



SACS

UK-WIDE SHOOTING
& COUNTRY SPORTS
ADVOCACY

SACS - WORK UPDATE: 31 JANUARY 2019

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No other organisation in our sector achieves so much with such a small dedicated staff team.

This update is a just a brief snapshot of our work, outlined so members know how their money is being spent.

We have deliberately left the firearms section to the end – everyone knows SACS excels in firearms advocacy, but we wanted to emphasise the sheer breadth of the other important work we do on your behalf as well.

Please help us to help you by continuing to support SACS and renewing your membership on time. Without you, none of this work happens.

SACS NEWS AND UPDATES

A constant question here at SACS has been what to do with a magazine or journal. In 2014 we asked members if they wanted a glossy magazine and the majority feedback was no, a newsletter was sufficient and since then we have tried a number of options, being wary that production costs, time input, overheads and mailing charges strain the rest of our work.

The other obvious issue is that as soon as a newsletter or journal is published, it can be out-of-date on important matters; we don't want members to act on obsolete information, unaware that this has been updated in a subsequent edition.

So, we are trialling a new, single online newsletter that is updated monthly and, to the best of our ability, constantly timely and accurate. There is just so much activity and work ongoing that this seems to be the most sensible option. Members will be able to access the newsletter from our website, but as each new version is published we will email or text the link to you. Anyone not online can call the office to request a printed copy at no charge.

MEMBERSHIP PACKS

From Alex: *"When you renew your membership with SACS it is a big thumbs-up that you support our work and ethos. If you renew by phone you get to speak with someone friendly who will always say 'thank you'. If you renew online or via Direct Debit it massively helps our administration and costs, but is less personal. The one consistent thing is your renewal pack, which until now contained your letter, card and a new window sticker. Over the last couple of years, SACS has been through a big restructuring and rejuvenating process. Change was necessary to ensure that the Association was able to effectively support members and counter the increasing threats to our way of life.*

As a thank you to everyone, going forward we are proposing that each renewal contains: letter, membership card, SACS lanyard and pin badge. We are looking into other member gifts as well. Unfortunately, Rigby rifles and Purdey shotguns will have to stay on the Xmas wish list! The new lanyards will be here in February.

Many of you get in touch to say thank you to the SACS team, but it is your support that makes that work happen. So, from us as a team as, thank you. Your support is really appreciated."

ANIMAL WELFARE CROSS PARTY GROUP

SACS attends the Scottish Parliament Animal Welfare Cross Party Group meetings, where animal welfare issues are discussed and consideration given to introducing or amending legislation concerning animal welfare. Given the increasing conflation in society between animal rights and animal welfare, which our Director of Policy has recently written about in Fieldsports Magazine, our attendance as an objective and rational party (along with our sister organisation the Scottish Countryside Alliance) is essential.

ATLANTIC SALMON TRUST

SACS supports the vital research work of the AST, and we have lent our formal backing to the Trust's Missing Salmon Project (the only national fieldsports organisation to do so). Without robust evidence on the multiple causes of the salmon population crash, legislators are unlikely to listen to our community's calls for action on predator control, aquaculture and habitat management. Contact the office to receive a copy of the latest Project booklet.

SACS BLOG

The SACS blog is published every two weeks, and ranges from fieldsports stories, calls to action and honest kit reviews. Click [here](#) to read more.

BRITISH GAME ALLIANCE

This is a new UK game meat marketing board that aims to deal with feathered game supply and demand issues, as well as consistency and publicity for game meat consumption. SACS actively supports the BGA and is fully engaged with BGA leaders, providing feedback on the proposed Standards and ways of working. We are also a member of the BGA Advisory Committee. We have written to all our club and syndicate reps to ask them to join up their shoot; you can do this by clicking [here](#). **IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING TO SELL YOUR GAME, PLEASE CONTACT THE BGA FOR ASSISTANCE AND TELL THEM YOU ARE A SACS MEMBER.**

In addition, the BGA is asking for honest feedback about its work to date. Click [here](#) to complete their survey, which is open to everyone in the shooting community.

CODE OF GOOD SHOOTING PRACTICE

Members are reminded of the importance of following the SACS-endorsed Code of Good Shooting Practice. No doubt many of you will be aware of allegations of pheasant carcass dumping and related poor practices; there is no excuse. SACS' director is meeting with other CoGSP partners in London later this month and will report back. The Code can be accessed [here](#).

DEER WELFARE AND MANAGEMENT

SACS sits on the Deer Management Round Table, which is a strategic policy forum for deer management issues, and Lowland Deer Network Scotland. We also sit on the Wild Deer Best Practice Working Group, which is currently working on updates to existing Scottish, English and Welsh Best Practice documents and delivery of new ones. SACS has an experienced and capable Wild Deer Expert Group and takes an approach based on two tenets: our members' interests and genuine deer welfare.

To this end, SACS has recently sought a more proactive relationship with Forest Enterprise in regard to greater community access to deer management opportunities; a full member update on this will be issued in due course. We have also recently led clarification of roadside dispatch insurance for the sector and responded to a request for information from the Lowland Deer Panel. In addition, we help deer stalking syndicates with leases, and firearms or firearms licensing-related matters.

