



# LEAGUE

AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS

Impact Report **2021**

# Contents

## Together, we are stronger

As we emerge from sixteen months of restrictions on our way of life, let us reflect on our successes, our resilience as a united front, our determination to do whatever it takes to prevent the needless suffering of animals.

This special edition of our Impact Report is a celebration of everything we have achieved together since lockdown began in March 2020.

We have been humbled by your commitment and it has fuelled our ambition to end hunting, shooting and animal fighting. There's a lot to celebrate, and we hope you are proud to be a part of the League Against Cruel Sports.



Might be worth exploring crediting entries (when used) of the photo competition. I am very keen to include image credits from supporters.

## Message from the Chairman, Dr Tim Holmes



Covid-19 has had a profound impact on our daily lives. Our future remains uncertain but if there has been a single positive to this most extraordinary of years, it is that the wildlife that surrounds us has had some respite from the brutalities routinely subjected to it.

We all saw the reports during the first lockdown of wildlife moving into areas with reduced human activity. Who can forget the footage of grazing fallow deer in suburban London gardens or wild goats moving into the town of Llandudno?

During this enforced isolation we spent more time in nature, benefitting from the positive impacts on our wellbeing. When the impact of the virus reduces, we must do everything we can to ensure society does not return as a destructive force to our natural environment.

**The League continues to play its part in ending the barbarism of the blood sports industry and its devastating impact on our wildlife and the environment.**

In 2020, the shooting and hunting industries suffered one of their worst years on record and I am proud of the role we played in hastening their demise. A police investigation was launched in response to the leaking of 'training' webinars where senior members of the hunting community

called 'trail' hunting nothing but a "smokescreen" – the same language we have used to describe their activities for years.

Now the hunting community's mask had slipped, we asked major landowners to stop hunting taking place on their land. In response, over 2.3 million acres were removed from the hunter's use. Could 2021 finally see hunting consigned to the history books?

We led much of this work but also successfully collaborated with other charities and individuals to achieve our objectives across all four countries of the UK.

My greatest praise and thanks are reserved for you, our loyal and generous supporters. We have had many successes this last year, despite the difficulties of Covid-19, all of which were possible thanks to your continued support. I am delighted to share these celebrations with you in this report.

## Message from the CEO, Andy Knott MBE



2020 illustrated that not all things go as planned. For us, the Covid-19 pandemic substantially changed the way we could operate. The challenge was to mitigate the negative effects without losing the focus on our animal welfare outcomes, all the while keeping our responses agile and our people safe.

With the incredible help and trust from all quarters of our Charity and beyond, we did just that. Some of our successes were in the making for some time, others taken when the moment arose; some were a mix of both. Land denial for instance, be it to the hunts or shoots, has been our operational 'main effort' for a few years. Following revelations released from the Hunting Office, the opportunity arose to focus our expertise and make substantial gains. As a result, more animals than ever thrive in hunt free zones, at least for the present.

**Our aim remains to live in a country where no hunting, shooting or animal fighting takes place, permanently.**

In turning to that future, it is as well to remember the past. In 1967, a legal drink driving limit was introduced. However, it wasn't more police standing outside pubs that eventually called time on drink driving. Rather it was effective campaigning, leading to an increasingly aware and outraged public withdrawing any tolerance or

social licence from those intent on flouting the law. You could say that it brought everyone together, united in a common cause that seems so obvious to us now.

Could the same now be true for cruel sports, be they illegal or plain unacceptable to our nation of animal lovers? Our reconnection with nature and animals presents an opportunity to open more eyes, win more hearts, and change more minds than ever before, and we will invest heavily in making it so in 2021 and beyond.

I hope you enjoy reading this report, whether you have been supporting us your while life, or are new to our burgeoning supporter base. In a year of accolades, mine goes to 'Team League'. Independently rated the 12th best charity to work for, we emerged from a testing year stronger than ever. We will continue to ensure your voice for animals will be heard.



## Strategic Approach

### Our **Vision**

A kinder society where persecuting animals for 'sport' is in the past.



### Our **Mission**

Empowered by knowledge and driven by compassion, we protect animals from being persecuted in the name of 'sport'.

United, we aim to redefine what is acceptable and inspire change.

## Our **Working Priorities**



**End**  
hunting  
with dogs



**End**  
shooting of  
animals for  
'sport'



**End**  
fighting of  
animals for  
'sport'



**Win** the  
hearts and  
minds of  
a broader  
audience

“

I support the League Against Cruel Sports because of its dedication and commitment to ending cruelty and abuse to all animals and wildlife. Lobbying parliament and local authorities to realise what is happening to wildlife in this country; using hard factual evidence in the form of videos, newspapers and news; significant steps being made all the time by the League's brave, courageous investigators; this makes me proud to be a supporter.”



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# Highlight Achievements of the Year

“ The League stands for justice for animals persecuted by cruel humans and acts within the law in bringing forth change. Without protective laws, it is even harder to have a just society.”

