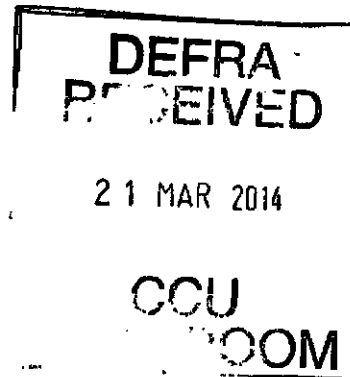


COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE

The voice of the countryside

George Eustice MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA



11 March 2014

Dear George,

I was surprised by some of the comments attributed to you in the Western Morning News this weekend and thought it might be useful if I cleared up a few points.

The Countryside Alliance is pleased that Defra is giving proper consideration to the proposal brought forward by the Federation of Welsh Farmers Packs, but it was the section involving your own views and repeal which has caused some concern as there seems to be a misunderstanding about what the law currently is.

The only legal use for a dog below ground since the Hunting Act came into force in 2005 is the use of one dog to flush out a mammal so that it can be shot, and then only for the purpose of protecting game birds. Digging a fox out as might have been done previously is illegal for any purpose and no stopping or blocking of earths is allowed. The 'terrierwork exemption' has attached to it both a statutory code and a separate code of practice, and can only be carried out with the written permission of the occupier.

As far as your views on the repeal of the Hunting Act are concerned you are, of course, entitled to take any position on any activity, but I would point out that you could not logically repeal the Hunting Act as it applies only to some mammals in some circumstances. The fundamental problem with the legislation is that it does not even pretend to address animal welfare, but outlaws a series of activities because its proponents did not like them.

In our opinion, therefore, perpetuating any part of a law as misconceived as the Hunting Act would be a grave mistake. The Alliance has, however, always considered that a piece of legislation protecting the welfare of wild mammals would be a sensible step forward as judgments about the legitimacy of any activity involving wild mammals should be made on their impact on individual animals and species as a whole.

If you would like to discuss this proposal further our animal welfare consultant Jim Barrington would be more than happy to explain the thinking behind it.

As ever,

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