

**Minutes of meeting between AAF and NT, Tuesday 27th August
11.00 Tisbury Hub (Agenda set by AAF) .**

Introductions

AAF

Pip - Chair and co founder of AAF

Pete - AAF Wiltshire leader and researcher re scents used in hunts

Emma - co founder of AAF - member of North Dorset Hunt Sabs -
Portman Hunt

Deborah - AAF Cornwall leader and hunt monitor for Western Watch

Helen – hunt monitor for Western Hunt

Cat – AAF Surrey and London leader and member of Guildford Sabs,
monitoring Surrey Union hunt.

Jane – AAF and League member. Note taker for the meeting.

National Trust present:

Nick Droy – Trail Hunt Manager

Verity Burke – Hunt Monitor for the National Trust

1 – Nick Droy (ND)– The NT’s position on Trail hunting

ND told us this:

At the NT’s AGM 2017, the motion on trail hunting was not passed but because of this the NT decided to update their procedures around licences and monitoring. They decided to publish the dates¹.

¹They also decided to publish the routes, but went back on that without any explanation.

Sept 18, the Trail Hunting management team was appointed. ND’s job is “on-ground monitoring”. His team is there to support the existing rangers.

² The team did not achieve what it set out to do, because they intended to visit and monitor ALL the hunts and only managed to see 2/3 of them

Last year was a pilot – the intention was to be impartial and evidence based.

His team achieved what the Trust asked². and the outcomes are on the website.

The review of the year found there were lessons to be learnt:

Number of licence dates (Devon and Wales) – which they have addressed by limiting the numbers of dates to 5 for a “Standard Licence”, but additional dates can be purchased for £75.

³ As there is no reason to give huge number of dates to hunts, AAF believes that the intention was to conceal the real hunt dates.

He said that the huge number of dates given to the Dartmoor Hunt wasn’t underhand or secretive.³

Future monitoring – going to be very much the same but they want to establish a more systematic way of dealing with complaints and investigations.

Verity said: She monitored 2/3⁴ of hunts last season – scent testing went well and all scents tested were artificial. Monitoring was mostly announced last season – are looking at introducing more unannounced visits this year. Later on, she said that on two unannounced visits, she hadn't managed to track them down at all.⁵

⁴The NT did not give actual figures – 2/3 is meaningless if you don't know what it's two-thirds of. AAF believes that this is a deliberate attempt to obfuscate.

Will be going out to ALL hunts⁶ with formal monitoring. Next season they'll be encouraging rangers to do the same. For unannounced visits, they wouldn't tell the hunts when they were going but they would reveal themselves once they were there. ND said that at least when they were there, the hunts wouldn't chase foxes⁷

⁵This means that out of the 9 unannounced visits, only 7 of them would have been successful.

⁶ At the end of the season, AAF will be asking whether the Trail Hunting Team have done this.

⁷ We would ask whether this statement indicates that ND is fully aware that the hunts can't be trusted not to hurt wildlife.

2. AAF - Our position on allowing Trail hunting.

PIP - AAF, along with many other anti-blood sports organisations, has been asking the National Trust to stop issuing licences to hunts on the grounds that none of the hunts can be trusted to hunt "according to the law". This is because there is a significant amount of evidence to show that the hunts go out with the intention of pursuing and killing wild animals, breaking the law as they do so.

Most people support us. We brought out signed League cards (800 of them) and a petition – nearly 3000 signatures⁸. We also put photographs of hunted foxes on the table – two of them killed by hunts that the NT licences (Portman and Surrey Union).

⁸ ND did not acknowledge the petition or the cards. He left them on the table as we exited the room at the end of the meeting.

We also believe that if the NT was really doing a good job at making sure the hunts were only trail hunting, no hunts would ask for licences at all.

Therefore, we are here to question your methods and ask for improvements.

We only have one agenda – to protect foxes from being torn apart by hounds.

3. Trusting the untrustworthy hunts.

Pip said that we suspect these hunts (below) have had their licences withdrawn or suspended – we also think it might be the Shropshire Hunts in Long Mynd.

ND did not confirm this and he didn't know who was going to ask for licences this year.

Cat spoke about the Surrey Union Fox – The SU were licensed to hunt on NT land last year.

Cat explained what happened in December last year, when the young fox was killed by the Surrey Union. Her group found the fox's body within minutes of its death. The photo taken of the fox was horrifying. The hunt lied about where and how the fox was found. Cat was there and she knows what really happened.

ND said – that's why we are out monitoring.

Emma spoke about the Portman fox –Portman were licensed to hunt on Kingston Lacy last year.

She gave an example of one incident with the Portman and said she knew there was a kill because the hunt "blew for a kill". She asked whether ND thought this was a hunt that would abide by the rules of their licence. Her group found the warm body of a fox and took it back to the car. The police arrived, felt it was warm, there was an investigation but there was no proof of the intent to kill. For several reasons, she suspected that the fox came from an artificial earth. If the hunt has been investigated by the police, why would you want them anywhere near your land? Some followers had been convicted of criminal damage, trespass and assault.

ND said they couldn't comment on this – he couldn't tell us whether the hunts that had behaved badly last year would be refused licences this year. They won't focus on the bad behaviour of the hunts outside NT land. Later on, he conceded that they would need to look into the evidence. He said that lots of people have opposing views and if allegations are made they will investigate and some false allegations have been made. If the allegations against the hunt were proven on NT land, they would take appropriate action by issuing warnings and suspending or cancelling licences.

Cat asked whether there was any other activity on NT land that was as controversial as hunting.

ND said
"Hmm."

Deborah and Helen – Spoke about The Western – licensed to hunt on Zennor NT land last year.

Pete said that the hunts are expected to keep records of their activities and evidence that they are *hunting legally*. He asked whether the NT

asks to see this evidence. He has been asking the hunts for this evidence and has received no replies at all.

ND – the NT asks for a self-reporting form from the hunts and they are expected to make data available.⁹

⁹ AAF will ask whether any data has been made available.

4. Monitoring the hunts

Pip: Your trail hunting update July 2019 doesn't give precise figures - why not?

We worked this out:

28 hunts used a maximum of 5 dates each. 140 dates. You checked 2/3 of these. This means there were 93 visits.

You say you visited 2/3 of the hunts – that's 18.

This means you visited 18 groups 5 times each (average) and 9 groups did not get a visit.

This isn't what you said to Jack Riggall and Joe Hashman last year. You said you would visit all of them.

<http://www.houndsoff.co.uk/archives/game-of-cat-mouse-continues-trailhuntlies/>

Extract from Hounds Off article

This season, the Trailhunting Team will be conducting one pre-arranged inspection of each Hunt which is granted a licence by the National Trust. My problem with this is that it provides an easy way for #TrailHuntLies to avoid detection because when Nick is about Hunts will temporarily change the way they behave.

Extract from letter from NT

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.

Verity **REFUSED** say how many dates the hunts used last year – or how many dates she went out monitoring. She said that some dates can't be monitored because it's difficult to arrange.

ND, on the other hand, **interrupted Verity** to tell us. He said that only fifty (50) dates¹⁰ had been used. Of these, 2/3 had been visited.

Pip said that last year, you said to Jack Riggall (National Distrust) and Joe Hashman (Hounds Off) that you would visit ALL of the hunts, but you visited only 2/3. She pointed out that if any of us missed a target by 1/3, we would be sacked.

¹⁰ – We have worked out that over the season, hunts probably go out about 11000 times in total per year. The NT is putting its reputation and its relationship with the public on the line for 0.45% of the number of hunt a year. So, only 1 in 220 hunts take place on National Trust Land. The National Trust must host thousands of events themselves on their land over the year. We have asked the NT for the actual figure. Given the sheer amount of land and properties the NT owns, this figure must also be significant.

ND said “we deliver to the best of our ability”

Pip asked whether the NT intends to visit every hunt next year –
ND said “we will endeavour to and will report back next year”.

Deborah pointed out that there was a significant number of UNUSED dates. This affects the locals who don't want to encounter the hunt with their own dogs/horses/livestock.

Jane asked if Verity stays with the hunt when monitoring.
Verity said she did.

Pip asked if she goes over the fences and hedges with the horses.
Verity said that most of the hunts take place in a flat area¹¹

¹¹ We thought that the whole point of hunting was to jump fences. The terrier men are (they say) there to mend fences. We found Verity's statement very hard to believe.

5 Trail laying

Emma asked when the hunt laid the trail – and Verity said it was twenty minutes before by trail layers. **Helen** said that she had never ever witnessed a trail being laid and she was out every time with the Weston when they were hunting on NT land.

Follow up question – how do you keep up with them when they are hunting and do you stay with them all day?

We know that the sabs and monitors have difficulty keeping up with the hunt – so how does she manage it?

Helen said that the Western state they lay artificial scent which is as near as possible to fox scent. **Emma** said that hunts declare that they use fox urine.

ND said they should be non-animal based scent.

Pip made the point that hounds – trained to follow fox-scent are unlikely to be able to change to a non-animal based scent just for the NT dates.

ND did not comment.

Neither ND, nor Verity answered this point.

Emma asked if the huntsman knows when and where the trail has been laid.

Verity said “sometimes”.

Emma said “If the huntsman doesn't know, he can't be sure that the hounds aren't following the trail of a live animal”

Verity said that was up to the hunt to stick to the trail and they should know where the trail has been laid.

Pip asked why the routes of the trail aren't published – as promised at the 2017 AGM. If they are published, then it would solve it because we would be able to watch them.

ND said it wouldn't solve it because whatever they do, people will have opposing opinions.¹²

¹²AAF believes that the NT doesn't publish the route of the trail because there isn't one. If the hunts had to stick to the published route, they wouldn't be able to pursue and kill foxes.

Emma said that would help the public to avoid the hunting areas, especially those families with pets and small children.

ND said "We licence the activity and work with groups to enforce this."

Pete asked - do the Trail hunt monitors check that the scent has actually been laid? Even the police don't have the power to do that.

Verity said they sometimes watch the hunts lay the trail.

6. Unmonitored hunts.

Emma asked about RANGERS – who are on the spot, all the time. Do they have specific knowledge of how the hunts operate?

ND said they don't have specific hunting knowledge but do have knowledge of the local countryside.

Pip asked what does the NT expect to find when the monitoring visits are pre-arranged? She gave this example:

On 6 March 2019, the Portman Hunt were at Kingston Lacey. Observers saw two ladies on clean-looking quadbikes with the hunt. There were no terriermen to be seen. The observers suspected the hunt were being checked and they emailed the NT later on to find out if this was the case. The NT refused to answer.

On the previous two meets on Kingston Lacey land, observers saw a significant number of terriermen on NT land, but no official monitors from the NT.

ND acknowledged that when they turn up to monitor, the hunt are likely to change their behaviour and comply with the rules. He also said that at least they wouldn't break the rules while they are being watched.¹³

¹³ Is this not a tacit admission of what the NT knows to be the case?

7. Independent Monitors

Pip asked why doesn't the NT encourage trained, independent monitors?

ND said that the NT didn't want to stimulate conflict between groups. And right now that isn't appropriate.

Pip asked Jane to record that ND said no - the NT weren't going to have independent monitors.

ND interrupted and said that wasn't true and shouldn't be recorded. He said the NT had no plans to do it at the moment.

Pip said that was the exactly the same thing as saying no.

6. Dates of hunts

Why have the number of dates been effectively limited to 5?

Long Mynd 29th Jan – United Pack. Caught digging into an active badger sett, when they were meant to be hunting at Long Mynd.

ND had already answered this.

8. Trail Hunt Team – cost to members.

We didn't have time to deal with this at the meeting.

With three employees, and running costs, AAF estimates that it must cost at least 100k a year to run the Trail Hunt Team. This means that for every one of the 28 hunts licensed to hunt on NT land, the NT coughs up 3.5k. The hunts (last year) paid for £157 of this. Who is paying for this and why? Do any other groups cost the NT this much? Do you have to monitor any other groups? Cyclists, for instance who aren't allowed to deviate from bridleways? Why is this money not being spend on "conservation". **This is the reason given for not answering the public's questions in detail.**

9. The 2017 vote

Jane said that we are very suspicious about the vote and believe it was rigged. Where can we get the answers to these questions?

The Vote to allow foxhunting on National Trust Land (20/10/2017)

84% of the population opposes fox hunting.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/fox-hunting-boxing-day-poll-opposition-all-time-high-theresa-may-hunting-ban-act-vote-a7495336.html>

Given this fact, it is highly unlikely that the majority of National Trust members support hunting and the result suggests that the vote was "rigged". Many National Trust members say they did not receive a voting paper.

Outstanding Questions:

- a. *How many National Trust members were there in October 2017?*
- b. *How many voting papers were sent out?*

- c. How many members used their votes?*
- d. How many members voted in favour of hunting?*
- e. How many members voted against hunting?*
- f. Did the chairman of the National Trust use all the unused votes to vote in favour of hunting?*

Verity said she was going to email about this. Her answer – emailed later – told us the process once again. She did not actually answer any of the questions above.

Jane (who was a member) and, at the time asked for a proxy to vote on her behalf, specifying that she would vote for the motion to ban hunting on NT land, has emailed the NT asking how her proxy vote was used. She hasn't had an answer.

Other points:

Deborah talked about “accidental kills” which seem to happen frequently. Even if the hunts aren't breaking the law when foxes are killed accidentally, why is the NT putting wildlife at risk for this minority pastime. The NT calls itself “guardians of the countryside”.

ND didn't comment on why the NT are happy to risk foxes.

Pip asked if 85% of people oppose foxhunting, why does the NT continue to allow it on their land?

ND said the NT wants as many people as possible to use the land.

Deborah said that you are stopping other people from using the land when the hunt is out.

Pip said that cyclists aren't allowed to go wherever they like, but horses and riders can. There is no justification for this.

ND said that the NT can't be expected to investigate every complaint made because it wouldn't be a good use of resources.

10. Date and place of next meeting.

We all agreed to meet again, possibly in January.