

**MEETING OF THE MFHA COMMITTEE TO BE HELD on
THURSDAY, 21st NOVEMBER 2019 at THE CAVALRY AND GUARDS CLUB,
127 PICCADILLY, LONDON, W1 at 11am**

PRESENT:

Willie Shorthose	Richard Gurney
Richard Tyacke	Andrew Osborne
Charles Clarke	Mark Hankinson
Edward Foster	Robin Vestey
Felicita Busby	Will Bryer
Paul Hancock	Tim Easby (Director)
Jessica Leigh-Pemberton	Benjamin Mancroft (Chairman)
Susie Goess-Saurau	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Alice Bowden (Director Designate, The Hunting Office)
Tim Bonner (Chief Executive, Countryside Alliance)
Polly Portwin (Head of Hunting, Countryside Alliance)
Adrian Dangar
George Bowyer (Director, Vote OK)
Lizzie Pinney (Director, AMHB)
Nick Herbert (Chairman, Countryside Alliance)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Jacky Thomas
Neil Salisbury (Secretary, Central Committee of Fell Packs)
Roger Westmorland (Chairman, Central Committee of Fell Packs)
Charles Frampton

1. Minutes of the Meeting held on the 12th September 2019.

The Committee agreed the minutes which were signed by the Chairman.

2. Matters Arising:

- a. Hunting Advisory Group (HAG) Report

Sam Butler had briefed the Committee on the progress of HAG at the previous meeting and indicated that a HAG report would be produced for the November meeting. The report was received and circulated to the Committee a few days ahead of the meeting. The Chairman proposed a vote of thanks to Sam Butler for the report which had clearly involved a great deal of work – he asked the Director to produce a summary of the recommendations, which will be discussed in full at the next Committee meeting.

ACTION: Director

- b. Campaign to counter activities of Hunt Saboteurs (Andrew Osborne/Richard Tyacke)

Richard Tyacke briefed the Committee on the campaign to counter the activities of Hunt Saboteurs. This season, there are three experiments being conducted in different parts of the country. The initial results from the three areas, after only a few weeks of the season are as follows:

The North West:

In Cheshire, the Cheshire Hunt had engaged a security company (Matrix) to assist with dealing with saboteurs. The Director had met with the CEO of Matrix, with Phil Davies and James Hall, Cholmondeley Agent earlier in the year. A number of planning meetings were subsequently organised and the Hunt has engaged Matrix from the Opening Meet until Christmas.

Richard Tyacke had hoped to secure group funding for a mobile team to support the packs in the North West area. Many hunts were reluctant to buy into a plan, which only left the Cheshire and Wynnstay. Subsequent to these discussions, the Wynnstay have also engaged Matrix for a number of Saturdays.

East Midlands:

The Cottesmore, Belvoir and Fernie all attract saboteurs particularly on Saturdays. The Belvoir and Cottesmore already have plans in place using their own stewards and 'ex doormen'. The Fernie are conducting a trial with Matrix this season.

Yorkshire:

Simon Roberts and George Wynn-Darley were hoping to establish a mobile response for Yorkshire, using Matrix. In the end there was little enthusiasm from Yorkshire packs to fund this with the exception of the Sinnington and Middleton. The Middleton have engaged Matrix for eleven Saturdays.

The results so far have been encouraging, though it remains difficult for a small team to contain a large number of antis. However, Matrix have gained a greater knowledge of the problem they are facing. The key to success seems to be leadership – where there is a leader who knows the country and can co-ordinate the efforts of Matrix, it seems to work well.

Andrew Osborne reported that although there was not an appetite to fund regional mobile teams to counter saboteur activity, there was a desire to fund an intelligence gathering operation for the benefit of hunts and hunting as a whole.

Robin Vestey reported that the Thurlow had gained much about the saboteurs in their area due to the indiscrete use of open band radios. The Thurlow has brought an aggravated trespass case against a saboteur.

c. Hunt Secretaries Association

The Director briefed the meeting on the Hunt Secretaries Association and the ongoing integration into the Hunting Office / Associations. It is likely that the Secretaries Association will hold a short meeting ahead of the MFHA AGM at Cheltenham Racecourse. The aim remains to encourage greater involvement of Hunt Secretaries in the daily issues of hunting.

3. Chairman's Initiatives

The Chairman opened this section of the meeting by outlining that there were a number of issues that he would like to delve into.

a. Hunting Office Board/Executive Committee

The Committee agreed that it was a good idea to establish a Hunting Office Board which would meet on alternate months at the Hunting Office, and alternate months via telephone conference. The Chairman's paper on the Hunting Office Board is attached to these minutes.

b. Hunting Office PR

The Chairman explained that the Hunting Office had never conducted PR on its own behalf but, that there was a case for lower level PR. This would not conflict with the wider promotion of hunting done by the CA, but would focus on the work of the HO and the Associations – training, standards and welfare mainly. Alice Bowden, as Director of the Hunting Office, would oversee this, it was likely to cost £15,000 per annum and a firm proposal would be produced for the January Committee Meeting.

ACTION: Chairman

c. Use of Intelligence

The Director explained that a company that he, the Chairman and Alice Bowden had met had been put on hold for now. The proposal from that team, although would have been extremely professional, would have cost an initial £10,000 and could prove an expensive option.

