



Falconry – Inscribed by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Hawk Board held on 13 February 2020**

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

The Chairman opened the meeting at 12:30

Present:

Jim Collins (JC); Nick Havermann-Mart (NHM); Gordon Mellor; Jimmy Robinson (JR); Martyn Standley (MS); Mark Upton (MU); Rachelle Upton (RU); Amy Wallace (AW);

Apologies:

Graham Bennett; Gary Biddiss; Graham Irving; Andrew Knowles-Brown; Paul Manning; Don Ryan; Derek Stotton; Dean White

Minutes of last meeting / Matters arising:

Approved

Chairman's Report:

With my having had to step back from Hawk Board duties due to work commitments, I have little direct activity to report that is not covered elsewhere. I appreciate the hard work and dedication shown by colleagues in covering for my absence, that whilst I hope this will be temporary is still ongoing.

We have positively engaged with the relevant authorities both in Scotland and England over the commercial hacking of falcons. Those undertaking large scale hacking are engaging with the licensing regime North of the border and we wait to see how matters develop later in the year. In England we appear to have made less progress and the situation remains worrying.

We are warned that another campaign by so-called animal welfare groups, targeting falconry centres is planned again this year. The major zoological collections are stepping away from tethering birds on display. We must ensure that wherever we are using tethering that the birds are in good condition, well manned and comfortable. Display givers must also ensure that their teams are well briefed to explain to the public the benefits of this practice, our legal responsibilities, and the permanent housing systems used.

The situation in Wales, the activities of 'Wild Justice', and the ramifications of the UK departing the European Union are some of the higher profile challenges that we face as we move into 2020.

### Treasurers Report:

The Cheshire Hawking Club have paid their fees.

The Yorkshire Hawking Club are still keen to rejoin the HB but would like Gordon to go to a meeting to talk to their members.

**RU to resend GM the detail of the April meeting.**

At present we have sufficient funds but need to look at improving income/fund raising

GM: Put HB sustainability on Junes Agenda.

NHM: Until there is a threat no one wants the HB.

GM: We need to be closer aligned to the shooting fraternity rather than the hunting.

MS: National Gamekeepers Organisation (NGO).

NHM: I will approach NGO regarding links and Countryfile Live

**RU to check emails regarding NGO contact from last year**

JR: A film crew is due to come to NCBP regarding BoP persecution, this could be a platform for HB to be in front of the camera.

GM: Good opportunity so long as it fits in with our standing.

AW: BASC released a statement n BoP persecution/

MU: The IAF raptor conservation opens lots of doors – it is a field worth investigating for the HB.

**JR to see if HB can have a presence on filming day**

### Game Fair/Countryfile Live

**RU to circulate Game Fair & Countryfile Live dates**

RU: Who can attend the following Game Fair (24-26 July, Ragley Hall)?

GM: I will be there.

MS: I will also attend.

RU: I can do Friday or Saturday, but not Sunday.

MU: I could also do Friday or Saturday, but not Sunday.

RU: Who can attend Countryfile Live (20-23 August, Windsor Great Park)?

MU: Best to combine and do a big display.

NHM: HB; BFC; FWF altogether.

GM: We should be thinking about the message we want to give, e.g. training of falcons.

MU: Good to do, but hard to say.

AW: 4 or 5 bullet points to get the message across.

### Welfare (Tethering)

NHM: A group of vets have agreed to review and sign so we can have an automatic defence. They are also reviewing keeping hawks in boxes overnight.

MU: As vets are doing this, we should hold back on publishing our guidelines.

GM: Can we use their names?

NHM: Most of them we can, but a some won't put their names to it.

GM: Tethering legislation?

MU: The legislation is for Zoo's at present.

NHM: But if zoo's stop tethering it could then be banned. Karl and the vets are going to look into tethering as well.

AW: Gemma is still doing her report on it, but it is for her PhD.

JC: The danger is if it goes through for zoo's, it will only be time before it is applied to falconers.

GM: We could go back to the CA to see who the recommend as a lawyer.

MU: BASC would be better.

GM: Let's get the report back from the vets and publish it. Although the problem will be getting people to accept it.

JR: A lot of the big places train manned birds well so the sit and don't bate.

AW: That is where the display givers can inform people.

