

Cross Party Group for Shooting & Conservation

Tuesday 10th February 2015
Ty Hywel, Cardiff Bay
6.30pm

Attending

Angela Burns AM– Chair
William Graham AM
Jocelyn Davies AM
Alun Ffred Jones AM
Russell George AM
Mark Isherwood AM
Llyr Huws Griffith AM

Gary Ashton BASC – Director for Wales
Tim Russell BASC – Head of Conservation
Glynn Evans BASC – Head of Game and Deer Management
Derek Williams BASC – Country Officer for Wales

Rachel Evans– Countryside Alliance
Huw Rhys Thomas – National Farmers Union

Guest Speakers

Jono Garton – Bodfuan Shoot
Wayne Tuffin – Commercial Shoot Proprietor

Secretary

Esther Wakeling BASC

Apologies

Lyndsey Whittle AM
Andrew RT Davies AM
Stuart Burns

Welcome

Angela welcomed everyone to the meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record

Presentation by Mr. Jono Garton – Bodfuan Shoot

Mr .Garton bought the freehold to the shooting rights across 4,000 acres 6 years ago, the land having been derelict for the previous 10 years. The shoot had historically been successful and Jono was keen to see it restored its former glory as a commercial venture based on his hobby for shooting and keen interest in creating a nature reserve, which now hosts a conservation project including Water Voles, Red Squirrels and Bats among many other species.

It is the ethos of the Bodfuan Shoot that everything that is shot should be eaten.

Jono admitted he had not anticipated the wider economic impact his shoot would go on to have by increasing trade for the local gun shop, shooting school, hotel, restaurants and travel providers.

His business is based around an experience that entails shooting but also importantly having a good time together and ending up with game meat, on the plate ready to eat.

The Bodfuan shoot employs 4 full time and 2 part-time staff and is already fully booked for the 2015/16 season. The shoot has established a broad customer base both local and, importantly to the economy from away. Analysis of his customer base identified the following;

- 5% live within 50 miles of the shoot
- 40% live within 40 miles of London
- 30% are from the rest of the UK
- 20% are from France
- 5% are from other countries

Jono explained the role Welsh Government had played in the development of Bodfuan into a successful shoot. He used the Young Recruit Programme to teach 2 trainees. In the last 4 years a Game Keepers course has been run in Coleg Meirion Dwyfor but it has subsequently been cancelled meaning that there will be no gamekeeper courses available in Wales. Jono also explained that he had help from the Rural Relief Scheme, Business Wales and Jobs Growth Wales.

The development of Bodfuan would have been made easier by the installation of a telephone line – which was prohibitive due to the cost, better mobile phone coverage, broadband and the Local Investment Fund.

Jono then explained what role he felt Welsh Government had in the future of his business. He felt that there was a massive demand for shooting in Wales and that it should both be encouraged and promoted and that we should use Scotland as an example of how to do it right. He also felt that Visit Wales has key role to play in the promotion of shooting and at the current time if you search for shooting on their

website the only listing is for football. He also felt that we should be working to encourage Welsh colleges to run Gamekeeping courses.

Jono also felt the public need to be educated on the value of shooting and the role it plays in the wider economy and the environment. He expressed the view that the Rural Rate Relief should continue and that collectively key stakeholders need to recognise shooting as a valuable industry in its own right.

Jocelyn Davies commented that Scotland seems the obvious choice for shooting and observed that we are not very good at promoting Wales to the Welsh.

Glynn Evans commented that his local shoot syndicate spent £13,000 per annum in the local economy.

Jono finished by reminding the group that the shooting season is late September to January, typically the close season for tourism, and that most people come and spend a night or two because of the distances involved. He illustrated this by saying that the hotel that he uses to accommodate his customers was busier in December than it had been in August as a direct result of his shoot.

Mr. Wayne Tuffin - Commercial Shoot Proprietor (Rhug Estate)

Mr. Tuffin began by explaining how he came to game keeping as a boy and used a YTS scheme to learn and went on to establish his own game farm. When he was 25 he was offered the chance to run his own shoot dealing with mostly local people.

