



A manifesto for sustainable shooting

Senedd Elections 2026





Overview

Shooting is an integral part of the cultural, economic and environmental fabric in Wales. Across the nation, a diverse array of shooting activities supports tourism and hospitality businesses throughout the year and provides rural communities with an economic lifeline by extending the traditional tourism season into the winter months. According to the Value of Shooting report published in 2024, shooting activities contribute £190 million annually to the Welsh economy and support approximately 3,000 jobs. This includes direct employment in shooting grounds, sporting agencies, shooting estates, farms and related businesses, as well as indirect roles in hospitality, retail and supply chains. These contributions are critical – without them, many fragile rural communities would struggle to survive.

In addition, the management practices associated with shooting play a pivotal role in protecting ecosystems and helping wildlife to recover and thrive. The 2024 BASC Natural Capital report in Wales established that shooting and its associated habitat creation and management provided £26.8 million of benefit through carbon sequestration, £1.2 million in public health benefits, £15.1 million in recreational value for those involved in shooting and the wider public, and £4.2 million in food, farming and forestry value for the country.

When we combine these figures with the Value of Shooting report we have economic data showing that shooting contributes more than £237 million to the Welsh economy and highlights the environmental and community benefits across Wales. This provides a full picture of the positive impact shooting has on our economy, countryside and rural communities.

In 2020, we surveyed our members on conservation activities and attitudes. The survey revealed that more than half of our members fed songbirds during the winter months, when natural food sources are scarce on their shooting land, and more than a third actively managed woodland for both shooting and conservation. Our members' environmental concerns align with broader society regarding climate change, habitat and biodiversity loss, and building development and infrastructure.



BASC leads in best practice in shooting and conservation across the UK's shooting community, ensuring shooting is conducted ethically and sustainably and contributes positively to the conservation of wildlife and the restoration of natural habitats. BASC's commitment to these principles is evidenced by the UK's shooting organisations coming together in 2020 to announce a voluntary transition away from lead and single-use plastics in shotgun ammunition for live quarry shooting. Since then, we have continued to provide evidence to the HSE team reviewing lead and supplied feedback on their proposals to ensure they are proportionate and practical.

In this manifesto ahead of the 2026 Senedd Elections, we highlight our policy recommendations for sustainable shooting and practical conservation, which we believe should be adopted and endorsed by all Welsh political parties. We make these recommendations in good faith and with an open invitation to discuss them with elected representatives, policymakers and stakeholders.

Thank you for taking the time to read this manifesto.

Summary of policy proposals

- 1.** Public recognition of the importance of sustainable shooting and practical conservation to the Welsh rural economy, health and wellbeing, food production, rural heritage, culture and social life across Wales.
- 2.** Acknowledgement that sustainable shooting, when responsibly managed, delivers clear environmental benefits. As such, sustainable shooting represents a major yet underused resource for tackling the biodiversity crisis.
- 3.** A commitment from Welsh Government to create and deliver species action plans protecting species, agricultural crops, forestry and native flora and fauna.



1. The importance of sustainable shooting to Wales

Introduction

The Welsh countryside is home to a diverse community of individuals who facilitate shooting activities. From gamekeepers to pest controllers and conservation workers, these rural professionals are highly skilled and resolutely dedicated to our countryside and the wildlife that lives there.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. It ensures Welsh public bodies work collaboratively to give current and future generations a good quality of life. Shooting contributes towards all seven wellbeing goals:

1. A prosperous Wales – There is a £190 million annual benefit to the Welsh economy from shooting. Game shooting provides employment opportunities throughout Wales, ranging from gamekeeping roles to the beaters and pickers-up on shoots. It also allows the local hospitality industry to thrive through the winter months. The various shooting disciplines in Wales attract tourists from both the UK and overseas. Many of these make regular return visits after sampling what Wales has to offer.

2. A resilient Wales – Shooting activities play a substantial role in shaping the Welsh countryside. The conservation efforts of recreational shooters alone amount to the equivalent of 500 full-time jobs, representing a contribution valued at more than £10 million annually at minimum wage rates. Game shoots and BASC-affiliated wildfowling clubs and syndicates undertake large amounts of conservation work throughout the year. This work varies from single-species action plans to landscape-scale habitat management, and site-specific wardening to litter picks and monitoring initiatives. Examples of this include, in 2023, the Wentloog Wildfowling and Conservation Association (WWCA) using a loan from the BASC Wildlife Fund (BWF) to help buy more than 900 acres of mudflats bordering the salt marsh. It is on these flats that Natural Resources Wales (NRW) spent the summer of 2024 working to protect the marsh from further erosion. The club has willingly accepted the important role they play in helping to preserve and improve this vitally important habitat, so were delighted when NRW approached them about a project which involved establishing polders on the mudflats to reclaim the salt marsh from the sea.

