



Falconry – Inscribed by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Hawk Board held on 17 October 2019**

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

The Chairman opened the meeting at 12:30

Present:

Jim Collins (JC); Graham Irving; Gordon Mellor; Mike Nicholls (MN); Martyn Standley (MS); Derek Stotton (DS); Mark Upton (MU); Rachele Upton (RU); Amy Wallace (AW);

Apologies:

Graham Bennett; Gary Biddiss; Nick Havermann-Mart; Andrew Knowles-Brown; Terry Large; Jimmy Robinson; Don Ryan; Dean White

Minutes of last meeting / Matters arising:

Approved

Chairman's Report:

It is to my great personal regret that I have been compelled to concentrate on my University work at the expense of both the Hawk Board and indeed my own falconry. This situation will last a minimum of six months and I am grateful to colleagues for stepping in and stepping up to the challenges that we face.

Things are very busy at present: Brexit; the situation in Wales; the variation in the operation of the Animal Activities License; the hacking of large falcons; and indeed activities anti's who are targeting field sports more generally and falconry in particular.

I feel that we need to look again for good legal advice. Last year we paid a deposit to secure the services of a Barrister with suitable experience. We had intended to have the scope of the Animal Activities License reviewed. Unfortunately despite two positive meetings and some good advice, no further commitment was received - certainly no examination of the Act nor insight about how we could challenge it. The Law firm has now offered us our money back.

During the summer we made overtures to the organisers of CountryFile Live. Currently they are easily the largest of the 'country' oriented shows or festivals in the UK and we felt that we ought to have a platform there. It is prohibitively expensive to have our own 'pitch', but we might be able to join with similar interests. Indeed we were offered the chance to attend their second show this year but gave us so little notice that it was impossible to coordinate attendance. They wanted us to attend with some trained British raptors to exhibit. We will attempt to organise something for next year.

I will circulate the revised Code of Conduct at our meeting and we will decide if we are to publish it. I have included a section on Pest Control that I would like us to give special attention to.

I am pleased to have the Female Falconers' Club on board. Their approach and energy is impressive

and they confirm just how important women are to British Falconry. The Bedfordshire Club has also recently rejoined. Another welcome addition is Project Luggar who have raised the plight of this often overlooked Asian falcon. Falconry is informed by, and informs conservation in ways that few other activities can rival. We have much to do but with our increasing reach and greater involvement, we are punching above our weight - long may it continue.

#### Treasurers Report:

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

I would like to formally welcome the Bedfordshire Hawking Club and the Female Falconers Club onto The Hawk Board.

The BFC Midland region have very kindly donated £100 to the Hawk Board.

Knights Solicitors have offered to pay back the £1,000 retainer we gave them last year for legal advice, which unfortunately was not very forthcoming. This is going through their accounts department at the moment and should be received shortly.

At the Game Fair The Yorkshire Hawking Club apologised for not sorting out their subs last year and have said they still want to be members of the hawk Board, but as yet no further contact has been received from them.

MU: At a recent YHC meeting they said they had paid.

RU: I will try and contact them again.

The Cheshire Hawking Club have not paid their subs and I have emailed Richard Newton lots of times, but have had no response. They have until the end of October to pay or they will need to be removed from all contact lists

DS: I will speak to the Cheshire Club. I am worried that clubs will start to drop out.

GM: If Richard Newton would like I am happy to go and do a talk for the club

MU: My feedback from the Falconry world 6 months ago was that lots were against the HB, but recently the feedback has been good and is getting better.

DS: Personally I feel the general population don't know about the HB.

GM: Wherever we are received we are received well; people are beginning to appreciate what we do. We do however have something of a legacy. We are what we are, you could do away with the HB, but it wouldn't be long before something similar would have to be reinvented. Amy is doing a good job via social media (FB 'a future with falconry'). Internet and social media are the main ways of communicating in the modern world. We need to use social media more.

DS: Damned if you do and damned if you don't.

AW: Have you thought about an individual/supporter membership?

