



RSPB policy review of gamebird shooting and associated land management

Consultation of external stakeholders: summary of feedback

Executive Summary

May 2020

1. Executive summary

The RSPB is in the process of developing a set of principles that would aim to improve the natural environment if applied to shooting and associated land management. These principles are being developed in order to inform both the management of RSPB land and its policy positions to advocate to governments, environmental organisations and those involved in shooting. In order to improve the principles, a draft form was put out to consultation with RSPB members, staff and volunteers, and external stakeholders through open consultation and confidential interviews. This report presents the results of the open consultation with the external stakeholders.

Consultation forms were emailed to 54 organisations across the UK by Martin Harper, the Director of Global Conservation, RSPB and the consultation was also advertised through social media channels. A total of 23 responses were received from a variety of individuals and organisations from the animal welfare, shooting, conservation and land management communities. As hoped, the consultation responses contained a variety of comments on the draft principles set out, views on the RSPB relationship, position and role, as well as wider topics around the issue of game bird shooting.

1.1. Wider issues.

Values: Many of the comments made on the subject of game shooting, along with its current state and future directions, reflected the differing underlying values of respondents. At one end of the spectrum were respondents who valued shooting as an activity with social, environmental and economic benefits. Conversely, at the other end of the spectrum were responses with animal welfare interests who expressed little value of shooting, considering it unnecessary and harmful. Other responses ranged in between, from seeking sustainable shooting and highlighting concerns over environmental impacts of current practices, to supporting a total or partial ban.

Shooting and conservation: An overlap between conservation and shooting interests and motivations for land management outcomes was mentioned by respondents. Changes in shooting objectives that could help conservation were also noted, particularly a move away from “big bags”. However, a lack of trust between the shooting and conservation communities, from both sides, was explicitly recognised by some, and evident in other respondent comments. This lack of trust was noted as having negative implications for the success of actions on the ground.

Animal welfare: Calls were made for animal welfare considerations to be integrated into the principles. Topics such as humane control plus consideration of welfare legislation were raised as topics that required inclusion and considered to be of increasing importance in conservation action.

1.2. Principles.

Information was given for amendments by the majority of respondents. Amendments were often specific (details in report) but some general themes united many comments:

- Framing – criticism was raised that the consultation documents and draft principles were negatively framed which led to claims of lack of balance, bias and leading motives.
- Terminology – lack of clarity on terms such as “population”, “adversely” and generic use of “native species” led to differences in interpretation of the draft principles.
- Implementation – a range of opinions, related to underlying values, were expressed that could be categorised as i) advocating statutory reform ii) targeted changes to current legislation or schemes iii) voluntary self-regulation iv) status quo.

1.3. Feedback on RSPB

Commonalities in purpose were recognised between shooting communities and RSPB, and also RSPB and animal welfare goals. However, concerns were raised that these draft principles could damage what was seen by some to be a deteriorating relationship between RSPB and shooting community. The consultation documents were considered by some to reinforce the idea that RSPB do not recognise the social and economic benefits that shooting provides, and the consultation itself was considered negatively biased against shooting. However, the opposite conclusion was also drawn that the RSPB was not taking a strong enough stance against shooting and, thus, giving it legitimacy.