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20 February 2023

Dear Dominic,

Termination of the Memorandum of Understanding Between the League Against Cruel Sports and the Ministry of Defence

Thank you for your letter of 13 January 2023 concerning the termination of the memorandum of understanding between the League Against Cruel Sports and the Ministry of Defence.

In your letter you raise several concerns relating to the ability to monitor hunt activity to ensure it complies with the law. The Defence Infrastructure Organisation is established by MOD to administer external use of the Defence estate by third parties, but enforcement of the Hunting Act is an operational matter for the Police. There is a close working relationship between Defence estate with the MOD Police and local constabularies, and where individuals are found guilty of committing an offence on the estate, they will be subject to the law. As such I have full confidence that there are sufficient processes and practices in place and do not perceive the need for further monitoring. Finally, it is an important principle that we treat all organisations equally. Were we to establish MOUs with other organisations who have an interest in the Defence estates this would become increasingly unmanageable, and likely impact military training while posing a risk to security.

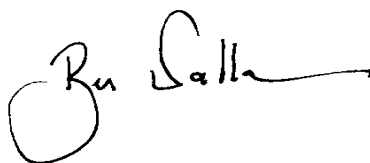
I note your comment in relation to your opposition to any violent behaviour connected to hunting. I am committed to ensuring that there is peaceful and safe enjoyment of those areas of the Defence estate, that are accessible to the

Dominic Dyer
Chair
Wildlife Crime Working Group
Wildlife and Countryside Link

public, for all. There have, however, been concerns raised over safety in relation to what is in effect a legal practice on the estate. The behaviour of masked hunt saboteurs and their threatening behaviour is not acceptable. I do not support law breaking on MOD land as it is the duty of the Secretary of State to maintain the land for the primary purpose of defence training.

I hope this will go some way to assuring you that Defence remains committed to ensuring that hunting is conducted both safely and in compliance with the law.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Wallace', with a large circular flourish on the left side.

THE RT HON BEN WALLACE MP