

# Dr Nick Fox submission of 20 November 2022

## PE1859/DD: Retain falconers' rights to practise upland falconry in Scotland

Please refer to my [submission of 19 April 2022](#) for information on my background, views on the aims of the petition and response to points raised by the Scottish Government.

**Having been asked to attend a further consultation, and being uncertain whether or not technology will allow me to attend virtually from a plane, I would like to offer the following in order to move the discussion forward:**

Wildlife management policy in UK, including Scotland, is not coherent or science-led. It is based on piecemeal legislation since 1830, heavily influenced by pressure groups, political expediency and class discrimination. The huge strides made by science in recent years in understanding how ecosystems work, and how they can be managed to optimise species diversity and sustainability, have been largely ignored by politicians. Also, while other forms of discrimination, such as gender, race and religion, have been addressed, our own indigenous culture has often been suppressed by class prejudice, one of the last bastions of discrimination. Political expediency, posing as democracy, has created huge hypocrisies in policies.

### **Mountain Hare populations.**

I will leave this to experts in the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust to enumerate. I ask them only one question: Does the taking of about 1000 Mountain Hares per year by falconers have any significant, or even measurable impact, on hare populations?

### **Falconry**

- Originated over 5,000 years ago, before any of the proscribed religions.
- Has been practised in UK since before 600 AD, before Christianity, and before Scotland became a country.
- Qualifies as a 'Protected Belief'.
- Details of its international Intangible Cultural Heritage in over 80 countries are listed by UNESCO and it is registered by UNESCO

for 24 countries on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind.

- Scotland/UK has not signed the UNESCO ICH convention which would have protected its indigenous cultural heritage.
- Falconry requires tremendous dedication and commitment (eagles can live 40 years). It is self-limiting and can never become mainstream.
- Falconry is a natural activity, a supreme form of bird watching.
- It is extremely low impact, sustainable activity. Its inefficiency is its efficiency; it entails a huge number of man days per head of game taken.
- It is welfare friendly, being selective and leaving no injured or maimed at all, the only method that can make such a claim
- It is very species and season specific, unlike domestic cat predation. Few non-target animals are taken.

### **Cultural aspects**

- Falconry is classless, being practised by all levels of society, genders and ages.
- It is part of Scotland's heritage, providing cultural colour in an increasingly homogenised and urbanised society.
- It is not a large-scale commercial activity entailing major landscape alterations, such as golf.
- It is non-polluting and not dangerous. It is compatible with other activities and does not require closing off large areas of land. Ramblers are fascinated and stop to watch.
- It provides only modest economic benefits, but these are in winter when income is most needed.
- It helps our children connect with nature and gets them away from their screens. Falconers promote raptors in schools and rural events to discourage persecution.
- Falconry is entirely self-sustaining and has not caused even the local extinction of a single raptor or prey species. In contrast domestic cats have caused 26 extinctions yet face no controls here. In Scotland only about 200 pure Wild Cats are left because of genetic introgression. Scotland has failed to apply WCA Section 14 to cats resulting in huge detriment to wildlife, and massive discrimination against other activities. This is a shameful hypocrisy, incompatible with Green credentials.

## **A legal solution**

A General Licence authorising Falconry for 'social purposes' is the obvious and easiest solution to resolve this situation. The Werrity report, and the subsequent blanket protection of the Mountain Hare, paid no heed to these social and cultural implications. Individual licensing, annual bag reports etc are a waste of time and resources, especially in the current economic climate. This is a relatively straightforward issue to resolve.