For the last 20 years Wayne has developed his business and now runs 7 commercial shoots including the Rhug Estate near Corwen, each covers approximately 3,000 - 4,000 acres and he pays between £5 and £10 per acre in rent to the land owner and operates as a sporting tenant.

He offers 200 to 240 days per season and charges anywhere from £150/gun/day to £3,000/gun/day

Wayne employs 12 full time members of staff and 2,500 people have been on one of his shoots this season of which 1,200 were accommodated in hotels local to the Rhug Estate.

Like Jono all of Wayne's birds enter the food chain and he currently sells to Aldi and Tesco.

Wayne told the group that his shoots were also fully booked for the next season and that he was proud to offer a very personal service. He told the group that he only has 3 welsh parties and 1 foreign party with all the others from London and Cheshire and surrounding area. A days shooting includes hospitality throughout the day, starting with cooked breakfast at the Rhug Estate Farm Shop with approximately 500 covers directly attributable to his shoot.

Wayne was also of the opinion that shooting is the largest tourism market in Wales during the winter months and that Wales needs to recognise that people come here

to shoot. He also thought that the lack of high quality accommodation especially in the Corwen area was an inhibitor in terms of future development in many parts of Wales.

Wayne told the group that he strongly believed that shooting should be key in the tourism marketing of Wales, but that a negative relationship with Visit Wales is hampering this. It was his opinion that there seems to be a cultural lack of understanding and recognition of the wider benefits of shooting. Gary Ashton also confirmed that he thought this to be the case.

❖ **ACTION – invite Visit Wales to the next meeting.**

Rachel Evans commented that a recently conducted review in to tourism in Wales did not recognise country sports to the extent it deserved particularly in light of the value of the contributions to employment and the economy the group were hearing about.

Wayne urged the group to think about the fact that there is land in Wales available which if rented out could offer a good alternative source of income to landowners, using some of the least productive areas of agricultural land, whilst encouraging greater tourism into Wales out of season.

William Graham reminded the group to make use of the Petitions Committee and use them as a tool to lobby – each petition requires a minimum of 10 signatures.

Angela Burns asked what the shooting sector's relationship with National Resources Wales (NRW) was like. The guest speakers and members of the group felt that NRW's attitude towards shooting was in part based on a fear of potential conflict between uses of the land for different pursuits e.g. walkers, mountain bikers coming across stalkers. Given that there are long established stalking opportunities on Forestry Commission land in England and on Scottish Natural Heritage land this view is unhelpful and not evidence based. It was also noted that there is no mention of sporting shooting in the NRW outdoor pursuits and recreation strategy.

❖ **ACTION – invite NRW development Officer to the next meeting**

Glynn Evans mentioned that conservation could be a potential income stream as he believed people would pay to undertake conservation work.

Mark Isherwood informed the group know that the Welsh Government had received a Freedom of Information request for details of group membership and who amongst them shot by the League against Cruel Sports.

It was also noted that it was within the gift of the Cross Party Group to take action and should write to people and ask for information

❖ **ACTION – write to Edwina Hart with reference to NRW and their approach to shooting sports.**

❖ **ACTION invite Ken Skates to attend a meeting**

Angela said she would be interested in identifying courses, not just game keeping, that could and should be run in Wales.

Rachel wanted to inform the group that the WJEC do not recognise shooting as a legitimate sport – Gary confirmed that BASC also had some experience of this affecting their members.

Jono felt that the perception of shooters and shooting was and is changing but that more could be done.

It was considered by the group that DIY syndicates made it more accessible as a sport and Angela said she had some experience of this. The assumption is that it's a sport for the rich but people don't see the rough shooters, groups and syndicates, beaters or pickers up.

Action points

- Invite Visit Wales to the next meeting.
- Invite NRW development Officer to the next meeting.
- Write to Edwina Hart with reference to NRW and their approach to shooting sports.
- Invite Ken Skates to attend a meeting.
- Make use of the Petitions Committee.
- All members to consider questions and points to be raised about the following topics
 - Education
 - Communication
 - Hospitality
 - Tourism.

It was agreed that Tourism would be the focus of the next meeting.

Date of Next Meeting

TBC.