

Re: Humber Wildfowlers Letter of Support – Nomination of Wildfowling for Inclusion in the UK Living Heritage Inventory.

This letter is from Humber Wildfowlers of whom I am Chairman, and it is my and our strong belief that wildfowling should be included in the UK Living Heritage Inventory and we are in full support of BASC in seeking formal recognition of our sport of Wildfowling in the UK Living Heritage Inventories.

Humber Wildfowlers was formed in 1964. The membership then as now is made up mainly of locals many worked in the fishing industry based in Grimsby and local farms and fish processing factories in the port. Coastal Wildfowling has been a long-established tradition in Lincolnshire and on the Humber often mentioned in sporting books. Often looked on as a poor mans sport it has sustained many a family in hard times.

Humber Wildfowlers has leased shooting on the North Lincolnshire marshes at Tetney and North Somercoates.

The initial membership was 15 and currently 55.

The chance of land ownership came about in 2000 when the old RAF camp at Northcotes went on the market; the sale includes the marshes in front of the camp and the sands down to the low tide level.

Purchase of this new marsh meant first we had to get shooting consent from Natural England which meant going back and trawling through the old bag records of members to establish the marsh had been shot for many years the earliest record was before the second world war. Ownership now meant that we could look after the site ourselves and be involved with conserving the site with its rare saline ponds.

It also meant we as custodians of the marsh which is part of the Humber SSSI and SPA so had to be included in discussions with Natural England.

We have also been dealing closely with English Heritage with reference to the King Charles Coastal Path to ensure the path did not damage or encourage trespass onto the marsh.

Membership fees were and still are kept as low as possible, wildfowling is not rich man's sport nor is it one where you can fill the freezer each time you go out. Success is hard earned and as a rule 1 trip in 3 brings a just reward.

Skills are passed on frequently from father to son and now increasingly daughter. What equipment to wear, where to go for a morning flight at a particular time of year and in certain weather conditions tide times and height. Same goes for an evening flight. For wildfowling is mainly done on a morning or evening flight. Morning flight is where the birds are returning to roosting areas after a night spent feeding. So out on the marsh well before sunrise so you are in your chosen position at sun rise. Which may be in a muddy creek or hiding in some natural cover where you use your skills honed over many unsuccessful trips in how to blend into the surroundings, keep still and only move at the right moment.

The joy of a morning flight is hearing first then seeing the marsh come to life as the first rays of the sun push away the darkness. There is always lots of bird movement especially with a rising tide. Here you learn and teach junior members the sound, flight movement and shape of both quarry and non quarry species. Correct and accurate quarry identification is essential, and we test all new member on this to ensure protected species are not shot.

On an evening flight you walk out an hour or so before dark and get into your chosen position and await the fowl to head out to their night feeding spot, hopefully if you have chosen correctly you will be able to intercept them.

The club has strict bag limits and keeps records of such. It has always banned the sale of wildfowl shot on club land although we encourage it to be given to anyone who asks or expresses an interest in trying it.

Recently the club joined with its neighbouring North Lincs Wildfowling Club a club with a history very similar to ours and we purchased a 5-acre field near the marsh and dug out a 2-acre lake. The reason, carrying out any sort of improvements or maintenance on coastal land is so restricted by Natural England we just seem to be just watching the sites steady decline.

Now we own land outside the SSI / SPA etc. we can improve the site, sow and plant indigenous species with advice from Wildlife Trusts and the Angling Trust.

The lake can be shot under our traditional club rules amended to suit the site which is great as we can train and educate young / new members in a less dangerous environment than a coastal marsh on the sport of Wildfowling. In addition, they can be introduced to the flora and fauna on the site as the whole site has been sown with a wildflower mix. Ease of access ensures older members can assist in the training and identification and pass on skills to the next generation. Fishing has now been added to the activities of the club.

We hope to get involved with local schools, showing pupils the different flora and fauna on the site and perhaps get them involved in carrying out studies on the site.

The Clubs future looks secure; our membership is still about 55 and the members are still drawn from local industry and families 95% living within a 15-mile radius from the clubs' shooting areas.

As you can see Wildfowling has been a traditional sport practiced by members of the local community in North Lincolnshire from before 1946 and is still practiced today on our coastal marshes,

*Humber Wildfowlers are sure that the inclusion in the **UK Living Heritage Inventory** would provide appropriate recognition of wildfowling as a living tradition and would help ensure that the associated knowledge, customs and community practices are recorded and safeguarded for future generations.*

For these reasons the Humber Wildfowlers is pleased to offer its full support for the nomination of wildfowling to the UK Living Heritage Inventory,

Graham Crompton-Howe
Chairman of Humber Wildfowlers.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "G.D. Crompton-Howe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "H" and "O" at the end.

Signature: _____