JC: DEFRA looked into pinioning of waterfowl with a view to ban it – it was explained that it meant they could have large roofless enclosures, otherwise they would have to be in smaller enclosures. DEFRA were happy with that

GM: Tethering isn't going to go away.

MU: We just need to be able to give the answers. JR has well manned hawks, if we needed you to get on TV at short notice would that be possible?

JR: Yes, that would be fine.

JC: Zoo's aren't arguing against it, so you need a statement out before they change the law.

GM: We need to go back to the vets and get something out quickly.

JR: It's not going to happen quickly, but it is going to happen.

MU: The statement should be more towards falconry tethering, by a Falconer

GM: I see where you are coming from, but when the General Public look at Displays they think Falconry

MS: Can we find out if any AAL have been refused?

GM: FoI for AAL's being refused?

JC: DEFRA are doing a mini review so have looked at this and some have been refused. Some councils are giving 5\* so that they don't have to reinspect for 3 years.

GM: When they review it will there be a consultation?

JC: No, but if you write they will ask you to be part of the review.

**GM to write to DEFRA and ask for HB to be part of the AAL review.**

### Hacking

MS: Report from 16 January 2020 meeting:

I spoke at length around the notes which originated from NF to which I made some amendments/additions. Nobody offered any comment or questions following my airtime even though I repeated the issues with cats and pigeons in comparison to the hacking of falconry birds in an attempt to garner a reaction.

In attendance were Andrew Knowles-Brown (SHC/SHB and HB), me (BFC and HB); Tony James (IAF) 2 SNH officials and 2 NE, 4 neighbours of the breeding facility including a legal representative? Mark and Ruth from Wild Justice, Chris, Jenny and a legal representative from the breeding facility.

Mark Avery made it quite clear that Wild Justice were in attendance to ascertain whether or not the hacking licence had been issued correctly including whether the correct level of EIA had been carried out in relation to Schedule 1 birds, more particularly during their breeding season. He stated that they would take SNH to court if they believed they had been negligent in issuing the licence. The facilities legal guy gave Avery short thrift and referred him to his Blogs and told him straight that he thought Avery was against their hacking programme.

Avery also stated that if the facility had complied with the licence conditions (it was quite clear they had), that their interest was again in the legality of issuing the licence by SNH and whether they had shown due diligence.

The facility stated they had hacked birds in 2017 and 2018 without a licence but then applied for a licence in 2019 just in case to be on the safe side as this was a grey area. Certainly, Avery and I believe SNH thought the same. SNH said the only way it could be tested would

be in court. I personally think the facility applied as a precaution after unwelcome interest was shown by Avery.

It is the neighbours that have brought the hacking situation to the attention of Avery and SNH. They complained about noise from the music the facility plays within the chamber where they catch their birds up. The music drowns out any screaming the birds make when being caught up so as not to alarm other birds coming in (SNH pointed out that this aspect has nothing to do with them or licensing conditions and rather that noise pollution is potentially an environmental health issue). The neighbours also complained about the birds chasing buzzards, crows and oyster catchers that ventured into the falcon's air space. The local's representative also stated that they had no issues with falconry, it was the hacking of large numbers of falcons that they were concerned about.

WJ continued challenging SNH as to whether the surveys carried out by SNH were suitable and sufficient and whether there were any follow ups.

Avery stated on two separate occasions that Wild Justice had no issues with falconry. I made a point of repeating his statement back to him and thanked him for making this statement.

From our perspective as individual falconers hacking small numbers of falcons/hawks, I do not believe we have anything to fear whether our falcons/hawks are native or not, providing we use suitable telemetry and manage the process sensibly.

It may be prudent now for the BFC and HB to issue guidelines for falconers who hack their birds to demonstrate to the authorities that we have given the matter due consideration.

MS: They weren't interested in traditional falconry and hacking; it was the environmental impact they are concerned about. The facility is going over and above what they need to do for the licence.

JC: 6 or 7 years ago at a Wildlife Crime meeting Nick Kester said what good falconry was doing and Mark Avery responded that falconry has never done any good.

GM: The Midlands facility is more likely to get hacking into trouble than the Scottish facility.

MU: Preliminary meeting said they had facts on hacking – it would be good to have those facts/results.

MS: The worry is the scale of the hacking; licences are being brought in to hack hybrids.

MU: It is the emotive side that is the problem.

NHM: DEFRA seems to have moved away from a science basis to an emotive basis – its what wins the most votes.

