



Falconry – Inscribed by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind

Minutes of the Meeting of the Hawk Board held on 23rd January 2017
London Zoo, Regents Park, London, NW1 4RY

The Chairman opened the meeting at 12:30.

Present:

Gordon Mellor (GM); Graham Bennett (GB); Steve Eastwood (SE); Mark Habben (MH); Graham Irving (GI); Terry Large (TL); Paul Manning (PM); Derek Stotton (DS); Mark Upton (MU); Rachelle Upton (RU); Dean White (DW)

Apologies:

Gary Biddiss; Jim Collins; Nick Havermann-Mart; Andrew Knowles-Brown; Richard Newton; Doreen Page; Jemima Parry-Jones; Don Ryan; Martyn Standley

Minutes of last meeting / Matters arising:

None

Chairman's Report:

This has been a difficult and busy few months. With the outbreaks of Avian Influenza in early winter 2016, we were faced with conflicting information and advice from DEFRA and APHA. Ultimately the government departments did get their acts together and the APHA advice prevailed. Following advice from two senior veterinarians, one a bird specialist and the other in APHA, I was advised that it would be prudent for falconers to stop flying their birds of prey. After consultation with the elected specialists, on the 25th I issued the Hawk Board advice to cease all flying activities.

It was a challenging decision to take, particularly since the published advice from DEFRA/APHA was that flying and hunting with birds of prey, along with shooting, were permitted. Many of us were aware that a good number of falconers would ignore the advice and continue. I recognise that professional bird abatement and pest control operatives, were in a particularly difficult position, nonetheless the HB position stands and individuals professional or otherwise, will ultimately make their own decisions. There has been a good deal of unhappiness expressed to me via email, and considerable disquiet on social media.

I see that some falconers have continued with 'field meetings', which I feel particularly unwise. I trust they are complying with the APHA requirements regarding 'bird gatherings'. On a positive note a number of clubs have asked their members to stop flying, although they are in the same position as the HB, in having no statutory power.

TL: I have only ever had 1 inspection, we keep records of bird movement, etc. and the show organiser is given a copy. Had no guidance from DEFRA.

DS: I advised the secretary of the Cheshire HC that at the field meets they should take all the information down.

MH: All our information comes from APHA and their email information service.

PM: If you force businesses or recommend they close down for 3 months, you need to widen the advice platform.

GM: Advice was taken from 2 senior vets, which puts us in an extraordinary position. We were between a rock and a hard place. Avian Influenza is probably present in our wild bird population so we need to look into setting guidelines for the future.

TL: We did set up guidelines on how to protect your birds previously.

MH: Best thing you can do is a risk assessment and document all the risks and what you can do to mitigate the circumstances.

TL: What surprised me was that we gave a massive number of falconers that weren't around when this happened before.

PM: Would have been helpful to have guidelines issued.

TL: Guidelines; biosecurity; all looked at before.

DW: I got the advice – it was advisory- and I looked at the risks and did my own risk assessment on the advice given.

GI: GM and I will source an individual within APHA to be our contact.

GM: Would they be allowed to?

GI: Any initial enquiry will go to a central team; on the guidance list they will have a list of people – so we need to discuss the advising vet.

TL: Are there any reports of mainland EU captive bred hawks getting AI?

MU: Spoke to a German vet, who is also a falconer, and there have been cases reported in Switzerland and The Netherlands of falconers whose hawks got AI from infected quarry.

GM: We have to come up with a protocol as this is going to keep coming up now. A protocol which acknowledges businesses and falconry specific advice.

On a different front, the Welsh Assembly has begun a consultation on animals in circuses prior to bringing forward legislation that it sees as long overdue and UK leading. I note that they have extrapolated from Professor Harris's report on 'wild animals' in circuses, shows and mobile zoos, to include all animals. This will encompass a good many more animal activities and may indeed ultimately play to our advantage. I have taken advice on lobbying activities in Wales and we will have to mobilise in order to have our voice heard. It is evident that whilst the CA will be a valuable ally, they are not nearly as influential or as well resourced as they were a decade ago.

JPJ email: Just so people know I had a meeting with the Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales last autumn and we talked about the circus act. I am hoping that we will be invited onto an advisory committee on this one. She enjoyed her visit and liked the Centre, which was good. I have also had about 6 of her staff over in two batches, so we are working on them now.

GM: That is good to know. A worry is that if it goes onto the statute book in Wales then there will be pressure for other home countries to follow.

There have been a number of requests from students, both undergraduate and postgraduate, for falconers and some clubs to contribute to small-scale studies and research projects mostly around animal welfare. I wonder if we need to issue guidelines to advise on engaging with this sort of thing? Innocent engagement from well meaning falconers and keepers may result in unwelcome outcomes and perhaps even bad publicity.

PM/MU/TL: All worried

DS: No matter how well written once the damage is done it is done.

DW: In the past we have supported research, but have been very careful. We wouldn't rule out, but would assess very carefully.

MH: We get 100s of applications; we can send you the protocols we use.

RU to follow up and get the ZSL protocol.

I have been contacted by a couple of falconers who wanted an update on our position regarding promoting a British signature to the UNESCO intangible heritage protocol. Whilst I responded to them in fairly unoptimistic language, I did promise to raise it with the board.

We are looking to adopt our new constitution soon and need to sort out our website and Facebook presence in conjunction with it.

Treasurers Report:

At present both the current and savings accounts are holding a healthy amount.

