforts we were unable to make any inroad in that, mainly because it was a last-minute amendment put forward by the Greens that the SNP, whilst they did not agree and we have it on very good authority that the SNP minister said, on the floor of the Scottish Assembly, that he thought it was poor legislation but ultimately the SNP supported it therefore it was carried and law before there was any consultation about it. We then asked to be consulted and to be part of the stakeholder group, the first stakeholder group went

ahead without representation from us because Government Departments left us off and then had to do some backfilling. The bottom line is that it is all well and good being consulted but it is Scottish legislation and there is very little we are likely to be able to do about it, the civil servants who have to work this are really on side. Scottish law says that the mountain hare is completely protected and where culls will be allowed for certain and very restricted purposes, we have their assurance that birds of prey can be considered as a viable method of culling, but that will only be as part of a very strict licensing regime and so I think hare hawking in Scotland has changed dramatically and there isn't very much we can do about it at the moment. One of the ways forward may well be, and I would not advise, but it may well be seeking to reopen discussions about the Wildlife and Countryside Act, but I believe that way lies dragons and in Scotland the last thing we want to do is reopen discussions around primary legislation because if we are on the wrong side of that then we are effectively banned.

AW: I appreciate that you said you think there is nothing that you can do at the minute, however there is an opportunity to speak with parliament through the response to Barry's petition. There is an opportunity to have direct contact with parliament in form of a response to their response so will the Hawk Board be taking that opportunity for that direct contact?

GM: Yes of course we will go down any route that could create a positive outcome I am just pessimistic about this because in the end and post the recent Scottish elections we are still in the same position, despite being tiny by comparison, the Green party holds the balance of power in the Scottish Assembly and whilst that's case almost every avenue is fruitless, that's not to say we won't try, but fruitless because in the end the SNP will not support any change that would offend the Greens.

AW: Yes, we certainly are in a bad position, but I think it would be important for the Hawk Board to at least put their response together so that they have their voice. I also want to raise a question around why the IAF were near impossible to react, we really had to fight and there is a huge frustration around the lack of cohesion between the BFC; The Hawk Board; A Future of Falconry and Andrews stuff with the Scottish Hawking Club and I feel like the IAF wouldn't do anything initially, I mean they obviously released a statement but I feel like they should have been the perfect people to help bring in a foreign voice on the importance of hare hawking and it was totally abandoned, well that is how it felt which seems a real shame if I am honest and I don't understand why they weren't going to leap forward and off that I would like clarity as to whether the Scottish Hawk Board is a part of the Hawk Board or separate entities, if they are part of the Hawk Board then I would like to ask on behalf of the Female Falconers Club why we don't have any representation in Scotland when we are a UK club.

GM: Well, I think you answered the very first question you raised about cohesion by outlining the issue, it is because there are half a dozen different bodies and we don't very often answer with the same voice, it is a pity but there we go. I cannot speak for the IAF and Mark maybe in a position where he wants to say something. In terms of the Scottish Hawk Board you are quite right to question quite how it functions, I do not know the history of how it was formed, it has always been a 1 or 2 man band, Emma Ford is the Chairman but is not active and AKB was the voice piece, but that has obviously changed and post AKB stepping back we have actually got someone from the BFC in Scotland to step in and be the Hawk Board Scottish Rep.

CB: Can I interject, I tried to do some research on the Scottish Hawk Board and I am equally none the wiser about where it sits in the grand scheme of things and who is on it. This is the reason that I wanted to go down the route of talking as the Hawk Board Scottish rep as opposed to the Scottish Hawk Board.

MS: The Scottish Hawk Board have a seat on the Hawk Board they are not part of the Hawk Board they are a separate entity covering North of the border.

GM: Cameron has kindly agreed to step in, largely around this mountain hare issue, but I would like to think that we might be able to keep him on board for longer, but that would be entirely his decision.