There is a lot happening in the deer world. SACS is an organisation with extensive staff and committee deer management experience and one that vigorously stands up for deer and deer managers against politicians and environmental do-gooders. A classic example is the constant single-species focus on deer. It is the long-held view of SACS that Deer Management Groups should be part of wider landscape-scale management groups covering everything from ecology to industry to renewables to human communities dependent on the land. Bigger issues require bigger thinking and broader engagement; SACS sits at the heart of that advocacy for our members.

SACS SYNDICATE AND CLUB SUPPORT

SACS has a large and growing number of syndicates and clubs within our membership. These cover a broad range of interests from game shooting, terriers, falconry, ferreting, air rifle and pistol, deer stalking, clay shooting and angling. It is a welcome indicator of the health of our way of life that the syndicate and club sector appears to be strong, although we do need far more younger people getting involved, and we don't just mean juniors. In our view it is much more effective to invest in young adults i.e. the next generation of parents and young parents, than juniors by themselves.

SACS provides syndicates and clubs with excellent public liability insurance, but we also help many with lease and legal queries, firearms guidance for their members and a level of personal support and service for syndicate and club officers that cannot be matched elsewhere. Our genuine, friendly approach really matters and we know only too well how challenging and thankless it can be to run a syndicate and club. We are here to make life easier where we can.

This year SACS has helped with more syndicate and club queries and calls for guidance than ever before. Whether it is shooting rates, trying to understand or negotiate a lease or perhaps even asking for our help to find new members for the group, then please just get in touch.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY – SALMON CONSERVATION ENGLAND

SACS responded to the public consultation on proposals for new National Salmon and Sea Trout Protection Byelaws. The Byelaws came into force on 1 January 2019, after an initial postponement following the consultation outcome. The EA wrote to us to clarify their position on some of our concerns, and to set out what amendments had been made to the Byelaws as-adopted. Visit the SACS news [page](#) for more information.

BEAVERS IN SCOTLAND

SACS responded to the ScotGov consultation on the Beavers in Scotland Strategic Environmental Assessment, and whether potential impacts of beavers and appropriate mitigation measures have been correctly identified. Responses to this consultation have now been analysed and published, with beavers expected to be granted European Protected Species Status imminently, but after ScotGov has resolved some 'outstanding issues'. SACS has also been engaged with SNH on the suite of management and mitigation measures to be made available to land managers dealing with negative beaver impacts, which should include lethal control where necessary.

FERAL 'HAIRY' PIGS

We await the Scottish Government's decision on feral pig management, having submitted our views via SNH back in 2016. The subject of 'hairy pigs' is on the National Species Reintroduction Forum agenda, of which SACS is a member. As and when more detail emerges on Scottish Government's position on hairy pigs, then we will be in touch with our members. It is a policy area that needs to be absolutely correct on your behalf. Read the latest SACS [blog post](#) to learn more about boar management.

REVAMPED FIELDSPORTS MAGAZINE

Fieldsports Magazine has been bought by the Fieldsports Press, and is now a high-quality journal-style smorgasbord of fieldsports commentary, information and photography that won't end up in your recycling box after a few days. SACS' Director of Policy continues to write a regular feature; of all the magazines available for our community, this one is really worth your attention.

COUNTRYMAN'S WEEKLY

SACS has been asked to make regular contributions to the Countryman's Weekly. This is a real vote of confidence in our work and commitment and we look forward to sharing views, concerns and ideas. It has been said by a number of you that you take pride in SACS being a 'straight-talker', which is true. Although polite and courteous, we are not in the habit of surrounding issues with cotton wool. It is best to say it like it is, and we started with the 16 January edition, providing readers with an [introduction](#) to our work.

FORESTRY COMMISSION

SACS has met with FC Scotland to discuss ways to work together on common policy issues, relating mostly to wild deer and habitat management. This is a developing area, and we will update members when more information is available.

FOREST ENTERPRISE

Forest Enterprise is the operational arm of Forestry Commission Scotland. Many FE staff, contractors and recreational deer management permission holders are SACS members and there is a consistent theme in all our discussions – concern about the future of **sustainable** deer management on the National Forest Estate.

SACS has been attempting to move FE's deer management out of the community engagement dark ages for several years now and has been exploring our vision for community-focused deer management initiatives. Following on from earlier meetings and correspondence, FE have asked SACS to meet with them again to discuss and explore and we will continue to press our case for a more sustainable way forward for deer management on the National Forest Estate.

More information on this deer issue and the SACS' perspective on the future of sustainable deer management will be available via a new blog, available shortly.

GENERAL LICENCES

Remember, wherever you live in the UK, if you are carrying out any control of bird species that is permitted only under General Licence for your region, you must have read and understood the relevant GL for the activity you are undertaking. This is your responsibility, and it is the law. If it is not for a clear purpose stated in a GL e.g. crop protection, then you are on wobbly ground. In 2016, SACS proposed a new GL format that was subsequently adopted by SNH. SNH will launch a GL review in spring 2019, and we will let members know when this is scheduled, in order to get your thoughts.

Elsewhere in the UK, the relevant authorities issue their own versions of the GLs. You can find the links to the host webpages [here](#), and you should check that you are reading the latest version of the licence you require.

INDIVIDUAL SPECIES CONTROL LICENCES

Problem cormorants? Rogue ravens? If you need to apply for an individual control licence to deal with a protected species, and you can provide hard evidence as to why lethal control is necessary, please apply to SNH, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales or DAERA (NI), or contact SACS to help you with your application. SACS has successfully assisted members who felt that they had no hope of a licence being granted. As one example, SNH have told us that they will consider all properly-evidenced applications, and it helps the case for active management of such species when more applications are submitted. Help us to help you.