League supporter



## Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act:

### How we collaborated, campaigned and won

**Emma Judd**, Deputy Director of Policy, Campaigns & Communications.

My proudest moment this year was when I heard the news I had been waiting for; the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act had been passed. We'd done it! Thanks to your support and the tactical campaigning of the League and a coalition of charities, we can wave goodbye to the paltry six-month sentence for animal crime and welcome the maximum of five years imprisonment.

The journey to justice is never a short one, even when all sides think a change in the law is a good idea, and our journey to providing better protection to animals treated cruelly by humans began with dog fighting, a heinous sport that has been illegal for more than 200 years.



## 2015

We issued a supporter-funded report that lifted the lid on the scale of dog fighting still going on in the UK. It urged parliament to implement a national strategy to tackle the issue and, crucially, increase sentences for those who pitted dogs against each other in the ring every day. Responses were promising, but nothing happened.

We launched a petition that received the support of more than 100,000 people, and as a result an early day motion was tabled, receiving cross party support of some 149 MPs.

**It all looked promising. And then...nothing.**

## 2017

Anna Turley, former MP for Redcar, was so horrified when two of her constituents received paltry sentences for inflicting unimaginable cruelty on a pet dog called Baby that she tabled a Private Members Bill calling for tougher sentences.

As our CEO Andy Knott said in a recent blog: "The level of savagery was matched only by the excitement and entertainment those brothers derived from torturing that dog."

Kevin Foster MP also brought a Private Members' Bill, calling on tougher sentences for those who harm animals through fighting.

Battersea Cats and Dogs Home issued its own report into animal cruelty and we continued to put pressure on where we could, both in the halls of Westminster and outside.

At one of our events, both Anna and Kevin joined explorer Sir Rannulph Fiennes and The Only Way Is Essex star Chloe Meadows in loudly calling for action.

But despite more promises – three times the government 'launched' its commitment to increase sentences - nothing happened.



## 2018

Another promise was made, welcomed by the League, but again nothing happened.

## 2019

The animal welfare charity sector had now lost patience with platitudes and, in June of that year, the League and the RSPCA brought a coalition of charities together to take the fight back to the government – knocking on the door of Number 10 itself.

Those charities were Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, Blue Cross, Cats Protection, Compassion in World Farming, Dogs Trust, Humane Society International, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, UK Centre for Animal Law, and World Horse Welfare.

As Andy said: "Animals need us to speak up for them, and our close collaboration lent them a voice that was both compelling and deafening."

We found a friend in Lord Randall of Uxbridge, who at that time was special advisor on the environment to Theresa May, prime minister of the day. But six months after our visit we again had to publicly demand that the government stand by its promises.

## 2020

Finally, on February 5, in a pre-pandemic world, Chris Loder MP tabled a Private Members Bill calling for tougher sentences for animal cruelty. However, delays abounded, blamed by Westminster on Brexit and Covid-19 (though the Scottish parliament managed to table a similar bill and pass it into law in the summer of pandemic-hit 2020).



## 2021

With just one day to go until parliament was suspended and all bills in progress would by necessity have to fail, the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill, championed by Chris Loder in the commons and Lord Randall in the House of Lords, finally passed its third and final reading.

A day later, on the final day of parliament, it gained royal assent and has become law.

Six years since our report landed.

Four years since Baby the Bulldog's owners received paltry sentences.

Two years since we all went to Number 10.

**If it becomes the deterrent we hope it will, it will be worth the wait.**

## Kudos from parliament

“Increasing custodial sentences for the most serious animal cruelty was long overdue and represents one of the biggest changes to animal welfare legislation since the Animal Welfare Act of 2006. League Against Cruel Sports Chief Executive, Andy Knott, was able to assemble some of the most powerful voices in the sector to call on the Government to bring forward this vital Bill. I commend him, along with Chris Sherwood of the RSPCA and others for their combined determination to see that animals enjoy proper protections from cruelty in the future.”

**Lord Randall of Uxbridge**, Former Special Advisor on the Environment to Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon Theresa May MP.

# Protected status for the iconic Scottish mountain hare

**Max Wiszniewski,**  
Senior Campaigner - Scotland

Our iconic native mountain hares have been subjected to unnecessary mass 'culls' for decades and are one of a number of species eradicated on an industrial scale to ensure grouse numbers are kept unnaturally high for sport shooting; figures run as high as 26,000 killed on average a year.

But while the UK was in the midst of a freedom-restricting lockdown, the mountain hare in Scotland was awarded a new lease of life; the **Mountain hare amendment to Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Bill** was passed which heralds the end of **recreational killing and mass culling** of this iconic species.

The amendment offers legal protection to one of Scotland's most iconic species and we're delighted the Scottish Parliament voted in its favour. As a founder member of the REVIVE coalition, we were a key part of this campaign motivating tens of thousands of people to demand this change; and it worked. By supporting the League you are an integral part of saving species like the mountain hare. Thank you for all you do and I'm confident we can achieve more, much more.