CB: Our engagement of Nature Scot wasn't totally pointless as we did get them to accept that using a trained bird of prey was an acceptable method of taking hare under licence for the purpose issued, now we can be fairly confident that because they have given us their word that is going to happen, I would be fairly confident to take their word on that. Nature Scot is the licensing body so what they have said is that an Estate has to have a license to take hare for a licensable purpose, defined under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, which predominantly will be protecting young trees or other crops and once the licence has been issued for protecting young trees then under the methods used to carry out that licence falconry would be allowed. So, falconry is not being allowed as a reason itself it is like treating it with a shot gun method, which is all they can do as a licensing body. As a way of going forward I would be happy for Amy to engage with me/Hawk Board about this issue then do I am happy to talk to anyone. As I see it the only way of making progress in the future is when we do the big estate licensing revamp, that the SNP are going to be pushing, as a vehicle to insert our amendment in to the WCA at the next review.

MU: I think that what you are saying about SHB is correct and I think it is a danger to us that we don't know how the SHB is constitutionally run, especially when we have a representative of theirs on HB. It became clear that we needed the SHB when the hare situation came up as a lot of the feedback we were getting from Scotland was that nobody from England should be involved as it would be seen in a very poor light as this is a Scottish issue, so for HB or BFC to get too involved at those early stages was looking bad and we desperately needed SHB, but we couldn't with AKB so I think it is important that Cameron gets it sorted out.

MU: Going back to the IAF Amy, I was involved with it as Gary Timbrel immediately forwarded stuff to me; any requests that have anything to do with the UK are immediately forwarded to me, as they would be in France then the French delegate would be informed. Everything in the IAF is done through delegates, club delegates have a little bit of say so, but the real power in every country for talking with the IAF office is the national delegate, who is usually the delegate from the biggest or oldest club within the country, the reason for this is that the IAF has had serious situations, not in the UK but in some smaller countries, where you get 2 or 3 clubs that don't agree and they get the IAF involved with political problems which in some cases has badly affected a second falconry club within that country even having falconry clubs banned. The IAF as the international body cannot get involved with spats within countries, so the delegate system and the main national club are the people that should be involved. As soon as Garry Timbrell had a letter or email in the office, he contacted me; the first email he received about this. I can't for the life me understand why this all happened when it did as the ban went through a good 6 months before the IAF ever received any information about this from anybody. They did know what was going on because I had informed them, but they didn't get any requests for at least 6 months and then everything went haywire in a 24-hour period where initially we got the most abusive and rude letter from Mr Barry Blyther, who I don't know at all, but it was virtually libellous and I was rather shocked that a British falconer, who actually is not a member of the IAF, could write a letter in this tone. So immediately members of the IAF office in Belgium's backs were put up.

AW: The letter was sent to Gary.

MU: It was sent to Gary directly, but I saw it as he forwarded it to me. It's not the ideal way to get any organisation on your side to send letters of that standard. Later that day I received a nice request from the FFC to write a letter on their behalf from Gemma, so we straight away moved forward on it, he did though write back saying that you should really have done this through your national delegate, which would have been me.

AW: As a club we have never had any clear guidance from the IAF as to who you contact.

MU: I completely understand that as you are very new to the IAF and I even debate whether the BFC, who were one of the founding members, would know it was supposed to be done this way and I will discuss that at the next IAF meeting. So then in my position as national delegate, and you might not agree with this, it was my duty to go back to the BFC as the main club and ask what their opinion is on this request, now the IAF don't have to stick to the

BFC's opinion but they have to take it into account, as happens in every country to stop country spats. I got in touch with Martyn that day and asked if the BFC would support which they did and then Martyn confirmed that this a good thing for the IAF to be doing, and was actually helpful as the IAF then in writing their letters could confirm that they were writing on behalf of the bigger club as well as the smaller clubs and individual subscribers that had requested the IAF to be involved and we got those letters out later that day. So, I think your comment was quite unfair, to do that within 24 hours with all this going on was quite quick movement and most things in the IAF don't work that fast.

AW: Obviously they sent the letter or statement whatever you want to call it, but I wonder why that was it. I don't know what Barry sent you, obviously you say it is a libellous, but with this petition there has been a push back against it for whatever reasons, but I would have thought if the IAF were to turn around to their international falconers and say all of you who are affected by your travels to Scotland why are you not signing it – you could reach a lot of clubs internationally in a way that we can't as a tiny club here but the IAF can turn round and talk to the whole of Europe and say we need support, signatures and emails, England can't have a lot of power but Europe and beyond could have and I just think it is sad that you have got this huge organisation with so many clubs that could have given some impacting sway saying we come from America, Germany or wherever and maybe that could have supported it and I feel it is a missed opportunity and one we can't do from England.