3. A healthier Wales – Sustainable shooting and its associated conservation and management activities have a positive effect on both mental and physical health. They provide people with the opportunity to socialise during the harsh and often long winter months, bringing remote communities together. Shooting provides regular exercise for its participants by offering the chance to walk in the countryside, work dogs and reconnect with nature. Clay grounds, shooting clubs, rifle target clubs and facilities also play a vital role, not only in local rural communities, but by offering participants a wealth of physical and mental wellbeing benefits. The BASC Natural Capital report established that public health savings for the NHS and local authority budgets as a result of shooting are valued at £1.2 million. This is made up of physical health benefits and mental health benefits for people involved in shooting in Wales.

4. A more equal Wales – Countryside activities help to bring people together from all backgrounds, age groups and circumstances, leading to a better understanding of the Welsh countryside and improved community spirit in rural Wales.

A survey undertaken by BASC, the Countryside Alliance, the Game Farmers' Association and the National Gamekeepers' Organisation, has revealed the shocking statistic that almost two-thirds of gamekeepers across the UK have received abuse and threats as a direct result of their profession. With more than 1,000 responses, the survey undertaken at the end of 2020 produces a snapshot of the national picture. The findings highlight:

- Nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) of gamekeepers have experienced abuse and/or threats because of their occupation.
- Abuse via social media channels is a rising issue for gamekeepers, with 56 per cent of respondents recording an increase in the number of incidents over the last 12 months compared to previous years.
- Respondents who have been targeted also recorded increases in physical (32 per cent) and verbal (37 per cent) abuse.
- Some gamekeepers also reported that the pressure of being targeted for doing their job has led directly to the breakdown of personal relationships.

Across various organisations, it is agreed that gamekeepers play a pivotal role in moorland and peatland management. Their predator control work is recognised as being paramount to the success of many bird species in Wales. BASC intends to work with government and devolved administrations to raise awareness of the findings and ensure gamekeepers have all the resources available to them to ensure they are protected at their workplace.

5. A Wales of cohesive communities – Shooting helps to inspire people to get involved with practical conservation and voluntary work, and brings rural communities together through conservation projects, shoot days and other activities in rural Wales.

6. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language – The Welsh culture and language is echoed through the Welsh shooting community. The tales of the Mabinogion have numerous references to the hunting of wild game and BASC celebrates its unbroken inheritance down the generations. Harvesting game from the Welsh countryside is a tradition that has been passed down by our ancestors and future generations should not be denied this ancient tradition.

7. A globally responsible Wales – Conservation work delivered by the shooting community has wide-ranging positive benefits for the flora and fauna of Wales and contributes to wider international conservation goals.



Policy proposals

1.1. Recognise the significant contribution that sustainable shooting makes to the Welsh economy both directly through spending on goods and services and through the role it plays in the wider hospitality industry through providing winter tourism, and often keeping hotels, B&Bs and restaurants in rural communities going through a quiet period.

1.2. Recognise and understand that sustainable shooting has a benefit to physical and mental wellbeing.

One of the key health issues facing the Welsh population is mental health which, according to Public Health Wales, costs society in Wales £7 billion a year. The Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 places a duty on the government to tackle obesity and associated illnesses which cost the Welsh NHS circa £73 million a year. We would like to see the Welsh Government acknowledging the major physical and mental health benefits that all shooting disciplines offer. In the winter months, for example, shooting brings communities together when support is most needed. Shooting also encourages people to get involved with outdoor activities and exercise.

1.3. Promote and acknowledge the health benefits of Welsh game meat.

One of the main benefits of eating game meat is that it is one of the healthiest meats available, as it is very low in fat and cholesterol and very often has low food miles. We would like the Welsh Government to understand this and support new schemes that aid the production and processing of game meat in Wales with a long-term plan of seeing game meat on menus in hospitals and schools throughout Wales

1.4. Wider protection and education to reduce gamekeeper abuse and targeted negative interference towards legitimate rural businesses. We ask that Welsh Government helps stop this abuse and recognises and supports the valuable contributions made by gamekeepers/moorland managers/etc., to wildlife conservation and rural life in general.

