

The Rt Hon Lord Bonomy

2002 Act Review

Natural Resources Division

The Scottish Government

1-C North, Victoria Quay

Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ

21 March 2016

Dear Lord Bonomy,

I thank you for the opportunity to submit evidence to the enquiry you are conducting into the operation of the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002.

My name is William Shorthose. Having served for 30 years in the police service in Scotland, I am now retired. Throughout my career, and subsequently, I have been involved with the Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire Hunt and am heavily involved in the running of the organisation and the practicalities of the days when our hounds are operating.

We keep a pack of about 45 foxhounds of varying age and experience. These are used to flush foxes to competent, fully licensed guns who are regular attendees and are all conversant with the current legislation. The number of hounds which we deploy on any particular day takes account of the country to be covered and the weather conditions – if we were to flush a fox from a vast expanse of woodland then we would take more hounds than if we were going to carry out the same task in small coverts or patches of scrub/gorse, and if the weather was particularly wild with high winds, we would take comparatively few hounds in order to maintain appropriate control. Hounds hunt by following a scent trail left by their quarry and the degree of intensity of that trail is compromised by time and climatic conditions. Purely from the point of view of the welfare of the fox, the appropriate number of hounds is determined by the expected rapidity with which he can be effectively flushed from cover in order that he can be safely shot. An arbitrary limit on the number of hounds to be used for this purpose could, and, dependent on the extent of any such restriction, certainly would compromise the welfare of the animal being flushed as it would extend the time the animal may be put under stress.

This fox control is carried out for the local farming and rural community and we take full cognisance of their working practices when arranging days. Regular on-going liaison ensures that we are aware of stock movements, feeding practices and cropping cycles of our farmers in order that any mounted followers can avoid areas where disruption to their requirements is minimised. We also carry out a number of days on foot in order to comply with local farmers and gamekeepers wishes and, in particular, to ensure appropriate humane predator control at their most vulnerable times, eg. when lambing is ongoing or game birds are about to be released.

You will have been forwarded a copy of the protocol compiled by, and adhered to by the mounted packs in Scotland. This is strictly followed and Police Scotland is made aware of our activities prior to the days we go out. They are given times and locations, then create a computer incident which is given a unique number which would allow the police to more quickly deal with any related reports from members of the public. They provide me with the incident number to me in order that I can easily inform them once the day's activities are complete. There are no other similar activities that I know of which are as transparent to the police and while local officers have, on occasion, attended to familiarise themselves with what we do and how we do it, nothing untoward has even been suggested let alone given rise to investigation. This localised view was expanded upon in January

2016 in an evidence session to the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee hearing when the head of Wildlife Crime for Police Scotland indicated that there was no need for a change to the legislation but that, 'all matters are, and appear to be, transparent and legal.'

I would contest that the current legislation does what it set out to do; allowing for the effective and humane control of species where necessary whilst providing them with adequate measures of protection.

I would be happy to expand on any of the points I have raised, should you so wish. Likewise, should you wish to carry out a visit to see first-hand how we operate, then I would be pleased to make the necessary arrangements and welcome you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Shorthose', written in a cursive style.

W. Shorthose