MU: I did speak to them about the petition, the IAF policy is not to support petitions because of the dangers involved with individuals and again that is something that if you are unhappy with the FFC could being up at an IAF meeting and say why do you not support that sort of thing. There are dangers in supporting petitions particularly after an extremely rude letter from an individual who isn't an individual subscriber or even, as far as we could work out, a member of a member club of the IAF. A petition from a non-member would not have been an unusual thing for any big organisation to support.

CB: Firstly, Gordon I am quite happy to support you in your fact-finding mission about the SHB, so if you need any help from me please ask away. Secondly, I think it is very important that the HB and member clubs should encourage all of their members and all falconers to follow the law, as what will absolutely not be helpful is people still going out hunting hare anyway as that would be bad publicity for us if we want to try and get things changed in the future.

GM: I completely agree.

RU: I have a document here regarding the SHB which states:

The Scottish Hawk Board is a formally constituted body that has been established to represent the best long-term interests of all falconers and hawk keepers resident in Scotland, it has established formal communications with the Scottish Executive and other Scottish government departments, as well as welfare and countryside NGOs.

The Scottish Hawk Board consists of elected representation and is affiliated to the Hawk Board of the UK which was established as an informal advisory body to the Department of the Environment, Transport & Regions (DETR), when the Wildlife & Countryside Act was introduced in 1981.

Our aim is to develop a close working relationship with the Scottish Executive Environment Group, MSPs, Scottish PAW and other welfare and countryside-based bodies in an effort to safeguard hawk keeping and falconry, and to promote high standards of husbandry and conservation guidelines.

The board is made up of the following:

Chairman

Vice Chair

Secretary

Scottish Hawking Club Representatives

British Falconers Club (Scottish region) Representative

Additional places for the following organisations:

Hawk Board

Campaign for Falconry

Scottish Countryside Alliance

Scottish Executive

Open invitation when required

RU: I have forwarded the entire document on to you Gordon.

GM: Thank you, that is news, and I will look at it. So, to close this issue I go back to the timeline, remember we had no advance notice of this and I think petitions, complaints and wide scale lobbying would have been great but the fact was this became law before we were really aware that this was going to happen and that is the difficulty, everything else is after the fact. We were not able, for one of the vagaries of parliamentary politics, to intervene on this before it went onto statute and that is why we are so weak on it and it no it won't be the first time I receive offensive emails and I am sure it will not be the last. We can complain all we want but we are a tiny tiny section of the community that wields very little clout.

Ferret Registration:

### **Establishment of a Great Britain register of ferrets and other captive Mustelinae**

**Dear colleague**

Thank you to those who attended the GB Ferret Register Stakeholder Consultation Meeting, on Tuesday 16th March. Apologies we were not able to accommodate all those who wished to join the discussions, as the event was oversubscribed.

To keep all informed, we will shortly be issuing the minutes of the meeting, the supporting PowerPoint presentation, and providing further information regarding the next steps in the process.

In the meantime, the following summary may prove useful to your organisation when engaging with your members and colleagues:

You may be aware the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) previously published information on. [Preventative Measures regarding SARs-CoV-2 and Ferrets in the UK](#) .

In Denmark, in Autumn 2020, following infection passing from humans to farmed mink, a new variant of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19 in humans) developed in the mink and passed back to humans. This variant was less readily killed by human SARS-CoV-2 antibodies than other variants, which raised concerns that if one of these variants spread easily amongst people, it could impact on the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions, e.g. vaccination.

It has therefore been necessary to take further measures to protect public health. Whilst mink farming is banned in the UK, other Mustelinae\*, such as ferrets, are now known to be highly susceptible to SARS-CoV-2. Research has demonstrated that new variants can arise in ferrets and they can spread infection within their own species. There is therefore concern that ferrets and other Mustelinae kept in GB could act as a reservoir of new variants with the potential to infect humans.

## **SARS-CoV-2 reporting**

Legislation has now come into force in Scotland, England and Wales to make SARS-CoV-2 reportable in all mammals (except man) and so positive test results must now be reported by your vet, or private laboratory, to APHA.