# 'Trail' hunting land denial

**Nick Weston,** Head of Campaigns

In 2020, the Hunt Saboteurs Association obtained a hunting lobby training webinar. In it, senior figures within the fox hunting lobby seemed to admit that 'trail' hunting is a "smokescreen" for the chasing and killing of foxes.

ITV News broadcast this as part of a groundbreaking exposé into the inner workings of the hunting lobby; we launched a campaign so you and the general public could add your name to the list of animal advocates calling for major landowners to ban 'trail' hunting from their land.

The results showed there really is no match for our campaigning expertise coupled with your voice and action for animals:

## 110,000

emails from supporters, five major landowners suspending 'trail' hunt licences, foxes living on nearly 2.5 million acres of land across the UK are safe from being hunted for the time being.

**1. Lake District National Park**  
**583,650** acres

**2. United Utilities**  
**138,376** acres\*  
Across the North West

**3. Forestry England**  
**617,750** acres\*

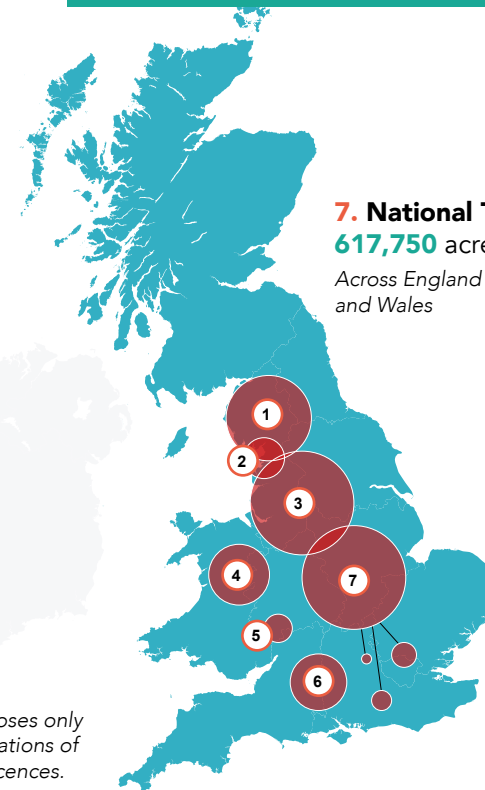
**4. Natural Resources Wales**  
**358,653** acres\*

**5. Malvern Hills**  
**3,000** acres

**6. Ramsbury Estates (H&M)**  
**19,000** acres

**7. National Trust**  
**617,750** acres\*  
Across England and Wales

\* Please note this map is for illustrative purposes only and does not accurately reflect the exact locations of the land that has suspended 'trail' hunting licences.







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# Goal One: End hunting with dogs

“Animals have just as much right to existence as humankind and I appreciate organisations like yours, that fight to preserve and protect.”

League supporter



## Step by step with the National Trust

**Will Morton**, Head of Public Affairs

The National Trust (NT) issues 'trail' hunting licences, in which hunts are supposed to follow pre-laid scents rather than real foxes. But if 'trail' hunting is real, why are foxes still being killed by hounds? Why do they run amok on busy roads and dangerous railways?

Our tactics for raising awareness of, and mobilising support for, this crucial issue often relies on being front and centre in a physical sense. We would organise protests at NT venues, have our supporter groups engage with the general public around the country, and work to encourage communities to stand up and say 'no more'.

But Covid-19 changed the face of campaigning and we were restricted to operating solely in the virtual world.

We called upon the hundreds of you who are NT members to pledge your support for a motion to go to the organisation's 2020 annual general meeting (AGM), to ban 'trail' hunting.

Your response was incredible, and that motion was accepted, meaning it would be debated by its membership and, ultimately, put to a vote. Unfortunately, the NT's AGM was postponed, but the crucial motion will be carried over to this year. Our work – and your support – has not been wasted.

The pandemic may have changed the world, but your support throughout this turbulent time has meant our work could continue unabated. Together, step by step, we will achieve our aims for animals.



## A hunting ban in Northern Ireland?

**Janice Watt**, Senior Public Affairs Officer, Northern Ireland

**Eighteen thousand, four hundred and twenty-five. 18,425.**

That's how many people put finger to keyboard and told the Northern Ireland Assembly they want their voices heard about whether hunting with dogs should be banned. That's the largest response to a consultation in the history of the Northern Ireland Assembly and we should all be proud of the ardent campaigning and round the clock commitment of the League and our wonderful supporters.

We helped launch the consultation on Boxing Day; we created a dedicated page on our website and called on our supporters in Northern Ireland to take part in, and share, the consultation; we promoted it widely on social media; we worked with our friends in other organisations towards the shared goal of getting as many people as possible to participate.

Our collaboration and credibility spoke volumes; the consultation sent a clear message to the Northern Ireland Assembly that the animal-loving people of Northern Ireland want the horrifically cruel sports of fox and stag hunting banned. There is now a strong foundation for a Private Member's Bill to be introduced to see a ban on hunting with dogs once and for all.

