



SHOOTING IN WALES

for countryside & community

A CASE FOR SUPPORT

FOREWORD

“I truly believe that shooting in rural
Wales is bound up with our
nation’s sporting culture
and traditions.”

It gives me immense pleasure to have been asked by the Countryside Alliance to write this foreword because gameshooting has played as important a part in guiding my life as rugby. I truly believe that shooting in rural Wales is bound up with our nation’s sporting culture and traditions.

I grew up spending long hours fishing, and later shooting, in our beautiful Welsh countryside. Over the years both sports have brought me magical times, close to nature, whether casting a fly for sewin on a balmy bat-filled summer’s night on the Towy or watching for a woodcock at the side of a Merionethshire copse on an icy day in deep mid-winter. I would dearly love others to experience the same joys.

I ask you *please* – whether a politician, journalist or member of the public – to take just five minutes to read what’s inside, with a genuinely open mind.

————— *Sir Gareth Edwards* CBE
Patron of the National Gamekeepers’ Organisation



Shooting *in* Wales

COUNTRYSIDE AND
COMMUNITY

“There are thousands of people across
Wales working to stem the decline
of farmland birds and habitats, motivated
by a love of wildlife and a love of shooting.
Shooting in Wales lays out how they achieve this,
and how you can support them.”

“Supporting shooting is to support conservation, social and economic success stories throughout Wales.”

Woven into Wales

A NATIONAL
PASSION

Shooting is woven into the fabric of the Welsh countryside. Some of the country’s wildest corners are in fact shaped by centuries of intricate management, their beauty formed by the rhythms of nature working in synthesis with the efforts of the people who live there. Farming has played a huge role in shaping these landscapes, but it is shooting that has ensured that those farms continue to be infused with hedgerows, small woodlands, lakes, ponds and even stunning swathes of heather moorland. The desire to harvest wild game from the Welsh countryside gives farmers and landowners a motivation and often the finances needed to maintain habitats that might otherwise be grazed or fall under the plough.

It is this diversity of habitats found on shooting estates, and the passion for wildlife found among people who shoot, that makes shooting so valuable in the fight to conserve declining bird species. But shooting’s contribution to Welsh rural life goes even further. At a time when people worry about rootlessness and loss of community, shooting helps people relate to their local landscape. Wild game in their pubs and restaurants connects people’s food to the conservation of their environment. Joining a driven shoot in the beating line allows people of all ages and backgrounds to get into the heart of the countryside and enjoy the physical rejuvenation and clarity of mind that comes from getting close to nature. Supporting shooting is to support these conservation, social and economic success stories throughout Wales.



380,000

hectares in Wales benefit from shoot management



Most shooters that I have met are from very different backgrounds, it is a pastime that develops friendship and companionship through a love and loyalty to the countryside and the outdoor life.

JAMES SMITH
Llanfynydd, Carmarthenshire

BEATING RURAL
ISOLATION

Community

“Shooting is a crucial part of these rural communities, with people making an average of 20 friends specifically by getting involved.”

Shooting is fundamental to rural communities in Wales, providing opportunities for people from all walks of life to come together in the great outdoors and enjoy each other’s company. Almost 25% of people in the most rural parts of Wales feel isolated, a problem to which a vibrant rural community is the solution. Thankfully 83% of people in such areas feel a strong sense of community and 95% enjoy being part of their communities¹. Shooting is a crucial part of these rural communities, with people making an average of 20 friends specifically by getting involved².

It is too easy when thinking about shooting to only consider the person pulling the trigger. It is true that a huge range of people take part in shooting, from competitive shots at the clay ground to a solitary wildfowler on the windswept foreshore and the driven game shot on the beautifully managed pheasant shoot. But even greater diversity can be found in the rest of the shooting community, the local people who make up the essential core of beaters and pickers up. Beaters are often local youngsters looking to make some extra pocket money, or retirees with decades of experience of the countryside. Pickers up are dog handlers who devote hours to the training and care of their working dogs and are a vital part of game shooting. All gather to enjoy the community and camaraderie that is so central to understanding shooting in Wales.

¹ Arsyllfa Wledig Cymru, 2009. Deep Rural Localities

² Public and Corporate Economic Consultants, 2014. The Value of Shooting

The Hand at Llanarmon

The Hand is a traditional hostelry in north east Wales renowned for its award winning food.