MS: A few years ago we changed the constitution so that groups could join, eg. pest controllers; display givers; but there was no take-up.

AW: Display falconers can quickly become falconers if they get the chance.

RU: I would like a supporter membership, but what can we offer in return, as they wouldn't get a vote.

GM: We don't have the time or people to do newsletters and Game Fairs.

MU: I find it extraordinary that falconry businesses don't want to be part of the HB. Unlike individual falconers their business will be gone if falconry was banned; and HB are the only body who might help prevent that.

GM: We are stuck with a label.

MS: Basically if no one in this room (HB) can do it no one can, but we are all very busy.

#### Game Fair/Countryfile Live

RU: I have received an email from Charlotte Hill regarding next year's Game Fair:

*We are fortunate to be organising next years Falconry Village at the Game Fair which is being held at Ragley Hall and we are hoping the Hawk Board will be able to accept our offer of a free stand during the three days?*

*I am wondering if you could take this to your board and members for considering and perhaps*

*you would kindly let me know their thoughts as soon as possible.*

*Next year, due to the enormous popularity of the Falconry Village the Game Fair organisers are taking positive steps to position the Falconry Village more into the Main Show ground, we have already provided a new Falconry Village layout for their consideration.*

RU: It is on 24-26 July 2020

GM: We should commit to be there; I will attend.

DS: I will also be there and am willing to do my food prep demo if required.

NHM Email: CountryFile Live

After many years avowing never to attend this show this year I decided that I needed to know what this show offered. In particular after the tethering report I wanted to see if there was any negative response to falconry.

The show was attended by around 250k people, gate revenue £5 million

It was twice the size of CLA and packed with exactly the people we, as falconers, need to appeal too.

I found nothing adverse about falconry, the show was well laid out with many varied groups and display areas There was a falconry display in the main arena, crowds 6deep all round, I spoke to the display team they had no negative comments from members of the public I spoke to the NGA on a Gamekeeping and conservation stand explaining who the HB were and was immediately offered stand space for next year

I feel if falconry wants to survive the next few years we need to be proactive, to be out there promoting our sport to the public.

This show gives much better opportunities to reach new people than the Game Fair. It is much better arranged and promoted I would like the HB to attend along with some club reps

RU: It is on:

Castle Howard 6-9 August 2020

Windsor Great Park 20-23 August 2020

GM: We would need to attend both; people are not interested in talking they want to see hawks.

MS: We need to focus on this and get clubs involved.

AW: HB & clubs together on a stand.

**RU to ask NHM what space and tickets we would get.**

MS: We should be at the gates to get a petition filled in for UNESCO.

GM: We will need BoP we can exhibit, bird on the fist.

MU: We need someone who does displays as we don't have the insurance, etc. needed.

GM: Lets establish what is on offer.

**Working group: NHM; AW; MS**

Wild Take - IHC

DR (IHC) Email:

What is the current HB policy on Wild Take? Do they support it? Will they defend it?

I note from the recent autumn BFC newsletter, that the BFC intend to apply for Wild Take in spring 2020.

The IHC also applied for Wild Take in Northern Ireland in 2018 but the application was refused earlier this year by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). In reaching their decision, they consulted with their counterparts in the South of Ireland; National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) and also the Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group (NIRSG)

We will be appealing their decision and one of the points we will be challenging them on is why they didn't consult with any falconry organisation despite the fact that there was a letter of support from the IAF.

As the representative body for all falconers and bird of prey keepers in the UK, the Hawk Board would be the obvious choice as a consultative body, but as you will understand, there is no point in us asking why they didn't consult with the HB, if the HB doesn't have a policy on it or they are opposed to it.

Clarification on the current HB's policy on the legal and sustainable practice of Wild Take will be much appreciated.

GM: We don't have a policy, the old Hawk Board were against wild take, the new board have a neutral stand on it, but if asked as experts we would support it.

GI: If you want to talk to another statutory body then Natural England are looking into Wild Take.

MS: The BFC would also support this.

GM: So whilst as an organisation we can't take a stand any of the elected specialists will support the IHC as expert witnesses.