The CFF account has a small amount in it; their donations are paid into the HB current account.

At the present time our income is ahead of our expenditure, but that will change at the end of this month. The CFF have raised £1,714 so far this year in donations and sales. We need to look into generating more revenue, especially with the next election coming up in 2018.

All clubs have paid their subs, although Home Counties were late, but this was due to extenuating circumstances. A couple of clubs showed interest in joining the HB last year, but so far they have not taken this forward.

BFC and YFC have no HB rep at this time.

Constitution:

The new Constitution will come into effect as of 6 April 2017. We will be going down to 3 meetings a year, which will be held in June, October and February.

The dates for the next years meetings are Thursday 22 June at UCMK; Thursday 19 October at London Zoo and Thursday 22 February at UCMK.

Website/Facebook:

GM: We need to investigate and invest in a new website and organise a Facebook page.

DS: Buyer beware when it comes to Facebook.

MU: You can limit the Facebook page so that only those you approve can see it, also you can set it so that every post must be approved before it goes onto the page. If anyone transgresses your page rules you can remove their post and then if it happens again you can remove them from the page.

RU: Happy to run the page, but will need regular updates and articles from members of the HB so that it stays current, the same for the website.

GM: Let's vote on a Website and Facebook presence **(Agreed)**

DW and RU to look into setting up the new website.

DS: You open HB up to everyone, not just members.

PM: People want to support the HB, but we need to be seen.

GM: We represent all, but paid for by a few.

Falconry Fair:

RU: I have received an email from Charlie Heap regarding this years Falconry Fair:

"I'd love the Hawk Board to come and have a stand at the revamped British Falconry Fair at the NCBP this year. I'd be happy to provide the HB with a free stand. Basically you pay for the stand up front, and at the end of the Fair - I'll come and refund the stand charge in its entirety."

GM: We have previously agreed at meetings that we don't attend fairs where we have to pay.

DW: He wants us to put out money where our mouth is.

RU: I think he is doing it this way after we let him down at his fair last year.

DS: Beautiful location, but not good for a fair.

GM: Can we go and man a stand well for the weekend?

TL: What we need is extra people to help, as CFF can't do it on their own, they need HB knowledgeable people on the stand as well.

DS: Well I won't be going, too far.

PM: We need to decide what we want to do.

MU: Have spoken to various people who are going hoping it will go back to being the FF as it used to be.

PM: Is it possible if there are affiliated clubs going that they could promote the HB.

DW: SEFG would represent to HB so other clubs could to.

GM: Ask affiliated clubs to represent the HB on their stands and then feedback to the HB. We could look into supplying the clubs with HB banners and publications.

RU to let Charlie know our decision.

Cage and Aviary Birds Article:

GM: I have received an email from Mike Nicholls concerning an a photo accompanying an article in the Cage And Aviary Birds magazine

I must say that I am disgusted at the photograph of a lanner falcon called Phoenix (p. 14, January 18 2017) used to illustrate an article promoting the Rutland Falconry and Owl Centre in this week's edition. The bird depicted appears to be in very poor condition, its beak very badly overgrown and its feathers look dirty and tatty. The block it is sitting on has no Astro-Turf or other topping (this essential for promoting foot health which is an issue with birds of prey kept tethered) and instead is liberally coated in faeces! The bird generally looks to be in poor health and with poor husbandry.

What makes it worse is that the supplier of the photograph and author of the article is also a keeper at the centre. Presumably they see no issues with the photograph or the image of bird of prey keeping that it depicts. This doesn't bode well for the welfare of the other birds in her care or the image of 'falconry' projected to the public.

GM: I have told him that we will discuss this and an appropriate communication to the Centre.

MH: Has anyone contacted RF&OC?

GM: No. What should our policy be, can the board articulate what we do about this. Do we contact them?

PM: Did the picture come from Rutland? Need to clarify where the photo came from.

GM: They didn't confirm it was one of their pictures. Do we contact Rutland and ask them and say was it one of their birds as we are concerned about the condition of its beak?

MH: I am happy to write in this instance.

PM: Carefully and constructively.

MH: Of course.

MH to write to Rutland

Treasurers Position:

GM: The last meeting was not quorate when the position of treasurer was discussed. Those present at that meeting agreed for RU to officially take on the role of treasurer, but we need to vote on it. **Agreed (MU abstained).**

UNESCO:

GM: I have had some falconers who are keen that we should progress UNESCO. Although it is unlikely to receive government support when they have a limited majority. This will not progress further without government support. Nick Fox thinks we should develop more country pursuits, e.g. stick makers.

MU: We need to get the government to sign up without mentioning falconry. Be good to get a friendly MP to push it through, or someone like Prince Charles.

GM: What is the process?

MU: Government have to agree they are supportive, once signed up then the stick makers, hedge layers, falconry, etc. can be signed to it.

Email from AKB: Below is one part of a letter I have received over the last 18 months, a second is attached. Neither are particularly earthshattering but shows support from Scotland and the UK National Commission for UNESCO. We also had support from the Culture Secretary of Wales some years back.

I am not sure who will be at the meeting but I may be repeating other views. A meeting was held at one of the CLA fairs some years back, convened by Nick Fox to take forward our wish for the UK to sign the UNESCO Intangible Heritage convention. A group was formed to start a grass roots Intangible Cultural Heritage project to push forward and present the government with enough information to hopefully get the convention signed.

