



The Rt Hon George Eustice MP
Secretary of State
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

20 April 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

We wrote to you on 16 March, to highlight a serious and emerging threat to the UK rural environment.


In our letter we emphasised our concern that Defra and Natural England's approach to the use of individual licences on Natura 2000 sites or within 300m of them is causing mayhem for gamekeepers, farmers and pest controllers and will also cause immense problems for Government. Unfortunately, as predicted, this is proving to be the case:

1. Our understanding is that there are circa 1000 outstanding applications for individual licences dating back to January this year. No licences have been granted to-date. In the uplands, these applications cover predatory corvids and gulls.
2. This is the second year running that on England's most precious biodiversity sites and well into the breeding season, the management of predatory bird species is not being carried out due to Natural England's failure to carry out the specific appropriate assessments in a timely, logical, planned and enabling way. The underpinning layer of SSSI protection of interest features is being sacrificed in order to focus on different single species cited in the EU designation where there is simply no scientific evidence to justify the overly precautionary approach being taken towards disturbance.
3. Last week, NE emailed applicants to ask them if they would like to withdraw their application's for individual licences because they were struggling to issue them due to COVID 19 restrictions. Even where the application is for the purpose of wild bird conservation, NE offers in its email Section 4 as a defence of operating without a licence. There is no such protection under this section for conservation purposes.

Urgent action is required. We would ask that you personally give this your attention and prioritise the delivery of individual licences especially for conservation purposes.

We need you to act now, in resolving this crisis in the management of wildlife on Natura 2000 sites and within 300m of them.

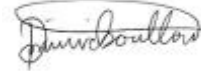
Yours sincerely,



Tim Bonner
Chief Executive
Countryside Alliance



Liam Bell
Chairman
NGO



Dominic Boulton
Chairman
Game Farmers
Association



Nick Downshire
Chairman
Moorland Association



Mark Tufnell
Vice President
CLA



Eoghan Cameron
Chairman
BASC

NB: Please direct any response to Mr Eoghan Cameron, Chairman, BASC Marford Mill, Rossett, Wrexham LL12 0HL