Next steps? We'll be working behind the scenes to support the bill and ensure the wording makes it a robust piece of legislation, closing the loopholes that allow hunts to get away with killing wild mammals in Scotland, England and Wales despite bans being in place.

**This is a proud moment, a moment of real opportunity, and we have all played a part.**





## Lobbying local authorities to end hunting on their land

**Chris Luffingham**, Director of Campaigns

In the months following the Covid-19 outbreak, many of us were able to take comfort in getting in touch with nature and enjoyed the respite flora and fauna was getting from human interference. However, when the hunting season was upon us again, I was concerned about the damage it would do to the environment, people, wildlife and our relationship with nature.

### **It's time to ban hunting on public land.**

Facts in our favour: the tide is turning across the country, as the National Trust, Forestry England, United Utilities, National Resources Wales, The Church of England estate and other major landowners have all suspended 'trail' hunting on their land.

These decisions were made after the police and Crown Prosecution Service announced they were investigating the contents of leaked webinars, in which senior figures within the Master of Fox Hounds Association and the Countryside Alliance seemed to admit that 'trail' hunting is a "smokescreen" for the chasing and killing of foxes.

Local councils must now follow major landowners. Despite all we were doing as individuals to maintain social distancing and staying away from our loved ones, fox hunts were still riding out across the UK, still chasing animals, still causing suffering.

To make this opportunity a reality, we created an online interactive map which enables you to uncover the fox, stag and hare hunts near you and contact your council to demand they stop being made complicit in fox hunting by banning 'trail hunting' and all other hunting related activities.

Our influence inspired Nottinghamshire County Council and Bassetlaw District Council to lead the charge by banning hunts and thanks to our recent campaigning efforts, Peterborough council has also banned 'trail' hunting from its jurisdiction.

Cheshire West and Chester have made moves to follow suit and we hope to see a positive result this summer. Bolsover District Council voted to examine the issue further and establish a debate on 'trail' hunting on public land and more widely.

A hugely rewarding and satisfying result of our campaign was the positive affirmation from various councils that they already have bans in place, or they are willing to strengthen current bans.

If there is no land, there is no hunting. Team League – our supporters and our staff – have the power to make council-owned land a sanctuary from hunts and help protect wildlife from suffering in the name of 'sport'.





## The future freedom of our flora and fauna

**Paul Tillsley**, Head of Conservation & Education

2020 was a terrible year in many ways, but there were some positive outcomes that could help us build a better future. As I live on the League's Baronsdown wildlife sanctuary on Exmoor, I had a preview of the future that we are all working towards, a future where hunting with dogs is consigned to the history books and shooting birds for pleasure is no longer deemed acceptable.

With the restrictions that were placed on our movements, many people started to appreciate for the first time the people and nature they were living alongside; they began to notice that the everyday can be extraordinary. Online forums were full of images of nature that had always been there, but we had been too busy to notice. In some places, nature took advantage of lockdowns to reclaim the streets and in other places a lack of human disturbance meant animals had bumper breeding years. We started to realise (or perhaps remember) that we are part of nature, and we rely on it to sustain our way of life more than it relies on us.



On the League's wildlife sanctuaries, life carried on as ever, with wildlife blissfully unaware of the pandemic that was gripping the human population. Migrant birds arrived back from their wintering grounds to nest and the air was filled with their song as they competed with residents for territory and a mate. Fox and badger cubs emerged from underground, and the young of roe deer and red deer began appearing in the woodlands and fields. Weasels, stoats and polecats were seen on the sanctuaries, desperately seeking to take advantage of the abundance of food to feed themselves and their young.



Some animals may have noticed there was less noise and disturbance in the surrounding countryside, as hunting and shooting activities were curtailed. I know I certainly did. It was great not to spend every day looking over my shoulder in case a hunt turned up on our boundaries, chasing a petrified deer, fox or hare. And it was bliss not to hear the sound of gunshot echoing around the valleys six days a week and not seeing dead and dying birds raining down from the sky in a hail of lead shot. For much of the year it was the sights and sounds of nature that prevailed and for most people who live in the countryside it was a blessed relief.

So, at the end of a year that most people would be happy to write off, I came out feeling positive and with renewed hope that we can learn from our experiences to make the world a better place for ourselves, as well as for nature.





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# STANDING PROUD

A celebration of the commitment and determination of our supporters and staff during the past year

“ The League is one of the worthiest animal welfare causes, because it raises awareness of the barbarity, cruelty and illegality of blood sports among the general public. ”

League supporter



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“The League is one of the worthiest animal welfare causes, because it raises awareness of the barbarity, cruelty and illegality of blood sports among the general public.”