MS: SNH and NE don't have any issues with the hacking, it felt at the meeting that Wild Justice is taking on SNH.

### A Future With Falconry

AW: This started with Gemma Bakewell and I discussing our concerns regarding falconry and to create something that shows falconry in a good light. We created a private group to create a discussion and it appears that most who are interested are from the commercial side. We had a meeting (approx. 40 attended) to set up a committee and constitution. The aim is its to get the general public to 'like' falconry and show how we aren't just about killing, but conservation, etc. We are producing leaflets etc to help advise and educate the general public and newcomers to falconry.

MU: If HB was younger then I think it is something that we should have been doing, so it would be good if we could work together and also maybe get someone from HB to attend your meetings.

MS: We could use Martin Perryman as he is on the FWF committee and used to be on the HB.

AW: HB has the connections for Gov and are coming from a different angle so it would be good to work together.

NHM: The FWF meetings publicity documents were really good.

MS: We just need to double check the wording, as all organisations do.

SUN Update:

See Appendix 1

JC: Meeting with the authorities at the moment is frustrating as there is no new Brexit news - it could be one way, or it could be another! When pushed for their ideal outcome, they don't have one. Our interests are being subsumed in the negotiations, they don't know whether or not they want to be aligned to CITES or Balai.

The UK might be honorary members of CITES, but the UK are not attending any CITES meetings. The EU want the UK to stay in CITES - this is mainly because the UK does most of the work on all the CITES committees, but it can only happen if the UK sign up to be totally within CITES – which is what we want!

Our ideal is that we stay unchanged within CITES and sign back up to Balai, my personal feeling is that a decision won't be made until the trade and transport is decided. If the UK goes for a closer alignment, then it is more likely that we will stay in CITES.

NHM: We are already applying for import and export licences in case of no deal.

JC: I asked about BoP being allowed across for a hunt and then back again and would they still require an import/export licence? They said that might have to be looked at separately.

AKB Email: Gordon and the rest, something that may want to be discussed, for those that remember many years ago when the ban on importing birds into the EU came about. John Hounslow and others put in place that the Balai convention could be used to import birds for Science, Education and Breeding for conservation, it was also important that the CMS (Commission for Migratory Species) inscribed that breeding in captivity is a conservation benefit.

I am sure I and others have been using the CMS conservation benefit as a justification to retain Balai approval status.

I have been told today by APHA in Scotland that this CMS justification is now deemed a generic reason and is not enough to retain Balai approval status.

Now they require in depth details of the specific species involved, data on the reasons, methods, release schemes etc. and the benefit to the species in the wild. I am to receive a letter outlining this and if I get it prior to the meeting I will copy into you the specifics if any.

My vet was also informed of this today, he was unaware as well. I have not had any details sent to me of any review or of any discussion with any of the user groups, has anyone else heard anything?

I copied Nick and Jevgeni in on this as they were involved in the CMS inscription.

JC: We won't be in Balai unless there is a tight agreement.

GM: IF AKB has an interest how does he counter it? Does he cite that we are in the transition period?

JC: It is probably not dissimilar to the 5-bird rule.

MU: Some EU falconers use the 5-bird rule for Morocco and wonder if that is something that the UK would do to continue hunting – I told them that I doubt it.

JC: DEFRA are aware it is being abused but turn a blind eye to it. A pitch has been made to keep it and that it would be a domestic law not an EU one.

NHM: They have now increased the number of birds.  
JC: That is an EU rule not UK – so we may lose it.  
GM: Advice to AKB is that he has to question this on timing.

Legal/Guidelines Update:

See Appendix 2

MS: Gary Wall has asked what is happening about A10s? I said that it stays the same until 31/12/2020 and at this point nobody knows what will happen.

JC: DEFRA hinted quite strongly that if we leave with no CITES then they may ditch A10s.

MU: So, there wouldn't be any internal documents?

JC: But then you would have to prove legally held, especially for export. They will probably increase enforcement officers.

MU: You have to have your own records and paper trail.

JC: We will continue to argue for A10s, as it will be beneficial for import/export.

MU: Wonder what RSPCA/RSBP will make of it.

IAF Update:

See Appendix 3

GM: What is the IAF financial sustainability?

