



**NATURAL ENGLAND
AND THE
BRITISH ASSOCIATION
FOR SHOOTING AND CONSERVATION:
PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**



Natural England and The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (and their predecessor bodies) have had a long and constructive mutual understanding and working relationship based on the recognition of the role the shooting community plays in the nature and landscape conservation of the English countryside. This Partnership Agreement replaces and builds upon the previous Statements of Common Interest and Cooperation. This Agreement reaffirms each organisation's appreciation of the other's interests and will be reviewed after three years. Annex 1 sets out specific arrangements for liaison and cooperation which will be reviewed annually to both measure success and identify further areas that would benefit from joint working. The provisions of this Agreement are not intended to create contractual obligations that are legally enforceable by either party.

1. Natural England's approach

- a) Natural England is the Government's adviser for the natural environment in England. Its remit is to help protect England's nature and landscapes, for people to enjoy and for the services they provide, both now and in the future. In April 2018 the Government published its 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment. Much of Natural England's work is now focused on helping to deliver this plan in partnership with others.
- b) Natural England acknowledges the place of field sports, practised within the law, in a shared countryside and recognises the particular value of a diverse and attractive natural environment to those who participate in these sports. Natural England recognises the contribution that field sports as an outdoor recreation can make to personal health and the contribution made to local economies, especially in rural areas. When working within the remit of its statutory duties and these factors are relevant, Natural England considers the social and economic interests of the people involved.
- c) Natural England believes that sporting shooting interests make positive contributions to England's biodiversity. However on special sites restrictions on sporting activities may be necessary to prevent damage to the special interest of the site, or rare, vulnerable or threatened species. Such restrictions will be discussed on a case by case basis in accordance with the Regulators' Code so as to avoid unnecessary regulatory burden.
- d) The activities which come under the ambit of the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) are compatible with nature conservation when responsibly pursued in accordance with applicable laws and regulation. Natural England wishes to continue to develop its relationship with BASC and through BASC, with those individuals involved in sporting shooting so that the general aims of nature and landscape conservation can be furthered alongside sporting shooting interest.

2. BASC's approach

- a. The British Association for Shooting and Conservation is the United Kingdom's representative body for all forms of sporting shooting. Through its 150,000 members, BASC has a management influence over significant areas of the countryside, covering a wide range of habitat types. For example, over 70% of the 105,000 hectares under the management influence of affiliated clubs in England is notified as SSSIs and survey work in Cheshire has shown that shooting has management influence over one third of the county. Game cover-crops provide benefits to farmland bird populations with deer control helping protect the diversity of England's woodlands. Wildfowling management initiatives contribute local commitment and knowledge to help the protection of many inland and coastal wetlands.
- b. The underlying approach is the sustainable use of the wildlife resource, with BASC's interest and commitment extending beyond quarry species. BASC believes that all sportsmen should embrace this principle since the well-being of the countryside and their sport depends on it. Acknowledged by Natural England, the BASC Green Shoots programme has clearly demonstrated the contribution that sporting shooting makes to biodiversity gain. The Green Shoots programme has the potential to make further significant contributions to the delivery of 25 Year Plan outcomes with land management for shooting also helping to maintain landscape features.
- c. BASC's conservation objectives are pursued by a professional headquarters and regional staff working in partnership with BASC membership and other conservation and land management organisations. Linking representative, advisory and research programmes with setting standards of conduct for sporting shooting (particularly through the BASC Codes of Practice, Code of Good Shooting Practice and Proficiency Award Scheme), BASC works to guide and promote shooting as a sustainable land use, contributing to the conservation of wildlife both within designated sites and in the wider countryside.

3. Arrangements for action

- a) BASC and Natural England will encourage regular contact between their appropriate staff, both local and national, to discuss issues, develop opportunities and, within the context and spirit of this agreement, to anticipate and resolve any conflicts which may arise between shooting and conservation objectives.
- b) More specifically the two organisations will agree an Action Plan (Annex 1) which identifies particular areas of activity and outcomes which BASC and Natural England will work to achieve. Working jointly, a Nominated Officer from each organisation will facilitate and monitor progress of the Action Plan and draft annual revisions, including the identification of new opportunities for joint working. Senior Officers, including CEO's, from each organisation will meet annually to review liaison and cooperation.

