

Cross Party Group on Shooting and Conservation

Wednesday 19th March 2025 at 11am

Video Conference Room, First floor, Ty Hywel, Cardiff Bay.

1. Welcome and apologies.

The Chair James MS welcomed members and stakeholders to the meeting and thanked all for attending. Informed everyone present that members may be late due to committees running over.

Present: James Evans MS, Russell Goerge MS, Llyr Gruffydd MS, Alun Davies (MS), Lee Gonzalez (Joel James MS Office), James Garside (James Evans Office) Edward Evans (Sam Kurtz MS Office), Tabitha Anthony and Ella Tregaskes Welsh Conservative Parliamentary Researchers, David Boden (BASC), Steve Griffiths (BASC), Victoria Bond (CLA), David Pooler (NGO), Tim Weston (NGO), Rachel Evans (CA), Sue Evans (GWCT), Matt Goodall (GWCT),

Apologies: Peter Fox MS, Laura Ann Jones MS, Lauren Price (FUW) Dominic Boulton (GFA), Spike Butcher (A2S),

2. AGM.

The AGM took place during the meeting with James Evans MS getting nominated as chairman by Alun Davies MS – Welsh Labour, this was supported by Llyr Gruffydd MS- Plaid Cymru and Russell George MS- Welsh Conservatives.

James Evans MS- Welsh Conservative nominated BASC to continue as secretariats for the group and this was supported by Russel George MS, Llyr Gruffydd MS and Alun Davies.

3. Future Work Programme.

James Evans, MS opened the agenda point by clarifying as chair how he wished the group to proceed and the importance of the group being more than a talking shop with clear objectives and outcomes. James wants the group to have a clear focus that can change or impact policy decisions and influence manifestos with an election 13 months away. We need a piece of work that we could promote as a group to the parties and cabinet secretary by April 2026. James opened it up to the stakeholders and members for discussion.

- Steve Griffiths (BASC) suggested a review on the Code of Practice for the welfare of gamebirds reared for sporting purposes as it was an out-of-date document that was last discussed with government officials in 2019 and previously brought up in the CPG meeting and still is yet to be updated.
- David Pooler (NGO) suggested Moorland Wildfires after a previous incident in Mold specifically looking at the wider impact to conservation and

endangered habitat. This could encompass RSPB land and they could be involved. Sue Evans (GWCT) also supported this subject area and stated we could work with the Moorland Association that has done extensive work on this, and no government has a policy, so Wales could be the first. We could also look at the risk assessment angle and the risk to life. Rachel Evans (CA), a member of staff, has previously received a call from Welsh Government officials regarding banning controlled burning some two years ago.

- Lee Gonzalez (Joel James MS Office) suggested a review on policies linked to Deer, Grey Squirrel and Wild boar in Wales. (GWCT) raised the success that Anglesey has had with the red squirrel project. Tim Weston (NGO) raised the impacts that both deer and grey squirrels have on timber production with special consideration to any government policies that promote tree planting. Also raised was the role of carbon capture. David Boden (BASC) made stakeholders aware of the current Timber Strategy consultation being held until 16th April. Rachel Evans (CA) & Steve Griffiths (BASC) raised the work that the squirrel forum does however the restraint on moving projects forwards due to finances.
- Lee Gonzalez (Joel James MS Office) suggested doing some work on promoting the positive health and wellbeing benefits that shooting has on individuals and communities. Llyr Gruffydd MS raised the previous inputs that the group have received on health benefits including the talk from Robert Croft MBE set up by BASC. Sue Evans (GWCT) highlighted the community spirit document they produced and previously delivered in the CPG.
- Victoria Bond (CLA) & James Evans MS highlighted the work that the Rural Growth CPG chaired by colleague Sam Kurtz MS did and the positive promotions that this led to with many suggestions impacting current policies. As a follow on we could collaborate all the data and documents we have to make a Welsh report promoting the economic benefits shooting has to Wales rural economy. Including the value of shooting and natural capital report and other documents stakeholders have around the table.

James thanked the group for five good suggestions and informed the group that it is important that we are pragmatic and that we can achieve an outcome within 12 months.

James stated the group has no budget and asked if stakeholders could support with research to carry out this work. Steve Griffiths (BASC) and Victoria Bond (CLA) agreed to support with resources to pull this any future work programme together.

Alun Davies MS and Llyr Gruffydd MS both stated that with manifesto work being started and with a lot of focus going towards income generation and the economy. We should focus on this, and the group could source priorities, and manifesto asks to all the parties.

James with the agreement of other members agreed that we would work as a group to promote the value of shooting in the rural economy of Wales through stakeholder resources, evidence sessions and written papers to highlight a Wales specific report. The group could broaden its audience with us inviting tourism and hospitality sector representatives to give evidence along with us all collectively submitting documents/paper for BASC/CLA to pull together. This would achieve a report with suggestions and considerations including key policy requests.

4. Outstanding Actions.

David Boden (BASC) at the Royal Welsh Show 2024 the group decided to send a hard copy of the Value of Shooting document produced by many stakeholders including those in the room today to the Cabinet Secretary Huw Irranca-Davies. This is still an outstanding action for the chair and do you agree this should be sent. The chair stated that due to our topic of our new CPG work programme, we will await our evidence and report to be completed and then submit a report.

5. AOB

Sue Evans (GWCT) raised any updates on the releasing of gamebirds in Wales. All members of the Senedd had not heard any updates and it was decided collectively that at this time the group of individual members would not raise it.

6. Date of next meeting

To be confirmed, after discussions around the framework by the chair and secretary. We will inform members on how the group will proceed with evidence gathering.

BASC invited all members and stakeholders of the group to a CPG drinks reception at the Royal Welsh Show 2025 held on the BASC stand on Tuesday of the show. The chair and members agreed and supported, and invitations will follow.