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## Goal two: End shooting of animals for 'sport'

On the League's wildlife sanctuaries, life carried on as ever, with wildlife blissfully unaware of the pandemic that was gripping the human population. Migrant birds arrived back from their wintering grounds to nest and the air was filled with their song as they competed with residents for territory and a mate. Fox and badger cubs emerged from underground, and the young of roe deer and red deer began appearing in the woodlands and fields. Weasels, stoats and polecats were seen on the sanctuaries, desperately seeking to take advantage of the abundance of food to feed themselves and their young.



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## STANDING PROUD

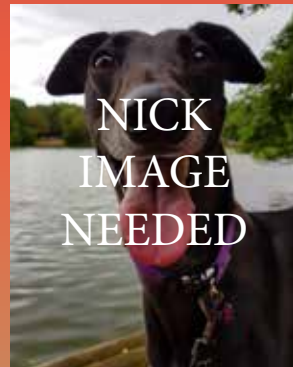
A celebration of the commitment and determination of our supporters and staff during the past year



# Team League, Strong and Proud



Despite the uncertainty caused by a global pandemic, the restrictions placed on our usual supporter facing events and the anxiety of being isolated from friends and family, our staff and supporters remained steadfast in their determination to protect persecuted animals.



**Nick, Head of Campaigns**

“As the best friend of two rescued greyhounds, my proudest moment in lockdown was helping to ensure a parliamentary debate on the introduction of legislation abolishing greyhound racing. Hundreds of racing dogs die every year, and thousands are injured, but we have the chance to make this cruelty history.”

**Andy, CEO**

“Unlike so many other charities across the country that have really struggled during the pandemic, my proudest moment was finishing the year with the same team that we had started with.”



**Helen, supporter care assistant**

“I have felt proud on a number of occasions in the last year, but most recently because the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill passed through Parliament, which will have a huge impact on animal cruelty that will no longer go unpunished.”

**Graham, professional investigator**

“Whilst on my daily exercise, after hours of watching I succeeded in getting film of a wild vixen fox with four cubs on the border of a League sanctuary.”



**Ivor, Cornwall, League Supporter**

“I feel so privileged and proud to think these beautiful animals see my garden as a Sanctuary where they can come and go as they please, in the knowledge that I only shoot with a camera and not with a gun!”



**Jess, Marketing Manager**

“My proudest moment was seeing a fox with my son on a walk and telling him that mummy helps protect foxes and other animals from harm.”



**Ann, Shropshire, League supporter**

“During lockdown, I’ve been spending less than usual on petrol and shopping, and as a result am so pleased to be able to continue regular support of the League... having intended for many years to make my will, it’s a blessing to have had the time to do so, and to know that the League will one day receive a gift in my memory.”



**Emma, Director of Marketing & Fundraising**

“My proudest moment at the League during lockdown has been leading an exceptional group of individuals who collectively raised £3.25m for our wildlife during one of the hardest years on record.

They showed incredible resolve and their compassion, determination and focus enabled us to continue campaigning, investigating and protecting animals from the hands of human kind of their own fun and enjoyment.”

**Sophie, Partnerships Manager**

“How the Marketing and Fundraising Director, Emma Smith, has held a team together with so many furloughed staff, childcare and other requirements makes me incredibly proud to be part of her team. She has had the confidence to be flexible and put trust in our capabilities. She has held mental health at the forefront whilst leading us to deliver excellent results – in the middle of a pandemic. I feel like the team is stronger than ever.”







# FOLD OUT

“ I support the League because I think blood sports and hunting are barbaric, and have no place in a modern society. I believe animals, birds and all wildlife that we share this planet with deserve much more respect, kindness and consideration than they currently receive. ”

**League supporter**

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## Breaking the circle of destruction