“People come from as far as Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool just to eat with us, we are known for our food and game plays a very important part of our menu” says Jonathon

Greatorex, who runs The Hand with his wife Jackie. But shooting doesn’t only contribute to the menu. Situated in the glorious countryside of the Berwyns, The Hand is unsurprisingly surrounded

by successful shooting estates such as Vivod, Chirk Castle and McAlpines that draw visitors to the area during what most tourist attractions consider the quiet season. Jonathon continues:

“Shooting contributes to approximately £50,000 of our annual income and keeps us busy during the winter months. Quite simply, if it wasn’t for shooting, we wouldn’t be here, it wouldn’t be sustainable”.

Owners Jonathon and his wife Jackie are pictured at their hotel The Hand at Llanarmon.



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£75m

investment in the Welsh economy every year

Local economies

INVESTING
IN WALES

Shooting directly contributes £75million gross value added to the Welsh economy every year¹. Government research has shown that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are even more important to the Welsh rural economy than they are elsewhere², and it is exactly these SMEs that the 76,000 people who shoot in Wales support.

Shooters pay for accommodation and services wherever they travel. Tables in pubs and restaurants and rooms in hotels and B&Bs are booked by shooters throughout the game shooting season, which coincides with the otherwise quiet winter months. The food served in these eateries is supplemented with seasonal Welsh game, meat that is healthy, supremely free range and sustainable. Out of the game shooting season these

shooters will be paying to hone their skills at one of the 23 Welsh Clay Target Shooting Association affiliated shooting grounds, or one of the hundreds of smaller clay shooting grounds.

Shooting estates source many materials and services locally, spending money with game farmers, contractors, seed and feed merchants, agricultural suppliers, machinery dealers, caterers and all manner of local tradespeople. Shooting also supports 2,400 Full Time Equivalent jobs, often in locations where employment opportunities might be limited. 64% of all shoot providers in the UK say that all of their staff live within 10 miles of the shoot, ensuring wages are being spent supporting local businesses and services.

¹ Public and Corporate Economic Consultants, 2014. The Value of Shooting

² Wales Office, 2011. Rural Economy Taskforce Summary Report

Conservation

GIVING WILDLIFE
A HOME

“It should come as no surprise that when management for shooting stops, vulnerable wildlife suffers.”

Shooting estates manage a wide range of habitats, providing benefits not only to the wild game that end up as food on the table, but also boosts populations of vulnerable species that are in decline elsewhere.

Every year shooting estates in Wales spend £7.4 million on planting trees, managing hedgerows, cultivating cover crops and conservation headlands, coppicing woodlands and maintaining habitat, while wildfowling clubs remove tonnes of litter from the Welsh coastline. Shooters undertake 119,000 days of conservation work across the Welsh countryside annually¹. This management benefits rare songbirds, geese and waders, providing them with shelter, food and protection from predators.

As such it should come as no surprise that when management for shooting stops, vulnerable wildlife suffers. Grouse shooting declined in the 50 years after World War II, coming to an end altogether in the late 1990s. The loss of shoot management resulted in the localised extinction of lapwings, a 90% decline in golden plover, a 79% decline in curlew, an 80% decline in ring ouzel and a 49% decline in hen harriers². Supporting shooting across the 380,000 hectares of Wales that it influences helps to ensure these valuable species do not experience similar declines elsewhere.

¹ Public and Corporate Economic Consultants, 2014. The Value of Shooting

² Baines, D. and Warren, P. 2012. Changes in upland bird numbers and distribution in the Berwyn Special Protection Area, North Wales between 1983 and 2012



Welsh Shooting estates spend

£7.4m

on conservation every year



We have created 3 hectares of grass margins around our arable fields and 5.5 hectares of wildlife cover crop.

Without a shoot it's unlikely that we would have that.

Hares and owls are abundant on this farm due to the diverse habitats which we've created.

TIM ROSSELLI
Bryn-y-Pys Home Farm

CASE STUDY

The Camddwr Shooting Society

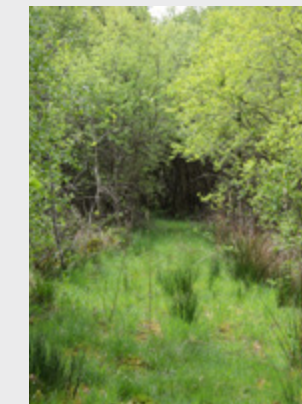
The Camddwr Shooting Society has the rights to 1,080 hectares, and while they only shoot over less than half of this area, their conservation work covers all of it. Society Chairman and founder member David Owen recalls that “when we started fifty years ago there was virtually no woodland here and game of any sort was very scarce.” Today there are 54 small woodlands on the site, and 19 lakes where previously there were none at all.