Business and education support will be required to help inform urban Wales on how rural Wales is managed.



2. Protecting sustainable shooting in Wales and its environmental benefits

Sustainable shooting, conducted in line with best practice, provides huge benefits to people, the economy and our environment.

Estimates of the conservation benefits that come from shooting roll into millions of pounds in equivalent spend each year. The management of habitats like peatland, woodland and wetlands, and bespoke habitat creation areas such as cover crops and building nesting boxes, provide habitat for both quarry and wider wildlife. Likewise, managing deer, pests and predators reduces environmental damage, protects threatened species and reduces losses in farming and timber production.

Effective control of pest species such as rats, foxes and crows, which prey on songbirds and gamebirds by eating their eggs and young, is essential for maintaining ecological balance. Through legal predator control carried out under general licenses we can protect vulnerable species and habitats. The shooting community actively supports this work, investing considerable time and financial resources in projects that strengthen biodiversity and improve wildlife corridors.

The shooting community also supports scientific research and data collection through surveys such as the BASC Wing Survey which began in 1965 and send bag returns to government bodies such as Natural Resources Wales. Our community cares passionately about the environment, with many of our wildfowling clubs carrying out litter picks and informing agencies of significant changes to landscapes and species or even working with the onset projects.

The 2024 BASC Natural Capital report in Wales established that shooting and its associated habitat creation and management provided a benefit worth £26.8 million in terms of carbon sequestration; the capture, removal and storage of atmospheric carbon that is critical in mitigating the impacts of climate change.



Policy proposals

2.1. Act on scientific, well-informed data and work with stakeholders through round table discussions to develop policies to manage the countryside. BASC is represented in numerous stakeholder groups formed by NRW to review and report on findings of various codes. It is vital that the scientific evidence provided by stakeholders helps form any policy direction. Individual stakeholders who are practitioners on the ground must be given a voice on how best to manage the countryside.

2.2. Implement general licences only when supported by scientific evidence and data demonstrating the need for change. Any changes to the general licensing system must be funded appropriately and provide users with workable general licences which are easy to understand and straightforward to use. They must have appropriate timelines to allow the rural community to adapt and plan business changes. Consenting systems must be fair to all and treat all countryside stakeholders equally.

2.3. Adopt the BASC Sustainable Shooting Code of Practice as a Welsh Government code to ensure the long-term future of wildfowling and the sustainable harvesting of duck, geese, waders and rails.

2.4. Adopt and use the Code of Good Shooting Practice as a Welsh Government framework for game management in Wales to help shape and enhance our landscape as wildlife thrives when it is managed sustainably for shooting.

2.5. Protect and promote the key role that wildfowling clubs play on Crown Estate landscapes and continue to allow these positive shooting and land management arrangements. We propose that these agreements are not changed to ensure ongoing essential monitoring and wardening can continue for the benefit of the wildlife which depends on these truly wild landscapes. It will also ensure the historic cultural practices and local traditions related to the lives and wellbeing of the people who live in the area can continue. Ongoing engagement with the shooting community will be essential.

3. Species conservation management

For many people, deer stalking is a recreational activity, it is also necessary to protect agricultural crops, forestry and native flora, reduce road traffic accidents and, indeed, balance deer populations. Deer are prolific breeders and, if numbers are allowed to increase unchecked, they may become prone to starvation and disease. The control of deer numbers should always take place as part of a deer management plan which considers both the welfare of the animals and the damage they may cause.

There are five species of deer in Wales. Two of these species – red and roe – are native to the UK, while sika, fallow and muntjac are a result of historic introductions. Muntjac are particularly successful and are considered a problematic invasive non-native species (INNS). While fallow is currently the predominant species present in Wales, there is a notable expansion of roe and muntjac, with populations growing and distribution moving east to west.

Grey squirrels are a significant invasive non-native species in Wales, having spread rapidly after their introduction to Britain in the late 1800s. Grey squirrels outcompete native red squirrels for food. They also carry a viral infection, known as squirrel pox, which is fatal to red squirrels. The economic cost of grey squirrel damage to Welsh forests is estimated to be nearly £1 million per year. BASC currently chairs the stakeholder forum that is assisting the Welsh Government with the delivery of a specific management plan to mitigate the problems caused to nature and people by grey squirrels. The Welsh Government's Woodlands for Wales (WfW) Strategy sets out a 50-year strategy for woodlands and trees and will be far more challenging to deliver unless the negative impacts of grey squirrels are properly addressed.