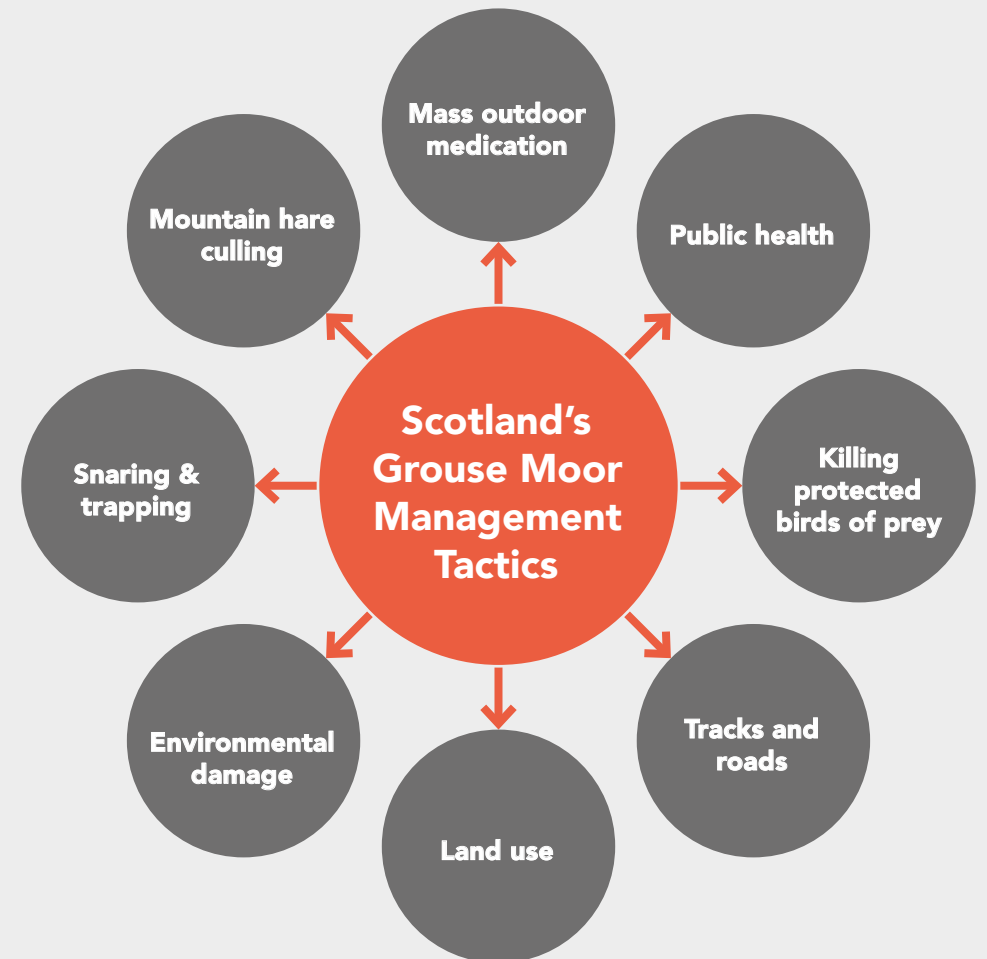
**Max Wiszniewski**, Senior Campaigner, Scotland

**Prepare for a shocking statistic:** in Scotland an area roughly half the size of Wales is being managed for grouse shooting. Every single year - from what the industry dubs the 'Glorious 12th August' to the 10th December - hundreds of thousands of grouse are shot for 'sport' by the small minority of people who can afford it.

The 'success' of this blood sport relies on land management techniques that are devastating to many species of wildlife, the environment and the iconic Scottish landscape.



## The circle of destruction surrounding the Scottish grouse shooting industry



We say 'no' to this circle of destruction and have tirelessly campaigned and collaborated to shine the spotlight on this issue.



## 1. Calculating cruelty – a field study of Scotland's hidden shame

In <insert month> 2020 we published the most comprehensive and robust field study of ground predator control on Scotland's shooting estates - the Calculating Cruelty report – and the results showed that up to a million animals are killed each year in Scotland to ensure more grouse can be shot for 'sport'.

- 57,000 killing devices deployed each day in Scotland representing the equivalent of over 10,000,000 active trapping and snaring days per year.
- Up to a quarter of a million animals are killed each year in an attempt to totally eradicate foxes, stoats, weasels and crows to increase the number of grouse.
- Nearly half of the animals killed are non-target species such as hedgehogs, dippers and mistle thrush.

Like us, we're sure you will find these figures shocking and appalling. The Calculating Cruelty report leaves us in absolutely no doubt that managing such large parts of Scottish moorland for an industry which makes a woefully low contribution to the economy is entirely misguided and outdated.

Owners of the Kildrummy Estate - used as a field study in the Calculating Cruelty report – have announced their plans to rewild parts of their sporting estate and end wildlife persecution on their land. They said, "We applaud the study done by the League Against Cruel Sports and support their mission to create greater transparency and accountability for the treatment of wildlife."

You can download the full Calculating Cruelty report at [www.league.org.uk/calculatingcruelty](http://www.league.org.uk/calculatingcruelty)





## 2. Launch of spoof Dragon's Den film

In a bid to highlight the devastation of grouse moor management we launched a campaigning film, Government's Den; it imagines a world where grouse shooting doesn't exist and puts two lobbyists in front of the 'dragons', arguing for huge swathes of Scotland to be managed for the sport.

The film sees the lobbyists put forward their case for ownership of a huge part of Scotland in return for a 0.02% contribution to the economy, with only 'a few Government subsidies' required. They also argue that they will use predator control to systematically wipe out all species that pose a threat to grouse to enable them to cultivate tens of thousands of game birds to be shot for entertainment.

The video is intended to be taken tongue in cheek, but behind the humour is a very serious issue. Driven grouse shooting is an intensively managed blood sport which depends on turning vast swathes of Scotland into barren monocultures. The circle of destruction which surrounds grouse moor causes untold suffering to many thousands of animals, depletes our peat reserves and causes environmental damage on an industrial scale.

The REVIVE coalition has alternative visions for our moors to address the environmental crisis in our countryside caused by intensively managed grouse moors and we hope this video will raise awareness of these issues and show just how ridiculous the current situation is.

To find out if the lobbyists win over the dragons with their arguments watch Government's Den using the link below.

