

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

*I am writing to express my strong belief that **wildfowling** is an important element of **UK Living Heritage Inventory**, and to confirm that I fully support the efforts of the **British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC)** to seek formal recognition of wildfowling in the UK Living Heritage Inventories. I have a particular concern for **punt gunning** which now has only a small but dedicated number of representatives.*

Punt gunning is a specialised form of wildfowling. It requires a unique, hand-propelled boat, suitable for use in any weather on open, tidal estuaries in wintertime. In addition, it represents a long-established traditional practice, sustained through shared knowledge, customary skills, carefully safeguarded and handed down from one generation to the next.

Punt gunners have played a very important role in securing the wildfowling of today. The Wildfowling Association of Great Britain and Ireland (WAGBI), now known as BASC, was founded by punt gunners. Amongst many famous names, the legendary Stanley Duncan was the association's first honorary secretary and Sir Ralph Payne Galwey, the leading authority on the sport in late Victorian times, its first president. Sir Peter Scott, who has arguably done more for wildlife than any other human being, was a dedicated fowler and punt gunner in his younger days. The following excerpt is from Sir Peter's introduction to the book "My Wild Goose Chase" by Bill Powell in 1954.

"...I believe that wildfowling is a king among sports. It is arduous and often dangerous; it is breathtakingly exciting; it requires initiative, enthusiasm and endurance. The lure of the morning flight, the whistle of wings in the sunset, the call of the wild geese under the full moon_ these have stirred the imagination of many a man and led him out into the marshes and the estuary creeks as a hunter. For many this is not enough, the interest stretches beyond the bag, beyond the assertion of ultimate power over the quarry, to the naturalist's studies, to the scientist's thirst for knowledge and the artist's search for beauty. For me these interests grew out of wildfowling...". (Peter Scott, 10th March 1954)

I am a second-generation fowler and punt gunner. I first trod the marshes and put to sea with my father in my early teens in the 1950's. The skills, the equipment, the excitement, and above all the love of the environment have enriched my entire life and continue to do so in my 85th year. I have donated my punt gunning equipment, dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in full working order, to a new local museum on the Solway Firth, where it has seen service for nearly a century.

UK wildfowling has a history dating back centuries. It possesses a number of elements that set it aside as a living and evolving practice combining traditional knowledge and skills to maintain a sustainable harvest. It includes locally rooted knowledge of tides, weather, habitat conditions and the behaviour of the plants and animals found in coastal areas managed for wildfowling. These practices embody a close, beneficial relationship with nature underpinned by a strict ethical code, established safety practices, and a strong sense of responsibility towards the environment.

Historically wildfowling was an important source of livelihood in coastal areas and an affordable source of food within traditional coastal foodways. Wildfowling's role in shaping coastal areas and traditions is reflected in landscape, local language and customary practices.

Wildfowling skills and traditions continue to be transmitted through informal teaching, mentoring and community involvement supporting a strong connection to place, local identity, and conservation engagement with wetlands.

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, I am pleased to offer my full support for the nomination of wildfowling, including punt gunning, to the UK Living Heritage Inventory,

Peter Cockrell

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peter Cockrell".

Signature: _____