

Introduction

Policy proposals and consultation questions - About you

1. Would you like your response to this consultation to be confidential in the event of an access to information request (see confidentiality and data protection above)?

No

If you answered 'Yes' please give your reason(s). :

2. Provide your full name

Provide your full name:



3. Provide your email address or, alternatively, your full postal address

Provide your email address or, alternatively, your full postal address :



4. In what capacity are you completing this consultation?

as an individual

If other, please specify:

5. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, what is the name of that organisation?

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, what is the name of that organisation?:

I'm not responding on behalf of an organisation

6. This consultation is for proposals that would apply only in England and Wales. Where are you, or the organisation you are representing, located?

England

If other, please specify:

Policy proposals and consultation questions - Proposed Legislative Approach

7. Do you agree with the proposed definition of "trail hunting"?

No

Please explain your reasons including, if applicable, your preferred definition of "trail hunting":

This is the definition the hunts use themselves. It hides what they are really doing - ie fox hunting. "Trail hunting" is the name the hunts used from 2005 onwards instead of "fox hunting". It was just a change of name, and not a change of activity. An overemphasis on "animal based scent" is a mistake. They don't use it anyway. A trail layer showed me his equipment once (at one of their trail laying days earlier this year) and he had aniseed but no fox scent. He couldn't answer my question - "where do you get fox scent from?" They don't actually need to use it because they are looking for the scent of actual living foxes. They pretend to use it so they can have a ready excuse for why their hounds got confused and chased a fox "by accident".

8. What types of conduct should be covered by 'engagement' or 'participation' in trail hunting?

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

Meeting to discuss areas to search for foxes
Laying the scent of any animal as a trail
Setting hounds to search for a scent
Looking in areas where a "trail" could not have been laid (undergrowth, hedgerows etc)
Frightening an animal from its covert
Using hounds to pursue any animal
Not stopping hounds from pursuing or killing any animal

Allowing hounds to kill any animal that suddenly appears in front of them
Bringing a live fox to a hunt (bagged fox)
Identifying a deer to hunt (harbouring)
Causing a deer to break away from the herd to be hunted
Using individuals on foot or on quad bikes to chase or contain an animal

9. In relation to offences or conduct which would assist unlawful trail hunting to take place, we intend that it should be an offence for the owner or occupier of land to knowingly cause or permit another person to engage or participate in trail hunting on that land. Do you agree?

Yes

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

After all this publicity about trail hunting being a cover for fox hunting, no landowner can pretend not to know what the hunt is actually doing. However, hunts trespass on private land. Preventing hunt trespass must be included in any new legislation.

10. In relation to offences or conduct which would assist unlawful trail hunting to take place, we intend that it should be an offence for the owner or person responsible for a dog to knowingly cause or permit another person to use the dog for trail hunting. Do you agree?

Yes

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

This has been a way for owners of hounds to get away with it.

11. Are there any other forms of conduct which should be considered as possible offences in relation to offences or conduct which would assist unlawful trail hunting to take place?

Yes

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

Road chaos - hunts chase foxes on to main roads. They also use main roads to access land where foxes live. They must stay off the roads.

Trespass on railways.

Hunts treat rural villages as their playgrounds, so they have access to foxes in any area. They trespass into gardens. Small holders are particularly vulnerable. All hunts (including clean boot and drag hunts) must be prevented from taking hounds in any areas where there are dwellings. Our local hunt refused to let villagers know when they would be going through the village (probably because they couldn't be sure where their quarry would run). This is very stressful for anyone living here, as we have our own animals to protect. Hunts have killed cats.

Domestic animals are put at risk.

12. Do you consider that any other legislative changes are necessary to ensure that a ban on trail hunting is effective?

Yes

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

Illegal hunting must become a recordable offence.

Sanctions must include custodial sentences.

Convicted hunters must be banned from hunting for life.

All the exemptions must be removed from the current Hunting Act.

There is little value in strengthening the law if the police are neither willing nor equipped to enforce it. Officers must have a clear and stated duty to investigate suspected breaches, including conducting searches, impounding evidence where appropriate, and questioning those involved.

At present, many officers appear reluctant to challenge hunts. This is particularly evident in relation to stag hunts, which in parts of Devon and Somerset continue to exert significant social and cultural influence. Challenging a hunt can place officers under considerable local pressure.

Effective enforcement requires two things. First, officers must be properly trained and understand both the law and the tactics used to evade it. Secondly, they must have an unambiguous obligation to act. If enforcement is left to individual discretion, officers may be deterred by the prospect of personal or professional repercussions. By contrast, where there is a clear requirement to investigate and question hunt activity, officers can rely on that duty rather than feeling they are acting on personal initiative.

In short, knowledge and obligation are both essential. Officers must know what they are looking at, and they must be required to act when they encounter it.

13. Do you think that it is possible for dogs to be appropriately trained for specific purposes other than trail hunting without the use of either animal based scents or artificial scents which mimic an animal based scent?