Your vet can provide advice on when testing is appropriate and further information can be found here: [SARS-CoV-2 in Animals – Case Definition, Testing and International Reporting Obligations \(defra.gov.uk\)](#)

## **Register of ferrets and other captive *Mustelinae***

In order to ensure that ferret and other captive *Mustelinae* keepers are provided with up to date disease information, and to facilitate statutory testing if required, we are looking to create a **register of ferrets and other captive *Mustelinae***. You may already be familiar with the GB Poultry Register and it is proposed the ferret register will operate in a similar way. The register will cover all kept animals classed as *Mustelinae*\* including ferrets, polecats and their hybrids, and wild *Mustelinae* kept in captivity. Further references in this letter to ferrets include all captive *Mustelinae*.

**We would like to stress that whilst mink in Denmark were subject to culling, this is not the intended purpose of the GB ferret register.**

As this is a public and animal health measure, it is important to be able to implement the register as quickly as possible. The register will therefore be implemented initially on a voluntary basis in GB, likely around 1<sup>st</sup> May, before legislation is introduced by Scottish Government, Defra and Welsh Government, making registration compulsory.

The information that may be requested in the voluntary register would be minimal and is likely to include: name and address of ferret owner; the species kept; and the purpose for which the animals are kept (e.g. as pets, for commercial breeding activities, or as working animals, etc.) The register will not be publically accessible.

Following feedback from the stakeholder meeting, the minimum number of ferrets which would trigger compulsory registration, and categories of purpose, are under consideration.

We will publish further information to advise when the register opens and what ferret keepers must do to register.

## **Advice for Ferret Keepers**

COVID-19 is driven by human to human transmission, and it is rare for an animal to contract coronavirus. Despite this, taking preventive measures to address the potential for transmission from ferrets to humans is important. Should you have any concerns regarding the health of your animals, **whether you keep them commercially or as pets**, you should contact your vet.

Current information for animal owners:

Scotland: Coronavirus (COVID-19): advice for animal owners - gov.scot ([www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)).

England: Coronavirus (COVID-19): advice for people in England with animals - [GOV.UK](http://GOV.UK) ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

Wales: [Advice for pet owners: coronavirus \(COVID-19\) | GOV.WALES](#)

\*Mustelinae includes animals such as ferrets, polecats, mink, weasels, stoats, ermine, martens and wolverines.

IAF Update:

See Appendix 2

Countryside Alliance Update:

JL: The situation in Scotland very much reflected in what may be coming down the line in England we have had the action plan for animal welfare from the government, which does include hares - a possible statutory close season and a complete ban on the taking or killing of mountain hares. There's the whole issue about cages and animals coming down the line, from my point of view that's more about game birds, but it could certainly come in with regard to the way in which animals are transported and therefore with your interest to. We've got the animal welfare sentience bill, the animal welfare kept animals bill and the animal welfare animals abroad bill, we've seen the first 2, the sentience bill has its debate in the Lords on the 16th of June. The issues we need to be thinking about for the Hawk Board is probably the issue of sentience and killing, for example falconry is a recognised method under the General Licences, but in future policy on licences it would be an obligation on ministers to consider welfare because animals are sentient, or at least at the moment vertebrate animals as sentient, QED do we think that falconry is the quickest, best way, etc., you can imagine where we are with the hunting and shooting world. There are hares; there is the whole issue about the trade, keeping and movement of animals which you will need to keep an eye on. They are also looking at zoos and increasing their conservation role and requirements, so they are amending the zoos act. I would have thought that that needs close looking at as to whether or not there is any change to the definition of Zoo and how far it might go, what precedent it might set, particularly with things like display etc. I would also note the green paper which was presented by the RSPCA to government which they claim is 50 organisations all of whom wants to see restrictions are angling, on the activities of hunts under the hunting legislation and I can see it moving into falconry if it's going to touch angling. As it turns out those 50 organisations do not support all those asks. So, from my point of view, and I think you will need to be aware we are facing a deluge and I've heard all that's been said about Zac Goldsmith, his views and buying and selling of non-domestic species, you are absolutely on the mark we face a deluge of issues that could affect all our interests.

