

17 November 2016

Countryside Alliance Parliamentary Update

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Highlights

Overwhelming support from MPs for grouse shooting

Following two online petitions, an inquiry into grouse shooting was established by the Petitions Committee. We submitted [written evidence](#) and our Head of Shooting, Liam Stokes, appeared as a witness during the only [oral evidence session](#) on 18 October. The Westminster Hall debate took place on 31 October and 30 MPs spoke or made interventions during the three hour debate. The vast majority of MPs recognised the benefits of grouse shooting and the Government confirmed it has no plans to change the law. Our briefing note is available [here](#) and a write up of the debate can be found [here](#).

EFRA Committee challenges RSPCA on private prosecutions

The [final report](#) from the animal welfare inquiry was published on 16 November. The report does not recommend removing the right of the RSPCA to bring private prosecutions, but it does recommend that the RSPCA “should withdraw from acting as a prosecutor of first resort where there are statutory bodies with a duty to carry out this role.” We have consistently argued that the RSPCA’s roles as investigator, political campaigner and charitable fundraiser are incompatible with that of an independent prosecutor, and see no reason why the RSPCA should not act like other charities such as the RSPB and NSPCC. More information is available [here](#).

Record year for Countryside Alliance Awards

Thank you to everyone who supported this year’s Countryside Alliance Awards for rural businesses. The deadline for nominations was extended to 11 November and we received 6,000 nominations for farms, shops and suppliers across the country. The judging team now has the daunting task of shortlisting the best of the nominations before winners are chosen and announced at a reception in the House of Lords on 22 March next year. We will notify MPs of any constituents who have been shortlisted.

Government Bills

Policing and Crime Bill

The Government brought forward two amendments at Committee Stage in the House of Lords on 9 November to return expanding ammunition to Section 1 of the 1968 Firearms Act and to make provision for the continued validity of firearms licences where there is a delay in renewal. We welcomed these sensible amendments, which have the support of the police, and look forward to their implementation.

Digital Economy Bill

The Bill received its Second Reading in the Commons on 12 September and is currently being considered by a Public Bill Committee. The Alliance submitted written evidence to the Public Bill Committee and Head of Political, James Legge, appeared as a witness to give oral evidence on 11 October.

Select Committees

EFRA Select Committee considers flooding, rural tourism and forestry

The Inquiry into **Future Flood Prevention** has concluded. The [final report](#) was published on 2 November. It made no link between grouse moor management and the winter floods, a point we stressed in our [written evidence](#). More information is available [here](#).

The Inquiry into **Rural Tourism** is on-going. We have submitted [written evidence](#) on the importance of tourism to the rural economy and the role that country sports play in this. Our Head of Policy, Sarah Lee, will be appearing as a witness to give oral evidence on 14 December.

The Inquiry into **Forestry in England** is on-going. We submitted written evidence (not yet published) on the important role that shooting plays in woodland management.

Environmental Audit Select Committee examines 'rewilding'

The Inquiry into the **The Future of the Natural Environment after the EU Referendum** is on-going. We have submitted [written evidence](#) highlighting concerns about 'rewilding' which was one of the questions in the terms of reference. One of the key issues is what is meant by 'rewilding'; is it a withdrawal of all management or a change in management and land use to achieve certain objectives?

Exiting the EU Select Committee launches first inquiry

An Inquiry into the **UK's negotiating objectives for leaving the EU** has been launched. We will be submitting written evidence on the rural priorities for Brexit.

Debates

Superfast broadband rollout

On 27 October there was a Grand Committee debate in the House of Lords on "rollout of superfast broadband" (Lord Foster of Bath, Lib Dem). The Countryside Alliance sent out a briefing note ahead of debate, available [here](#).

Housing shortage

On 3 November there was a House of Lords debate on "housing shortage impact on young people, in their desire to live in the communities where they were born, raised and educated" (Lord Griffiths of Burry Port, Lab). The Countryside Alliance sent out a briefing note ahead of debate, available [here](#).

Reports and Publications

'Better Broadband Scheme' launched

[We welcomed the launch of this scheme](#) which has been developed by the Government to ensure that every household and business can access an affordable basic broadband service. It provides subsidised connections for people unable to receive speeds of 2Mbit/s and who are not in line to benefit from either commercial or BDUK superfast deployment.

New report critical of mobile phone coverage

[A new report on mobile phone coverage](#) by the British Infrastructure Group of MPs, chaired by Grant Shapps MP, revealed 17 million people have bad signal at home, and 525 blackspots across the country. On 30 October the *Daily Mail* featured an [article](#) about the report which quoted the Countryside Alliance on the impact poor coverage is having on the countryside.

New polling on grouse shooting

[New polling carried out by ORB](#) for the Countryside Alliance in advance of a parliamentary debate on Monday 31 October shows that grouse shooting and grouse moor management do not register as a spontaneous issue of public interest, and compared to a range of other issues, people rank grouse shooting as the least important.

Away from Westminster

Great British Game Week comes to London

To celebrate Great British Game Week (19-26 November), a [Game Food Festival](#) will be held in Borough Market's Market Hall on Saturday 19 November featuring several specialist game dealers serving game delights such as venison and whisky sausage hot pot, Moroccan spiced pheasant goujons, and Smokey pulled wild boar.

Casting for Recovery retreats announced for 2017

Casting for Recovery is a unique fly fishing program for ladies with breast cancer. Run by the Countryside Alliance Foundation, it takes ladies profoundly affected by breast cancer on retreats to beautiful locations where counselling and medical advice are offered alongside fly fishing tuition. [In 2017 there will be five retreats across the UK & Ireland](#) and applications are now open.

Fishing 4 Schools featured in the *Daily Telegraph*

On Saturday 5 November the *Daily Telegraph* education section featured the Countryside Alliance Foundation's Fishing 4 Schools project. In "[Cast the rod, empower the child](#)" David Profumo writes about the young people who are discovering that skills and values learnt at the riverside can translate into the classroom.

Hunting Newcomers' Week

The Countryside Alliances' annual [Hunting Newcomers' Week](#) (22 – 29 October) has come to a close with a number of people having experienced hunting for the first time. The aim of Hunting Newcomers' Week is to introduce as many new faces to the hunting field as possible and, due to the co-operation of many hunts, we have successfully managed to do that once again.

And Finally...

Fundraising success to honour fieldsportsmen who fell in WWI

Countrymen Richard Walton and John Cavana recently walked 100 km in three days in memory of those hunt staff, gamekeepers, ghillies and fieldsports enthusiasts who were injured or gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country in World War One. The walk was to commemorate the Centenary of the Battle of the Somme and to raise fund for ABF The Soldiers' Charity. To date Richard and John have collected £180,000.

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