

Ministerial Event Checklist

Please ensure all boxes are completed accurately.

Completed briefings should be submitted **electronically** to the DS Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs mailbox and copy recipients. Additionally **two hard copies** of the final briefing should be submitted to the Minister's private office Ty Hywel, Cardiff Bay.

DC/LG/02552/20	To be returned to PO by: 2 November 2020
Title of Event	Meeting with Bethan Collins and Andy Knott MBE of the League Against Cruel Sports
Date of Event	4 November between 12:00pm and 12:30pm
Location of Event	Virtual meeting
Time of Minister's Arrival	N/A
Time of Minister's Departure	N/A
Official attending & Mobile number	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Start time of Minister's Speech <i>(if applicable)</i>	N/A
End time of Minister's Speech <i>(if applicable)</i>	N/A
Contact at the organisation <i>(including mobile phone number)</i>	N/A
Who will greet the Minister on arrival <i>(if different)</i>	N/A
Any additional information you wish to draw to the attention of the Minister or private office? <i>(e. g. Press/Q&A/Media/Photography arrangements/Local Cllr's attending/AM/MP's)</i>	N/A
Accompanying Documents – to be tabbed with document numbers	Doc 1 – Purpose of meeting & Agenda / Programme Doc 2 – Delegate List & Pen Pics Doc 3 – Lines to Take & Key issues Doc 4 – Background Briefing

Drafting official (including division and ext. no)	[Redacted]
Cleared by	[Redacted]
Copy recipients	PS Cab Sec for Env & RA [Redacted] PS Special Advisors Dan Butler Ceri Witchard Christianne Glossop [Redacted]

Doc 1 - Agenda

The League Against Cruel Sports (LACS) would like to discuss the following agenda items with you:-

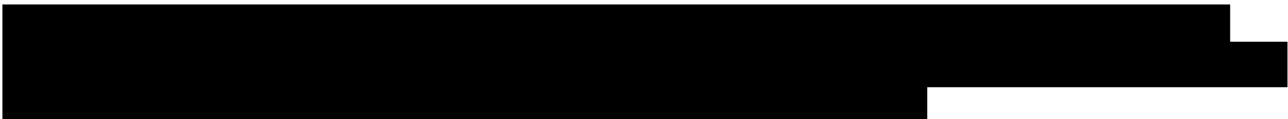
- The use of animal snares in Wales, their impact on animal welfare and the need to ban their use.
- The use of cages for the breeding of game birds in Wales, their impact on animal welfare and the need to ban their use.
- The need for increased scrutiny of the game shooting industry in Wales.
- Trail / illegal hunting in Wales, including on council-owned land.

Doc 2 – Attendee List and Pen Pics

Andy Knott MBE – Chief Executive Officer



Bethan Collins - Senior Public Affairs Officer Wales



Doc 3 – Lines to take

Snares

- The Welsh Government's Code of Practice on the use of snares in fox control places the welfare of animals at its core. The Code was published in September 2015 and provides clear guidance on the operation and inspection of fox snares.
- The Code of Practice states snares should only be used when other control methods are not available.
- The Code of Best Practice on the Use of Snares in Fox Control is aimed at those who use snares in the Welsh countryside. It seeks to deliver higher animal welfare standards, increased efficiency in terms of fox control, and ensure that fewer non-target species are being caught.
- Whilst the Welsh Government has developed a Code of Practice to improve snare user practice in fox control, we are considering whether in the future further regulatory action may be required to existing controls on the use of snares to improve animal welfare standards.
- It is important to continue to collect evidence on snare use in Wales as this will help me decide if further regulations or a ban is needed.
- I am prepared to consider taking further steps should the Code prove ineffective.
- I advised the Petitions Committee that before the end of this Assembly term, I will publish a White Paper which will pave the way for the introduction of an Agriculture (Wales) Bill during the sixth Senedd term. The intention is for the Bill to include provisions that will give Welsh Ministers the legislative powers to regulate all aspects of the sale and use of snares in Wales.

Doc 4 – Background Briefing

Snares

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 the use of a ‘self-locking’ snare is unlawful; only free-running snares can lawfully be set. A free-running snare is a wire loop that relaxes when the animal stops pulling, whilst a self-locking snare is a wire loop that does not relax when the animal stops pulling.

