

26th November 2019

Dear Vice Chancellor

We were confused and disappointed at the recent decision by the Executive Board to end game shooting on University of Reading land. This decision goes against all available evidence. It is a sad day when a university, especially one of Reading's standing in the agricultural world, values the prejudice of animal rights activists over facts and science.

The environmental benefits of the shoot at Hall Farm are well documented. The shoot has undertaken an ambitious program of tree planting, planted and maintained cover crops each year that provide valuable habitat for all wildlife, provided supplementary feed throughout Autumn and Winter which benefits songbirds as well as gamebirds, and has undertaken predator control, allowing the return of red listed farmland birds such as the grey partridge.

All of the techniques employed by the shoot are recognised by peer reviewed science as critical to maintaining biodiversity on British farms. Indeed, the Hall Farm shoot, has been so successful in their conservation efforts that they have won a nationally recognised award. All of this was at no cost to the university. Will you now make additional funding, to the tune of tens of thousands of pounds, available to fill this gap? Or simply consign the good conservation work of your previous tenants to history?

The University of Reading has a justifiably prestigious reputation for its agriculture and land management teaching. Running a game shoot on farmland is very much part of the British vernacular of land management. The techniques employed by the managers at Hall Farm were backed by almost all land management organisations, from the NFU to the RSPB. The Hall Farm shoot also has a long history of integration with the University, its students and its employees. Ending the shoot is denying future members of the University this important exposure to shooting on an intimate and sustainable scale.

Your decision is damaging to your students and to your reputation as a university, especially in the rural community from which many of your students have come. The decision made by your Executive Board was clearly neither based on evidence or principle and we would ask that the University revisit it urgently to protect not only the biodiversity of the land it is steward of, but also its own reputation as an academic institution.

Yours sincerely,



Tim Bonner
Chief Executive
Countryside Alliance