Yes

Please explain the reasons for your answer and, if applicable, explain the circumstances where you think it necessary to continue to permit the use of such scents in training dogs.:

If animal scents are still permitted in the training of dogs, the hunts will take full advantage of it.

14. Do you think that it should remain lawful, in certain circumstances, for animal based scents, or scents which mimic animal based scents, to be used in training dogs for certain purposes?

No

Please explain the reasons for your answer and, if applicable, what training purposes should be permitted.:

Hunts will see this as a loophole and make use of it.

15. Do you agree that this is an accurate description of drag hunting?

Yes

Please explain the reasons for your answer and, if you wish, propose a different description.:

16. Do you think that there is a risk that dogs engaged in drag hunting will deviate from the pre-laid trail by the scent of a wild mammal and then pursue the wild mammal?

Yes

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

Because they are also taking a pack of dogs into the countryside to follow a scent, things could go wrong. It is also likely that when trail hunting is banned, the hunts will turn to drag hunting and some of them will still want to hunt wild mammals for fun.

17. Do you agree that this is an accurate description of 'clean boot' hunting?

No

Please explain the reasons for your answer and, if you wish, propose an alternative description.:

They use bloodhounds and stay away from places where foxes live.

18. Do you think there is a risk that dogs engaged in clean boot hunting will deviate from their pursuit of human runners to the pursuit of wild mammals?

Yes

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

Again, take a pack of dogs into the countryside, or even one dog, and if the owner has poor control, of course wild animals might be chased and killed. Pet dogs chase anything and need to be controlled by their owners. Remember Venton? A pack of dogs is even more difficult to control.

19. Do you think that a new law to ban trail hunting would need to include any additional provisions in relation to drag hunting or clean boot hunting?

Yes

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

Neither drag hunting, nor clean boot hunting must be allowed to turn into fox hunting.

20. Are there any equestrian activities other than drag hunting, for example point to pointing, which you think are at risk from being affected by the proposed ban on trail hunting?

No

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

The hunts have complained about this, but I fail to understand why they can't adapt.

21. How do you think the introduction of a ban on trail hunting will affect dogs used for trail hunting? For example, will they be able to be re-directed to other activities?

Please provide your answer:

Hopefully, the hunts would not need to run large packs of dogs any more. What happens to the hounds is up to the hunt. They own the dogs (and are still breeding them) so it is their responsibility. I asked a hunt person what happens to retired hounds, and he said the hound would go back to the original puppy walker. We know they shoot them instead of retiring them. They already have their own methods for doing this already.

22. Do you think that there should be a transition period following the introduction of a ban on trail hunting and if so, how long should that period be?

No

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

I cannot even imagine the carnage in the countryside if a transition period is allowed.

Policy proposals and consultation questions - Community and Social Impacts

23. Do you think that the proposed legislation to ban trail hunting in England and Wales will affect people and/or communities more widely?

Yes

Please explain the reasons for your answer including, if applicable, which groups of people/communities could be affected and in what way:

Life will be so much better without the hunt. The following is my own experience:

We never know when the hunt is coming.

I live in a small hamlet overlooking green fields and trees, with a handful of scattered cottages. A single lane runs through it, only wide enough for one vehicle. In winter, when the trees are bare and the sky is grey, the lanes wet and the light low, it can feel stark. What softens it are the cottages—chimney smoke rising, lights on in the windows.

Life here is quiet. Most residents are retired, and many share their cottages with cats or dogs. We watch the wildlife around us—badgers, deer, squirrels, foxes, the occasional hare—going about their business in the field, finding food, bringing up their own children and making their homes. There is also a growing colony of feral cats, some with kittens.

Our local hunt has more than a dozen court convictions, including for illegal hunting, violence, and road traffic offences. Their arrival is something we dread: it is unpredictable and very, very dangerous. When we suspect they may be in the area, we keep our cats indoors in the morning, shut our gates, and spend the day on edge—listening for the sound of hounds, the blast of a horn, or the rattle of hooves on the road. Or, worst of all, the roar of several aggressive-looking quad bikes tearing past, the grim looking riders intent on doing the hunt's dirty work for them.

One dark, grey drizzly day last November, I kept my animals inside as I knew the hunt was meeting nearby. My animals had objected, but I wasn't going to risk them. I can't do that. I was weary; the knowledge that the hunt was going to be nearby had kept me awake most of the night. All day, inside my cottage, I listened and listened. The morning turned into afternoon and the light began to retreat. Finally at about 3.45, I just about heard the unmistakable and blood-chilling noise of the hunting horn, followed by the noise of hounds in cry.

Were they on to a fox? Were they savaging a deer? Had they seen the feral cats, and discovered a nest of kittens? Had the hunt blocked a badger sett, to stop the fox going to earth? I could only guess.