MU: At the moment it is funded by the Arabs, but they would like it to become self-funding – which isn't really possible. The West put in the time, but can't afford to fund it, so the money is paying for their expertise. Also there is a concern that Qatar would step in if Abu Dhabi stop funding.

CA Update:

See Appendix 4

A.O.B:

DR email: Could you include a note of thanks from me and IHC for the response to our last request on the HB's position on Wild Take - much appreciated.

Now that the season is coming to a close, we can give it more attention and I may contact Martyn Standley directly in regard to a joint submission.

MS: I will contact Don.

The meeting closed at 3.30pm

**Next Meeting: 12.30pm Thursday, 18 June 2020**

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

Rachelle Upton, Co-coordinator – 19 February 2020

## SUN Report from Jim Collins

Since all government meetings and legislative decisions were embargoed during all of November and the first half of December as a result of the General Election campaign period and this being followed by the Christmas and New Year festivities, there is very little to update in respect of UK legislative activity. Hawk Board members will have noticed that despite losing his seat at the General Election, Jac Goldsmith has retained his Ministerial position within DEFRA by his being elevated to the House of Lords. Given his posturing on a whole raft of animal 'welfare' issues in the past year this was an unwelcome development.

As far as all the statements from the UK Government are concerned, nothing will change in respect of CITES movements to/from EU Member States, not needing quarantine for birds coming from or going to the EU Member States, etc. until after the completion of the Brexit Transition Period i.e. until after 31st December 2020. After that, everything will depend on what is negotiated and agreed in the coming few months. However, it is worth noting that the Management and Customs Authorities of some EU Member States have told their citizens that the UK became a Third Country in regard to CITES species as of 1st February 2020 and that therefore Import and Export Permits must be obtained. SUN have written an urgent communication to DEFRA and Border Force requesting that they liaise speedily with their EU counterparts so as to rectify this misinformation.

Two meetings of substance took place in late November and early December - both in Brussels. The management Committee of the EU's Invasive Alien Species Directive has their first meeting in six months. Before them were a list of new species whose risk assessments had been deemed sufficiently robust by the Scientific Forum to go forward for a vote on being banned from further breeding, transfer and sale.

Of real significance for all animal keepers and traders was the proposal to put the Common Kingsnake onto the banned list which SUN argued heavily against. The two reasons why a listing of this species would be hugely important to everyone is firstly that this is a species kept and bred in the hundreds of thousands across Europe (so a listing would demonstrate that the decision makers were prepared to list a species with a major impact on keepers and with no regard to the likely compliance rate with such a prohibition) and secondly because the species has only established as a non-native species in the Canary Islands (demonstrating that the decision makers were prepared to ban a species that is not established anywhere within Europe since the islands are biogeographically clearly African not European). In the event, and much to our surprise, the EU Management Committee opted to defer this and the other listing proposals to a yet to be declared date in 2020 and no vote was taken. Regrettably, the UK has announced that it will accept and implement all new banned species coming through in 2020 on this legislation even though the U.K. will not be part of the voting procedures during this Brexit Transition Period.

The second meeting was one called by One Health and elements within the Belgium Government and Agencies. Although ostensibly it was called to discuss how best to minimise disease risk from keeping, importing and trading non-domesticated species it hid a thinly veiled agenda to conclude that European countries and the European Commission should copy Belgium and bring in Positive Lists for species allowed to be kept in captivity. The danger being the ready access that Belgium has to the European Commission. Knowing this we were able to pack the meeting with representatives of pro-keeping organisations from Germany, Belgium, Netherlands and U.K. sufficient to block the recommendation for a Positive List from each of the working groups established on the day. It is fair to say that the organisers were far from pleased with the outcome and, two months later, have still to issue the conclusions and recommendations to Member States and the European Commission.

## **Legal/Guidelines Report from Graham Irving**

### BREXIT

The Withdrawal Agreement came into force on 31.01.2020 and this means that the UK and EU have entered an Implementation period until the end of 2020. During this time the current CITES regulations will stay in force until the end of 2020.

The UK CITES management authority stated at a meeting with them on 05/02/2020 that at this moment in time they have no idea what will happen post the implementation period, we will be asking this question again during the next quarterly meeting. There may be updates published on the GOV.UK website in the meantime.