### Hacking

MS: Harris Hawk case: Chap was going to be prosecuted for releasing a non-native bird into the wild. NRW got involved and got a barrister to take the case and argue to ban hacking – which would then have become case law.

GI: Wild Hacking is being undertaken in Scotland adjacent to SPA. A person in the Midlands posted maps of his hawks hacking all over the country.

GM: As for the loss rate, it has been said that they all wore tracking tags so they were not lost – we are waiting to hear how that meeting goes.

MU: If there is a good outcome for this and they licence it; it could be an advantage for traditional falconers as hacking would then be legal under licence.

### Code Of Conduct Review

NHM Email:

Many thanks to all who contributed to this excellent work

My only comment is regarding keeping raptors in boxes overnight, is this really illegal? Is this based on case law involving conditions inside the boxes rather than being based solely on being in boxes overnight? I would like confirmation that it is illegal to keep raptors overnight in a clean ventilated box.

GI: It is illegal under the Wildlife & Countryside act – they have to be able to spread their wings and not touch the sides.

JC: You could change the wording from:

*"...it is illegal to keep birds in small boxes over-night..."*

to

*"...Legislation in the Wildlife & Countryside Act stipulates minimal size accommodation to be used in housing birds. These should be taken into account when using temporary housing such as overnight boxes..."*

GM: The CofC contains specific guidelines for Display Givers and Pest Controllers, but not for falconers who only get an outline of guidance

MS: You could refer falconers to their clubs code of conduct.

MS: Also could remove Code of so it becomes "Welfare and Husbandry for Birds of Prey and Owls".

GM: I will circulate further with minor tweaks and then go forward.

**Feedback in 7 days**

### NRW – Quarry Licences

NHM Email:

Further to the announcement of a consultation into Animal Activities Licenses the Welsh Hawk Board held a meeting of interested parties at the Welsh Hawking Centre. Following an afternoon's meeting it was agreed to contact as many commercial users of raptors to invite them to a second meeting to formulate a combined response.

At Honeybrook we have contacted all customers possibly impacted by this legislation and now have a list of potential attendees, I am now waiting for input from the other parties from the original meeting and then will arrange a suitable date

The WHC do not have any members who now require quarry licenses however we do have members who are willing to apply.

GI: Rooks are now not on any Welsh General Licence, only on the quarry licence.

MS: Reason behind this is that a falconer in Wales was told that quarry licences will no longer be issued for falconry and that there will be no general licence provision permitting the use of birds of prey, in Wales.

GM: Went to the CA and spoke to James Legge and Rachel Evans – they were both desperate for us to do this low key and for them to deal with. They then went entirely silent.

MN: What is the HB view on quarry licences?

GM: Personally I feel everyone should apply for one.

MU: What about pest controllers?

GI: General licence will cover them under health and safety.

GI: Depending on who looks at the licence, if the species applied for is not caught after a few years that species will be removed from the list. NE quarry licence list is twice as long as SNH.

#### SUN Update:

See Appendix 1

JC: Animal keepers are in the most dangerous situation we have been in for years.

I have been asked to be on the Companion Animal Sector Council, Civil servants will use CASC as primary source on consultations.

MU: If out of EU what happens to the Alien Invasive Species list?

JC: For at least 2 years we have to comply with the agreed IAS list.

#### Legal/Guidelines:

GI: At a meeting last week it was Border force staff have agreed that you will be able to use the Eurotunnel for CITES species but NOT the Eurostar.

GI: It has been confirmed that if you bring a bird in from Europe (after BREXIT) then there will be no quarantine – we don't know if this will be the case going back into Europe.

JC: Dover and Folkestone agreement was a great bit of lobbying.

GI Passports for CITES species is on the radar but not classed as urgent.

#### IAF Update:

See Appendix 2

MU: It is important for the IAF to remember its reason for being, i.e to protect falconry – as well as continue its conservation; education and heritage work.

