



**ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP
on
GAME & WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**

**Minutes of the meeting on
Monday 24th October 2022
4-5pm, Room M, Portcullis House**

Attendees:

Name	Representing	Name	Representing
Sir Robert Goodwill	MP	GWCT	
Daniel Zeichner	MP	Teresa Dent	GWCT
Kieran Persand	Chris Grayling MP office	Dr Alastair Leake	GWCT
Earl of Caithness	House of Lords	Henrietta Appleton	GWCT
Lord Colgrain	House of Lords	Joe Dimbleby	GWCT
Baroness Hooper	House of Lords	Sir Jim Paice (online)	GWCT
Lord Blencathra	House of Lords		
Lord Lucas	House of Lords	Guest Speakers	
		Paul Temple	
Peter Stevens	Conservative Rural Forum	Dr Steve Carver	
Alice Booth	POST		
David Bean	Countryside Alliance		
James Fisher	Country Life		

Apologies received from - Lord Carter of Coles, Lord Cameron of Dillington, Lord Harlech, Baroness Young of Old Scone, Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville, Mark Garnier MP, Lord Browne of Ladyton, Earl of Leicester, Lord Wigley, Lord Campbell of Pittenweem, Lord Randall of Uxbridge and Baroness Masham of Ilton.

Meeting notes:

The APPG discussed the topic "Turbo-charging food production and the environment – who needs Beavers & Bison?". Sir Robert welcomed all attendees and drew the meeting to order. After a brief introduction to the subject, he introduced the first speaker, Paul Temple a farmer representing the Science for Sustainable Agriculture.

Paul's presentation (a copy of which can be found [here](#)) emphasised the importance of science and advances in husbandry in balancing food production with environmental concerns and the importance of behavioural change. He demonstrated this by reference to his own farm and his conversion to farming 'greener' – essentially from ploughing by instinct to reducing risk by direct drilling and introducing grass into this rotation – and the environmental wins that he is now seeing. In addition to reductions in fuel, energy and fertilizer use with their associated net zero gains, he is also seeing increases in biodiversity both in the soil and across his farm.

Sir Robert then introduced Dr Steve Carver from the IUCN's Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM) Task Force on Rewilding and a senior lecturer in the Department of Geography at Leeds University. Steve's presentation (for a copy see [here](#)) focused on how farming and rewilding might co-exist but he was at pains to explain that regenerative agriculture is not rewilding. Given that rewilding as a term has been used to cover a variety of approaches to nature recovery, Steve outlined the definition and guiding principles of rewilding that the IUCN has been at pains to create to provide some consistency. They emphasize that rewilding focuses on the nature-enabled recovery of ecological processes; it may be human-led at the outset but human intervention declines over time. However, he also recognized the need for food production and that therefore it is not appropriate to rewild everywhere. Instead of seeking a solution on the land sharing-land sparing continuum, he discussed the concept of the three-compartment model based on semi-natural habitats, high yield farmland and low yield farmland. If this approach is taken, of the 30% area target for rewilding only about 5% of our land area needs to be focused on 'real wilding' (i.e. no farming), the remaining 25% focusing on regenerative farming and

other agro-ecological approaches where nature is managed alongside food production. In this 25% he saw a role for Farmer Clusters in supporting geographical connectivity. Such an approach would conform to the 3Cs or “Cores, Corridors and Carnivores” rewilding model as well as deliver the “Bigger, Better, More Joined” habitats espoused by the Lawton Review.

Sir Robert then introduced Dr Alastair Leake of the Allerton project whose presentation (a copy of which is [here](#)) neatly combined the approaches of the first two speakers by demonstrating how the Allerton project has managed both the in-field for food production and the margin for nature. His presentation emphasized the importance of the interventionist approach in supporting farmland wildlife such as winter supplementary feeding, the application of agronomic principles to wildlife seed mixes and predation control. This has resulted in Allerton recording higher songbird, brown hare and moth numbers than in the surrounding area; all whilst seeing output per hectare increase through science-led improvements in cultivation techniques in-field.

Q&A discussion

Concern was expressed about the need for man to intervene at times, particularly for example with regard to deer and grey squirrel control in order to allow natural regeneration or with regard to key species protection such as Curlew. Dr Steve Carver responded that the level of intervention changes over time; however abandonment (or zero intervention) is likely to lead to unforeseen outcomes. He also pointed out that in some cases natural predators had been removed and that their reintroduction could support the control of invasive species such as pine marten preying on grey squirrels and that there had been an increase in meso-predators due to wider availability of food sources and that this needed to be accounted for in considering key species declines.

A question was also asked about rewilding being seen as allowing open access. Steve responded that experience shows that the public generally follow footpaths so that to some degree this can be managed. However, he acknowledged that wild camping has become a problem as some are ill-informed. He hoped the introduction of a GCSE on Natural History would be a positive step in increasing awareness.

Given the worrying impacts of its spread, the threat of Avian flu on wild birds was also discussed. Our status as a base for migratory species limits our ability to address it. Dr Alastair Leake suggested that we could support wild bird numbers and health through improving our approach to their conservation. Winter food mixes are largely based on combinable crops that have been bred to shed their seed and consequently supplementary feeding using hoppers is needed. We need to breed seed-holding capacity back into crops used in wildlife mixes to limit the hungry gap.

Sir Robert brought the discussion to a close at 16.57 by thanking all attending and contributing to the discussion. He concluded by saying that ELMS remained an important mechanism for converting mainstream farming to more sustainable approaches.

11th November 2022