LANTRA COURSE CONTENT CONSULTATION

The leading awarding body for land-based and environmental training courses and qualifications, Lantra have sought SACS' input on a number of game sector qualification reviews. Ensuring that education opportunities are up to scratch for our young folk and new entrants – our future – is truly vital work.

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT REVIEW OF GROUSE MOOR MANAGEMENT/LICENSING

The Werrity Review into the management of Scotland's driven grouse moors, and the call to introduce statutory licensing, is well underway and due to report in Spring 2019. SACS was invited by the Review group to respond to a 37-point questionnaire, to which we submitted an objective and thoroughly-researched 13-page response in September 2018. As one of our members, who was asked to review our draft response before submission, said: *"Not many folk could've written a response as competent as that."* If the group proposes legislative change, we are informed that a public consultation will be launched before the Minister makes her final decision.

LYNX REINTRODUCTION

On 4 December 2018, the Secretary of State announced his decision to refuse the proposed trial reintroduction of lynx by the Lynx UK Trust. SACS, frustrated by the media showboating dominating the public narrative of this potentially disastrous proposed trial, submitted our serious and evidenced concerns directly to Natural England and Defra, which were acknowledged 'with great interest.' We are certainly pleased that the Government has listened to key stakeholders including SACS, and you can read more about the SoS' sensible and evidence-based decision [here](#).

MOORLAND FORUM

SACS remains an active member of the Moorland Forum, working on both the Principles of Moorland Management Steering Group and the new Uplands Vision Task Group. The leading cross-stakeholder group for upland management issues, we encourage members to visit the Forum's website and to read the PoMM documents [here](#).

NATIONAL ACCESS FORUM

We are a corresponding member of this Forum, but SACS attended the May 2018 meeting to co-present the Working for Waders initiative to groups including the British Horse Society, Ramblers Association, Police Scotland and Mountaineering Council. The presentation was a call to action for recreational users of the countryside to avoid disturbance to waders in the breeding season, part of our work on the Raising Awareness group of this cross-stakeholder conservation project.

PARTY POLITICS

SACS is currently engaged with a number of cross-party MSPs, MPs and party staff, on issues ranging from hunting with dogs, firearms legislation, and afforestation to wildfowling and, after the Islay goat incident, social media.

NORTHERN IRELAND

We have recently written to all our NI members to let you know that we will be going back to administering your valued NI representation and member service from SACS HQ, following former SACS-NI Director Neil Beckett's decision to pursue his new firearms training and consultancy business, Arbour Training; we wish him well in this commercial endeavour.

Members requiring firearms licensing support will be ably assisted by SACS Director Alex Stoddart, and SACS' Senior Firearms Adviser, former Police Scotland Head of Firearms Licencing, retired Chief Inspector Fraser Lamb, both with long firearms experience. Fraser has an established relationship with PSNI from his previous work, and has a proven record of success in helping SACS members throughout the UK.

Following Neil's resignation from the SACS Management Committee, we sought applications from NI SACS members who wish to join the Committee. If anyone else is keen to support our work and especially if you are dedicated and committed to SACS, a good communicator and have demonstrable experience in management work and/or a professional qualification or skill set, email your expression of interest to info@sacs.org.uk. We have received three strong nominations already, but we're always happy to hear from keen SACS supporters.

In other NI news, SACS is currently actively assisting members with a number of firearms applications, variations and potential appeals and is looking to effectively engage with PSNI FEB in relation to 'good reason' and land inspections. We are aware of a number of challenges presented by members in NI and look forward to taking these forward with FEB.

WALES

Following the insupportable decision of the Welsh Environment Minister to prohibit the leasing of pheasant shooting rights on Welsh public land, SACS wrote to both the Minister and Natural Resources Wales to call-out their dangerous, authoritarian approach to government and land management. Prior to this, we had been involved with the NRW firearms review from its outset and submitted a robust response to the public consultation on the original – and sensible – options that NRW had planned to adopt before the Minister's intervention. The other shooting organisations operating in Wales have refused to work with SACS on this matter, but we remain committed to fighting for our members' rights as well as those of the whole fieldsports community. After all, divided we will fall.

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT PIKE CONSULTATION

As part of the Scottish Government's Wild Fisheries Review process, SACS had previously highlighted the vulnerability of pike populations to over-exploitation. We were pleased to see the launch of a public consultation on pike conservation measures, to which we responded in August 2018. Public responses to the consultation have now been published, and we await Marine Scotland's response; we are informed that this will be forthcoming during 2019.

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT SALMON FARMING INQUIRY

The Committee has now published its [report](#) and ScotGov has issued its [response](#), which represents progress but does not go far enough in our view. The SACS Wild Fisheries Expert Group (WFEG) submitted robust and comprehensive responses to both the 2018 ECCLR Committee's inquiry into the environmental impacts of salmon farming and the related REC Committee's broader inquiry into aquaculture. Our submissions are available to read on the Scottish Government's website. SACS has a high level of competence and scientific understanding, which we use to help represent members' interests; we met with Marine Scotland in mid-2018 to discuss our ongoing advocacy work for wild fisheries and ways to maximise our effective engagement with legislators. This engagement is ongoing.