#### CA Update:

See Appendix 3

JL email:

I should have noted the Welsh consultation on mobile animal exhibits was launched on 29 August and closes on 21 November. I assume the Hawk Board will discuss and will be responding. Note the children's version of the consultation leads with a falconry picture.

<https://gov.wales/animal-exhibits>

MS: Difference between England and Wales AAL, Wales used a report by Professor Harris.

GM: We will do a response; it will be largely the same as the England response.

MS: Are the applications for a license complicated?

AW: The enrichment reports are extra on top of what I was already doing. Also there is more paperwork. You need to be prepared for an inspection at any time.

MS: So what are we fighting for?

GM: Consistency and to stop people being told they are a zoo.

AW: Took me months to persuade them that I am not a zoo.

GM: Open to the subjective view of the inspector; it's costly and takes up time.

#### A.O.B:

JR Email:

Could we include a quick jot down of the various things the HB are working on as part of the agenda please. That should make it fairly straightforward for me to pull it all together and produce the report I was asked to do. I'll then ping it back to the board for edits etc.

**MU and RU to put a list together for JR**

MU: I have received an email from Martin Jones asking if we were aware of the CITES notification 2019/048 regarding IPBES sustainable use assessment.

GI: Can you forward me a copy of Martin's email?

**RU to forward the email to Graham**

**GI asked MU to see if the IAF are aware. They are and have been lobbying on behalf of falconry.**

RU: Dates for next years meetings are:

13 February 2020

18 June 2020

15 October 2020

The meeting closed at 16:30

**Next Meeting: 12.30pm Thursday, 13 February 2020**

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

Rachelle Upton, Co-coordinator – 20 October 2019

### Sun Report from Jim Collins

Although the report covers the 'quiet' summer period, obviously a great deal of effort has been expended on the implications of Brexit upon animal transportation and the movement of frozen food products. Members will recall that DEFRA were adamant in their public pronouncements that both Dover Ferry Port and the Channel Tunnel would be prohibited from the movement of CITES specimens for a period of 12-24 months in the event of a no-deal Brexit (supposedly to safeguard the prioritisation of pharmaceutical drugs, medical equipment and food for human consumption). We lobbied like mad to have this decision reversed and in September it was publicly confirmed that we had lobbied successfully and both the Channel Tunnel and Dover Ferry Port would be added immediately to the list of ports/terminals permitted for CITES movements. Equally, DEFRA have confirmed that - irrespective of a no-deal Brexit or a Brexit involving a transitional period - non-CITES animal movements with EU Member States can proceed without any additional measures such as further health certification, quarantine, etc. and that this applies to both live animals/plants and too by-products such as frozen rodents, day-old chicks, etc. This reversal of fortunes demonstrates the benefit of consistent but forceful lobbying over an extended period of time.

A no-deal Brexit does, however, still throw-up the challenge of actual CITES certification for imports, exports and movements (a Brexit involving a deal will have a transition period - likely lasting until 31st December 2020 - when nothing will change from present arrangements whilst negotiations take place to determine the CITES relationship between the UK and EU). In the event of a no-deal Brexit, the UK immediately becomes a Third Country in respect of the 27 remaining EU Member States and accordingly CITES Import and Export Permits will be by definition be obligatory. Apart from the timing and costs applicable to licensing applications this should not prove unduly onerous if the movement/import/export is known in advance (for example, selling a Gyr Falcon to Germany will become equivalent to nowadays selling one to the UAE and importing a Saker from Austria would be the equivalent to importing today from Canada; or indeed, a known hunting trip to the Continent) but will seriously impact on keepers and horticulturists either taking specimens for sale at exhibitions and wanting to bring back unsold items or people hoping to buy and bring back specimens on the day of a show,

The CITES Conference of the Parties held in Geneva witnessed the near complete ascendancy of an animal rights/animal protectionist agenda much to the annoyance of countries like South Africa and Botswana which have made an excellent job of conservation of species through sustainable utilisation. Throughout the proceedings countries such as these with solid animal populations lost vote after vote to opposition headed by countries whose 'conservation policies' have been an unmitigated disaster for the wildlife in their countries - the likes of Burkina Faso, Benin and Senegal which, incidentally spent an inordinate amount of time 'liaising' with the plethora of animal rights/protectionist NGO's present. Several countries have now publicly stated their intention to review their membership of CITES. Perhaps the dominancy of the lunatic brigade was/is most exemplified by the choice of country to next host the Conference of the Parties (Costa Rica) which rejoiced in informing delegates that they were the first country in the world (2019 legislation) to formally prohibit the private ownership of any species not considered fully domesticated!

