



COUNTRY SQUIRE MAGAZINE



Countrywide
MAKING COUNTRY LIFE BETTER
SINCE 1902



COUNTRYSIDE, POLITICS

Cometh the Hour, Cometh the Man?

BY CAPTAIN ED SWALES

In the aftermath of the resignation of Boris Johnson, could this be the opportunity to get straight to the point that has eluded the UK rural voter over recent years and get a proper review of wildlife management law and strategy? To start delivering for the Countryside?

Now, more than ever, the support for whichever party champions the cause of the rural voter will decide which party occupies Westminster at the next General Election. 200 seats

are rural which is circa 30% of the total. Simply, if you don't get the rural vote, you don't get in.

Recent by-elections in Tiverton, North Shropshire and Wakefield have rattled the Tory party, as if they needed any more rattling right now. The Countryside will however support a Prime Minister who takes the gloves off against this continuous anti-rural woke rot and injects some common sense.

You only have to look across the water to Holland, where, in the last few days, the Dutch farming sector have decided they have had enough and are firing up the tractors, with mass protest. The same is happening in Germany, Italy, Spain and Poland, whilst the quiet rural Brit looks on.

The stock line from Conservative MPs relating to any suggested review of the Hunting Act 2004, is:

'I was elected on a manifesto that pledged to make no changes to the Hunting Act 2004 and I must tell you that there are not any plans for the Hunting Act to be changed or repealed. However, as I am sure you are already aware, it is possible to simulate a hunt through 'trail' or 'drag' hunting and I know that many hunts have turned to trail hunting as an alternative to live quarry hunting"

And from George Eustice at DEFRA:

"This Government is committed to supporting the people who live and work in the countryside, respecting rural communities' unique way of life and providing opportunities for them to flourish"

Nice words but out here in the shires, it doesn't feel like that's anything other than a hollow promise and rural voters are getting sick of backing politicians who never deliver for the Countryside, for our rural community rights or our cultural heritage, let alone fundamental animal welfare.

This pro-Countryside message is at odds with the Government's recent attempts to pass Animal Welfare legislation, namely the farcical Sentience, Kept Animals and Animals Abroad Bills. Was anyone aware that Tony Juniper, head of Natural England of the lunatic General License infamy, influenced by his friend Chris Packham last year, sat on a team of 4 people who concluded a consultation on the 'Nature Recovery Green Paper' on 11th May? No involvement from any countryside organisation, who I doubt knew anything about it anyway. This is critical stuff and needs proper attention and lobby. The report is due out by 11th August.

It is obvious that Boris Johnson, steered by Carrie along with team Goldsmith, have essentially been about as pro rural as the Labour Party, with such MPs as Sir Roger Gale and Henry Smith and the 'Conservatives against Hunting' or the 'Blue Fox Group'.

There are encouraging signs though, as seen in March this year from Jeremy Wright MP, former Attorney General, who said:

“I support legislation that helps to ensure the welfare of all animals. I do not, however, believe the Hunting Act has done anything for animal welfare. The vote on amending the Act has now been deferred, but I would have voted for the amendments and will do so again if given another opportunity. I would like to see the matter resolved as I believe the Hunting Act to be bad legislation, as it should have been originally, on the basis of principle and evidence and not prejudice.”

Reality Check

We need to know, very soon, which politicians are worth our vote. Targeted lobbying needs to take place with immediate effect to ascertain their various positions with regards to wildlife management, as a central thread to rural life, along with all other aspects that have been highlighted so well by the likes of Jeremy Clarkson, Sir Ian Botham, Ian Coghill, Barrie Wade and Jim Barrington among others. Anybody who holds the view of 'let's not do anything in case it makes it worse' needs a reality check, or maybe some 'encouragement'. What better opportunity than this are you waiting for?

Pull YOUR finger out, engage some effective people with some conviction, acumen and determination and get on with it.

The Scottish Hunting with Dogs Bill public consultation showed a roughly 50% split, for or against the Bill. The Northern Irish bill to ban hunting was binned at the second reading in Stormont last November, clearly demonstrating that these Bills don't have the public support that the animal rights extremists claim. The poll backing John Blair MLA's claims received enormous input from overseas and not from Northern Ireland. Deliberately misleading spin and thankfully Stormont MLAs dismissed it.

The moral unease of Daniel Greenberg, who drafted the Hunting Act 2004, led him to state:

“What’s actually happening here, is that we are legislating against a minority on a moral issue and I thought we didn’t do that?” and went on to say “Instead of an effective measure, therefore, the Act and Bills for it were largely an exercise in what it has now become fashionable to describe as ‘Virtue Signalling’”

A more unbiased and clear-thinking man than Daniel Greenberg you would be hard pressed to find in Westminster.

What happens when politicians forge ahead with ‘virtue signalling’ policies, without any idea what their consequences will be?

They make way for examples of wildlife management disasters, such as the withdrawal of the General License in 2021, the monumental mismanagement of the Baronsdown deer sanctuary by the LACS and its Bovine TB outbreak. Bradford Council mowing heather on Baildon Moor during nesting season earlier this year, having banned grouse shooting, tops it all.

Circa **£30 million** was spent by animal rights extremists to bring about the Hunting Act 2004, using the ‘smokescreen’ of animal welfare, absorbing 700 hours of Parliamentary time (and cost). Not one penny has subsequently been spent by any of these organisations to establish whether there have been any beneficial outcomes, because they recognise fully that there have not.

When the Veterinary Association for Wildlife Management (supported by 560 members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons) state: *“Hunting by hounds is the natural and most humane method of controlling the population of all four quarry species, fox, deer, hare and mink in the countryside”* you would have thought that maybe our wildlife management laws

need review? If you are an MP looking to regain any form of credibility with your rural electorate and expecting them to support you, it might be worth considering, with a degree of urgency.

This is the moment, this is the time to get forward now and lobby effectively, with a positive stream of political consciousness and get wildlife management law properly reviewed and to regain rural votes. To whoever emerges as this country's leader, start delivering for the countryside now and fill the boots that are worthy of rural voters' support.

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