A small number of pheasants are released every year, but the main focus is on wild game. The newly created woodlands have been carefully crafted to maximise the valuable woodland-edge habitat and provide a valuable blend of thick bramble understorey and broadleaved trees, resulting in significant conservation impact.

One species that has particularly benefitted from the Society's shoot management is the red-listed woodcock. Having experienced a 29% decline across Britain since 2003, returns from the Camddwr Shooting Society show a 17-fold increase in the species since 1963.

Mr Owens said “my own father, who left Taihirion in 1912 but returned for holidays annually, never saw a woodcock, but the woods and ponds we have created have resulted in substantial numbers”.

Pictured are examples of the woodland and ponds created by the Camddwr Shooting Society, managed to maximise woodland fringe habitat.



Newly created woodlands have been carefully crafted to maximise the valuable woodland-edge habitat.



Gamekeepers make the countryside more beautiful, accessible and wildlife-rich for all who go there.

CUSTODIANS OF THE LAND

Gamekeepers

All over Wales hardworking men and women take on the role of gamekeeper, custodians and stewards of the land. Much like a nature reserve warden or a National Park ranger, gamekeepers undertake the essential tasks that keep the countryside running. Usually operating in the working countryside alongside farmers, gamekeepers create a healthy environment by maintaining hedgerows, managing woodlands, and controlling pests that threaten agriculture, wildlife and game. They also perform a crucial public service through maintaining fences, footpaths and stiles, reducing rural crime such as poaching and machinery theft, and assisting with wildfire control.

These are highly skilled tasks, and gamekeeping is a demanding vocation. A gamekeeper needs to understand the natural history of the habitats they

manage, be able to use firearms and legal traps safely and with great field craft, and be skilled in the use of increasingly complicated land-based machinery. These skills were once passed from father to son, but the modern gamekeeper is increasingly expected to undertake formal apprenticeships or college courses, take practical qualifications in chainsaw use, all-terrain vehicle driving and deer management, and attend best-practice courses on subjects such as snaring.

Supporting shooting means supporting this network of countryside management professionals, without whom the Welsh farmed landscape would be a much poorer place. Gamekeepers may be funded by the shooting community, but they make the countryside more beautiful, accessible and wildlife-rich for all who go there.

119,000

working days spent on conservation by Welsh gamekeepers and the shooting community every year



Gwilym Jones

Gwilym started honing his gamekeeping skills at the age of 11, helping his father with the keeping tasks around the Llangynog estate near Powys. Six years later, just one week before finishing school, Gwilym was offered a gamekeeping job of his very own. 48 years on and he is still going, the last 37 of which have been spent on the Glasfryn estate, near Pwllheli. “I can honestly say I have enjoyed every minute”, he says. Gwilym reckons the best part of being a gamekeeper is being in the outdoors working alongside nature. “Every day there’s something different” he says, “you see something new in nature”. Gwilym is equally passionate about eating game. Three decades ago he realised that people would eat more game if it was presented dressed and prepared, and he has been plucking and supplying oven-ready birds ever since. All the birds shot at Glasfryn are either sold to local pubs, hotels and individuals or served up to the shooters for lunch by Gwilym’s wife Wendy. As Gwilym says, “If you are going to shoot it you better eat it!”

Gwilym is pictured on the 1,200 hectare estate he runs near Pwllheli, North-west Wales.



“I had one ambition and that was to be a gamekeeper. I got laughed at by my teachers, but I was head keeper by the age of 21.”

NEIL ROBBINS
Head Keeper, Edwinsford Estate, near Llandeilo



*Across Wales people are getting involved,
trying the Olympic sports of clay target shooting,
beating on a driven game shoot or getting out
on the coast with their local wildfowling club.*

How can you support shooting?

Get to know your **Assembly Members** and **Members of Parliament**, supporting legislation that supports the shooting community in their important work.

Eat game! You'll find it stocked in the best of Wales' pubs, restaurants, hotels, farm shops and butchers. It is healthy, delicious and easy to prepare.

Get involved! Find your local shoot and go beating or head to your local clay target ground and have a go at shooting.

Join the Countryside Alliance, the voice of the Welsh countryside.

For more information of the benefits of shooting in Wales, please contact:

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**COUNTRYSIDE
ALLIANCE**