GM: Thank you, we need to be aware of these things and we will step up wherever we are needed. The HB can be contacted if we can be of any use to the CA.

JL: But also, please let me know if the CA can be of use and if there are issues you are tackling, problems you might be having with DEFRA let me know, I talk to George as do you and other people, but the point is if he's getting the message from all side it will help and I can put stuff into briefing on the impacts on falconry and we do have the advantage of the UNESCO heritage, etc. it all helps the general picture. We had Martin Salter who was one of the leading lights of the anti-hunting campaign talking about our desperate need under the sentience bill to protect field sports and country sports, but the point is that there are lots of MPs and peers who appreciate that what the Government is proposing is potentially an enormous opportunity for the animal rights extremists to go after all our issues. So please come to us if you need to and we will come to you if we need more detail.

AOB:

GI: Am I correct in thinking that next year is the next round of elections for the HB

RU: Yes, as the last election was in 2018 and they run every 4 years.

GI: Have we heard anything from Derek Stotton

RU: No nothing, no replies to emails or anything.

GM: We have both of our Vice Chairs out of action, we need to formally contact them both as to whether they are planning to stand down. In the meantime, we did vote MU in as temporary Vice-Chair.

JR: Very briefly with the change in circumstances and move for me I'm very willing and I think fairly able to help with the Scottish Hawk Board thing, whether that's as a representative or to help in anyway shape or form.

GM: That is great thank you and sorry we haven't followed up on the shadowing of meetings and following Graham's question we do have to think about expertise going forward and we have to think about succession management, which is something we've never been very good at. But I take your point, and I actually will take that offer, Jimmy. I think there may well be very, very useful for us, obviously I will have to discuss it with Cameron, but I think as you're up there, you should be up to your neck in it and you will be joined by Amy soon.

NH: We are still having lots and lots of problems with the EU, importing and exporting food, so if anybody works out how to deal with the EU as the Commission really hates us. The regulations change daily putting lots of different impositions on us it's not really helped by our own people in import licencing in very, very, very, very slow – it has taken us 5 months to get a licence to import fish.

GM: James can you shed any light on how may well engage with our department in terms of import and export.

JL: We've got huge numbers of problems regarding meat products, various other things and before we get into Northern Ireland and the whole issue of pack movements and dogs and everything else. I would suggest that you probably just have to write directly to the minister and see if you can get the relevant civil servant and, if you want, I can try and forward it into the SPAD level which might get it picked up a bit quicker.

GM: I'll work with Nick and we'll see what we can do.

JL: Our chairman now sits in the House of Lords and has quite good relations with the current SoS, so maybe it is something I could ask him to forward just to make sure it doesn't get lost in all the other stuff going on at the moment.

GM: Nick if we need to liaise on that, you can either you can do it independently and contact James or you can work with me and we will do that.

The meeting closed at 15:15.

**Next Meeting: 12.30pm TBC October 2021**

**Location: TBC**

Rachelle Upton, Co-coordinator – 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021

## SUN Report from Jim Collins

Across the world the many opponents of animal-keeping and animal trade have been exceedingly busy with lobbying of governments, the European Commission, the World Health Organisation and CITES seeking to ban or seriously restrict the trading and keeping of non-domesticated species. Foremost in their tactics is the use of the scaremonger tactics of associating the Covid19 pandemic with responsible wildlife trade (notwithstanding that the pandemic is just as likely to have been initiated from release of material from the Wuhan Research Laboratories than from contamination at a so-called wet food market). The Sustainable Users Network (SUN) together with associate organisations have been active - and largely successful - in blunting these attacks and persuading institutions and governments to take a more balanced response. Nevertheless, the protectionist and animal rights NGO's have vast resources (both people and in finances) and are recording some successes in some individual countries. We face major problems in countries such as Spain with the proposed imposition of highly restricted Positive Lists, continued pressing ahead with more Positive Lists in Belgium and the Dutch Government again preparing (having lost several court cases) to have another attempt at introducing Positive Lists in the Netherlands. The Sustainable Users Network will stay committed and involved in each of these challenges since the real danger is that if several EU countries introduce Positive Lists the European Commission (and, indeed our own government here in the UK) might become persuaded that the time is right for one to be introduced across all EU countries. We of course also await the outcome of the review into the possibility of introducing a Positive List in Scotland under the Scots' devolved powers.

