



**ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP
on
GAME & WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**

Minutes of the AGM and meeting on

**Monday 13th March 2023
4-5pm, Room M, Portcullis House**

Attendees:

Name	Representing	Name	Representing
Sir Robert Goodwill (chair)	MP	GWCT	
Earl of Caithness	House of Lords	Sir Jim Paice	GWCT
Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville	House of Lords	Prof Nick Sotherton	GWCT
Lord Colgrain	House of Lords	Matthew Goodall	GWCT
Lord Carter of Coles	House of Lords	Henrietta Appleton	GWCT
Viscount Thurso	House of Lords	Jeremy Payne	GWCT
Philip Dunne (part)	MP		
Sir Bill Wiggin	MP	Non-passholders	
Greg Smith	MP	David Bean	Countryside Alliance
David Simmonds (part)	MP	Prof Juliet Vickery	BTO
		John Watkins	Landscapes for Life

Apologies received from - Baroness Young of Old Scone and Lord Soames of Fletching.

AGM business for 2023-2024 reporting year

The following were duly re-elected as officers of the APPG:

Chair: Sir Robert Goodwill MP

Proposed by: Sir Bill Wiggin MP

Seconded by: Earl of Caithness

Vice Chairs: Mark Tami MP, Earl of Caithness, Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville and Baroness Young of Old Scone.

Proposed by: Sir Robert Goodwill MP

Seconded by: Earl of Caithness

Officers: - Rt Hon. Philip Dunne MP, Lord Carter of Coles and Lord Colgrain.

Proposed by: Sir Robert Goodwill MP

Seconded by: Sir Bill Wiggin

There being no further AGM business, the meeting discussed the topic “Achieving biodiversity targets – saving our endangered species”.

Meeting notes:

Sir Robert welcomed all attendees and after a brief introduction to the subject, he introduced the first speaker, Professor Nick Sotherton of the GWCT.

Nick’s presentation (a copy of which can be found [here](#)) emphasised the importance of adopting the game management model in wildlife conservation for some species. Whilst habitat improvement will

work for some species such as Bittern or Corncrake for other species habitat improvement has not resulted in a demonstrable recovery.

The GWCT regards habitat as important and was instrumental in designing 7 of the 37 arable agri-environment measures (and involved in another 23). But we advocate the game management approach as this considers the support of game and wildlife throughout the year, identifies bottlenecks in the support for survival and productivity and seeks to provide solutions to these. Whilst habitat can provide the necessary nesting cover and brood rearing cover, for some species such as ground-nesting birds and mammals a lack of protection from predation can be an important determinant of productivity. This is often referred to as the three-legged stool – abundant/available insects for chicks; abundant/quality nesting cover; and, protection for hens/chicks during breeding season. All legs must be in place for success. He evidenced this with the results of the GWCT's Grey Partridge work on the Sussex Downs.

He finished by reviewing other conservation approaches such as reducing predation through fencing or diversionary feeding, rewilding which could embrace field margins as opposed to landscape scale change and species reintroductions. In relation to the latter, he questioned the validity of waiting until species get to the brink of failure; what is needed is support for our existing wildlife.

Sir Robert then introduced Matt Goodall from the GWCT's Advisory Service as the second speaker. Matt's presentation (for a copy see [here](#)) focused on the role of predation management in wildlife conservation. He began by reiterating Nick Sotherton's point that habitat is fundamental but that given the demands of supplying food to an increasing population we need to become more efficient at delivering wildlife. This involves focusing on productivity, defined as the ability of a species to recruit sufficient young to at least maintain the population. He demonstrated that habitat alone has resulted in Lapwing productivity of only 0.32-0.47 chicks per hen against a maintenance level of 0.7. Yet the Avon Valley project has been able to demonstrate 0.96 chicks per hen and a 97% increase in Lapwing populations. This project is a farmer cluster taking a holistic approach to Lapwing recovery which includes predation management. He also detailed other GWCT evidence of where predation management has resulted in significant increases in the populations of red-listed species such as Curlew. Towards the end of his talk he emphasised what happens when predation management is lost by highlighting the declines at Otterburn in waders and the total loss of Black Grouse, ten years after the end of our predation experiment with only habitat in place.

If one accepts the need for predation management in the conservation of some red-listed species then it is important that all tools are available; consequently Matt explained the importance of retaining the use of the humane cable restraint in wildlife conservation and how it surpasses international welfare trapping standards. He also emphasized that when undertaking predation management there are six key considerations – is it rational, achievable, proportionate, cost-effective, focused and humane.

Q&A discussion

After both presentations Sir Robert led the discussion. This began by discussing the need to get the message across that there is a value to wildlife from predation management and GWCT needs to provide appropriate advice for those who wish to undertake best practice predation management including for example advice on over-wintering decoys for Larsen traps. Aim to Sustain is working within the sector to change the culture and encourage the adoption of voluntary training. In addition shoots need to be encouraged not to just release more pheasants to compensate for losses but to control predators. Also predation management needs to be used more widely in conservation based on the Community Keeper model across farm clusters. In answer to a specific question, Matt said that Defra had responded positively to GWCT proposals for the adoption of predation management more widely through the new ELMS (based on mandatory best practice training). This approach is particularly effective when adopted in targeted areas for endangered species and across farmer clusters.

The issue of predation by protected species was also raised. The key is to be effective in managing the legally controlled predators but even addressing this may mean that population recovery fails due to predation by protected species. Other species reactions to Badger culls are being monitored to establish the impact that this species might have. Concern was also expressed about policy encouraging the reintroduction of additional predatory species without the means of controlling them where they impact on red-listed species or without a competent licensing process in place. Sir Robert advised that the EFRA committee is undertaking an inquiry on species reintroduction to consider these sorts of issues.

The impact of bird flu on songbirds was discussed. Some of the 67 species affected by bird flu are songbirds – Chaffinch and Greenfinch for example. But as these do not breed en masse, transmission is less than for other species.

Sir Robert brought the discussion to a close at 17.00 by thanking all attending and contributing to the discussion. He concluded by saying that information on individual species ecology is vitally important in designing policy, a factor that is not always fully understood by decision makers.

31st March 2023