

13 October 2016

## Countryside Alliance Parliamentary Update

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### Highlights

#### **Petitions Committee launches inquiry into grouse shooting**

Following an online petition calling for driven grouse shooting to be banned and a counter petition supporting grouse shooting, the Petitions Committee has agreed to allocate time for a Westminster Hall debate on Monday 31 October. However, they are holding an [inquiry into grouse shooting](#) to help inform MPs ahead of the debate. The Countryside Alliance submitted written evidence to the inquiry and will be taking part in the only oral evidence session on Tuesday 18 October which will be a joint session with the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee.

#### **Nominate now in the Countryside Alliance Awards**

The Awards, known as the Rural Oscars, are back. They are the most prestigious rural business awards to win, and recognise those who routinely go the extra mile for their community. If you want to nominate a farm enterprise, local food & drink producer, village shop/post office or a rural tourism enterprise then you can [nominate online](#) by Friday 4 November. Thank you to everyone who has supported so far.

#### **Digital exclusion and BBC debated at party conferences**

The Countryside Alliance once again attended the autumn party conferences. We hosted events at the [Liberal Democrat](#), [Labour](#) and [Conservative](#) conferences entitled "Tackling Digital Exclusion in the Countryside." At the [Conservative](#) conference we hosted a second event entitled "Does the BBC Deliver for the Countryside?" All events were well attended and produced useful debate on these important issues.

### Government Bills

#### **Policing and Crime Bill**

Improvements to firearms licensing that the Countryside Alliance called for back in March 2016 have now been tabled as Government amendments to the Policing and Crime Bill in the Lords. The British Shooting Sports Council has welcomed the proposal to extend the life of a certificate, if a renewal has been submitted in a timely fashion, and the proposal to move expanding ammunition, of the kind used for deer stalking, back to Section 1. These amendments have the support of the police. We are hoping that the Government will also bring forward an amendment to clarify who may lend and borrow firearms.

#### **Digital Economy Bill**

The Bill received its Second Reading in the Commons on 12 September and is currently in Committee Stage. The Countryside Alliance welcomed this Bill as an important step towards ensuring universal connectivity. The Alliance will submit written evidence to the Committee and will brief at Report Stage. The Alliance also gave oral evidence to the Committee during a session on 11 October. The evidence can be viewed [here](#) (10.30-11.00).

## Select Committees

### **EFRA Committee considers animal welfare, flooding, rural tourism and forestry**

The Inquiry into **Animal Welfare** has concluded and we are awaiting the final report and recommendations. This included an examination of the RSPCA's role in enforcement of animal welfare laws. Our [written evidence](#) highlighted the potential conflict of interest between the Society's charitable, campaigning, investigatory, and prosecuting roles.

The Inquiry into **Future Flood Prevention** has concluded and we are awaiting the final report and recommendations. This included an examination of upland management. Our [written evidence](#) highlighted the role that grouse moor managers play in heather and peatland restoration and the importance this can make to water management.

The Inquiry into **Rural Tourism** is on-going. We have submitted written evidence on the importance of tourism to the rural economy and the role that country sports play in this.

The Inquiry into **Forestry in England** is on-going. We will be submitting evidence on the important role that shooting plays in the management of many woodlands.

### **Environmental Audit Committee examines 're-wilding'**

The Inquiry into the **The Future of the Natural Environment after the EU Referendum** is on-going. We have submitted [written evidence](#) highlighting concerns about 'rewilding' which was one of the questions in the terms of reference.

## Debates

### **Safety of airguns**

On 14 September there was a Westminster Hall debate on the use of airguns by under 18's (David Hanson, Lab, Delyn). The Countryside Alliance welcomed the chance for the use and safety of airguns to be debated and the Government described the debate as "well-balanced and meaningful". Our brief is available [here](#).

### **Effects of leaving the EU on UK tourism**

On 12 October there was a Westminster Hall debate on the potential effect of the UK leaving the EU on UK tourism (Nigel Huddleston, Con, Mid Worcestershire). The Countryside Alliance welcomed this debate as a chance to highlight the importance of tourism to rural areas and the role that country sports tourism plays within this. Our brief is available [here](#).

## Reports and Publications

### **New Code of Practice for snares is published**

Defra Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Therese Coffey MP, has written the foreword to a new Code of best practice on the use of snares for fox control in England. The new Code follows the example set by the Welsh Government, by incorporating the latest research on snaring practices and technological developments on snare design. The Countryside Alliance contributed to the development of the new Code and welcomes its publication. It will help deliver higher animal welfare standards, improve efficiency in fox control, whilst minimising the risk to non-target species.

### **State of Nature Report reaction**

The State of Nature Report has been published, and it would appear to be grim reading. Our immediate reaction is that it confirms what we have known for a long time; we have an immediate fight on our hands to conserve some of our most precious species. Everyone who cares about wildlife will be united in the view that "something must be done". Our response is available [here](#).

## Away from Westminster

### **Casting for Recovery final retreat of 2016**

The [final Casting for Recovery retreat](#) of 2016 was held at Forbes of Kingennie, near Dundee, on the weekend of 23-25 September, with eleven ladies who have, or have had breast cancer, taking part in the unique medical and fly fishing program. Plans are underway for 2017's retreat schedule and this will be announced at the end of October, which is also breast cancer awareness month. Applications are already open for the [Coniston retreat in April 2017](#).

### **Fishing 4 Schools' Norfolk success**

Over 50 pupils from four Norfolk schools attended an [open day at Lenwade Pike Club Lake](#) on Tuesday 13 September. F4S director Charles Jardine said "huge thanks are due to all the people who made this day so special. This brief introduction to fishing might be a moment that changes the children's lives forever and offers them both a pastime and link to so many school-based activities." If you know a school that would like to take part in the F4S program then please let us know.

### **Hunting Newcomers Week**

The Countryside Alliance's annual [Hunting Newcomers' Week](#) will take place from 22-29 October. The aim of this week is to introduce as many new faces to the hunting field as possible and to encourage those that have never been hunting before to give it a try.

### **For more information on any of the articles please contact:**

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