In Wales snares are commonly used by gamekeepers and farmers mainly to control foxes, when other legal methods cannot be used because of high vegetation cover, terrain, or fox behaviour, and to a lesser extent rabbits. They are used to restrain animals prior to its despatch. Although they can be used for restraint without injury, neck snares are recognised as capable of causing injury and death to target and non-target animals, and for this reason are controversial.

The 2019 UK General Election Labour manifesto contained a commitment to ban snares (and glue traps).

In September 2015, the Welsh Government published the ‘Welsh Government Code of best practice on the use of snares in fox control’ the ‘Code’. The Code was developed with Countryside Alliance, National Gamekeepers' Organisation, British Association for Shooting and Conservation, NFU, FUW, Police, Nation Wildlife Crime Unit, British Veterinary Association, League Against Cruel Sports (LACS), Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) and One Kind.

The Code is a statutory code issued under Section 14 of the Welfare Act 2006. This Act sets out that if a person fails to comply with a provision of the Code this shall not in itself render them liable to proceedings of any kind. However, in any proceedings against a person for an offence under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 a failure to comply with a relevant provision of the Code may be relied upon as tending to establish liability, and compliance with a relevant provision of the Code may be relied upon as tending to negative liability.

In short, the Code is an authoritative, comprehensive and technical guide to the law. The Code does not change legal obligations, but can be used in evidence in legal proceedings.

Snares are a particularly emotive issue with many organisations such as the LACS, Cat Protection League, One Kind and the RSPCA wanting all snaring banned on animal welfare grounds.

The Minister has previously stated that should this voluntary approach fail to drive up operator practice and animal welfare standards she would seek to regulate or ban snares. Presently, other than bringing forward primary legislation there is no mechanism to regulate snares.

The use and sale of snares in Wales has been considered by the Petitions Committee (twice) and discussed by the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee’s (CCERAC). The CCERAC [report](#) published July 2017 on the use of snares in Wales.

Officials hold annual meetings with stakeholder groups to gather evidence on snaring practice. The Welsh Government has provided a [response](#) to the CCERAC.

The gathering of evidence to determine the effectiveness of the Code of Practice has proved extremely difficult despite numerous meetings and requests to both snare users and groups opposed to snaring. The Group have recently been sent an email by Welsh Government officials requesting evidence to enable officials to compile this years’ report.

Positive evidence

Snare use by its nature is not advertised or apparent to anybody other than the person setting the snare. Officials have urged snare user groups to submit figures and case studies to support the continued use of snares but no substantive figures have been provided. Some snare training has been provided by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust since the launching of the Code in September 2015 but individuals trained remains relatively low (less than 100).

Negative evidence

Despite anti-snaring organisations being asked to submit evidence of animal welfare issues / cruelty / death, very little has been provided. The Welsh Police Forces also report extremely low numbers of reports of animal suffering as a result of snare use in Wales.

Rabbit snares

Snares are sometimes, although rarely, used to capture rabbits. The Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA) report into determining the extent of use and humaneness of snares which was published in 2012 reported that even the use of Code compliant snares could not increase humaneness to acceptable levels when the target animal was rabbits. Any future regulation on snares should include a ban on the use of snares for catching rabbits.

Snare use and fur export

It was reported widely in the press last year that a pest control contractor from South Wales is snaring approximately 300 foxes annually in Pembrokeshire and exporting the pelts to countries such as Sweden and the USA for use in the fur industry.

The export from the UK of red fox pelts is subject to International treaty and European regulations. The red fox is contained on the list under the European regulations that requires the lowest level of restriction and permission to export red fox fur is therefore not needed.

There are 4 annexes to the European Wildlife Trade Regulations and the red fox comes under annex D. An animal pelt from a species listed under annex A, B or C would need a permit to export. An animal under annex D does not.

Advice from Legal Services is that legislating to restrict trade or amending annexes of European Wildlife Trade Regulations is not something that could be done until after the EU transition period has ended but even then, these annexes are based on International Treaty so there would still be difficulties.

Legal Services advice is if we wanted to restrict this kind of activity then the most expedient way would be to look at controlling the source (snares) rather than the product (export restrictions on fox pelts).

Agriculture Bill

At the Ministers request, officials have included proposals for inclusion in the forthcoming Agriculture Bill that will provide the powers required to regulate or ban snare use.