### Wild Justice legal challenges

There can't be many of you who are not aware of the ongoing trickle of legal challenges that WJ have launched in the past few months, the ones that are going to be of most interest to falconers are the challenges around the legality of the range of General Licenses that the devolved governments' are responsible for. We have already seen a number of species removed from some of the licenses and the removal of gulls from all of them, the removal of gulls now means that gull hawking can now only be undertaken either via a falconry quarry licence or an individual licence that is issued to allow protection of livestock/crops/foodstuffs.

On the subject of falconry quarry licences, Natural England will be reviewing the inclusion of and numbers of gulls that can be taken via the quarry licenses they issue. No dates have been set for this review at the time of writing this report.

### Wild hacking

In January the BFC, Hawk Board and IAF were invited to join a call set up by SNH to discuss the licensing of wild hacking in Scotland: Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and representatives from Wild Justice (representing the locals) were also invited to participate in the discussion. As a result of that call, Natural England have passed comments and observations discussed during the call to DEFRA's bird's policy team to see if they want NE to investigate the subject further. At the time of writing no feedback from DEFRA has been given.



## Appendix 3

### IAF Report from Mark Upton

The main happening since the last HB Meeting was the 2019 IAF Council of Delegates Meeting, Carmona, Spain

This year's 51st annual Council of Delegates Meeting of the IAF was held in Carmona, Andalusia, Spain, by kind invitation of AEECA, la Asociación Española de Cetrería, the Spanish Falconry Association.

The Council of Delegates Meeting was opened by the New President, HE Majed al Mansouri. We received an in-depth and interesting report by the President, followed by reports from Janusz Sielicki, Vice President - Europe, Africa South of the Sahara, Oceania, Keiya Nakajima Vice President – Asia, Dan Cecchini Vice President - Americas and from Leonardo Vargas Chairman of the Latin America Working Group. The report for Middle East & North Africa, MENA was given by Omar Fouad, from the IAF Abu Dhabi office, as the stand-in for the empty office of Vice President for that region.

The main items of interest from the reports were the reorganisation of the IAF using working groups to manage the different faculties of the IAF. These working groups cover the areas of admin, science and conservation, culture, UNESCO, welfare and ethics, education, youth, women falconers, and the regions. Each group has a group leader who communicates back to the executive and board.

From the Vice President's reports we learnt that in north America the Anatum and Tundrius peregrine have been reclassified to not at risk, which gives an opportunity for wild take of this subspecies in areas of North America and will have significance in proposals to delist the peregrine by some countries.

Electrocution of raptors on power lines, particularly sakers, is still a problem in many parts of the world and the IAF is continuing to lobby governments and power companies on simple and cheap methods of altering the pylons in order to prevent this. A short document has been produced to be distributed to banks and financial institutions to make them aware of the effect of poorly designed electricity lines can have a detrimental effect on wildlife. The document contains recommendations of good practice for these bodies to insist are put in place before financial support is given for projects. A fund has been introduced to reintroduce the saker in Bulgaria.

Following the legislation of falconry in Denmark the IAF are working with newly formed falconry clubs in other Nordic countries, with the objective of legalising falconry in these countries to. A lot of work has been going on in Asia, particularly China, to work with falconers and clubs to become members of IAF and receive support on recognition by their authorities.

Janusz Sielicki reported on Conferences and Conventions News and Conservation Projects. IAF has attended a number of meetings around the world during the past year and Janusz reminded all of the importance of falconers being seen and heard at these meetings.

The IAF is planning advise on welfare and work is being done on this. A film is being produced and an online course is being planned with education on welfare. The European Group is discussing the writing of a code of conduct for social media to be used by falconers. The hope is to prevent the posting of material damaging to falconry.

The positions of Vice President of the Americas and Vice President for MENA region were up for election. Vice President of the Americas, Dan Cecchini, stood for a second term,

unopposed, and was re-elected for the post. The position of Vice President for MENA was vacant, following HE Majed al Mansouri being elected President at last year's Delegates Meeting. There was only one candidate standing for the post. Karim Rousselon, from Morocco, proposed by The Emirates Falconers Club. He was duly elected for the post by the delegates. There was then discussion about the Vice-Presidency of the Americas being split into two new vice presidency posts for North America and Latin America. It was proposed that the Latin America Presidency would cover the regions of South America, Latin America and Mexico. It was explained that although Mexico, geographically, was part of North America, it shared language and falconry practice with Latin and South America. The Vice President of the Americas and NAFA Delegate were asked their views and stated that they did not have a problem with the split. Delegates then voted to adopt the proposal which will not come into effect until the next delegates meeting, following a necessary change to the constitution. At the next meeting the two new vice-presidency posts will be up for election and the present Vice-President of the Americas post will be dissolved.

