

Dear

Re: NRW Shooting on Public Land Review

Hannah Blythyn, Welsh Minister for Environment, recently claimed¹ that it is Welsh Government policy to cease pheasant shooting on land held by the Welsh Government Woodland Estate. That request has now been implemented to the surprise of many, because no such policy has been debated or published. I can only assume the announcement is a personal opinion. If this is the case, I believe it should be investigated because it would constitute an abuse of position in public office.

This is important for both the Welsh environment and those affected because it goes against the findings of a £45,000 review conducted by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). It spent 2,000 hours reviewing over 250 pieces of evidence and considered 4,700 public consultation responses², over two years, measured against the following Welsh legislation:

- *The Environment (Wales) Act (2016)*
- *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015)*

They identified the evidence that pheasant shooting can positively contribute to biodiversity, well-being, rural enterprise, jobs and community cohesion, and stated it should continue on the existing basis.

It now appears the findings did not agree with the Minister for Environment's personal views and she sought to intervene by suggesting her views are those of the Welsh Government. There are three things that appear completely illogical:

- 1. If this policy had ever existed, NRW and the public would have known about it. There is no such policy on the Welsh Government website.*
- 2. Hannah Blythyn states that she supports the use of guns to shoot deer, rabbits, squirrels, foxes, crows and pigeons because their management supports environmental objectives. However, NRW concluded from the evidence that pheasant shooting supported both the Environment (Wales) Act and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, so why is it Welsh Government policy to cease shooting pheasants?*
- 3. Hannah Blythyn also stated that the Welsh Government position on pheasant shooting is driven by 'public views'. What views are these? Are these the views captured in the NRW consultation? If so, the public was equally opposed to the shooting of deer, rabbits, squirrels, foxes, crows and pigeons. On what basis are the public views adopted for some species and not others?*

There appears to be no Welsh Government policy on pheasant shooting, and Hannah Blythyn's stated position on pheasant shooting is inconsistent with:

- *Welsh legislation*
- *Natural Resources Wales (NRW) review (both the evidence and public consultation)*

If my conclusion is wrong, I would like to understand why. Please can we meet to discuss this?

Yours sincerely,

¹ Letter from Hannah Blythyn, Minister for Environment, to Clare Pillman, NRW Chief Executive, 9 July 2018.

² Natural Resources Wales, Board Paper 'Review of the use of firearms on land managed by NRW', 12 July 2018.