Initial inertia was good but this slowly waned with changing ministers / governments / etc.

I am sure at some point Nick or his team would have been in contact with the minister responsible for this but it would have been many years ago, so maybe we need to start again by going to the top and finding out first-hand what problems are perceived by the government that prevents them from signing this convention.

Thank you for your correspondence of 28 January 2015 to Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Europe and External Affairs, regarding Intangible Cultural Heritage. I have been asked to reply.

While the Scottish Government is in favour of ratifying the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, membership of United Nations organisations such

as UNESCO is reserved to the United Kingdom Government. As a result, Scotland cannot itself ratify the Convention, as this can only be carried out by the UK Government.

Attached letter:

Dear Mr Knowles-Brown, Thank you for your email and your interest in Intangible Cultural Heritage. As you may be aware, the UK National Commission is not an internal part of UNESCO. Rather, it works closely with UNESCO and UK Government as the focal point in the UK for UNESCO-related policies and activities. Although there is some interest in certain sectors to ratify the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage in the UK, we are not aware of any intention for the UK Government to do so in the short term. I am sorry we cannot be of further assistance, but we welcome you to learn more about the programme on the official UNESCO website: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/>. With best wishes, Shannon

Shannon McNaught Research and Administration Assistant United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO

TL: This could be a way in.

MU: If it comes from Scotland and Wales we could still be told to wait for Brexit to finish.

PM: Could be good to tackle from Scotland as they could push the UK government.

DW: If we could get a friendly MP on side to raise an early day motion.

MU: Who is the new Cultural Secretary and could we use them?

GM: Do we have any friendly MPs?

MU: Could ask Claire Perry if she comes to the BAF opening.

GM: Shall I write to the Cultural Secretary? **Agreed**

RU: The Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP.

GM: I will write to her.

CITES – Team Research Group Request For Input From Raptor Breeders:

GI: CITES Research Group have contacted me asking me to cascade an email to all Raptor Breeders that they can then contact.

TL: Are they contacting directly?

GI: I will circulate the email, you reply to them and they will then contact you direct.

GM: What makes a valid responder?

GI: They want a broad spectrum.

Legal/Guidelines Update:

See Appendix 1

GI: I want to ask the club reps if they are aware of any member who might be interested in taking on birds that have been licenced to be taken rather than culled. Feedback to RU

GM: What is the responsibility of the falconer who takes the birds on?

GI: The bird has to be micro chipped within 48 hours and is not to be used for commercial gain.

PM: Would like a Buzzard for training purposes.

MU: Regarding the import of hawks into Europe and restrictions that could be placed, do we have any information?

GI: I have asked the IAF to help find out – when article 50 is invoked we will no longer be in the EU so could come under International CITES not EU CITES.

SUN Update:

See Appendix 2

IAF Update:

See Appendix 3

JPJ email: On the stuff coming from Europe particularly the Companion Animal legislation I have put Jim Collin and Adrian in touch with one another as I think that IAF having a permanent person in Brussels and Jim not only representing a very large group, but also being very au fait with the issues it will be good for all of us.

MU: FACE is moving so IAF is losing their office, the IAF are now looking for their own building.

DW: If UK legislation heavily influenced by Europe how will that affect the IAF and HB?

GM: IAF will operate here as they always have and one hopes they will work through the HB.
DW: For future agenda; working with the IAF in a post Brexit model.
MH: Who started the IAF?
MU: The BFC and the DFO at Woodhall Spa.

CA Update:
See Appendix 4

A.O.B:
PM: What is the situation with LANTRA and Raptor Awards, do we have any plans not to continue to support LANTRA?
DS: No

The meeting closed at 16:10

Next Meeting: 12.30pm Thursday, 22nd June 2017

Location: UCMK, 502 Avebury Boulevard, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK9 3HS

Rachelle Upton, Co-coordinator – 29th January 2017-01-29

Legal/Guidelines Update from Graham Irving

BREXIT- There is not much of an update for this topic as we are still uncertain exactly what implications this will have for falconers, what we do know is that all EU law that is currently embedded within UK law will be transposed into UK law in its own right once Article 50 is triggered by the government. The **law Commission review document** that was being considered by parliament to replace a range of current UK legislation is to sit with parliament and possibly be used during the process of the unpicking of EU legislation from current UK wildlife laws, the big unknown is how long and in what order the government will undertake this mammoth task, so any possible new wildlife laws in the UK could still be years away. I have been in contact with the IAF over the possibility to find out what changes, if any, Brexit will mean to UK and EU falconers, especially in relation to the movement of birds (and possibly falconers dogs as well), they hope to raise these questions during a meeting they are setting up with the EU CITES management team to discuss the way the EU responded to the proposal to down list the peregrine falcon in CITES.

CoP 16 (that's the international CITES meeting to you and I)- If ever we needed an example of how well international agreements can be influenced by those NGO's that want bans on any sort of wildlife trade, then this meeting is a cracking example, especially of the shenanigans of the EU CITES board within the EU parliament. The below IAF statement hits the nail squarely on the head

The International Association for Falconry and the Conservation of Birds of Prey (IAF) notes with great sadness the decision by the Parties to the 17th Conference of Parties to CITES to reject the Proposal by Canada to down-list the Peregrine Falcon from Appendix I to Appendix II of the CITES Convention. This Proposal was strongly supported by the IAF, as the global representative of falconers from 80 different nations, not because we seek any increase in trade but because this would have been a celebration of the very real conservation success, following 50 years of work resulting in the restoration of this species.