The most dangerous development over the past couple of years has been the push by NGO's - supported by a number of European parliaments - for the implementation of Positive Lists i.e. a very limited list of species that are permitted to be kept with all other species prohibited. Belgium and Luxembourg have had such lists for mammals for several years and a couple of months ago Belgium extended this to having a Positive List for reptiles and amphibians and with a stated aim to then extend to birds and fish. Meanwhile, several countries are well underway in looking at the possibility of Positive Lists - Finland, Austria, Malta, Cyprus, Spain and Portugal have all indicated a willingness to look at such possibilities. If sufficient number of countries adopt such lists then an EU Directive on the matter would be the next step and clearly where are opponents are wanting to head. The better news on this subject is that the Dutch Government have attempted on several occasions to introduce Positive Lists and have been roundly hammered in legal cases each time, forcing them to withdraw the legislation again and again.

We should, in the next month or two, ascertain what species are being proposed for inclusion in 2020 on the list of species banned from keeping and sale under the EU's Invasive Alien Species Directive -

if we Brexit with a deal the UK Government has pledged to adopt any new banned species during the duration of the transitional period although a no-deal Brexit would mean we had no obligation to do so.

## Appendix 2

### IAF Report from Mark Upton

A new board and advisory counsel has been put together by the new President, Majed al Mansouri, with input from the out going President Adrian Lombard and Gary Timbrell. This is standard procedure in the IAF. There are a few of the old faces and some new younger ones. It has been slightly streamlined at present but I am sure will be added to as the presidency carries on.

The operation of the IAF has also changed with Group Leaders running different aspects of the organisation. This is intended to spread the workload, which is important with the increased size of the organisation, as it was becoming too much for the President on their own, as it has been in the past.

A meeting was held at the new IAF offices in Brussels at the end of July to discuss the future strategy of the IAF, attended by most of the group leaders and some of the board and AC. The group leaders had been asked beforehand to work on strategies for the groups, which had then been handed over to a consultancy company to evaluate and come up with plans for the future direction and running of the IAF. The strategies in themselves were quite interesting but I felt the consultancy company of limited value, as they have no idea about falconry. I pushed that we should be concentrating on the core values of the IAF and the reasons it was established. I.e the protection of falconry.

This years IAF Council of Delegates Meeting is on 1st-6th December in Carmona, Spain. Individual subscribers are welcome to attend the meeting and more information can be found on the IAF website [www.iaf.org](http://www.iaf.org).

IAF representatives have been working hard attending various meetings relating to falconry and conservation around the world. Attending a conference on "The World of Birds of Prey" held at Warsaw University of Life Sciences; RGI Renewable Grid initiative "Nature and the High Voltage" Workshop hosted by ELIAS and University of Košice's Falconry Club Conference. In July the Second International Falconry Meet in Paraguay was held. The IAF was involved in New Slovak Legislation where falconers exempted from the draft implementing decree on the breeding of dangerous animals. In September they attended Adihex in Abu Dhabi where a Joint Workshop Against Illegal Trade in Birds of Prey was held and the Launch of Sakernet 2 [www.sakernet.org](http://www.sakernet.org).

Details of these meetings and other news can be seen on the monthly ebulletin's produced by the IAF and can be seen on the IAF or Hawk Board facebook pages.

The IAF's 2019 International Journal of Falconry is now out and can be ordered from the IAF's webpage.