SUN is participating in several working groups - recently initiated - set-up by DEFRA/APHA regarding ways our legislation might be rationalised, improved, or deleted and this is especially important now with the complications that Brexit has brought about in terms of CITES Import/Export, transportation to and from EU Member States, etc. It does seem likely that any movements to and from the EU are going to remain highly problematic for at least another 18-24 months after which - hopefully - the UK and EU will have negotiated and signed agreements that recognise parity between each other's animal health regimes which, in turn, would facilitate easier movement of livestock.

The Queen's Speech included a number of nods to the animal welfare/animal rights agenda including on animal sentience. In the section dealing with the intent of this government to only allow the private keeping of primates by those holding a 'new' Specialist Keeper's Licence a sentence was included that referenced the possibility of adding other taxa that might be added to this Specialist Keeper's Provision. This inclusion is extremely dangerous to all those keeping non-domesticated species. The "anti" NGO's have already been busy seeking to exploit this possibility - suggesting everything from all non-domesticated species to selected taxa - and questions have already been raised in Parliament as to when species might be added. We can be 100% assured that a number of submissions will call for only Specialist Keepers licensed through the local authority (the government has confirmed that this will be administered by the local authority together with a veterinary officer and so is going to cost a minimum of several hundreds of pounds per annum) in regard to birds of prey. It is difficult to overstate the challenges we will face in countering this legislative nightmare in years to come.

The process of continually seeking to add more species to the banned list under the EU's Invasive Alien Species (IAS) Directive continues with no sign of abating. In the years leading up to the Invasive Alien Species Directive becoming law (when SUN was involved throughout in the EU's working groups) we were assured by the European Commission that they were seeking to only have a very limited list of species (no more than fifty in their statements) and that the legislation would not be like CITES where species are continuously

added. Unfortunately, the European Commission has proven singularly unable or unwilling to keep to these pledges with a banned list that easily exceeds fifty species in number and is continuously added to in number. Fortunately, the UK has indicated that it will no longer feel bound to follow the EU in future species listings and SUN is active in seeking the UK's Non-native Species Secretariat to adopt a more pragmatic and workable approach to the issue of potentially invasive species.

The 31st Meeting of the CITES Animals Committee takes place on various days through June (concluding 22nd June) and will inform the 19th Conference of the Parties to CITES that will take place in Geneva during 2022. SUN will be present throughout the CITES Animals Committee deliberations and remain involved in all the working groups critical to the interests of those involved in animal trade and animal keeping. In an important move it is already decided that no further species will be added to the CITES Significant Trade Review process in 2021 in order to not overload the system during the continued restrictions resulting from the pandemic situation - restrictions in trade and often the forced setting of zero quotas is frequently the result of species going through a Significant Trade Review.

The CITES Animals Committee will consider a review undertaken by UNEP-WCMC under instruction from the Conference of the Parties into Appendix I species that might be given increased focus, further action or prohibitions using a suite of criteria including risk of extinction, perceived threats from trade, biological vulnerability (size of range and generation length) and amount of current management effort (levels of legal compliance, what measures currently in place, etc.). The CITES Animals Committee will also consider progress and developments of species already placed into the Significant Trade process, species/country combinations of interest to hobbyists.

Another agenda item for the CITES Animals Committee meeting will be discussions on what constitutes 'Appropriate and Acceptable' destinations for CITES I species. Although focused at the present time on elephants and rhinos it is important that pressure from the protectionist NGO's does not result in this being broadened to other CITES I species including those that are often traded - birds of prey could easily be proposed for attention in this regard.

The CITES Animals Committee reviews into species captive-bred and/or ranched remains a serious challenge to animal keepers with the danger of restrictions coming from these reviews and as a result we must stay actively involved in order to counter the arguments of the protectionists. SUN will provide a full summation of conclusions from the CITES Animals Committee meeting in its next report to the Hawk Board.

## IAF Report from Mark Upton

As in my last report IAF work continues to be hampered by the pandemic. The usual IAF attendance at international meetings has been impossible due to travel restrictions and many meetings have been postponed or held online. When online IAF representatives have been able to attend.