Falconry and the Peregrine falcon are almost synonymous, particularly in the West. There is a history of sustainable use of this species for at least 2 thousand years but almost certainly much longer. This relationship between man and falcon relied on wild-taken birds which could be released after use and captive breeding was virtually non-existent until the 1950s. This use was abruptly ended with the collapse of Peregrine populations, mainly in the northern hemisphere, in the 1950s. The collapse was first recognized by falconers who noted nesting failures and alerted conservation authorities. The immediate response was to assume that unsustainable trade was the cause. In time, organo-chlorine pesticides, principally DDT, were identified as the culprits. Conservation pressure resulted in the removal of these products from general use, paving the way for recovery of this and the many other species severely affected by a toxic environment. Fears that unsustainable trade could add to existing threats to the species, resulted in the listing of the Peregrine falcon in CITES Appendix I. The essential requirement for restoration however was recognition of the real cause and a clean environment. Falconers led a global effort ensued to re-establish this iconic species. The response of falconers in North America and Germany was to pioneer captive breeding of the species and thousands of peregrines have been released to the wild as a result.

All over the world, falconers and other enthusiasts, contributed to the restoration through breed and release projects, provision of artificial nesting sites, rehabilitation and public education. With ongoing work in Germany and Poland, the last population of this species to recover are the tree-nesting peregrines in Central Europe. As this population was completely extirpated, restoration required imprinting of new birds on tree-nests; this success represents a process which could possibly take centuries without intervention. There are now probably more Peregrines in the world than ever before. Increasing populations of pigeons in cities and because of modern agricultural methods have favoured this species. Traditional cliff eyries are occupied and there are now nests on novel sites such as high-rise buildings and quarries. The down-listing would have recognised this considerable success.

All of the significant conservation NGOs, including World Wildlife Fund, TRAFFIC and the World Conservation Society, as well as the CITES Secretariat, acknowledged that the Peregrine falcon no longer warrants inclusion in Appendix I and down-listing is appropriate.

The Proposal to down-list failed, largely through the block-vote of the European Union which commands 28 votes and acts as effective veto, on the basis that there was insufficient information available to conclude that the precautionary safeguards are met in all exporting countries. This ignores the scientific evidence and the recommendations of major conservation NGOs. We salute Canada for presenting this sound Proposal. We understand that Canada courageously supported its Proposal despite suggestions that it may be more acceptable if the Proposal were limited to only part of the distribution range of this species.

This decision by the CoP 17 of CITES is a success for those who oppose the sustainable use wildlife and it fails to recognize this conservation success. This Congress of the Parties was characterised by statements paying lip-service to rural communities and those whose livelihoods and cultures are intimately involved with wildlife while imposing restrictions on use even to the detriment of demonstrable conservation benefits. The failure of CITES to respond to a dramatic conservation success must bring into question the whole mechanism of this Convention and highlight the inordinate influence of anti-use and animal rights groupings on its function. Finally, the strategic decision for the 28 European Union votes to be applied together instead of as independent Parties must bring into question the access of other Parties to fair democratic participation.

Falconers can and will continue to rejoice in the successful restoration of the Peregrine falcon. We hold our heads high in recognition of this notable achievement. We will use this as a focus for our celebrations on World Falconry Day (16th November). Falconers, around the world will look to other conservation challenges which need to be addressed including the devastation of bird of prey populations by electrocution and we will continue to oppose illegal trade in wildlife.

*Adrian Lombard,
President – IAF
1st October 2016.*

Jeffrey Lendrum- Now there is a name that we haven't heard mentioned for a few years, well he is back in the news following his conviction in Brazil for more falcon egg smuggling where he has been sentenced to a four and half year jail sentence ... unfortunately the Brazilians gave him bail and he promptly did a bunk (now there is a surprise!).

Avian Influenza outbreaks- The arrival of the H5N8 strain of avian influenza has certainly seen us on a very steep learning curve this winter with outbreaks appearing in a wide variety of locations across the UK. During the early days DEFRA/APHA were keeping on top of the outbreak notifications via their web site and text alerts, but it did seem that as time went on the speed of notification slowed down a bit and it also appears that not all outbreaks, where wild birds were involved, made it onto the web site. There were concerns raised about differing advice being given out by regional offices to that which appeared on the web site, especially in relation to raptor field meets and the need to inform local offices of them taking place. One thing that I think we are all going to have to learn from this almost annually occurring issue is that we are going to need to take a closer look at how we house our hawks, especially in relation to the risks associated with partially covered or netted over aviaries and enclosures, I do know that there are members who are (or already have) looking to completely roof over their aviaries, flight pens and weathering's in the near future to hopefully reduce the chance of their hawks being infected by wild birds. The only structures that might be an issue are large hack pens but it will be up to each of use to decide on the lengths we want to go to to protect our birds.

The recovery of lost hawks- I mention this subject every now and then to remind falconers of the need to stay legal when you are contemplating using what would be considered a prohibited method to attempt re capture your lost hawks within the current UK legislation. In January Natural England were contacted by two gamekeepers, but located within the central strip of the country that had been approached by falconers who had lost goshawks and wanted to put live baited Larsen traps out on their land. These two gamekeepers rang to check the legality of them allowing this and also if it was possible for the falconers to do this as they were aware of the restrictions on decoy birds within the general licences. Both keepers were informed that it would be illegal for the falconer to place a live bated trap of any kind to re capture their lost goshawk without a licence from the responsible statutory body (in this case Natural England) and they were advised to decline the request unless the falconers concerned produced a valid/current licence from Natural England and also that the falconers had the consent of the landowner where they wished to deploy the traps.