## **Countryside Alliance Update**

### **HAWK BOARD**

#### **POLITICAL AND LEGAL UPDATE ENGLAND AND WALES**

**October 2019**

#### **New Government**

Boris Johnson has replaced Theresa May as Prime Minister. Theresa Villiers MP has been appointed Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. George Eustice MP has rejoined the Defra team and Zac Goldsmith MP has been appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State. His responsibilities include animal welfare. Both Theresa Coffey MP and Lord Gardiner have retained their posts. Neither Theresa Villiers nor Zac Goldsmith are supportive, and we could well face a number of problematic policies. New ministers across key departments have been written to and meetings arranged. Tim Bonner met the new Secretary of State on 12 September.

#### **Queen's Speech**

Parliament was successfully prorogued on the 8 October and as a result almost all Bills, including the Agriculture Bill and the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill, were lost. The Queen's Speech took place on Monday 14 October setting out the Government's new legislative programme. This includes an Environment Bill, Agriculture Bill and Animal Welfare legislation increasing sentences for cruelty offences and creating a duty on ministers with regard to animal sentience. A brief was sent to all MPs and peers for the subsequent debate. A General Election is still expected and there is speculation that this will take place before Christmas.

#### **Parliamentary Briefings**

##### **Grouse Shooting**

A comprehensive Question and Answer briefing note on grouse shooting was sent to MPs in Westminster. The briefing note, which provides a factual response to the 10 most frequently raised issues about grouse shooting and its associated moorland management, has also been sent to peers with an interest in shooting.

##### **House of Lords Rural Economy Debate**

The House of Lords debated the rural economy on 8 October, following the House of Lords Rural Economy Committee Report published on 27 April. The Alliance gave both written and oral evidence to the Committee. A brief was sent to all peers. The Alliance brief was widely quoted and there was near universal agreement from all sides of the House of the need for a rural strategy to be put in place, as well as demands that the Government must rural proof proposed policies to ensure they don't have a negative impact on the countryside.

#### **Parliamentary Update**

An update on our parliamentary work and campaigns was sent to all MPs and peers ahead of the Summer recess in July.

#### **Party Conferences**

The Countryside Alliance had a presence at all three main party conferences, making the case for rural communities. The Liberal Democrat Conference took us to Bournemouth. There we met MPs and members of the House of Lords and raised important issues including the future of the Agriculture Bill, public money for public goods and rural crime. At the Labour Conference we hosted our fringe event: *Unpacking Environmentalism*. Chaired by Abi Kay of the Farmers Guardian, we were joined by the Shadow Fisheries, Flooding and Water Minister, Luke Pollard MP; the Executive Director of Green Alliance, Shaun Spiers; ORB International's Johnny Heald; and Alliance CEO, Tim Bonner. At the Conservative Party Conference we hosted three events - a joint drinks reception with the Conservative

Rural Forum, and two fringe events: *Unpacking environmentalism* and *Investing in Rural Britain*, both chaired by he Abi Kay.

The Rt Hon Theresa Villiers, Secretary of State for Defra, spoke at our drinks reception and spoke passionately about resolving the issues the countryside faces, as well as the opportunities the countryside has post-Brexit. Our second event, *Unpacking Environmentalism*, provoked another fascinating discussion involving Tim Bonner, Defra Minister of State George Eustice, Neil Parish MP, Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, Johnny Heald ORB International CEO and Onward's Guy Miscampbell.

We were joined at our third event, *Investing in Rural Britain*, by Philip Dunne, MP for Ludlow; James Palmer, Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough; Councillor Daniel Humphreys, Leader of Worthing Borough; and Countryside Alliance board member and prospective parliamentary candidate Caroline Squire. The fringe covered post-Brexit opportunities, restructuring local government, rural crime and taking rural voters for granted. A crucial takeaway was from Phillip Dunne MP who said that all government departments should 'rural proof' to ensure that rural communities receive the services they deserve. Mayor Palmer and Councillor Humphreys went further and made calls for further devolution to allow local authorities to take control of what to prioritise spending on. In both events each panel member, from government Ministers to local councillors, acknowledged that rural voters were being taken for granted. This is a message to which all parties should pay attention, and especially the Conservatives who currently receive 38 per cent of the rural vote.