There were 14 applications discussed of which there were four successful applications for membership, one for supporter and four for observer. The successful membership applications were from Falconeria Maestra - Italy, Tsar's Hound Hunting – Russia, UVMP Falconry and Raptor Rehabilitation Club – Slovakia and the Female Falconers Club – UK. These were all clubs which practice traditional falconry, although the name doesn't always suggest this for political reasons within their countries. Supporter membership was given to the International Raptor & Falconry Center, USA and observer status to the countries of Norway, Finland and Luxembourg who are in the process of attempting to legalise falconry in those countries. Observer status was also given to China Falconry Culture Communication Co., Ltd. who were at the time two months under the limit for a club to apply for membership but were considered a good candidate and will be made a member as soon as the two-year minimum time in existence is reached, in February 2020.

2020 Council of Delegates Meeting will take place at the invitation of NAFA in Kearney, Nebraska, USA. 2021 will be in the Czech Republic and 2022 United Kingdom.

A nice part of the meeting then ensued. The Presidential Awards were announced. An award was presented to Dr Pierre Basset from Switzerland, who was present at the first IAF meeting in 1968. The award was presented in recognition of being the longest-surviving delegate, and of his many accomplishments as a falconer. Dr Javier Ceballos, of Spain, was awarded the President's Award for his dedication to the IAF and his founding of World Falconry Day to commemorate the inscription of falconry onto the representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Count Umberto Caproni di Taliedo, of Italy, was awarded the President's Award in absentia, for his distinguished services to falconry and his excellence in game hawking.

IAF Representatives also took part in both the meetings on Hacking in Scotland and they sent a representative to the recent A Future With Falconry group initial meeting.

The IAF at the request of the Pakistan Falconers Club took part in a Pakistan National Strategic Workshop "Conservation of Raptors in Pakistan & Safeguarding of Falconry: a Heritage Sport" in January. Falconry has been under great pressure from the conservationists in Pakistan and this meeting gave falconers the opportunity of discussing raptor conservation with the main NGO's and showing falconry is not a danger to raptors and in fact falconry is a positive participant in conservation.

## **Countryside Alliance Update**

### **HAWK BOARD**

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

**February 2020**

#### **General Election**

Throughout the run-up to the General Election, we ran an extensive lobby campaign enabling members and supporters to contact candidates. The Conservatives won 345 seats, Labour 202, SNP, 48, Liberal Democrats 11, DUP 8 Sinn Fein 7 (Don't take their seats), and other parties 9. The Conservatives gained 48 seats and won 43.6% of the vote giving them a majority of 80.

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

The Queen's Speech, following the General Election, took place on 19 December. Due to the Christmas recess the Queen's Speech debate was not held until early January. A brief was sent to all MPs and peers, outlining the legislation announced in the Speech and the Countryside Alliance's position.

#### **Agriculture and Environment Bills**

The Agriculture Bill has been reintroduced. The Bill had its second reading on 3 February. The latest version of the Bill is a considerable improvement and now makes explicit reference to the uplands with respect to 'public money for public goods', for which the Countryside Alliance campaigned and lobbied in the last Parliament. The Environment Bill was also reintroduced on 30 January, and MPs will be briefed ahead of second reading.

#### **Meetings with MPs and Conservative Environment Network**

A number of meetings with MPs have taken place to discuss the Alliance's campaigns and wider work. A meeting was also held with the Conservative Environment Network, which plays a key role in influencing policy within the Conservative Party, to understand better their role and priorities. There will also be two general meetings, one for the 2019 intake and one for other MPs in order to brief them on our work and key issues in this Parliament.

#### **Moorland Members of Parliament**

We have written to the 27 MPs that have moorland in their constituencies to congratulate them either on their re-election or election, and to invite them to visit a grouse moor so they can see first-hand the considerable conservation work that is being undertaken by gamekeepers, and to hear how grouse shooting is so important, both economically and socially, to many of their constituents.

#### **Parliamentary Reception**

A parliamentary drinks reception has been arranged for 11 March. The event is sponsored by Greg Smith, MP for Buckingham and Countryside Alliance Member.