So if you do ever find yourself in the position that you want to use a trap, and this does not include just something you want to put a live bait in but also includes snares, nets and noose carpets as an example, you will need to speak to the licensing unit that covers the country you are wanting to use the trap in. And yes licenses can and have been issues to re capture lost hawks using live baits, but the conditions are fairly tight as to their use for obvious reasons.

Natural England licenses to control problem raptors- there are probably a fair few of you that are aware that last year Natural England issued licenses to 4 gamekeepers in different parts of the country to control, by lethal methods, buzzards that were preying on pheasant and partridge poults where they could show that the predation caused "serious damage" to the extent that the level of predation was impacting on the shoots. Natural England approached the club to see if any members could be found who would want to take possession of any buzzards that were the subject of a licence being issued as an alternative to lethal control. One club member was found who would take two of the birds, but a delay in issuing the licence nearest to that member resulted in them being out of the country at the time the licence was issued so the process could not be followed through.

Natural England have stated that they are willing to consider this option if any licences are issued in 2017 and with this in mind if any member of an affiliated club who wishes to register an interest in receiving either passage or haggard buzzards or sparrowhawk please inform the Hawk Board coordinator who will pass the information onto the relevant contact within Natural England. I would think that the affiliated club that any potential recipient belongs to will undertake a vetting procedure of some sort of any potential recipients as for obvious reasons we need to make sure that we have every confidence in our membership that we can show ourselves in a positive light to a government body.

On the subject of potential recipients, Natural England are aware of the potential issues associated with centres and display givers wishing to receive such birds (and I have spoken with 3 display providers who would take buzzards) and the problems associated with A10 documentation, so they are talking with APHA to see if an agreement can be reached that would not be problematic for A10s to be issued to such recipients.

You can read more about the 4 buzzard licenses issued in 2016 via the following link-
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/buzzard-licensing-applications>

2017 General Licences -The newly issued range of 2017 General Licences are now available on the relevant statutory bodies web site, please see the below links to guide you to the relevant authority for your location.

England- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prevent-wild-birds-damaging-your-land-farm-or-business#general-licences>

Scotland- <http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/species-licensing/bird-licensing/general/>

Wales- <http://naturalresources.wales/apply-for-a-permit/protected-species-licensing/uk-protected-species-licensing/general-licences-2017-birds/?lang=en>

Northern Ireland- <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/wildlife-licensing#toc-2>

International Falconry Festival Abu Dhabi 2017 - The dates have been set for this year's International Falconry Festival Abu Dhabi, 4-9 December 2017, under the patronage of the President of UAE. It will be the fourth edition of this festival now being held at three year intervals.

Sun Report from Jim Collins

Sustainable Users Network Report January 2017

The primary issues taking-up lobbying time, meetings and report feedbacks continue to be those revolving around CITES, Invasive Species Directive and the ever-threatening danger of Positive Lists for species allowed to be kept and traded.

On Thursday 12th January affiliates to the Sustainable Users Network met with representatives of the authorities (DEFRA Policy, APHA, JNCC and RBG-Kew) and discussions from this meeting are also included in this report.

CITES

In the CITES cycle, with the completion of the triennial Conference of the Parties (CoP) in October 2016 we go into two successive years of Animals Committee meetings with that in 2017 to be held in Geneva. Details are beginning to emerge of what major items will be up for discussion and recommendation to the next CoP and the SUN Co-ordinator will be in attendance. Hawk Board members might recall that issues like the trade in Saker Falcons are dealt with almost exclusively within Animals Committee proceedings with just the final decision endorsed by the appropriate CoP. Transportation of CITES species and the control in captive-bred specimens of CITES species are certain to be items on the agenda, as will trade reviews. It is quite possible that the CoP debacle on the Peregrine Falcon will be aired and attempts made to resolve satisfactorily in readiness for the CoP of 2019.

Invasive Species Directive

The second list of Invasive Species to be banned from breeding/propagation and trade is expected to be voted upon in mid-February by the Member States. Frustratingly, and despite assurances to the contrary, the vote will again be on the whole list not species by species (meaning that countries say opposed to one species but generally supportive of the others are forced to vote through in favour of species they do not believe warrant listing). This second list comprises, in essence, a relatively few species that the European Commission were not able to make up their mind whether or not they should have been on the first list. At the last phase before the second list was formally posted, the European Commission threw out the American Bison (shame really because it would have been so ridiculed as to have made the Directive a laughing stock) and Sika Deer. Remaining on the second list are species such as the Egyptian Goose - a very popular species in wildfowl collections - and the Raccoon Dog.

As predicted, keepers in the UK and across Europe are almost universally choosing to ignore the bans on breeding (from the first banned list) of species like Raccoons and Ring-tailed Coatis. Most are doing so quietly and without a fuss but one still sees quite open advertising of new born specimens of this species with keepers either oblivious to the possibility of action from the enforcement authorities or else believing that action simply will not be taken.