The IAF "Sharing the Knowledge" zoom lectures by prominent international falconers on various subjects, including history, archives, hood making, collections and the present state of falconry in their countries have been well attended and a great success. A nice respite in difficult times.

We have been using this quieter time to re-organise admin of the association and catch up on work that has been side-lined in busier times. I have been having monthly meetings with the admin team and representatives of the different regions of the IAF. We have been updating our knowledge of clubs and how falconry is progressing in these regions and any problems that they might be having.

At the request of the British Falconers' Club and the Female Falconers Club the IAF wrote to the Scottish Government and NatureScot to voice their concern that the ban on hunting mountain hares in Scotland would badly effect falconry. They had a couple of non-descript replies. They are in support of our work to get falconry accepted as a form of hare control where licences are issued for culling and happy to help in anyway felt appropriate.

This year's annual Council of Delegates Meeting, which was to be held in the Czech Republic was moved to Abu Dhabi some time ago. It was to coincide with their ADIHEX sporting exhibition at the end of September. Because of the ongoing pandemic this is looking unlikely to happen now but there might be a smaller physical meeting of the executive combined with an online meeting of the board and delegates. This will be re-examined nearer to the time.

The positions of President, Vice-president for Europe and Vice-president for Asia are up for election. HE Majed al Mansouri has agreed to stand again, have done three years, and at this stage there are no other candidates. The two Vice-president positions will have new candidates, as the present incumbents have both done the full six years allowed by the constitution. At the time of writing no one has put their name forward.

The monthly IAF eBulletin which appears on the HB and BFC Facebook pages records most of the news in international falconry and can be subscribed to by individual falconers. Below are a couple of the more important developments.

### Significant Improvement in legislative framework for falconry in Ontario, Canada

I am extremely pleased to forward news of a significant step forward in Ontario falconry. Today the Honourable John Yakabuski, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry for the Province of Ontario approved new regulations that:

1. Eliminates the quota and special permit requirement, and allows all licensed falconers to take 1 bird per year from 4 common species, and
2. Adds a limited take of Northern Goshawk for the first time.

These developments are very significant for several reasons, including:

- This makes Ontario only the second province in Canada (behind Saskatchewan) to allow the capture of birds of prey by licensed falconers without a permit.

- It enshrines the practise of wild take in regulation, rather than policy, which is a much more secure and stable legal framework.
- It substantially enhances the actual practice of falconry in Ontario by making passage red-tailed hawks universally available to falconers.
- It stands by science and the conviction that falconry, and the regulated use of wildlife enhance conservation.

Wild take was first authorized in Ontario in 2012 under special permits which allowed up to 25 birds to be taken from 4 common species. This changed falconry in the province but only about half of the people who applied were able to get a permit in any year. This was particularly difficult for apprentices looking to get their first bird. Today's decision removes those restrictions and by adding and entrenching the use of wild raptors in regulation really secures the future of falconry traditions in Canada's most populous province.

This is a great day for all of us, and I want to recognize the important support of the IAF, as well as the great number of comments submitted by NAFA members from across the USA and Canada. The international support did not go unnoticed by the Ministry....and is humbly appreciated by Ontario falconers!

Thank you all,

Martin Geleynse  
IAF Delegate, Canada. Past President, Ontario Hawking Club



To read and download this excellent production of the IAF Womens' Working Group and other members of the IAF huge volunteer force, with sponsorship from the Falconry Heritage Trust, please click on the image or the link below:

[https://www.falconryheritage.org/viewItem.php?id=6322&fbclid=IwAR2JW4qxAwf2II17UFh0BONKENnRNfgDEJvAFYfWgnaOASrDHXzJ\\_G3v6Bc](https://www.falconryheritage.org/viewItem.php?id=6322&fbclid=IwAR2JW4qxAwf2II17UFh0BONKENnRNfgDEJvAFYfWgnaOASrDHXzJ_G3v6Bc)

There are proposals for a print-run for a falconry fair in England and to translate and print in the following languages: Russian, Portuguese, and Croatian. If you would like to translate into another language, please contact [alessandra@iaf.org](mailto:alessandra@iaf.org)

Enjoy and distribute as widely as you can!