

JW Hughes
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Lord Bonomy
Natural Resources Division
The Scottish Government
1-C North, Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

Our Ref:
Your ref:

29th March 2016

Dear Lord Bonomy,

I understand that you are undertaking a review of the 2002 Protection of Wild Mammals Act.

For many years I have run a stable yard on the edge of Galashiels. The business has been founded on the following activities:

1. Teaching people how to ride, particularly youngsters.

Local boys who have reached prominence and have ridden from my yard include (i) Ian Stark who has won four Olympic Silver medals and won Badminton Horse Trials three times and (ii) Ryan Mania who won the 2013 Grand National. The others have not enjoyed such prominence but riding and contact with horses has become important part of their lives.

2. Providing horses for the Borders' festivals during the summer months.

These rideouts are an important part of the culture of the Scottish Borders with up to 300 mounted followers on the big occasions. The yard provided horses for hire for these occasions.

3. Providing livery services.

This service enables those with horses to have them kept and exercised so that, when the owners wish to ride them, they are available. Owners include mounted followers of local hunts.

The provision of livery services to mounted followers of the local hunts has been important. It provides income during the winter months when the other parts of the

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business are at a much lower level. As such, the hunt followers support the infrastructure needed to enable yards such as mine to provide horses for the ride-outs throughout the Borders in the summer months.

Although the 2002 Act brought an end to traditional hunting, the hunts have managed to continue to attract mounted followers and the necessary funding for their operation through subscriptions. Throughout the time I have had my yard following hounds has been a wonderful way for my customers to build confidence in their riding and for horses to be brought on. I would be concerned should any changes to the current arrangements bring an end to the existence of packs of fox hounds in the Scottish Borders.

I understand that your particular focus is to be on the suffering which foxes may experience by being chased to guns by a pack of hounds. I would be concerned for my business if there were to be any changes to the current arrangement, particularly if they were simply to satisfy a political necessity and were not based on sound evidence.

Yours sincerely,

S Philip

AP **J W Hughes**