The third list is being generated at the present time and is widely expected to include a larger number of species. Proposals are placed by the Member States to the European Commission (for example, it was the Polish Government that proposed both the American Bison and the Sika Deer) but, not infrequently, they are acting at the behest of protectionist NGO's. Therein lies the danger. We continue to hear a plethora of species being muted - amongst them Harris Hawk and hybrid birds of prey - so a lot will depend on whether or not a Member State is willing to propose them for the third list and then whether the European Commission accepts the proposal and places them on the list to be voted upon by the 28 Member States. Unfortunately, despite Brexit, the UK Government has stated that it will continue to adhere to all the lists until the time that the UK has left the EU and had chance at some later date to review the content of the legislation. This is a real shame since it would seem much more sensible to decline to implement any more banned lists and simply undertake a review of what species are invasive strictly in the context of the UK (meaning species like the Red-eared Slider and Ring-tailed Coati would no longer be banned!).

Positive Lists

The protectionist NGO's and a host of animal rights and so-called animal welfare organisations (annoyingly together with the reprehensible stance of several veterinary organisations) continue to put forward the idea

of Positive Lists as a panacea. The Positive List (with a highly restricted number of species) for mammals in the Netherlands has been subject to legal challenge - with SUN providing considerable support to the challenge - and we await a ruling on the case. The UK Government continues to make clear their opposition to Positive Lists seeing them as disproportionate, unnecessary, unenforceable and counterproductive (people still keep the species but do so undercover and cannot therefore use veterinary facilities for fear of being informed upon). It is clear that the current Conservative Government has no intention whatsoever to pander to demands for Positive Lists but our European colleagues face a tougher and more immediate fight and we could do so if a Government of a different persuasion were to take office. The sphere under which Positive Lists are considered is currently a Member State Competency so although our opponents will lobby otherwise the European Commission can only really suggest to Member States what they would like to see happen rather than putting forward a Directive for all to comply with across the EU.

SUN Meeting with the Authorities

We had a long discussion around the possible implications of Brexit. DEFRA will act in line with other Government Departments with the intent upon the day of Brexit to transpose all EU legislation into UK law with only the merest of tweaks. There was considerable discussion around the possibilities that this might present in making more than just tweaks but the feedback was that there was little appetite to do so. Instead, successive legislation would be reviewed and amended in the years following Brexit with wildlife legislation not likely to be near the top of the queue. The one possible exception appeared to be in respect of Ports of Entry and Exit where there might be the possibility to keep ports like Manchester/Birmingham (and perhaps one each for the devolved countries) by pragmatic wording in our anticipated response to the European Commission. This possibility was welcomed by SUN affiliates and will hopefully come to fruition.

DEFRA are finding it hard to attract staff and are running well under their target headcount. Restructuring of the wildlife teams has recently occurred and Michael Sigsworth will move on from his current position of responsibility for international wildlife trade issues. Although no species of raptor were upgraded within CITES at the last CoP it might be of interest to keepers that the listing of species like the African Grey parrot on CITES I (Annex A) has left a huge amount of unanswered questions in respect of licensing - lack of paperwork for such long-lived species, keepers normally pet owners rather than specialists, numbers held in 'rescue' centres, etc. and the numbers potentially involved are causing considerable consternation to the APHA Licensing Team.

It was confirmed that the UK Government reiterates that it has no intention of implementing Positive Lists in this country but is keeping an eye on moves in other EU Member States and in dialogue with the European Commission. Changes to the Unicorn system are being rolled-up under a larger revision of how CITES (and then all animal related) licensing takes place in the UK and with a particular concentration on process. SUN affiliates have been invited to participate in all stages of this review in order to best inform the decision-makers.

After three years of procrastination it now appears that the UK Government have made proposals to the European Commission in respect of dropping most if not all requirements for additional documentation for captive-bred European birds (typically passerines) being brought into the UK from other EU Member States - people may remember that the UK was found by the European Commission to be in default of freedom of movement and trade requirements for the EU by insisting on additional documentation not required anywhere else within the EU.

DEFRA/APHA responded to a question raised on A10's given to raptors being rehomed. Graham Irving will cover this in his report

IAF Report from Mark Upton

In November the Irish Hawking Club hosted the IAF for their 47th Council of Delegates Meeting. The main meeting was held in Sneem, Co Kerry in some of the most beautiful scenery in Ireland. This was followed by The International Conference on the 'Stewardship of Biodiversity and Sustainable Use' which was held in Moyvalley, Co. Kildare. I am pleased to say we were well represented by several Hawk Board members at both meetings, as well as a number of falconers from the UK.

Falconers from all over Europe flew at the field meet, often with very large fields watching. On the whole quarry was plentiful and the hawking venues good. All hawks were in top class condition and well manned. No hawks were injured or lost (although I came close to losing my tiercel). The falconry was of the highest standard and a great reflection on the quality of falconry seen today.

At the Delegates Meeting several new members were admitted:

- Bahrain: Bahrain Raptor Rehab (Supporting Member)
- Greece: Hellenic Falconers' Club (Member)
- Malta: Maltese Falconry Club (Member)
- Morocco: Association Fauconnier Uled Fraj el Jadeeda (Member)
- United Kingdom: Yorkshire Hawking Club (Member)
- Saudi Arabia: Avian Research Centre King Faisal University (Supporting Member)
- Serbia:

This brings the total number of countries represented in IAF to 86, putting it among the largest International Conservation NGO's in the world.

Ralph Rogers stood down as Vice-president for the Americas. There was an election between Mike Dupuy and for the post Dan Cecchini, which was won by Dan Cecchini.