Effect

This Partnership Agreement has effect immediately. Both Natural England and BASC will make every endeavour to bring the contents and spirit of this Agreement to the attention of their respective staff, and, in the case of BASC, to its membership.

It is agreed that this agreement does not affect the constitution of the British Association for Shooting and Conservation.

Nothing in this Agreement shall prejudice, conflict with or affect the exercise by Natural England of its statutory functions, powers, rights, duties, responsibilities or obligations arising or imposed under any legislative provision enactment, bye-law or regulation whatsoever, nor shall it fetter the exercise of any discretion Natural England may have.

Nothing in this Agreement will create a joint venture between the parties, nor will this Agreement constitute one party as the agent of the other. Neither party will have authority to enter into any contract, warranty or representation as to any matter on behalf of the other party and neither party will be bound by the acts or conduct of the other.

Signed:  Signed: 
Chairman, Natural England Chairman, British Association for Shooting and Conservation

 

Date. 27th July 2018

ANNEX 1 – ACTION PLAN 2018 - 2021

NE and BASC have appointed a point of contact for each of the topic areas detailed within Annex 1. The appointed contact will take responsibility for progressing the specific topics.

The Action Plan will cover the following

1. BASC's contribution to the delivery of Biodiversity outcomes for Defra's 25 year environment plan and NE's Conservation 21 Strategy

The Green Shoots programme provides an excellent foundation on which to develop opportunities for BASC members to contribute to monitoring and conserving habitats that contributes not only to the environment but to the resilience of our landscapes, involving people and supporting and growing our natural capital.

Natural England will assist BASC staff through advice and other appropriate means in the continuing development of its conservation programme. Where appropriate, Natural England will liaise with BASC staff on matters relating to shooting management and its successful integration with nature conservation needs.

NE's appointed contact - Rob Cathcart, Principal Adviser Biodiversity

BASC's appointed contact – Ian Danby, Head of Biodiversity

2. Wild deer management

Browsing by deer can have a negative impact on the condition and biodiversity of many woodland habitats. Working with others as appropriate, BASC and Natural England will investigate ways in which recreational stalking schemes might contribute to delivery of a sustainable and well-managed wild deer population in England.

NE's appointed contact – Adrian Jowitt, Principle Adviser

BASC's appointed contact – Glynn Evans, Head of Game and Deer Management

3. Scientific Research

Recognising the essential role of evidence in underpinning sustainable use and conservation, BASC and Natural England will explore ways to collaborate on the identification, planning and conducting of relevant research projects. Such projects may include, but are not limited to, the use of lead ammunition, harvest data and statistics and the impacts of recreational disturbance.

NE's appointed contact – Dave Stone, Deputy Chief Scientist

BASC's appointed contact – Dr Matt Ellis, Head of Science

4. Wildlife Licencing

BASC and Natural England will work together to build into advice and standards associated with shoot management activities, measures that reduce the need for licensable activities. Natural

England will consult with BASC on any reviews of strategic licences relevant to their area of interest.

NE's appointed contact – Ginny Swaile – Manger Advice, Incentives and Regulation

BASC's appointed contact - Glynn Evans, Head of Game and Deer Management

5. Wildfowling consents

BASC and Natural England will explore ways to improve the service associated with the issuing of consents to BASC's affiliated wildfowling clubs. Particular emphasis will be placed on ensuring that the reasons for any terms and conditions of consents are transparent, evidence based and proportionate to the activities undertaken by wildfowling clubs. BASC and Natural England will also promote opportunities for staff interchanges and local wildfowling visits to increase the respective understanding of both wildfowling and consenting remit and processes.

NE's appointed contact – Matthew Powell, Senior Advisor Protected Areas

BASC's appointed contact – James Green, BASC's Head of Wildfowling

6. Shoot Guidance

Natural England will work with BASC to help develop guidance for shoots on how their activities can be undertaken in a way that does not impact upon biodiversity interests, rather can help enhance wildlife. This could be part of work within the shooting industry on self-regulation or building on the code of good shooting practice.

NE's appointed contact – Adrian Jowitt, Principle Adviser

BASC's appointed contact - Glynn Evans, Head of Game and Deer Management