THE GOOD FOOD BILL

SACS was the only fieldsports organisation to submit our food priorities to Nourish Scotland's Kitchen Table Talks campaign in 2018, and of course we placed a firm emphasis on local game meat. The Scottish Government has now announced a [public consultation](#) on its proposed Good Food Nation ambitions, and SACS will respond to make sure game meat is not marginalised or forgotten.

HUNTING WITH DOGS

Members may already be aware that Environment Minister Mairi Gougeon has now made her long-delayed statement on the use of dogs in fox control. In a disappointing display of party politicking, she announced a plan to restrict the number of dogs to two, copying the inept and scientifically-unsound English legislation and ignoring clear evidence paid for by Scottish taxpayers. You can read our initial response [here](#).

SACS submitted an intelligent, strategic response to the Bonomy consultation, and we met with the Minister in October 2018, where, using case studies from our members, we explained the facts of fox control in Scotland and why it is imperative that a full pack and option to use terriers is kept lawful. Although the Minister expressed genuine interest in learning about why foxes are controlled and how this control is most efficiently carried out, evidently her party's minority position in Holyrood has been leveraged by the animal rights-dominated Green Party, resulting in the proposed cap on hound and terrier numbers. We were pleased, though, to hear that our intervention with the Minister in October has resulted in a proposed new licensing scheme where use of multiple dogs will be permitted under certain conditions (for example, terrain constraints and if no other form of fox control can work in the location). This is an excellent example of SACS members having a direct impact on politicians' decisions. Thank you to those of you who helped directly with this work.

Following the Minister's statement, we met with her senior civil servants to discuss the timeframe for change, and what the changes will look like in practice. Much is still to be decided, but the SACS community will be consulted as the new primary legislation progresses. For now, it is business as usual in Scotland for the use of hounds and terriers in lawful fox control.

In other hunting news, SACS was a significant contributor and driving force in the new Code of Practice for mounted packs, which, despite many meetings and workshops, has yet to be launched formally by Scottish Government though it has been adopted by hunts during the current season. Our thanks also to Barrie Wade of the National Working Terrier Federation for his support and collaboration with SACS throughout this process and in previous years.

SCOTTISH LAND COMMISSION

SACS met with the Chair of the Scottish Land Commission shortly after he commenced his appointment, in order to reinforce the importance of fieldsports to Scottish land management. With our professional qualifications, experience and contacts, SACS is best placed to advocate for our members' rights.

CROWN ESTATE

SACS has met with senior representatives of the Crown Estate to reinforce the importance of wildfowling. The discussion was positive and forward-looking with an acceptance that a community-focused approach to wildfowling advocacy should be an over-riding aim. This meeting follows significant work by SACS at Findhorn and Caerlaverock to mitigate threats to wildfowling, although quite different in both cases. SACS continues to reach out to partners and Government agencies to ensure our members and their activities are fully and competently represented.

FINDHORN WILDFOWLING SAGA

A new negotiation between both wildfowling clubs, BASC, SACS, local representatives and some of the antis is currently underway. Whilst this is ongoing there had been agreement between parties, on the basis of courtesy, not to make any public comments. However, SACS is aware that at least one of the anti-shooting representatives around the table is continuing to obstruct and harass wildfowlers on the bay, which rather negates any potential benefit from the negotiations. SACS, for its part in competently representing wildfowlers is unwilling to simply surround the issue with cotton wool and hope other parties will 'just be nice'; our approach to the ongoing negotiations reflects this reality.

The 2018/19 season has shown heightened harassment of geese, wading birds and wildfowlers by antis, which has included face-to-face confrontation, flashing strobe lights onto the roosts to scare geese off before dawn, drones being used to scare geese, constant filming and photographing of wildfowlers, countless calls to the police against wildfowlers and online campaigns to coordinate anti activity.

This is all unacceptable, not least for the poor wild birds affected by being constantly harassed on their roosts by antis. SACS has asked Findhorn Bay wildfowlers to photograph and film any anti activity and forward to us. Local police have made it repeatedly clear to antis that the wildfowlers are doing nothing wrong and so there is no action to take.

In the confusion of battle between our ancient, venerated and sustainable wildfowling way of life and these new world types who wish to force their dogmatic views on us, it is important to step away and see the bigger picture. The antis know that they will be unable to effect a wildfowling ban and are therefore behaving with some desperation. This is demonstrated by one anti-shooting lunatic submitting circa 300+ photos to local police of dog excrement as evidence against wildfowlers, which is as tragic as it is genuinely weird.

The negotiations are continuing in January 2019 and there is now some exploration of a potential byelaw for permits. We will see where this goes, but so far there has been consistent engagement on reasonable concessions from wildfowlers, but zero commitment from the antis to stop harassment and sabotage of wildfowling and, more importantly, harassment and disturbance to waders and geese.

CAERLAVEROCK WILDFOWLING

In 2018 Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) announced a ban on duck shooting, punt gunning, and territorial restrictions on other wildfowling at Caerlaverock nature reserve. This was on the back of zero effective engagement with local wildfowling and representative bodies. SACS robustly challenged these proposed restrictions and pushed for a meeting between SNH and wildfowling representatives.

A number of meetings and online communications then took place, the consequence of which was that SNH was forced to back down on all points. They simply could not evidence any of their concerns and the only real issue left on the table was a lack of resources for wardens. Public funds are tight, SNH is cash-strapped and we all needed to find a more community-engaged way forward.