I picked up my binoculars and went out into the lane. A muddy 4x4 was parked at a viewing point, with a two men in dark clothing standing nearby, gesturing excitedly towards a field where the hunt could be seen moving quickly towards the village. The hounds were in cry, clearly pursuing something. I couldn't see the quarry. Could have been anything. They were in a field belonging to someone who has explicitly banned them—so, trespassing. I didn't engage with the men. No point. Did my neighbours realise the hunt had arrived? I let them know, but had no response. I know they object to the hunt, and they may not have felt brave enough to come and join me. On my own then.

I went further down the lane to a better vantage point. A dirty quad bike was parked at the end of another neighbour's long drive. The number plate was covered in mud. I know the neighbour has not given them permission to be there either—more trespass.

I stood there alone in the wind and drizzle, binoculars in hand. I'm 5'1" and 65 years old—there was absolutely nothing I could do to stop what was happening, whatever it was they were doing: chasing, killing, treating it as entertainment at the expense of everyone else—the quarry, the villagers, and me. They were here in my village, where I live, where I should feel safe. I was utterly powerless.

I went back inside and carried on listening. The quad bike started up, and left. After a while, the sound of the horns faded, and with it the hounds.

I felt sick to my stomach. I always do, for the whole day whenever the hunt is nearby.

They often bring their hounds through our village with no regard for our comfort and no warning at all. They take over. They intimidate anyone who challenges them. On a previous occasion, a huntsman—since convicted of illegal hunting (twice) —told me, "I know where you live." I am a retired teacher, living with my husband and my cats in a cottage we own. We should not be forced to feel like this in our own home.

I once asked the Parish Council to request at least some advance warning from the hunt. The answer came back as a contemptuous no. Why not? Is it because they don't know themselves when they'll arrive? Or because this isn't trail hunting, where the route is planned in advance, but something more unpredictable—where the course is decided by the hunted fox?

The ONLY thing that makes any difference at all is knowing the sabs are with the hunt on the day when they come to our village. They can't always make it, of course. But, their presence is a comfort—not because they can stop the hunt reaching our village, but because someone is out there trying to protect the wild animals. It restores a sense of balance: compassion on one side, cruelty on the other.

When the sabs are out, I watch their messages closely:

They've killed. We think the fox got away. We don't know what happened to the fox.

And the best message of all: They've packed up. They've gone home.

Only then can I breathe out, shut the curtains, light the fire, and wait—until they come again.

Policy proposals and consultation questions - Business and economic impacts

24. How do you think the proposed ban on trail hunting might affect the income and activities of the hunts currently involved in this activity?

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

Like anyone whose livelihood is affected by the change in attitude or economy, they should adapt. The job I did when I left university in 1982 no longer exists. So I earned my living doing something else. If I could do it, then so can they.

25. How do you think the proposed ban on trail hunting might affect the income and activities of businesses directly linked with hunts which currently engage in trail hunting?

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

Not at all. Adapt. Many have.

26. Do you think that the proposed ban on trail hunting in England and Wales might affect other businesses not directly linked with hunts?

No

Please explain the reasons for your answer including, if appropriate, which types of businesses you think might be affected and how.:

Consider Brexit, and the effect that had on businesses. No one cared much about those businesses. They were just expected to get on with it. Why are the hunts a special case?

Policy proposals and consultation questions - Environmental impacts

27. How do you think that the proposed ban on trail hunting could affect the environment or wildlife?

Please explain the reasons for your answer.:

Without the hunts galloping all over the countryside disturbing the peace, spreading disease and annoying everyone, things can only get better.

Further Considerations

28. Are there any other matters, including possible alternatives to primary legislation, which you feel should be taken into account in developing the legislation to ban trail hunting?

Yes

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

Public Space Protection Orders, and any other local legislation, must never exempt hounds. They are not "working dogs".

All hunts must be totally banned from all public owned land.

Hunt trespass must be dealt with properly.

Sporting Rights Covenants on private land must be rendered invalid and the new act must specifically mention this.

Hunts must be banned from ALL residential areas, including villages and hamlets.

Boxing Day and New Year's Day meets of hunts must not be permitted to happen in town centres. It promotes a false view of their activities.

29. Is there any other evidence you would like us to consider?

Please use the box below to tell us briefly what you are going to send and why:

The hunting community often portrays itself as being far more central to rural life than it really is. In reality, it represents a small, insular, and intimidating group whose interests and values are not shared by most people who live in the countryside.

Too often, members of hunts reinforce each other's cruel behaviour and present themselves as pillars of the rural community, despite the distress and division their activities cause. Many local residents do not see hunts as a positive force. Instead, they see them as a source of conflict, disruption and harm to wildlife.

From my perspective, rural communities would be much better off without them. The claimed benefits of hunting are greatly overstated, while the negative impacts on wildlife, local residents and community relations are all too real. Rather than enriching rural life, hunts diminish the enjoyment many people take in the countryside.

Consultee Feedback on the Online Survey

Overall, how satisfied are you with our online consultation tool? Please give us any comments you have on the tool, including suggestions on how we could improve it.

Satisfied

Please give us any comments you have on the tool, including suggestions on how we could improve it.: