



7<sup>th</sup> August 2019

**National  
Trust**

By email

Pip  
Action Against Foxhunting

Dear Pip

### **Trail hunting update July 2019**

I am writing to provide an update on trail 'hunting' at the National Trust.

As you are aware, the Trust introduced new procedures to licence, monitor and manage trail 'hunting' on our land for the 2018/19 season. Key elements included;

- The introduction of formal 'on the ground' monitoring of licensed activities
- The use of non-animal based scents to lay trails
- The publication of licensed dates and areas on our website
- The establishment of a new Trail Hunting Management Team to support local teams to implement our refreshed approach

The Trust recently reviewed the first season under these new arrangements and is pleased with the successful implementation of our new procedures. We believe this approach provides assurance that trail 'hunting' can be conducted on Trust land in compliance with our licence rules and the law. We noted however, that this was only the first year of operation and we will be making, in the light of our practical experience, some further limited changes for the 2019/20 season.

In summary, our review noted the following key points and has as a result established some minor changes to our procedures:

#### **Licensing**

We issued 28 licences for trail 'hunting' and 7 licences for ceremonial meets (where trail 'hunting' on our land is not involved). This is a broadly similar number to the 2017/18 season.

The licensed dates and areas for trail 'hunting' were published on our website. We listened to some concerns around the publishing of specific licensed dates on our website, but after review of our direct experience, the views of interested parties, and our own verified evidence, we will maintain the current system. We will continue to keep this under review.

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In the event, not all the dates granted were used with 90% of licensed groups using five or fewer dates. This was largely due to a range of legitimate logistical and practical issues. We are updating our procedures for next season to make sure information about licensed dates on Trust land is as accurate as possible, working in conjunction with the trail groups.

Our licence fee has remained stable for some time. As part of our routine review of such matters there will now be an increase in the annual licence fee from £157/annum to £300/annum, but for a new maximum of 5 licensed dates. Any additional dates requested will be charged at £75/date.

We have also clarified that changes to licensed dates within season can be requested and granted - at the Trust's discretion and where compatible with local conservation and visitor objectives. We will usually require two weeks' notice for such changes. We will update the website listings accordingly throughout the season. Our charges are broadly in line with other similar bodies.

### **Monitoring**

In our first year we made a formal monitoring visit to two-thirds of the licensed trail 'hunting' dates that were used. This covered two-thirds of all groups that were licensed by us. We also monitored all seven ceremonial meets. We anticipate continued progress next season, given the team are in place for the whole of the coming season and our procedures are now tested and established.

Our monitoring was largely through pre-planned visits, but we also trialled unannounced 'spot checks' which made up around one quarter of the visits. In addition, we sampled and laboratory tested 13 scent samples; all samples were confirmed as non-animal based and compliant with our licence terms.

Groups worked constructively with the monitoring team and we established our methods and ways of working for this new undertaking. We do not anticipate any substantive changes for the coming season, aside from formally introducing unannounced 'spot checks' as part of our monitoring programme for around 25% of visits. We will continue to keep this under review.

### **Incidents**

Any activity associated with the term 'hunting' continues to provoke strong emotions on both sides of the debate. The Trust centrally recorded a minimum of 97 incidents and allegations through the season as a result of 3<sup>rd</sup> party allegations, our own staff reporting and our central monitoring programme.

Incidents related to;

- Alleged breaches of licence conditions, trespass or illegal/inappropriate behaviour by trail 'hunting' groups;
- Alleged intimidation, inappropriate behaviour or vandalism by anti-hunt groups/protesters.

When such incidents were reported, we investigated them robustly and impartially to attempt to verify the content and location of any allegations. We always advised anyone who believed they had witnessed or experienced illegal activity/actions to contact the police immediately as the appropriate body to investigate criminal matters. We will not go in to detail over specific allegations or outcomes.

People have a legal right to organise demonstrations and express their views and, provided they are respectful and don't block access for our visitors or impact on our conservation work, we accept this activity. Last year we accommodated 11 such demonstrations at our properties.

## **Our people**

The Trust's primary responsibility will always be to our people and we will not tolerate any abusive or inappropriate behaviour. We will always support staff to withdraw from situations and/or stop any contact/communications immediately where necessary. We will continue to closely monitor such incidents and always with our staff's welfare at the forefront of our minds.

## **Outcomes**

We cancelled two licences for severe/cumulative breaches of our licence rules and issued several warnings when licence conditions were breached for less severe, but still important incidents. There is a presumption against the licensing of trail 'hunting' groups who have committed the most severe breaches of our licence or sought to circumvent our rules. We have sought and received assurance from trail 'hunting' governing bodies that such activity will not be tolerated and that we will collaborate to address specific incidents.

We also warned anti-hunt individuals and groups for specific actions or incidents. We have removed a number of social media posts for inappropriate content and reported two instances of vandalism and/or intimidation at our properties to the police. We have sought and received re-assurance from anti-hunt groups that such activity will not be tolerated and that we will collaborate to address specific incidents.

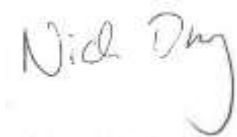
## **Summary**

I trust that the enclosed information has provided a useful update of our approach. For reference, I also enclose the Trust's licence for trail 'hunting' for the 2019/20 season.

For further information about the Trusts' position on trail 'hunting' please visit our website at [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk).

Thank you for your continued interest and engagement on this issue.

Yours sincerely



Nick Droy  
National Trail Hunting Manager

Enc: National Trust licence for trail hunting 2019/20