



Through conservation The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) and its members work to ensure plentiful quarry species in Wales while benefiting the wider environment. Responsible shooting is central to landscape-scale conservation and shooting is of major environmental, economic and social benefit to Wales.

Key ask: BASC asks for the opportunity to meet the committee to discuss the significant environmental and conservation work undertaken by shoots across the country. BASC is leading the Woodland Resilience Deer and Grey Squirrel Management project; a shared outcomes partnership with Natural Resources Wales covering over 200,000ha of the Welsh countryside. We ask for the opportunity to meet with committee members to discuss this important project and to facilitate a committee visit to one of the six project areas.

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation

BASC is the largest shooting organisation in the UK with approximately 150,000 members. Our mission is to promote and protect sporting shooting and advocate its conservation role throughout the UK.

BASC's headquarters are based in North Wales and our role is to:

- Provide an effective and unified voice for sustainable shooting sports.
- Benefit the community by providing education, promoting scientific research, and advocating best practice in firearms licensing, habitat conservation, and wildlife and game management.
- Promote the benefits of game as food.

Shooting and conservation in Wales

- Increased understanding is needed into the contribution of shooting activities in Wales to the Welsh economy, environment and rural communities, including analysis on Welsh Governments policy towards shooting in Wales.
- Shooting activities in Wales contribute £75 million to the Welsh economy, supporting 2,900 shooting-related businesses across the country and directly supporting the equivalent of 2,400 full-time jobs.
- Across Wales, shooting contributes to an annual spend of £7.4m on conservation, which is the equivalent of 490 full-time jobs or 120,000 conservation workdays.
- 380,000 hectares of land are influenced by shooting in Wales.
- Sustainable shooting fulfils each of the seven Well-being Goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, providing economic, environmental and cultural benefits to Wales.

Tree planting

- Tree planting is a Ministerial priority over the next 12-18 months. This is also a core area of interest for BASC and our members.
- Shoots across the country plant many trees each year. BASC encourages the committee to examine further ways to support and facilitate this important activity.
- It is vital that decisions made by the Welsh Government do not result in conservation conflicts that could be damaging for biodiversity and livelihoods. For example, woodlands can increase predator populations which can then have impacts on losses of livestock and of ground nesting birds such as curlew, lapwing and oystercatcher. Careful selection of where new woodlands are created is important because meeting planting targets should not negatively impact priority biodiversity species.
- We urge the Welsh Government to encourage successful natural regeneration to the same extent as tree planting. The management of deer and grey squirrel is required to allow natural regeneration to the same extent as such management measures are required to allow the establishment of new trees. This must be understood and facilitated by policy makers.
- Deer and grey squirrels can negatively impact tree health, natural regeneration and undermine the success of future planting schemes. The [Woodland for Wales Action Plan](#) priority action 11 under Tree health specifically recognises this. BASC is undertaking the Woodland Resilience Deer and Grey Squirrel Management project; a shared outcomes partnership with Natural Resources Wales working in six key areas in Wales for deer and grey squirrel management, covering over 200,000ha. This project assesses

the condition of the Welsh Government Woodland Estate for deer and grey squirrel impacts and its interaction with connected woodlands in private ownership. This paves the way for landscape scale, effective management of these species to provide the environmental, social and economic benefits of Welsh woodlands.

- BASC Chairs the Wales Squirrel Forum which is trying to push forward Welsh Government's Grey squirrel management action plan to discharge their duties under the IAS regulations. Insufficient resource into grey squirrel management is damaging Wales' trees and carbon sequestration potential.
- BASC suggests the Welsh Government needs to prioritise the delivery of the current Action Plan for Wild Deer Management in Wales.
- The Climate Change Committee has made recommendations for how Wales meets its climate targets and the Welsh Government has outlined their ambition to increase in tree planting rates and develop a National Forest. The Climate Change Minister has acknowledged that the delivery of the National Forest will involve a range of partners as the majority of the new woodland will not be planted by Welsh Government. It is important that organisations that have an interest in such proposals, including BASC, are involved in the projects development.

Environment

- The shooting community wants to maintain its place at the forefront of conservation and environmental protection. BASC and eight other rural organisations (Aim to Sustain) are encouraging a transition away from lead and single-use plastics in ammunition used by those taking all live quarry with shotguns by 2025. We urge the Welsh Government to support this voluntary approach understanding that self-regulation and progression should prevent more punitive legislation in the future. Raising the profile and increasing awareness of the transition is an important part of ensuring its success, and we strongly believe this is an important initiative that our elected representatives should take an interest in and actively support.
- The eating of game meat are core elements of sustainable shooting. Game meat is a sustainable, inexpensive, delicious and a healthy source of protein. With more emphasis on sustainably-sourced food, game meat is sourced from natural landscapes, the animals are not intensively farmed and are often locally sourced so the carbon footprint of the game industry is relatively small, with very few miles from field to fork.

Circular economy

- Shooting contributes to an annual spend of £7.4m on conservation in Wales in areas such as habitat and species management, linking to the circular economic principles.
- Shooting has been a legitimate way of life in rural Wales for generations, supporting rural economies, including the tourism and hospitality industries. Better understanding is needed regarding sustainable shootings contribution to the Welsh economy and rural communities, including analysis on Welsh Governments policy towards shooting in Wales.

Nature and biodiversity

- The management practices associated with shooting play a pivotal role in protecting ecosystems and helping wildlife to thrive. BASC's commitment to a range of conservation and land management projects is well recognised. In Wales our organisation has successfully worked in partnership across the sector to deliver species management projects such as the conservation of red squirrels, deer management and white fronted geese to name a few.
- The Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) is going to be revised, but BASC questions how a revision of the document is going to ensure that it does more.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee consultation and more information on BASCs policy priorities for the sixth Senedd can be found in our [manifesto](#) for sustainable shooting.

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