



Chris Heaton-Harris
Member of Parliament for Daventry
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 020 7219 7048

June 2021

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about pheasants.

Like most Parliamentarians I am committed to the careful management of the pheasant population and ensuring biodiversity is maintained.

Gamebird shooting adds around £2 billion to the rural economy each year and I value the economic benefits of the industry to rural communities, including Daventry.

Those involved in shooting carry out £250 million in conservation work annually. Managing game bird populations is the responsibility of individual shoots but it is in their interest to manage their resources in a sustainable way.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has undertaken a review into how gamebird releases on or near European protected sites are managed. The review looked at areas including the number of gamebirds released and their impact on protected sites, the consenting process, and whether further safeguards could be provided to protect sites.

The review found that the negative effects of gamebird releases on protected sites tend to be localised and that there are minimal or no effects beyond 500m from the point of release. However, the review did highlight a need to gain a better understanding of how any localised impacts might be mitigated and existing arrangements strengthened. As a result of the review, any release of common pheasants or red-legged partridges into the wild on European sites in England or within 500 metres of their boundary will now only be lawful under the authority of a licence issued under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Defra has developed a general licence that allows an authorised person to release a specified number of common pheasants or red-legged partridges into the wild in these areas providing the conditions of the licence are met. Anyone unable to use the general licence can still apply to Natural England for an individual licence. The proposal is that this licensing regime will remain in place for 3 years, with a review after 2 years should it be appropriate to stop earlier.

Further, the welfare of gamebirds is currently protected by the Animal Welfare Act 2006 which makes it an offence to cause unnecessary suffering. This is backed up by the statutory Code of Practice for the Welfare of Gamebirds Reared for Sporting Purposes, which encourages the adoption of high standards of husbandry.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY

Website: www.heatonharris.com