



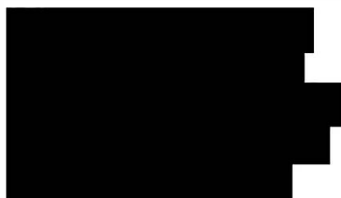
**Welsh Government Code of Best Practice on the Use
of Snares in Fox Control**

Evidence Gathering Meeting

1:00 pm - 4:00 pm Tuesday 14th of May

Welsh Government, Spa Road East, Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1 SHA

Attendees



- Welsh Government (Chair)
- Welsh Government
- Welsh Government
- Welsh Government
- Welsh Government

Mike Swan (MS)
Matt Goodall (MG)
Neil Paton (NP)
Bernard Griffiths (BG)
Glynn Evans (GE)
Eryl Lloyd (ELI)
Chris O'Brien (CB)
Lewis Clark (LC)
Adrian Ward (AW)

- Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust
- Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust
- British Veterinary Association
- Farmers Union of Wales
- British Association for Shooting and Conservation
- North Wales Rural Crime Team
- **RSPCA**
- **RSPCA**
- **Dyfed Powys Police/NRW**

Apologies

Dafydd Jarrett
Tom Bailey
Bethan Collins
Rachel Evans
Charles Nodder
Libby Anderson
Steve Griffith

- NFU Cymru
- BVA
- LACS
- Countryside Alliance
- National Gamekeepers Association
- OneKind
- BASC Wales

1. Welcome and Introduction

- [REDACTED] welcomed everyone to the meeting, listing apologies as above. Went on to summarise the current situation, reminding the group that the CCERA committee report which came out in 2017 made a number of recommendations, including publishing an annual report on snare use, the first of which has now been published (to be discussed under item 3)
- [REDACTED] met with the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths AM following the last meeting where she indicated that she was keen to have the powers to control the use of snares. Snares featured in part of the recent SMNR consultation. This issue has not been progressed very much to date due to Brexit related pressures, however, it is still live.
- [REDACTED] went on to state that the Minister, is very interested in how the code has been implemented and how effective it has been to date. Discussions and actions arising from this meeting will be put to the Minister in due course.
- Round table introductions were made before opening the meeting.

2. Minutes/Actions from the last meeting.

- **MS** on training actions. Last year's course was cancelled as not enough people were interested to make it viable. In a better position to promote training now. **Action MS – Work on this to continue.**
- **MS** on training opportunities for students at agricultural colleges etc. Didn't get as far as they'd hoped with this due to staffing issues, but options now being explored along with the availability of various funding streams. **Action MS – Work on this to continue.**
- [REDACTED] noted that there has been limited retailer engagement regarding selling code compliant snares. Likely to be arising from a combination of price point and the fact that snares make up a small percentage of their business. [REDACTED] stated the only likely way to influence this area is through legislation.
- [REDACTED] on legislative options. It would require primary legislation to legislate on snares. However, the current legislative programme is focussed on delivering Brexit. The Minister will be asked again how much of a priority this is for her – **Action WG.**
- [REDACTED] on survey required to further enhance the evidence base. Hard to find a cost effective solution (according to colleagues in KAS), as costs currently disproportionate. May be able to use new member of staff for this. **GE** stated that the BASC research team may be able to help with this aspect as they do a lot of surveying. **Action WG for work to continue on this.**

3. Update on the 2018 Annual Report

█ gave a brief update on the 2018 annual report.

- The 2018 annual report on the code was submitted to the Minister in March this year.
- 20 snaring incidents reported since 2015, 15 involving non-target species. Unable to determine if non-code compliant snares were used due to the nature of the reports (lacking detail). Going forward, those reporting such incidents will be asked for more details including code-compliance.
- 69 individuals trained in Wales
- Approx 48k hits to BASC training video online, though these views could be from anywhere geographically, not just Wales.

█ in summarizing, stated that overall, the evidence for the code's effectiveness is very limited even though the code has been in place over 3 years, should be able to evidence whether the code is leading to better practice by now.

MS asked where the evidence that there's a problem is. Hard to evidence improvement without a valid baseline to refer to. Felt it would be a shame to do away with the code, when it might have made an improvement that's not been quantified.

█ confirmed WG are not looking at removing the code, but if the Minister was inclined she could make it a statutory code, with a legal basis, as was consulted on in the SMNR consultation.

AW summarized his year's work. Legal snares mostly being used in non code compliant ways, and in the majority of cases the target species are non-legal species:

- Case 1 – Fox in compliant snare not properly fixed.
- Case 2 – Badger, where line brake failed, died away from snaring site.
- Case 3 – Snares set on an animal run, likely badgers.
- Case 4 – Legal snare attached to chains set for foxes.
- Case 5 – 3 snared badgers found decomposing in grazing field.
- Case 6 – Badger run snared next to main road.

AW doesn't see how making it illegal will stop these practices as those doing this don't care for the law as it stands. Felt the best way to stop these practices is for them to have implications for land-owners' Single Farm Payment / other subsidy.

BG queried where the evidence for a payment scheme deduction would come from, if there currently isn't enough evidence for a criminal conviction.

CoB also raised the question of snaring / farm payments being considered as part of the Welsh Government's new farm support scheme within the anticipated Agriculture (Wales) Bill - which is topical due to the current open consultation - thus incentivising farmers financially to use more welfare-friendly methods of control.

Discussion continued on these two points, █ highlighting that snare misuse highlights the need for better training, that this is something that WG could potentially look at as part of future farms schemes. █ added that there was potential to include incentives for good practice as opposed to penalties for bad practice. **BG** noted that any WG appeals process could be inundated if subsidy penalties are introduced.