**Grouse moor management must stop once and for all, starting with a complete ban on all traps and snares. Thanks to your ongoing support, we will continue to put the spotlight on the circle of destruction that surrounds Scotland's driven-grouse moors.**





# Making real headway in Wales

**Bethan Collins**, Senior Public Affairs Officer, Wales

## 2021 Senedd elections

On 6th May this year, Wales went to the polls. The Senedd elections saw 16 and 17-year-olds voting for the first time, and some recently-formed political parties contesting seats for the first time, adding to the choice facing the electorate.

Once again, our committed supporters answered our calls to action and sent out more than 16,000 emails to Senedd candidates seeking commitments on banning snaring and the caged breeding of 'game' birds.

The response from candidates was overwhelmingly positive, many of whom individually went further than their party manifestos. This was an incredibly valuable exercise as it allowed us to explain our policy asks and to secure a number of pledges from individual candidates.

Our hope is that this Senedd will provide greater protections for all animals including those who suffer in the name of 'sport'. We look forward to working with MSs and League supporters from across the political spectrum to make these pledges a reality.

## Cage breeding and snares

Millions of pheasants and partridges are estimated to be factory farmed in Wales each year so that they can be shot for 'sport'. To breed them, tens of thousands of parent birds are confined to cages, often for much of their breeding lives. Cages are cruel and cause animals to suffer. The Welsh Government has previously indicated support for Wales to become a cage-free nation. The League has highlighted the welfare issues with cage breeding of 'game' birds for years and recently petitioned Welsh Government to ban the use of cages to produce 'game' birds. We have also campaigned for a number of years to get snares totally banned in Wales, to outlaw their manufacture, possession, sale and use. We petitioned Welsh Government on this issue a few years ago, leading to an influential Senedd Committee report on snaring which has had a positive impact on policy development on the issue since.

Our work has been rewarded over the past year with some notable developments. A commitment to limit cage breeding, detailed in the Welsh Labour manifesto, is a great development and will be working with MSs and the Welsh Labour Government to ensure that 'game' birds are included in the scope of future measures. On snares, we welcomed the publication, in November 2020, of the Agriculture White Paper, which contains proposals to give Welsh Ministers the powers to ban snares. With Welsh Labour returned to power we look forward to working with the MSs and the Welsh Government as they take this work forward and to ensuring that a ban on snares is enacted as soon as possible in this new Senedd term.







## Goal three: End fighting of animals for 'sport'

“I hate any cruelty to any animals and I know you do your utmost to protect and secure animals in every area. So glad that you are there in their corner fighting their battles.”

League supporter

#368840320

## Intelligence is key

**Mark Collings**, Head of Field Operations

Many find it surprising that dog fighting was outlawed nearly 200 years ago. Sadly, it continues in the twenty-first century and is a significant animal welfare issue for the UK.

It's one of the most horrific forms of organised animal cruelty, not only for the violence the dogs endure during fights but because of the trauma they suffer throughout their lives.

Dogs forced to fight suffer terrible injuries, both from the fights and at the hands of their vicious 'owners'. Most will ultimately be killed in the ring or die soon after from their injuries. Those who can no longer fight are often brutally killed.

### **The importance of Animal Crimewatch**

Our intelligence team is responsible for developing information and investigation leads received through our supporter-funded Animal Crimewatch reporting service, relating to animal fighting.

Much of the information is referrals from social media, or more community-based information. Using our specialist expertise, we endeavour to progress all reports to confirm those that may be involved in dog fighting and, when possible, develop an intelligence package to share with the relevant police force.

This work is complex and specialised, which can take time to develop.

### **Dog fighting reports**

In 2020 we recorded 129 dog fighting-related reports into our intelligence system. Of those, 49 were received from our Animal Crimewatch service, while the remaining reports were self-generated by our Head of Intelligence following Animal Crimewatch investigations and from our own research.

We also prioritised our efforts towards uncovering a suspected dog fighter and organiser who is believed to be networked across the UK and wider, with access to potential banned breed American Pit Bull terriers. This complex investigation was challenging, and we are grateful to our specialist contractors who provided the much-needed information verification that enabled us to deliver our evidence to a police force for their review.

During a year of lockdowns and furloughs, I am proud our team were able to develop three dog fighting cases which we passed to enforcement agencies. Due to the pandemic, the incidence of animal fighting crime reported to us, and our operations to address it, were seriously impacted but we were able to keep the Animal Crimewatch line operational, which provides a vital link between the general public and potential animal fighting prosecutions.







Might be worth exploring crediting entities (when used) of the photo competition. I am very keen to include image credits from supporters.

## Goal four: Win hearts and minds

“ I support the League because it gives a voice to the voiceless and stands for justice and truth. People need to know the reality of how certain sections of society treat animals so cruelly. We need to stand against these barbaric practices and join together to protect the defenceless. ”

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## Animal welfare ambitions

**Andy Knott**, CEO



Earning the title of 'world leader in animal welfare' will require ambition, vision and strategy from the Government.