#### **European Parliament - Biodiversity, Hunting and Countryside Intergroup**

A series of meetings were held in Brussels and Strasbourg with new UK MEPs in the week of 9 September. Their support for the re-establishment of the European Parliament's Biodiversity, Hunting and Countryside Intergroup will be essential. Whatever the outcome of Brexit it will remain important that hunting interests are strongly represented in the parliament and that the UK continues to have a voice. We will continue to work closely with FACE in Europe

#### **APPGs**

The Alliance attended meetings of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for the Horse and APPG for Game and Wildlife Conservation.

#### **Hare Poaching/Illegal Hare Coursing**

The first formal meeting of the coalition on illegal hare coursing took place on 23 July. The coalition is finalising its proposals. A formal approach will then be made to ministers.

#### **Home Office**

##### ***Firearms consultation***

The consultation on the new statutory guidance and medical procedures was launched on the 23 July and closes on 17 September. A copy of our response to the Home Office's consultation on firearms licensing has been placed on the website. Members have been encouraged to respond.

##### ***European Firearms Pass (EFP)***

The Home Office has confirmed that post Brexit the UK will no longer recognise the EFP. A meeting was held with the Home Office to highlight our concerns as far as the ability of UK citizens to travel with firearms to the UK.

#### **General Licences**

The EFRA Committee took further evidence on the General Licences (GLs) fiasco on 2 July, with Michael Gove appearing before the Committee. The Countryside Alliance, along with other countryside organisations, has written to the new Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to suggest the future direction that we believe the General Licences for bird control should take, ahead of the review that Defra will be launching later in the year.

Counsel's opinion has also been sought on a number of issues arising out of GLs granted or to be granted under s.16 Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. These include the minimum criteria which the law requires of a GL, and to what extent, if at all, do pre-2005 GLs need amending, and implications for GLs concerning shooting activities in European sites, as well as the implications of shooting over Sites of Special Scientific Interests. Defra is currently consulting on GLs. Similar consultations are taking place in Scotland and Wales. A question has arisen in Wales as to falconry as a recognised method which can be used under a General Licence as well as specific licences for falconry.

#### **Labour Animal Welfare Manifesto**

Although Labour's recently published Animal Welfare Manifesto is commendable in parts, there are many areas of serious concern. It ignores important environmental issues, focusing instead on the class war agendas of grouse shooting and hunting, and betrays a fundamental lack of understanding in a number of areas. We have reiterated our offer to meet Labour to discuss our concerns, and to offer guidance and advice on the issues that matter to countryside communities.

#### **Gamekeeper Apprenticeship**

The Gamekeeping Standard has been signed off by the Institute of Apprenticeships and will be published online in the coming weeks. We will now be putting together the criteria for assessment with the hope of seeing the first apprentices undertaking it in the New Year.

#### **RSPB 2018 Birdcrime Report**

The RSPB's Birdcrime Report for 2018 was published on 28 August. As in previous years, this is little more than a lobbying and fundraising tool driven by the RSPB's politically motivated campaign to see driven grouse shooting licensed. Our analysis of the report has been placed on the website, and a copy has been sent with a covering letter to Defra Ministers, and supportive MPs, along with those with moorland in their constituencies.

#### **Hen Harrier Breeding Success 2019**

Figures released by Natural England reveal that 2019 has been a record-breaking year for hen harrier breeding success in England, with 15 nests producing 47 chicks. Eleven of those 15 nests were on land that is managed for grouse shooting, and of the three nests that failed, two were lost due to bad weather, with the third to predation. We have produced a table showing the number of hen harrier breeding attempts, successful nests, and chicks fledged over the last 34 years, and the cyclical nature of these, the explanation for which is unclear.

#### **Hunting Newcomers' Week**

Our annual Newcomers' Week will take place from 19<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> October. This year we have invited the grassroots organisation This is Hunting UK to collaborate with us to help promote this campaign.