

20/04/2017

Mr Graeme Day MSP,

Committee convener Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform

Mr Dey

I am most certain that you will have by now digested the salient facts from the most recent Environment Climate Change and Land Reform Committee (ECCLR) evidence session with Lord Bonomy. 28th March 2017.

I wanted to take this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to the overall objective of increased transparency and confidence in the use of dogs in association with exceptions within the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002 to stalk and flush foxes and other wild mammals from cover to be shot.

We were pleased to hear the volume and variety of questions from members and the frank answers from Lord Bonomy. I do however need to point out one or two points discussed.

1. We were particularly heartened to hear Lord Bonomy clarify his thoughts on the most misquoted statement from his report and that he **doesn't subscribe to the view that the 2002 Act is "almost unworkable"**. Further explaining that No evidence was tendered to him that there was a need for additional resources to enforce the 2002 Act.
2. Although outside of Lord Bonomys brief, Mark Ruskell MSP probed on the number of foxes killed by hounds. Mr Ruskell suggested that Lord Bonomy had found that 20% of foxes accounted for by mounted packs were killed by hounds.

Whilst Lord Bonomy made some effort to correct Mr Ruskell on the numerical value as anecdotal, he failed to refer to his own report and to define that the number referenced were foxes in the process of being flushed or indeed wounded by shooting. Not chased and killed, as intimated.

This can be further qualified as an anecdotal comparison of foxes killed in the process of flushing when done so by hounds and terriers. i.e. anecdotal evidence suggests that 20% more foxes are killed by hounds during flushing than are killed by terriers during flushing.

Lord Bonomy reported

6.19 The material before the Review suggests that more foxes are killed by hounds **in the course of flushing or further to being wounded than are killed by terriers in the course of flushing from below ground.** Purely on the basis of anecdotal evidence, it appears that in general 20% or more of foxes disturbed by hunts are killed in this way by hounds.

It is our belief that the anecdotal evidence referenced was taken from one written submission. You might want to circulate this within the committee for information.

3. In your letter of invitation to Lord Bonomy, 1st February 2017 you wrote:

The ECCLR Committee, which has the protection of wild mammals as part of its remit, would therefore like to hear more about the findings of the Review and your proposals for change.

I should add that the Committee heard only yesterday from the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform that the Scottish Government intends to consult on many of your recommendations during the course of the current Parliamentary session. **Ms Cunningham also confirmed that stakeholders will be invited to develop a new Code of Practice for adoption by all mounted hunts as soon as possible**

It is my understanding that any new COP will apply to all those utilising dogs to flush wild mammals as described within the 2002 Act? Can you confirm this?

I wanted also to take the opportunity to update you and the committee to our ongoing commitment to assist agents of the Scottish Government in coordinating the COP stakeholders working group and to Police Scotland, by confirming a range of kennel open days.

Invitations will be issued to Police Scotland operations within the pack boundaries and to appropriate MSPs. I will ensure that the Cabinet Secretary and ECCLR committee members are invited.

I look forward to your response

Kind Regards
Jamie Stewart

Director
Scottish Countryside Alliance