We have joined an unprecedented coalition of 50 animal welfare charities with the objective of urging the Government not to waste a once-in-a-generation opportunity to redefine our relationship with animals; we have released a new vision for animal welfare called Act Now for Animals, which sets out the sector's priorities for creating a society which rebalances the way we rear, live and work with animals.

The paper sets out 40 recommendations, including a number of important measures to improve the welfare of wildlife such as banning the use of glue traps and snares, banning primates as pets and an immediate end to the mass culling of badgers. The vision also covers companion and farm animals.

Crucial to the paper's recommendations, is the role of the new Animal Sentience Committee. For the Government to fulfil its commitment to recognise animals as sentient beings, the coalition is clear that the committee must have real teeth. It must be independently chaired, made up of the leading animal welfare experts in the country and be able to meaningfully hold ministers to account.

Wild animals deserve robust protection too, especially those that are harmed or killed because of so-called 'sports' such as fox, stag and hare hunting and commercial shooting. It's not just the hunted animals that are harmed, it's other species like badgers or even cats and dogs that are trapped in cruel snares, or the breeding birds kept in tiny cages just to produce the millions of eggs needed for the shooting industry.

It's time to strengthen the Hunting Act, introduce a complete ban on snares, and to stop caged breeding of 'game' birds.

## Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) at the polls

**Martin Sims**, Director of Investigations

Although hunting with dogs was banned in 2005, the League continues to receive reports about hunts chasing and killing foxes, deer and hares. Despite the recent national lockdowns, we collated a huge 300 reports relating to suspected illegal hunting.

It is clear that hunting with dogs is still a significant problem in the countryside and the police need to prioritise the enforcement of the Hunting Act to bring the cruel perpetrators to justice.

So, in the lead up to the April 2021 elections, we called on all our supporters and the general public to seek the PCC candidates' views on wildlife crime, and ask them to commit to make it a priority both locally and nationally.

We also called on all candidates to commit to making hunting with dogs a national wildlife crime priority; to tackle animal cruelty in the countryside; and ensure police forces have the funding they need to properly enforce the law.

Our hope is that candidates committed to tackling the brutal activities of the hunts and blood sports proponents which continue to blight our countryside will be secured. By prioritising the enforcement of the Hunting Act, we can take the steps needed to bring an end to fox hunting once and for all.





## We're Building a Kinder World Together

**Jenny-Anne Dexter**, Individual Giving Manager

Leaving a gift to the League in your will makes a lasting contribution to ending the persecution of animals by supporting our nine wildlife sanctuaries. We recently released a heartwarming animated film to demonstrate how we're building a kinder world together for animals. The tale of a vixen running from a hunt and seeking safety at a sanctuary was created by an exceptionally talented young graphic designer as a gesture of support for the League.

Narrated by wildlife advocate and presenter Megan McCubbin, the story tells how a lifelong wildlife lover helped to create a permanent place of safety for the animals she cared so deeply for. Her tale serves to inspire a new generation, a granddaughter, who in turn learns compassion for animals that will last a lifetime.

Leaving a gift to the League after you have taken care of your loved ones means we can look forward to a kinder tomorrow.

If you would consider leaving a gift to the League after you've taken care of your loved ones, it would mean that together we can create a kinder world for animals.

You can watch our beautiful animation, and help plan your own last legacy using our free will service, by visiting **[league.org.uk/akinderworld](https://league.org.uk/akinderworld)**



## A legacy of kindness

A gift in the will of these League supporters has helped to build a kinder world for animals over the past year. Their compassion for animals has been memorialised on the Tree of Life at Baronsdown to inspire generations to come.

D Atkins	Amanda Hawkeswood	Christopher Owen
William Baker	Barry Hobson	John Powell
John Bentley	Marie Howell	Dennis Simmonds
David Bishop	Dorothy Hudson	Brian Smith
M Bonneres	Brenda Kobylarek	Jean Squire
George Brown	Marlena Lindenbrook	Susan Stevens
Rosemary Brown	Hariet Livas-Parker	Tom Trowbridge
Paul Bryan	Peggy Llewellyn	Angela Tuckett
Margaret Buckner	Renee Lorrimor	Edward Wallace
Peggy Burrows	Gerald Lynam	Patricia Waters
Veronica Byers	D Martin	Alfred Wild
D Carty	William McCrea Bailey	Geoffrey Williams
Gillian Clitheroe	Peter Monks	Michael Wilson
W Cotrill		
Yvonne Cowell		
Florence Crowther		
Annette Durant-Eele		
Gladys Edwards		
J Findlater		
F Finlayson		
Thomas Franks		
Rita Gardner		
Alan Gent		
Gillian Granger		
Peter Grant		
John Grimley		
Gwendoline Halliwell		
Susan Harries		
Margaret Harris		





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League Against Cruel Sports is a registered charity in England and Wales  
(no. 1095234) and Scotland (no. SC045533)