MG stated that putting people off snaring completely could have a serious knock-on effect on species such as Curlew and Lapwing, which are already under pressure.

ELI highlighted 2 incidents in North Wales last year:

Case 1 – Snared fox dead near release pen, been there for some time.

Case 2 – Trailcam footage of live badger with non-compliant snare attached.

Action - AW and **MS** to liaise regarding a training session on snares/ Corvids best practice.

4. Evidence Gathering Session (some of this covered above)

Numbers of Farmers using Snares to control foxes

BG reported no feedback received from members about snaring. **GE** suggested BASC could help with this as they survey farmers regularly. **Action for WG to discuss this 'offline' with GE.**

Gamekeepers in Wales using Snares to control foxes

MS states 600 NGO members in Wales, approx 200 registered as full time gamekeepers. **MS**, hard to tell what % of these use snares regularly, not all have been asked. **GE** happy to ask BASC members. ■■■ felt it would be useful to ask code-specific questions. **Action for this to be picked up 'offline', between WG and GE/MS.**

Discussion moved on to wider reporting/evidence.

GE 4731 hits on Welsh Snares code video (BASC), shows people are looking for this information specifically. In the last 12 months, 916 click throughs to Welsh Snaring Code from link on BASC page.

CB recounted RSPCA figures from Wales – 106 calls over 5 years (heavily caveated with possible mis-reporting/repeat calling/ calls already made to police forces/ and use of code compliant snares):

2014 – 15 (8 wild mammals, 5 cats 2 dogs)

2015 – 16 (10 wild mammals, 4 cats 2 dogs)

2016 – 21 (17 wild mammals, 2 cats 2 farm animals)

2017 – 29 (16 wild mammals, 9 cats 1 dog, 3 birds)

2018 – 24 (15 wild mammals, 5 cats 2 dogs, 1 farm animal, 1 bird)

■■■ asked the group if they felt the code was difficult to understand. **MS** considered that no, it was not, but that certain groups, responsible for the inappropriate use of snares were not being reached because they're not involved in pest control/wildlife management.

■■■ confirmed that the code should cover everyone involved in the use of snares.

■■■ asked if there were any aspects of the code which was unclear/easily misinterpreted.

AW stated that some officers needed guidance on the code before heading out to incidents.

No wider issues with the code reported.

BG stated that if the Minister is looking for the figures to show improvement since the introduction of the code compliant snare, she's unlikely to get it. The figures are too scant and variable in his opinion.

5. The Code of Practice – Commitment to Review

█ reminded the group that one of the recommendations of the CCERA report was that the code be reviewed on an annual basis and if its efficacy should come into question, Welsh Government should tighten the law on snare use - one option being to give the code a statutory basis. █ didn't feel it was necessary to change the code at this time, █ asked if this was a view shared by the group.

MS felt they were delivering better understanding of the code at the moment, so should not change the code while this work was ongoing. Same as the Code in England so felt it was important to have a consistent message.

6. Taking Forward Wales' Sustainable Management of Natural Resources

█ ran through some of the regulatory changes proposed by the SMNR consultation and public responses.

Is the Code improving animal welfare standards?

Responses indicated there should be clarification around checking snares at least once a day. 56% thought it was a good idea. Issue with waiting potential 47 hours between checks in this case, █ suggested clarification should read "once in every 24 hours".

CoB raised the issue that daily checks could mean that snares are not checked for a 47 hour interval. They would prefer wording that does not create this risk and which offers more guarantees as to the frequency of checks.

MS felt there was a serious issue around this and potential inadvertent illegality (e.g. being for example 10 minutes late checking snares). Could make the process more onerous for those following the code.

NP echoed the RSPCA's concerns over potential for almost 48 hours to pass between checks. Could be problematic for animal welfare in very hot weather.

█ made a point about bringing the legislation in line with the code, so that it reflects the Code's "twice a day" checks rather than "once in 24 hours". Greater benefits to animal welfare with this approach.

MS felt this was forcing people to check snares twice a day. Moves from 'should' to 'must', which can lead to legal issues if for some reason the person doing the checks is delayed.

Group agreed that this issue requires more discussion.

Should there be a requirement not to possess or sell self-locking snares? Would this result in any disadvantages?

MS felt including 'possession' would impinge on his training activities, but agreed on not selling self-locking snares, although there is no definition of what a self-locking snare actually is.

█ suggested revising the definition to prevent the sale of non-code compliant snares.

MS, no argument against, felt it was a good idea, however banning anything that may be considered a self-locking snare will be a lot more complicated due to lack of proper definitions.

GE asked if there was a time frame for the assessment of the code of practice?

RSPCA also asked for a timeframe on the Welsh Government's conclusions as to whether the Code has been a success. Stated that rather than only reports of non-compliance from enforcers being sought, it would be good to have an onus upon farming representatives of proof of positive adherence to the Code, if possible.

█ confirmed nothing's been agreed yet. Officials will be looking at progress year on year, any lack of it will raise concerns with the Minister. She has asked that we plot a path so that she can regulate if she wants to, but no decisions have yet been made. There will be a consultation on any proposed changes if/when it is decided. The Minister is not looking to ban snares at this time, though this course of action has not been dismissed as she is interested in welfare issues.

Confirmed **WG** need evidence of best practice and code compliance, not just bad practice, to inform decisions.

MS to ask **CN** and **NGA** colleagues about access to members snaring data, which would be anonymised for the purpose of wider reporting. **Action MS** to discuss with colleagues what data can be brought to bear in this issue

7. AOB

Nothing Raised. █ thanked everyone for their contributions and closed the meeting at 4pm.