



## **British Association for Shooting and Conservation response to a Welsh Government consultation to inform the development of its Natural Resources Policy**

13<sup>th</sup> February 2017

By email to: NaturalResourceManagement@wales.gsi.gov.uk

### **Executive summary**

Shooting in Wales contributes to the sustainable management of natural resources, including safeguarding and increasing carbon stores; improving health and equity through access to good quality green and blue spaces; improving the quality and connectivity of our habitats; and retaining the distinctiveness of our places and historic landscapes.

BASC recommends that the Welsh Government funds the development of shooting sports in Wales to help improve habitat and species management, recreation and food production.

BASC works in collaboration with the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales on Green Shoots Invasive Alien Species Control, the Welsh Game Meat project and Greenland White-fronted Goose conservation.

### **Introduction**

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) is the largest representative body for sporting shooting with over 148,000 memberships. It aims to promote and protect sporting shooting and the wellbeing of the countryside. It actively promotes good firearms licensing practice, training, education, scientific research and practical habitat conservation. BASC believes that all who shoot should conduct themselves according to the highest standards of safety, sportsmanship and courtesy with a full respect for their quarry and a practical interest in wildlife conservation.

Shooting contributes £75 million annually to the Welsh economy and this supports the equivalent of 2,400 full time jobs in Wales.

Shooting interlinks with other sectors such as tourism. Shooting tourism represents an important boost for rural areas in Wales, which is especially important in tourist based businesses during the 'off season' months.

The management of 380,000 hectares of land in Wales is influenced by shooting sports. The conservation value of shooting in Wales is considerable, as indicated by the fact that the labour put into conservation work from shooting is equivalent to 490 full time workers (<http://www.shootingfacts.co.uk/>). We would like to work with the Welsh Government to increase these benefits.

## **Ecosystem approach to land management**

Shooting sports are an excellent example of how to deliver the ecosystem approach to land and resource management as follows:

### Provisioning services.

In terms of provisioning services, BASC is working in partnership with the Welsh Government on The Welsh Game Meat project which aims to identify and evaluate the potential for sustainable short supply chains, local markets and increased sales and consumption of game meat in Wales. We are grateful for the support from the Welsh Government in this project and expect it will encourage additional shoots to develop, bringing with it the multi-faceted benefits of shooting to the sustainable management of natural resources.

### Cultural services.

We know that over 450,000 days shooting takes place in Wales each year which provides an indication of how important shooting is for people's appreciation of landscape and biodiversity, recreation, well-being and tourism.

### Regulating and supporting services.

The habitat management and creation provided because of shooting in Wales supports these services. We know that the management of 380,000 hectares of land in Wales is influenced by shooting sports. In addition shooting provides species management on land, helping to control pest and predator populations that can threaten biodiversity and the sustainable management of natural resources.

## **BASC white paper on lowland game shooting**

In 2016 BASC released a white paper on lowland game shooting which draws upon evidence to demonstrate the benefits of shooting. For example it highlighted a range of benefits relevant to the sustainable management of natural resources such as its value for the landscape-scale conservation of non-quarry species groups like farmland birds and butterflies.

<https://basc.org.uk/blog/press-releases/latest-news/new-basc-white-paper-highlights-benefits-of-lowland-game-shooting/>

## **Deer management in Wales**

BASC also helped develop the Wild deer management in Wales Action Plan, which helps meet many of the objectives in the Woodland for Wales Strategy. Deer are an excellent example of the sustainable management of natural resources. They are a resource in their own right but their impact on habitats both on and off SSSI can be negative, which requires management. BASC manage a number of stalking schemes throughout the UK and has a proven track record of meeting culls to a high standard whilst providing stalking opportunities for our members. BASC would be keen to develop further stalking schemes and opportunities to manage deer throughout Wales.

## **Wildfowling in Wales**

Wildfowling clubs and their members around the coast of Wales provide all the benefits of ecosystem services and have been particularly active in responding to issues such as monitoring for Avian Influenza. However their targeted action for conservation should not go unrecorded. A recent example is the conservation of Greenland white-fronted geese where all wildfowling clubs are voluntarily signed up to a moratorium on shooting them. In addition BASC and the Dyfi, Mawddach & Dysynni Wildfowler's Association are members of the Greenland white-fronted Goose Partnership who are delivering targeted conservation work for the species in Wales; this work is benefiting from a Welsh Government grant that the partnership is administering.

## **BASC Wales Green Shoots Project**

BASC's biodiversity programme called Green Shoots is also closely allied with Welsh Government through NRW. We have a grant agreement in place to deliver the control of invasive alien species in strategic locations throughout Wales in partnership with our members and other conservation partners. There are two species for control; grey squirrels control both protects reds and trees and control of the American Mink benefits water voles and wider riparian species.

See: <https://basc.org.uk/conservation/green-shoots/green-shoots-in-wales/>

## **Key challenges for sustainable use of natural resources**

The consultation identifies a number of key challenges. Shooting can help address these challenges as follows.

### Safeguarding and increasing our carbon stores

Minded that there is a substantial target for afforestation in Wales, BASC would like to underline that non-upland shooting relies upon and is a driver for woodland creation and planting. Shooting is a potential additional ally for Welsh Government to work with on this target

### Maintaining our productive capacity

Shooting provides food for those taking part in the sport and others. Developing shooting would lead to an increase in locally produced and sustainable food production and consumption. In addition shooting is a regulator of pests for example grey squirrel which can damage trees.

### Reducing the risk of flooding

Across the UK, wildfowling clubs have undertaken numerous managed retreat projects as new intertidal areas are of use to wildfowling clubs. BASC and our wildfowling clubs have the potential to work with Welsh Government and NRW in identifying possible new projects to assist in flood control.

### Improving health and equity

Wellbeing is used by policymakers and the Government as an indicator and measure of our quality of life. Sports and outdoor activity are increasingly being recognised as important for their contributions to our physical, personal and social wellbeing. This report summarises results from a survey which investigated the wellbeing benefits people receive from taking part in shooting, beating, picking up, and habitat management. In short shooting makes an

important contribution to the health and well-being among people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.

See: <https://basc.org.uk/the-personal-value-of-shooting/>

Improving the quality and connectivity of our habitats

Shooting relies on good quality habitat. In addition connected habitat is important to shooting, from a network of woodlands on a game shoot to a pattern of wetlands for people involved with wildfowling. Therefore policies that allow shooting to grow will stimulate improvements to the quality of habitats as well as the quantity of habitat in Wales.

Retaining the distinctiveness of our places and historic landscapes

Shooting has helped shape Wales' landscapes over the centuries, both by providing the incentive to retain habitat and with creating new habitat. Shooting sports can make the creation of habitats desirable and financially viable in locations where it otherwise would not be.

BASC would be pleased to expand on any of the points covered in this consultation response and to meet with Welsh Government staff to help in the development of this natural resources policy.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Danby', with a long horizontal line underneath.

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