These species present a threat to the Welsh Government's targets on the expansion of woodland cover, which relates to government climate change policies.

There is a growing concern over the expanding wild boar population in the Forest of Dean and some wild boar releases in south Wales, too. Apart from the extensive damage to road verges, village greens etc., they contribute to an increased number of road traffic accidents, which can be fatal. The chief concern regarding increased population size and spread is disease transmission, especially into the domestic pig herds of Wales.

The Eurasian curlew is the most pressing bird conservation priority in the UK. In Wales, responsibility for the delivery of the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) International Action Plan falls to the Welsh Government. Following a hugely successful Wales Curlew Conference in Builth Wells in 2018, a group was formed to push forward conservation of the species in Wales. Gylfinir Cymru, which includes BASC, has written the Wales Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of Eurasian Curlew at the request of the Welsh Government. This ten-year plan has driven forward co-ordinated conservation action to prevent the curlew from becoming extinct as a breeding bird in Wales by 2033, as is predicted according to its current population and rate of decline. The curlew is not just a single species needing our help; it is a true indicator of the health of our environment – and an environment where curlew thrive is one that meets the wider aims of the Welsh Government through the Environment Act.



Policy proposals

3.1. Produce a five-year Wild Deer Management Action Plan Wales (2026–2031) and a five-year Grey Squirrel Management Action Plan Wales (2026–2031).

BASC has previously played a major role in helping the Welsh Government achieve the outcomes in both the Action Plan for Wild Deer Management in Wales (2017–2022) and the Grey Squirrel Management Plan for Wales (2018–2023). BASC has been and can again be the delivery agent on many of the outcomes.

Continued support and updating of these plans are vital for the Welsh Government to achieve its targets, as set out in the following: Woodland for Wales (2009); Nature Recovery Plan (2015); Climate Change Strategy for Wales (2010); GB Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) Strategy.

3.2. Production of a five-year Feral Wild Boar Management Action Plan Wales (2026–2031).

Feral wild boar are established in Wales but are currently mostly confined to the southeast of the country, mainly to the east of the River Wye. Defra has a Feral Wild Boar Action Plan (2008), but the Welsh Government has not yet published a plan for Wales. The Defra plan helps protect domestic farming herds from disease as well as habitat in England, and it is vital that Wales develops and implements a management plan while there is still opportunity to stop the spread of wild boar across the country and prevent the variety of associated negative impacts they can have on livestock, public health and the landscape.

3.3. Delivery of the forthcoming Wales Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of Eurasian Curlew – to save the species and meet the aspirations of the Environment Act and Well-being of Future Generations Act.

BASC is a co-compiler and signatory to this plan, which is Wales' best hope to turn around the state of our environment, see curlew recover, and help fulfil the wider objectives of the Environment Act and Well-being of Future Generations Act. The UK has around a quarter of the worldwide breeding population of curlew; our responsibility is truly global for both the species and for people across its international flyway. BASC expects to see continued strong commitment from the Welsh Government across departments to help both Gylfinir Cymru and wider society succeed in creating a greener and more prosperous Wales.



About BASC

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) is the largest shooting organisation in the United Kingdom, with a membership of 150,000, including 7,000 members in Wales. BASC employs 140 staff across the UK (80 of which are based at its headquarters at Marford Mill, Wrexham, Wales), who are dedicated to ensuring a guaranteed future for sustainable shooting sports in all their diversity as a widely enjoyed and important part of the environment, economy and culture.





For more information, please contact:

Steve Griffiths

Director Wales

Email: Steve.Griffiths@basc.org.uk

Tel: 07771 921 500

© 2026 BASC – British Association for Shooting and Conservation

Head Office: Marford Mill, Rossett, Wrexham LL12 0HL

Registered Society No: 28488R



The British Association for Shooting & Conservation

COVER IMAGE: [ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/BRIDGENDBOY](https://www.istockphoto.com/bridgendboy)

IMAGES: NICK LANE, RICHARD FAULKS, IAN COOPER, SCOTT LITTLE AND [PIXABAY.COM/IAN KELSALL](https://www.pixabay.com/)