There were many presentations on conferences and work carried out by the IAF in the previous year. Most of which have been mentioned in earlier reports to HB.

The IAF have been sharing an office in Brussels with FACE. This is coming to an end because FACE are moving to larger premises. Although they have offered IAF a space in these offices it is felt that because they are open plan that IAF would lose their identity in such premises. So it has been decided to look for other offices which would either be rented or bought as an investment.

The International Conference on the 'Stewardship of Biodiversity and Sustainable Use' was organised by the Irish Hawking Club and the IAF as an important international discussion and review on the subject of 'Wild Take' and 'Sustainable Use' of Raptors for the purpose of Falconry.

Talks were given by International guest speakers with strong credentials in Raptor Biology, Raptor Monitoring, Conservation Management and Science, the Conference Programme focused on key themes:

Session 1: Setting the Scene

Session 2: Falconers in Conservation

Session 3: Convention, Theory and Science

Session 4: The Future

The Conference relied heavily on research, facts and science and a document on the subject of the presentations will be published to compliment, support and record the occasion. (Help has been given towards the publishing of this document by the Falconry Heritage Trust).

There were also presentations by the Irish Grey Partridge Conservation Trust and the Irish Red Grouse Conservation. In the evenings the conference room was used for interesting talks on Falconry Archives in USA and UK, the work of the Falconry Heritage Trust, the re-introduction of peregrines in USA by Tom Cade and other falconry related subjects.

Adrian Lombard presented the IAF Presidential Award to Professors Tom Cade, Christian Saar and Carl Jones. These are three of the foremost raptor conservationists in the world and all of these conservation icons are falconers.

The 11 session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage took place in the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Conference Centre in Addis Ababa, from 28 November to 2 December 2016. IAF attended as an Accredited Advisory NGO to the UNESCO. IAF is working closely with the NGO Forum which assists the Intergovernmental Committee.

Portugal, Italy, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Germany have now joined the list of "Falconry, a living human heritage" bringing the total to 18.

The IAF are now fully involved in the organisation of the 4th Falconry Festival in Abu Dhabi which will take place on 4-9 December 2017. Youth is to be the theme of the event.

The official launch of the Perdix Portal will be 10,11 and 12th May 2017 in Bozararts complex in the centre of Brussels. An associated art exhibition "Living in Arable Landscapes" is being organized around the event.

Countryside Alliance Update from James Legge

POLITICAL AND LEGAL UPDATE ENGLAND AND WALES 12 January 2017

POLITICAL

People Moves

- Robert Courts was elected in the Whitney by-election (Con hold)
- Tracy Brabin was elected in the Batley and Spen by-election (Lab hold)
- Sarah Olney was elected in the Richmond Park by-election held following the resignation of Zac Goldsmith (Lib Dem gain from Con)
- Caroline Johnson was elected in the Sleaford and North Hykeham by-election held following the resignation of Stephen Phillips (Con hold)
- Mary Glendon and Sue Hayman have been appointed Shadow Defra Ministers
- Kerry McCarthy replaced Valerie Vaz as a member of the EFRA Select Committee
- Glyn Davies and Matthew Offord replaced Jo Churchill and Rebecca Pow as members of the Environmental Audit Committee

EFRA Select Committee Inquiry – Animal Welfare

The final report was published on 16 November. The report included a recommendation that the RSPCA should cease to prosecute animal welfare offences as a first resort but should instead assist the police in gathering evidence.

EFRA Select Committee Inquiry – Future Flood Prevention

The final report was published on 2 November. It made no link between grouse moor management and the winter floods last year, a point we stressed in our written evidence.

EFRA Select Committee Inquiry – Rural Tourism

We submitted written evidence and Head of Policy, Sarah Lee, gave oral evidence on 14 December in which she stressed the importance of country sports in helping to create a 365 day tourist season.

Environmental Audit Select Committee Inquiry – Natural Environment outside the EU

The Committee's Report was published on 4 January. We submitted written evidence with a particular focus on the issue of rewilding. The Report, while not rejecting rewilding, does note the lack of consensus over what rewilding is, or should be, and acknowledges that the evidence base for rewilding is "insufficient".

Exiting the EU Select Committee Inquiry – Negotiating Objectives

We will be submitting written evidence on the rural priorities for Brexit.

DEFRA - Animals Establishments Licensing Consultation

The consultation has closed and the Government published a summary of responses on 15 September. A response from the Government is expected early this year, with regulations to follow later in the year.

Petitions Committee – Driven Grouse Shooting

Following the online petitions, an inquiry into grouse shooting was established. We submitted written evidence and 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 we briefed ahead of this. 30 MPs spoke or made interventions during the three hour debate. Only one MP (Kerry McCarthy) came close to supporting a ban, the SNP waived the right for their frontbench spokesperson to respond and Labour called for more evidence. The Government made it clear that it did not support a change in the law.

Policing and Crime Bill

Firearms

The Government brought forward two amendments at Committee Stage in the House of Lords 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. These amendments were agreed on 9 November. A further amendment at Report Stage to clarify the law in respect of the borrowing of shotguns and rifles was agreed at Report Stage on 7 December.

Face coverings

A Government amendment was brought forward at Report Stage to address this issue. The amendment does not change the scope of police powers but makes authorising use of those powers simpler. The amendment was agreed on 7 December. The power to remove face coverings can now be authorised orally and recorded in writing subsequently. Previously an authorisation had to be given in signed writing before the power could be exercised.