#### **Parliamentary Update**

Further to the mailout at the beginning of January, we sent out our parliamentary update to MPs and peers. The update highlighted our work, priorities for the year, reminded MPs of the Countryside Alliance Awards and the strong turnout at Boxing Day meets.

#### **Casting for Recovery**

All MPs, AMs and MSPs with retreats in their constituency/region have been invited to attend part of the retreat and we will be writing to the relevant minister following the expected reshuffle. A similar exercise will be undertaken for the Fishing for Schools project.

### **Select Committees and APPGs**

APPGs are being formed/re-formed and we have written to the chairs of relevant APPGs. Neil Parish is confirmed as chair of the EFRA Committee. Once the members of the committees have been announced we will write to them too.

### **DExEU Meeting**

A meeting was held with the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU on 28 January. The discussion focussed on issues of importance to rural communities which need to be recognised in our long-term future relationship with the EU and beyond.

### **Illegal Hare Coursing Coalition**

A letter is to go to Defra and Home Office has been agreed. It sets out the action we would like to see the Government take, including amending the Game Act 1831. A draft Bill has been prepared to accompany the letter. The coalition represents a broad spectrum of interests including the police and RSPCA.

### **House of Commons Private Members' Bill Ballot**

The Private Members' Bill ballot was drawn on 9 January. In total thirteen Friday sittings are set aside in the House of Commons each session for the consideration of Private Members' Bills. None of the Bills announced are of immediate relevance to our campaigns.

### **House of Lords Private Members' Bill Ballot**

House of Lords Ballot was drawn on 20 December. A full list of the Bills can be found [here](#). Lord Randall of Uxbridge introduced a Hares Protection Bill on 23 January. We have also been in contact with Lord Bird with regards to his Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill. We will monitor the progress of these bills and brief accordingly.

### **Countryside Alliance Awards**

The Countryside Alliance Awards received over 18,000 nominations which was a fantastic response from communities across the country. We have now whittled down these businesses to 160 businesses across the country – you can see who they are here <https://www.countryside-alliance.org/our-work/rural-awards/caawards/regional-finalists-2020>. We have received extensive media coverage, support from parliamentarians and communities and the businesses on social media. Judging will commence in March.

### **Gamekeeper Apprenticeships**

We are continuing to finalise the assessment criteria for the gamekeeper apprenticeship, the syllabus for which has been published. We now have the three training providers and one assessor that are required and are in the process of obtaining tenders before making our submission for panel review this month.

### **General Licences**

The current General Licences expire at the end of February and we are seeking clarification from Defra as to how they intend to proceed, given the threatened legal challenge to any extension by Wild Justice.

### **Trophy Hunting Consultation**

We have submitted a response to the Government consultation on trophy hunting, supporting the continued use of current controls based on internationally agreed rules, on the grounds that the rules and legislation imposed by the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species are both efficient and effective. Any ban on the export of UK hunting trophies would

have a significant impact on necessary deer management, as well as on the economies of many rural areas that depend on the income from deer stalkers. We recently challenged a misleading article in The Telegraph concerning the hunting and export of trophies from buzzards and cranes. The Telegraph has now issued a public retraction and amended the piece online.

## **WALES**

### **General Licences (GLs)**

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) have stated that they will be undertaking a second consultation at the end of 2020. Wild Justice have written to NRW threatening legal action on the basis that the 2020 licences are unlawful.

### **Game Bird Code of Practice**

Despite the Welsh Government's stated commitment to base any changes on available evidence, we believe that the Minister has refused to sign off the new Code, which makes a political decision more likely. We have made our concern known and reminded them of their commitment to produce an evidence-based welfare document, rather not one based on political expediency.

### **Access to Land and Water**

Following the publication of Welsh Government's proposals to extend access provision in Wales, the NRW set up three expert groups to consider:

- Possible approaches to delivering the intent of the reforms to the Countryside and Rights of way Act
- Flexibility on public paths
- How to communicate access rights.

The Alliance successfully applied to participate in all three groups, which will allow us to ensure that landowners/managers are fully represented. The timescale for completion is June 2021, although there will be an Assembly election on 6 May 2021, which could change this. Access to water will be considered separately via a National Access Forum subgroup. This work won't be completed by 2021.