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DEAR LORD BONOMY

REVIEW OF WILD MAMMALS PROTECTION ACT (Scotland) 2002

With your review of the above in relation to fox control to proceed shortly, I felt it necessary to write to you with a few points from a directly concerned end user.

Having read your remarkable C.V. I am most assured that this Review will be conducted in an open, informed and unbiased way.

I feel it wholly unnecessary and counter productive to have any change in the law. The law is being well upheld and the job of fox control is being carried out efficiently and humanely and in the full glare of public scrutiny.

I am an active farmer both in a hill (sheep) and lowground (Arable) environment. I am also a keen rural environmental conservationist. The environmental conservation achievements within my farm are recognised, having twice been selected to qualify for Britain's leading Conservation award (Lapwing Award), getting in both selections to the finals, though always appearing as the bridesmaid never the bride.

My conservation efforts are concentrated on the preservation and improvement of rare wild bird numbers on my farms and others' who seek my views and help. In particular in relation to black grouse, wild partridge, golden plover and tree sparrow and their associated habitat and management requirements. All of the above Bird species are in deep decline on today's lowland and upland farms.

My Farming business and Conservation efforts require there to be culling of the top ground predator - the fox.

We have tried every method presently available under the Law.

We have, by expensive failure in both economic and results terms, come to a simple conclusion that fox management by a sizeable pack of controlled dogs and guns to be the most efficient, humane and most directly targetable to the specific problem.

Though I am confused by the illogicality of the issues that seem to worry the Scottish parliament in this matter I can only give you my points to allay any fears that might have brought about a desire for a change in the law.

I use the Services of the local Foxhound pack on a regular basis at least twice a month from Sept to April and occasionally at other times.

They appear on my farms ,with mutually prearranged consent and timings , free to do the service ,unlike any other method available locally .

The results are striking and positively different in terms of efficiency and humane targeted control , let alone a simple cost basis .

As counter balance to the lack of cost to the end user of this service , I am more than happy to let a few people on horses follow them for an enjoyable days horse riding.

In comparison, in the Highlands of Scotland and rest of uk where packs of trained foxhounds and guns are common place , they have to charge due to inaccessibility for horses, to offset the cost of the service .

This legal method has been used effectively and openly as predator control for some time ,with no known legal failings to date .

This method is common practice and used frequently ,consentually and happily on every farm in my local area . I believe there is only less than 1% of the hundreds of thousands of acres ,that our local pack of foxhounds have as a chosen geographical area to provide a service for farmers , landowners and land managers That is not used by the aforesaid farmers for a variety of different reasons .

As to the routine of this service , the huntsman rings me early in year to arrange suitable days of access and what needs doing . When they arrive on the days They are punctilious and professional in all their manners , whether in behaviour of their highly trained dogs and staff (guns and mounted assistants ) or the rest of the mounted or foot people who are well marshalled by appointed officers.

I have been more than delighted by their diligence and humane efficiency in relation to the task performed .

This cannot be said for the other methods I have used .

The targeted control of the predators is most effective with a full pack of hounds .

My farming business benefits with less lamb losses , my efforts at increasing wild bird numbers has shown great improvement and all at a zero cost to my business or the government .

I am confused as to why there is a perceived need for any change . The system works well for all concerned .It is humane and efficient in terms of predator control, it has been proven in abiding to laws of the land and is welcomed by the very great majority of active and concerned farmers .

It would appear to me that the opponents of fox control by a pack dogs and guns ,seem to hate the country people more than they love the fox . A sort of Orwellian “two legs bad ,4 legs good” syndrome .

What little I have seen of these opponents when they appear locally to protest is most ungratifying , they seem to be totalitarian and deceitfull in their attitudes and if it isn't objecting to this it would be objecting to something else .They seem to think working country people are a class beneath contempt .

Lastly in relation to other methods of Fox control,

-Rifle shooting must be done at night and is inefficient and worryingly dangerous and very costly .

-Shotguns and a couple of dogs is very inefficient, being only very area specific, and is more costly ,

-Snares are open to much abuse and local disgust and not at all specific .

-Terriers and guns at night is dangerous open to considerable abuse and is not at all specific and costly .

In relation to the local practice of having mounted assistants and followers, I can only say from my experience they are a uncomplicated gentle law abiding lot who want no more than a social day out on the back of a beautiful stead. Something they love as passionately as others love football .

The Borders is well steeped in centuries of the love of the horse whether this be from Reiving days or more modern Common Ridings .It gives me and others enormous pleasure to see them enjoying my bit of land and bravely jumping with gay abandon over my hedges , helping to pay the costs ,whilst the pack of hounds do their necessary work nearby .

Farming is today a lonely and not a road to riches way and any local spectacle of enjoyment watching the horses is a welcome respite from worries .

The image that is fostered by the detractors is one of piratical blood-soaked heathens causing mayhem and carnage . It is so far from Reality as to be farcical but it makes for a better and more lurid story .

I have found the use of trained foxhounds and guns essential to my livelihood in my farming and my conservation efforts .The professional people who undertake to do it are law abiding and knowledgeable individuals .

It is an area much misunderstood and has no need for change but definitely has a need for much more understanding and less politicising .

If you felt a desire to see this in action and so as to be better informed , it would be an honour for me to arrange something if that was to your liking.

Knowing the local individuals and their practices ,they have nothing to hide and everything to show .

Yours sincerely

James Scott

J.G.SCOTT