CAMPAIGNS

Countryside Alliance Awards

The Countryside Alliance has closed to nominations which are nudging towards 6,000 and is a record breaking year. The Awards have received significant support from parliamentarians, the media and social media which has helped to spread the message. A shortlist has been drawn up and judging will take place early this year. The dates have been set for the Welsh Winners reception on 1 February and the National Winners Reception at the House of Lords on 22 March 2017.

Rural Policing

The Government is reviewing the police funding formula across England and Wales. The previous proposal from 2015 was roundly rejected. The Countryside Alliance has briefed MPs on our concerns and is working with Devon and Cornwall Constabulary and the National Rural Crime Network to demonstrate the cost of delivering policing in rural areas compared to urban areas and to put forward a proposal for fair police funding.

HUNTING

Prosecutions

There are no further Hunting Act prosecutions for 2016 to the two cases reported previously.

Hunting Campaign - Westminster

All Conservative MPs who were either opposed to, or were 'wobbly' over, the Statutory Instrument to amend the Hunting Act last year were invited to Wales to meet the Welsh hill packs and see their work and why amendment of the Act was so important. As none took up the offer they were invited to a drop-in event in Westminster to meet David Thomas from the Federation of Welsh Farmers Packs (FWFP) and Nick Fenwick from the Farmers Union of Wales (FUW). This took place on 5 December.

SHOOTING CAMPAIGN AND MOORLANDS

Snaring in England

The new Code of Practice on the use of snares for fox control in England, which has been developed by the shooting organisations with the support of Government, was published on 20 October. It is essential that all snare users are aware of the new Code and that only those snares that are compliant with it are used.

Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTS)

The Countryside Alliance highlighted the incongruity of implementing AIHTS despite the UK leaving the EU, given the EU is the signatory to the agreement. The Government has responded that it intends for England to become an independent signatory to AIHTS with a view to adopting its standards for all trapping. The Alliance has requested assurances that any such process will include full consultation with countryside organisations to ensure AIHTS becomes fit for the unique circumstances found in the UK. The Alliance is a member of the Technical Working Group, made up entirely of shooting organisations, working on identifying AIHTS' compliant traps.

The BBC and Chris Packham

The BBC Trust has finally published its findings, following the complaints it received against its presenter Chris Packham in 2015, and his failure to follow its own editorial guidelines. The BBC Trust has ruled that the amount of time contracted, and the amount of time on air, did not make Packham a 'regular' BBC Presenter, even though he worked for the BBC on 119 days, or well over half the working year, in 2015. It also decided that Packham was not associated with public policy broadcasting on the grounds that his discussions were academic and not policy.

Game to Eat

The inaugural Great British Game Food Festival took place at London's Borough Market on Saturday 19 November. Game to Eat, which is one of the 14 participants, will be promoting wild game at this event which

is at the heart of the London food scene

HSBC

Following information from Alliance members that HSBC were declining services to businesses involved in shooting, the Chairman of HSBC UK was written to seeking clarification. He replied that there was no policy restricting the access of shooting businesses to services and assured us he would look into the cases we had raised. Subsequently he informed us that the bank's policies had been misapplied and HSBC would be contacting affected businesses to offer their services. We have received confirmation from members that this has now happened.

British Medical Association (BMA) and Firearms Licensing

Having received no response from the BMA regarding their advice that GPs claim a conscientious objection to firearms ownership, we wrote to the Chairman directly but again have not received a response. We will now be publicly calling on the BMA to amend this approach as part of our wider campaign to improve the application of the new medical element of the licensing process, which continues to fail applicants.

WALES

Mobile Animal Exhibits

Lesley Griffiths, Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs made a statement on 15 December. She stated that "Mobile Animal Exhibits' are not subject to any stringent licensing regime or routine inspection and it is clear the welfare of animals used by these entities is a cause for concern which I want to address." She has tasked officials with "developing a new scheme such as licensing or registration, for 'Mobile Animal Exhibits' including circuses, which display domestic and exotic animals in Wales." There will be a consultation early this year and the Welsh Government have committed to working with stakeholders. Any new scheme will have a direct effect on those using birds of prey in shows and demonstrations. A future ban on the use of wild animals in circuses in Wales has not been ruled out.

Snaring

The League Against Cruel Sports lodged a petition that was considered by the Senedd Petitions Committee. We lobbied members of the Committee ahead of the debate, deconstructing the League's use of statistics and pointing AMs to Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) research. The Welsh Assembly refused to take down the petition. The Environment Committee has now called an oral evidence session to explore the topic further. Rachel Evans gave evidence to the Committee on 30 November.

Animal Welfare Network Wales (AWNW)

The recent AGM saw no change in the governance of the Executive Board with the RSPCA remaining in the Chair. The National Gamekeepers Organisation (NGO) and the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) have now joined the Group.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW)

Rachel Evans attended the recent board meeting and spoke about the pressure from Animal Aid on NRW to ban recreational shooting and questioned the timescale of the proposed consultation. Rachel Evans also highlighted the need to engage with rural and shooting organisations to get an alternative view to the claims of animal rights groups.

EUROPE

EU Firearms Directive

The trilogue process continues. This involves discussions between the Parliament, Commission and Council before the final approval of the amendments to the Directive.

Lead Ammunition

The first European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) stakeholder meeting regarding the use of lead shot over wetlands took place at the end of September in Helsinki. The meeting discussed the background information to the issue with the next meeting in February to discuss the first draft.