

## Alok Sharma, MP for Reading West

2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about driven grouse shooting.

I believe it is essential that wildlife is properly protected. Anyone involved in game management must respect the country's conservation laws, which are among the toughest in the world. I also support the Government's efforts to secure the future of the hen harrier through its recent action plan. Nevertheless, I support shooting for all its benefits to individuals, the environment and the rural economy.

Shooting as a whole is worth about £2 billion per year to the economy, much of it in some of our remotest communities. It supports more than 70,000 full-time equivalent jobs, 1,520 relating directly to grouse shooting. Shooting is also concerned with the management of about two thirds of the UK's rural landscape.

Habitat conservation is of tremendous importance and moorland management is vital to biodiversity. Healthy heather provides good habitat for ground nesting birds, which are also helped by the control of predators, and attracts butterflies and bees. Globally, heather moorland is rarer than rainforest and three quarters of it is located here in the UK. Without active management, this biodiversity would be lost. Grouse shooting helps generate funds to allow it to carry on.

I am aware of concerns over peat burning, but this technique is considered to help maintain healthy heather at the range of heights needed to provide diverse habitats. A 2013 Natural England study found no direct evidence relating burning to downstream flooding, and grouse moor owners are carrying out ditch blocking, which can help restore peat, guard against flooding and capture and store carbon.

I want to see a vibrant, working countryside enhanced by a diverse environment. Driven grouse shooting contributes to that goal, so I do not support a ban.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Alok Sharma MP**

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