So, the positive result of these detailed negotiations with SNH is that wildfowling has restarted at Caerlaverock, permits have been issued, duck shooting has not been banned, punt gunning continues as before and both local wildfowling clubs are successfully helping SNH with voluntary monitors.

A good joint result for wildfowling clubs, BASC and SACS working together, but a climb-down for SNH local staff who should have engaged better from the outset. It simply did not need to happen.

SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE - SNH

Despite the challenges at Caerlaverock (see above), SACS is recognised by SNH as a collaborative, forward-thinking organisation that acts with integrity and genuine care for our members. And for its part, SACS consistently reaches out to SNH on a wide variety of relevant matters and enjoys productive working relationships with many of its staff. As a result, we engage regularly with wildlife management senior staff to discuss relevant issues and opportunities for improvement. This kind of effective dialogue between government agencies and advocacy groups such as SACS is vital for our future.

Most recently, in early January we met with SNH's senior wildlife team to discuss work towards a set of collaborative wildlife management principles; SNH are seeking input from the 'key players' (their words) in the Scottish wildlife management world, and they know that SACS provides both an innovative way of thinking and the grassroots representation of our membership for which we are rightly famous (or should that be infamous?).

And upcoming is a consultation on the General Licences for 2020; we will update members on this when we know more.

SCOTTISH RURAL ACTION: THE 'SCOTTISH RURAL PARLIAMENT'

The only active fieldsports member of SRA, ScotGov's one-stop-shop for engagement with rural Scotland, SACS is part of SRA's post-Brexit rural policy task group as well as participating more generally in the body's work. Two of our management committee members attended the recent Parliament event in Stranraer, attended by MSPs as well as stakeholders from across the nation. If you are not involved, your voice cannot be heard.

SEPA FINFISH AQUACULTURE CONSULTATION

SEPA has consulted on evidence-based proposals for a revised regulatory regime, as part of its new Finfish Aquaculture Sector Plan. SACS responded via our Wild Fisheries Expert Group, and we will let members know when SEPA publishes its response. In the meantime, you can read the consultation documentation [here](#).

SHOOTING RATES

SACS' request for the Assessors to make sure that sporting tenants are able to contribute to the information gathering process that informs rates valuations was agreed; we have been working directly with the Assessors since 2016. In addition, we are a member of the shooting rates advisors' forum led by SLE that is doing excellent work now that shooting rates has moved into the appeals stage. Over the past two years, SACS has provided extensive guidance to a large number of members throughout the rates process; please call the office if you are struggling, particularly as issues such as reliefs continue to evolve. No other shooting organisation has worked as hard on this issue for its members, helped significantly by our in-house rural chartered surveyor.

SCOTTISH WILDCATS

SACS is a member of the new land managers' stakeholder group, established this autumn by Scottish Wildcat Action/SNH. The group aims to draft a protocol for gamekeepers and others who are involved in lethal control of feral cats, with the aim of ensuring 'wildcat friendly' predator control. Contact the office for more information or to get involved.

WORKING FOR WADERS

A cross-stakeholder initiative that aims to halt and reverse the decline in breeding waders, SACS is an active member of the Raising Awareness project sub-group. We have written publicity articles for the initiative that have been published in the RICS Land Journal, Shooting Scotland and Fieldsports Magazine, as well as a news piece on BBC Alba and an agenda section on the National Access Forum. SACS hosted the project at our Scottish game fair stands throughout the summer. We continue to support this project, and are keen for members to participate; email the office asking for Julia, for more information.

SPRING TRAPS LEGISLATION UPDATE

SACS works with Scottish Government, SASA, DEFRA and other partners on approved alternatives to Fenn/Solway traps and a SASA-led technical review of snaring in Scotland. We are also engaged with SNH on proposed management changes to corvid trapping regulations. In this news update we will focus on AIHTS, stoats and spring traps. For anyone currently using Fenn-type, magnum or WCS tube traps then you really must read the information below.

In previous news updates, SACS has mentioned the ongoing issue in regard to the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTS). The UK has signed up to this agreement, which is an attempt to standardise humane trap designs. Work is ongoing to implement the standards, but has been complicated due to a number of currently popular UK spring traps being unable to pass the new tests.

Importantly, AIHTS only applies to a list of international animals commonly trapped for their fur. AIHTS species resident in the UK are beaver, marten, otter, badger and stoat, but obviously under current UK law only stoat may be legally trapped without applying for a licence. Mink and fox are not affected by AIHTS – so in the UK it is essentially about stoat trapping.

Those bloody stoats!

The obvious difficulty in limiting which traps are legally allowed for stoats is the difficulty of preventing stoats from entering a trap set for other target species. For example, the new standards will not allow Fenn-type traps to be used for stoats, though they could be used for rats, but then how would you prevent stoats from being caught, and then falling foul of the law? The consequence is that if there is potential to catch stoats, even if unintended, then you should only use those traps that are permitted for stoats.

Spring Traps Approval Orders

Spring Traps Approval Orders (STAOs) are the legislative mechanisms which bring the AIHTS standards into regional UK law (being a devolved matter) whilst also having other legal restrictions for other non-AIHTS species e.g. grey squirrels, weasel etc. On the basis of AIHTS standards, Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland will all be developing their own amended Spring Traps Approval Orders to clarify which traps will be lawful for use against stoats and other species. It is a bit confusing, but for simplicity what you need to know is: 1) the end date for using your current traps if they are no longer to be approved e.g. Fenns, and 2) that your new traps, e.g. DOC150, are listed in your regional STAO approval list.

The new regional STAOs will stipulate a date from which a number of currently-used traps such as Fenn-types can no longer be used, and the STAOs will also provide a list of currently approved traps. But beware: the list will still mention traps being phased out of approval, such as Fenn, and clarify the end date for their use – see following section on ‘end date’. Essentially, only those traps listed in your regional STAO should be used for trapping where stoats may be caught.

End date for non-approved traps

Trappers will still be able to use the following spring traps for stoats **only until 31 March 2020** (after which it will be unlawful to use them):

- BMI Magnum 110 & 116;
- Fenn Vermin Trap Mark IV (Heavy Duty) & Mark VI (Dual Purpose);
- Kania Trap 2000 & 2500;
- Solway Spring Trap Mk 4 & Mk 6;
- Springer No 4 Multi-purpose (Heavy Duty) & No 6 Multi-purpose;
- WCS Tube Trap International.

(The above traps either did not pass the new tests or the manufacturers were unwilling to invest in their approval)

The following spring traps will be removed from the STAO altogether, so you can't use them at all:

- Fenn Vermin Trap Mk I, MkII & MkIII
- Imbra
- Juby
- Lloyd
- Sawyer

As a positive, the new STAO approval lists will include some new and innovative traps such as the **Tully Trap** for stoats, weasels and rats and **DOC traps** in tunnels (though not for grey squirrels). For grey squirrels a new trap is approved called the **Goodnature A18**, which though not exactly cheap and a bit of an odd-looking thing, is reported to be very effective and enduring.

For those of you who trap stoats or operate traps in stoat areas, and that will be many of our members, we would recommend looking at the Tully Trap as a replacement for Fenn type traps.

The Tully is British gamekeeper designed and reported to be simple, strong and effective. More information at: <https://www.tullytrap.co.uk/>

YouTube video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKA7IWm_tI4

SACS supportive Game and Country (<http://www.gameandcountry.co.uk/>) is the current listed retailer and is currently taking orders. The price is around £31 before VAT. If you are using Fenn type traps you do have until 31st March 2020 to continue using them and it is really up to you which trap you wish to invest in.

Regional STAOs

Spring Trap Approval Orders must be effective in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland by the end of March 2019, as the Humane Trapping Standards come into legal effect from the 1st of April 2019.

STAO - England

The [Spring Traps Approval \(England\) Order](#) has been drafted and came into effect on 1st January 2019. The '[Schedule](#)' includes the list of currently approved traps for England. It is a short document – please read it thoroughly.

STAO - Scotland

For Scotland, the Spring Traps Approval (Scotland) Order came into force on 3rd January 2019. Link to Order: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2018/389/contents/made>

STAOs - Wales and Northern Ireland

Details to come. We will update members with details of the Welsh and Northern Irish STAOs as they become available.

General Licence for Stoats from 2020

Members need to be aware that the new Humane Trapping Standards Regulations make stoats a protected species from 1st April 2020. However, stoats will be allowed to be trapped via a General Licence, much the same as for corvids etc. where a crow is essentially a protected species under the EU Birds Directive and related UK legislation, but the regional General Licences grant us a derogation to control certain pest species of birds for a number of sensible purposes. And, exactly as for the bird General Licences, you will not need to apply for the stoats General Licence - all you would have to do is simply read the Stoat General Licence and follow any stipulated actions, conditions or restrictions.

SPRING TRAPS SUMMARY

AIHTS is about international humane trapping standards for species commonly caught for fur.

The only practically relevant species to us in the UK is the stoat. The stoat is also a species that it is difficult to avoid catching in spring traps set for other pests.

The UK is a signatory to AIHTS, which is an international agreement. Brexit has absolutely nothing to do with this.

As these matters are devolved to regional administrations, the UK brings the AIHTS standards into legal effect via regional Spring Trap Approval Orders in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The STAOs will all come into effect before the end of March 2019.

STAOs permit the use of spring traps for controlling pest species other than stoats. The newly amended STAOs will list the approved traps and what species they are approved for. Though stoats will become a protected species their control will still be allowed via a Stoats General Licence.

There is a grace period for some old traps, such as Fenn IV and VI, to be continued to be used for stoats. This ends on 1st April 2020. It is advisable to start the changeover to new traps well before then.

And, because it is nigh impossible to prevent stoats from entering traps used to catch other pests such as rats, even if you are not actively going after stoats you will most likely need to use a spring trap approved for stoats. If you live in an area of the UK without stoats, such as some islands, then this may not apply.

If in doubt get in touch with SACS. Keep an eye out for our updates with further information and detail. Remember, it is up to you to ensure you are legally compliant. It is up to SACS to ensure you have access to the information you need.

Please bear in mind that these new trap types are generally much more powerful than the old Fenn-type traps. They are built to last and built to kill quickly. Practice using and setting them in good light conditions before going afield. A member of staff can attest to the fact that the DOC150 is far harder on the hand than even a Fenn Mk6. Be careful.

SACS AND TECHNICAL ENGAGEMENT

It is one of the many SACS roles to represent our members on these complex technical and legal issues and try to simplify them as best we can. Shooting and country sports advocacy is no longer an amateurish 'job for the boys' after gin and before whisky; it is complex, convoluted, incredibly time-consuming and requires professional technical, scientific and legal expertise. And that's just part of what you get by supporting SACS and our work. If in doubt ask.

FIREARMS, FIREARMS LAW & LICENSING

We leave this section until last as 1) SACS is already well-known for its firearms law and firearms licensing work, and 2) in the preceding sections we want to convey the breadth of our other UK-wide work for shooting and fieldsports.

As many of you know from personal experience, SACS is incredibly busy on the firearms licensing advocacy front and the high volume of cases across the UK, often from those members who never imagined they would ever have had a licensing problem, shows no sign of abating. So, here is a wee update on our ongoing firearms work.

OFFENSIVE WEAPONS BILL:

PROPOSED .50 AND 'RAPID-FIRING' RIFLE BANS

The Offensive Weapons Bill (OWB) has been taking its steady journey through Westminster. There have been hearings and committees and some strong views voiced by many MPs opposed to the anti-gun elements within the OWB.

Basically, as well as some restrictions on the sale of acids and knives, the OWB proposed to ban .50 calibre rifles (essentially any high muzzle energy rifle with a muzzle energy in excess of 10,000 ft.lb.) and MARS and Lever Release action rifles, known as 'rapid-firers'.

SACS has covered this issue in previous news updates (see news section of website). The principle issue with MARS and LR rifles has been internet videos of UK gun trade journalists firing them off as quick as they can and describing the MARS as an effective "non-semi-auto semi-auto". Yes, really. It is one thing shooting yourself in the foot, but another thing entirely when you affect so many others as well.

So, the problem we now have is that, although MARS is essentially not semi-auto, some of our own shooting press have described it as good as a semi-auto and, as a consequence, the powers that be have taken an active interest. And because MARS was under scrutiny and the technical specification is similar, Lever Release has followed suit and we believe there are more of them in target shooting circulation than MARS.

On the high muzzle energy (HME) rifles ban, SACS and its sister bodies have taken an active and firm stance. There was not a shred of evidence to support the ban, and a lot of hot air from the National Crime Agency about the risk of such a rifle if it were to fall into criminal hands, but anyone who has lifted a full-weight target .50 rifle will understand how ludicrous that suggestion is.

SACS has engaged with the Fifty Calibre Shooters Association and others to help this fight. Also, SACS has contacted directly every UK MP and received some strong indications of support and the list of MPs objecting to the high muzzle energy rifle ban reached as high as 76, which is extraordinary. Thankfully, at a late stage, the Government decided to avoid an embarrassing loss prior to Brexit votes and has now shelved the High Muzzle Energy ban in favour of further consultation. Well done to all those who responded and acted.

GPs AND MEDICAL EVIDENCE

In Scotland the situation with GPs and firearms licensing is much-improved. SACS has covered this topic at great length over the last few years and we have been by far the most active shooting organisation in supporting those members affected. Fully two years after this issue arose, certain others were still denying there was a problem at all.

Whilst there are only a few non-engaging GP practices in Scotland and a smaller number charging extortionate fees, the issue has worsened in some areas of England and Wales as police forces realise that the old system of 'if we do not hear back from a GP within 21 days we will assume all is well' was deeply flawed and likely to result in tragedy. It is not in the interests of protecting shooting sports to allow genuinely unsuitable persons to have firearms. A competent, fair and transparent medical reporting system helps to protect the future of shooting, though there is a strong argument that the current medical system actually acts as a disincentive to shooters with mental health or other serious medical issues from going to see a GP. SACS is working with the police, Government and sister bodies to find a way forward.

"IT'S OK NOT TO BE OK"

Mental health is receiving a lot more attention these days, which SACS believes is a good thing. Though SACS is not a mental health welfare charity, we have considerable experience of handling a wide variety of 'life events' for our members. Perhaps because we are friendly, perhaps because our members know we genuinely care, and perhaps because firearms are often a major part of our members' lives, we sometimes get the first cry for help from someone needing a little prod in

the right direction. Sadly, sometimes, there is a tragedy to deal with from a member that SACS, their family and friends just could not reach out to in time.

Remember, mental health is exactly the same as physical ailments, which vary in severity. Some days you may be down; other days you may be able to run a half marathon backwards while singing Bonnie Dundee. Sometimes a condition is more serious and gets worse. Sometimes it has and always will 'be there' and sometimes it was brought on by a specific traumatic life event. And, at times, it just goes away altogether as life moves on. Mental health is rarely a simple case of he/she has depression and that's it i.e. the full diagnosis in that single word. Far more often it is an identified broad condition, and a heap of words describing the context and prognosis for the individual affected.

What is constant though, is how short and precious our lives are and how much we are reliant on others to help, guide, advise and support. And, whatever the background issue, SACS will do its level best to find a sensible way forward in respect of a member's shooting and firearms licensing, because so often that is the challenge presented to us. SACS is a grown-up and responsible representative body with experienced and able staff and a well-developed sense of social responsibility. And so it is with the wider shooting community - we care about each other and we care about the future of shooting.

Last year, the Gamekeepers Welfare Trust (GWT) approached SACS and our sister organisations to ask for our support for their work. We willingly engaged and then considered the reality that not all of our members are gamekeepers or from keeping families. SACS then took a firm decision to formalise our support mechanisms for all members undergoing mental health challenges and to work with other bodies on the Firearms Licensing Practitioners Group, where we meet with senior police officers, Government officials, other agencies and other shooting and countryside organisations, to develop a joint approach and effective signposting to professional help for mental health matters. This work is ongoing and we hope to have a draft of a joint leaflet soon.

As a responsible community we have a duty to each other, and to the future of shooting, to not ignore any concerns we may have about ourselves or others. SACS has long-stated our reservations that the new GP reporting system would make folk avoid going to their GP in case they had guns removed. So, on top of this new mental health leaflet with signposted guidance, we are working with partners and the police to ensure that those who correctly go to see their GP are not unfairly penalised for their responsible conduct. The police approach should be public-safety-minded, pragmatic, evidence-led and fair and SACS is working to ensure that sensible approach prevails. This is one of our most important areas of work and we hope to positively report back to members.

Remember, it is OK not to be OK and it is good to talk. Seeking help for yourself, or another shooter you are genuinely concerned for, is your duty and responsibility as a certificate holder. Don't ignore warning signs and, if in doubt, call us or the bodies we will signpost in the new leaflet. If it's really serious and a life or lives may be at risk, then call the police straightaway.

AIRGUN LICENSING IN ENGLAND & WALES

The Westminster Government has been exploring the airgun licensing issue again. SACS has made its own representations and attended relevant meetings at Westminster. Our vast experience of airgun licensing in Scotland and the challenges that it presented puts us in a key position to advocate against such legislation in England and Wales. It is one thing rolling it out in one Scottish police force – quite another across 43 diverse and varying licensing teams south of the border. And that doesn't even cover the principle that such legislation is disproportionate, a waste of time and resource and will only serve to disadvantage the law-abiding. SACS remains engaged with this issue on behalf of our English and Welsh members.

LEAD AMMUNITION

The European Chemicals Agency is becoming more active in its stance against lead in the environment – not just ammunition. Lead ammunition being at risk is perhaps a consequence of other bigger anti-lead issues, but there is apparent growing evidence of damage being caused by lead ammunition and there has been some talk of a 5-10 year phasing out of lead ammunition. This is a complex matter further complicated by heightened emotions on all sides of the debate. We have members who actively advocate non-lead ammunition for rifles and shotguns and others who are deeply sceptical. Then there are simple questions, such as what is the future for .22LR? The non-lead alternatives we have tried have performed poorly.

And will this affect all ammunition or just for birds and edible mammals? .243 80gr TTSX bullets are not exactly frangible vermin bullets. When this issue becomes properly 'live' we will reach out to our members for the majority view and take a direction from that. SACS will always listen to its members' views and this is a huge issue for all of us, especially those using old guns and unable to afford expensive non-lead shotgun ammunition, such as bismuth at £40 a box of 25. And also clay shooting and rimfire target disciplines. As soon as we hear more we will be in touch.

FIREARMS LICENSING FORUMS

SACS engages with National Police Chiefs Council firearm licensing leads and other senior licensing staff around the UK. We also provide the secretariat to the Scottish Firearms Licensing Practitioner Group. These groups and forums are an excellent and proven way of driving forward positive change in licensing practices and resolving innumerable issues to the benefit of our members across the UK. Engagement is vital; if you are not engaged you do not have a voice and without a voice you are not heard. For the majority of you, firearms licensing is an area where SACS will have its biggest influence. It is only with your support as a member that we can fight your corner, either collectively or individually.

BSSC (BRITISH SHOOTING SPORTS COUNCIL)

SACS has withdrawn from membership of the BSSC. This is due to a significant difference in views regarding the BSSC's role in advocating for shooting sports in the UK; without a competent communications plan, and with no interest in creating one (SACS has offered to assist), we can no longer justify the £5,260 annual membership fee demanded by the Council. Put simply, to keep our BSSC membership would not be a competent use of our members' fees.

To read our resignation letter, which explains our decision in more detail, click [here](#). Our resignation will have no impact on SACS' level of representation and influence for our members, since we already carry out active engagement with the various Police authorities, Governments, practitioners' groups and other stakeholders. In SACS' view, effective, modern shooting sports advocacy requires

visionary thinking and vigorous, proactive behaviour. We believe that members' money is better spent on our own productive, direct advocacy to the people in power: something we do demonstrably well.

EUROPEAN FIREARMS PASSES AND BREXIT

One of the more sensible things to come out of Europe was the European Firearms Pass or EFP. With Brexit, that is now in peril and Westminster has made it clear that in the event of a 'no deal' Brexit the UK would not support the EFP. Without EFPs our members will face complex challenges in travelling with firearms to other countries in Europe. The next few months are uncertain and we will keep you updated.

OTHER SACS FIREARMS MATTERS – our work ongoing

- ✚ HSE Explosives Guidance engagement
- ✚ NPCC Criminal Use of Firearms
- ✚ National Ballistics Intelligence Agency
- ✚ Antique and obsolete chambering firearms being used in crime
- ✚ Police firearms licensing risk management
- ✚ Firearms licensing software and the potential for online applications
- ✚ Contentious licensing cases backlogs (non-Scotland)
- ✚ FEO training
- ✚ Firearms used in the oil industry
- ✚ Section 11(6) authority clarification
- ✚ HMICS Police Scotland recommendations
- ✚ Humane dispatch pistols

As well as working with our partners in other organisations on many additional important shooting and country sports issues, SACS also represents its members on national and regional working groups and panels. Proactive and positive-minded, our competent and member-focused representation is truly UK-wide.

Thank you for your support.

[Please bookmark the web link and check back every month for updates to this document]