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21 March 2016

*Dear Lord Bonomy*

Review of the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002

I have been a practising rural chartered surveyor in The Scottish Borders for over 28 years. I therefore meet a broad cross section of the rural community on a daily basis, particularly farmers and land managers.

They have a deep understanding of the countryside and so the question of vermin control is high on their list of priorities, being essential to prevent the predation of sheep and lambs, game birds and other species. This service is provided by the mounted gun packs.

In order to provide such a service a full pack of hounds is required to flush effectively to guns, particularly in areas of extensive forestry and hill ground, and to ensure foxes are dispatched quickly and humanely. Farmers care for their animals and hate suffering. What I have learnt from farmers is that they would much rather see fox control in its current form continue, rather than the growth of indiscriminate and unregulated shooting and wounding of foxes using high powered rifles and night vision equipment. Every form of shooting (with a rifle or shotgun) carries the risk of wounding. The presence of a pack of hounds reduces the risk of prolonged suffering.

Allowing mounted supporters to be in attendance runs parallel to the pest control operations; there are many situations where they can assist – for example, helping to hold up coverts in order that the hounds and guns can do their job more effectively. Moving from one flush to another (not always taking the shortest route) gives mounted supporters access to ride across country which would not otherwise be available to them. Their presence and support helps fund the service that is provided and contributes to the social matrix that helps hold our rural communities together.

*Yours sincerely*

*James Denne*

James Denne MRICS