

**Review of the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002**

**Submission to Lord Bonomy**

**on behalf of The Berwickshire Hunt**

**Tim Culham**

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The Berwickshire Hunt provides a fox control service for the benefit of farmers, shoot owners and landowners generally. It operates within the above law and does this effectively by using a whole pack of hounds to flush foxes to guns for humane despatch. We therefore feel that no amendments need to be made to the current law which is working effectively.

The Hunt operates in countryside which is very diverse including woodland and forestry; moorland; grazing land and cultivated land. This diversity of land use makes it essential for a whole pack of hounds to be used to flush foxes to guns. Without enough hounds to put pressure on foxes, they would never be flushed effectively enough to shoot them safely.

In order to help in this endeavour and to cover the ground efficiently, while helping to control the hounds at work, it is considered best to do this with horse-mounted followers, although there are also foot followers and the people with guns use bikes for access. It is often not possible to cover the ground fast enough on foot; bikes can be noisy and can alert foxes to their presence; it is often necessary to cross countryside and rivers that are inaccessible to bikes. Horses are normally best for this purpose; in some terrain and in adverse weather conditions, even they can find it difficult.

We believe that this allows for proper, effective and humane control of mammals, such as foxes, under the Act. Keeping a close presence with the working hounds, which is best done on horseback for the above-mentioned reasons, ensures that the necessary level of protection is also afforded to any other mammals.

We have the support of farmers and landowners in controlling foxes in this way; generally in a farming area it is understood by the public that foxes need to be controlled to prevent loss of lambs and poultry. Farmers allow us - hounds, huntsman and mounted followers - free access to their land in return for us controlling their fox population. There would not appear to be any public demand for a change in the way we control foxes.

The activity operates within the current law. Those carrying guns are experienced individuals with appropriate licences; their number depends on the terrain and the area. It is not always possible to ensure that the fox goes where the guns are concealed; nor is it always possible to shoot safely; nor is it always certain to kill the fox outright.

Our terriermen operate under a licence for the days we hunt. They work to a Code of Practice and are fully conversant with the law. Terriers flush foxes from underground to a waiting gun. If it is not despatched immediately (even the best shots can malfunction and they have to be sure it is not a terrier), hounds are available to do that in order to minimise suffering.

We are in contact with Police Scotland and both parties seek to ensure that communication is improved. Police Scotland have stated that there is no evidence to suggest that any hunt, mounted or otherwise, has broken the law. We have received few, if any, complaints that we are not doing the job properly and Police Scotland seems content that there are no issues for them either. In other words, the Act is being enforced and complied with.



**Tim Culham**  
Chairman, for and on behalf of The Berwickshire Hunt.

29th March '16