Richard Tyacke explained that he was working very closely with Polly Portwin and Eleasha Sallis and that an experiment was underway, but it would probably take around three months to deliver any results. He will report to the next meeting.

Tim Bonner explained that the CA had been collecting intelligence on anti-hunt institutions for about 15 years, but had only been collecting intelligence on individuals for two years. Her also explained that the Community Protection Orders could be useful for excluding our opponents from areas. He also thought that the H&S executive could be helpful with an examination of the Hunt Saboteurs Association and their dangerous activities which constantly put its members in potentially difficult situations.

The Chairman explained about a third option which involved the analysis of organisational structures and the possible identification of leaders, administrators, funding sources and vulnerabilities of the anti hunt groups. The Chairman was in contact with the investigatory department of a law firm which could conduct the research for an initial exploratory cost of £5,000. The Chairman delegated Richard Tyacke to meet the group and whoever the CA nominates, to explore and assess this option further.

ACTION: Chairman and Richard Tyacke

4. CA / MFHA Relationship – Andrew Osborne/Richard Gurney

MFHA representation on CA Board

Andrew Osborne explained about the meetings to reset the CA / MFHA relationship.

The CA Board is part elected and part appointed and the Hunting Associations have no right to a position on the Board although the Chairman of the MFHA has always been on the Board since its founding. Nick Herbert agreed to examine the possibility of having a member of the MFHA Committee attend CA Board meetings in a similar manner to the Chairman of the CA being ‘in attendance’ at MFHA Committee meetings. However, Nick Herbert also proposed to establish a CA / MFHA strategy group. This could be configured of 5 members of the CA Board and 5 Members of the MFHA Committee. Committee Members were asked if there would wish to serve on such a group, but no members indicated their willingness.

ACTION: Nick Herbert & Committee Members

5. Social Media proposal

Adrian Dangar spoke about the social media proposal that he had submitted in conjunction with Polly Portwin. The aim was to 'normalise' hunting and the hunting community using free social media platforms, mainly Instagram to produce a nationwide positive PR message focussing on three main areas – Charity, Conservation and Community. The Hunting Office will contact all hunts to nominate a Social Media Administrator (SMA), generate regular and positive hunting PR via their own hunt's public social media accounts. They will also encourage hunt supporters to promote, like, share positive hunting related posts and pages.

ACTION: Director

6. Vote Ok and Election Strategies

Vote OK has increased its manpower to cover the General Election period with funding raised; £4,000 from the Hunting Office and £4,000 from the CA. Most packs were engaged with the run up to the election, although inevitably there would have to be some chasing of packs reluctant to assist the cause. George Bowyer was to produce a post-election strategy on political engagement in time for the January Committee meeting.

George Bowyer also briefed the meeting on the Police and Crime Commissioners elections, ongoing Council elections and representation of Council and Local groups.

ACTION: George Bowyer

7. South Hereford Enquiry

The Director talked about the South Herefordshire enquiry and the need for security concerning Sir John Chadwick's report. The Director will produce an MFHA summary based on the enquiry panel's report for the South Herefordshire and if necessary, for wider publication. Nick Herbert spoke about the need to limit 'own goals' and the need for standards, science and evidence and social acceptance.

ACTION: Director

8. Prosecutions and Legal Issues

The Director highlighted the following prosecutions:

- Meynell and South Staffordshire pleaded guilty to a Hunting Act offence over a misinterpretation of the 'game bird' exemption.
- The Crawley and Horsham prosecution under the HA has been dropped.
- The Kimblewick were found guilty under the Animal Welfare Act but have yet to be sentenced and an appeal had been lodged.
- The Blackmore and Sparkford Vale face prosecution under the HA.
- The Thurlow was successful in their appeal against Assault allegations.

9. Hunt Issues – Changes to Hunting Infrastructure

The Director briefed the meeting about a number of ongoing hunt issues – including a number of potential amalgamations which were at various stages. Interestingly more packs were beginning to discuss joint ventures of their own volition without prompting from the HO.

10. Trail Laying App Proposal

Alice Bowden outlined a number of potential scenarios for the development of a Hunting Office trail laying App. It was generally thought that although it was exactly the sort of service the Hunting Office should be providing for hunts it was deemed to be too costly to pursue.

11. Finance

The Treasurer briefed the meeting on the 7-month budget to date. The MFHA expenditure was in excess of budget, but largely due to items that were not budgeted for, an extra contribution of £10,000 to the Hunting Office, £12,000 contribution to the Chairman's legal fees and £9,000 above budget contribution to the cost of court cases. The Hunting Office was under budget.

The Treasurer reminded the Committee that the salary costs will rise to cover the transition period during the handover period and the recruitment of an administrator to succeed part of Alice Bowden's current role.

12. Any Other Business.

The Chairman briefed the Committee on progress with Vico Partners. He, Mark Hankinson and Alice Bowden had met with Vico who remained keen to conduct some strategic communication work for the MFHA. The Chairman will ask Vico for a revised proposal to be put to the Committee as soon as possible.

ACTION: Chairman

13. Dates of Future Meetings:

Committee	Thursday 30 th January 2020	Cavalry and Guards Club
Committee	Thursday 30 th April 2020	Cavalry and Guards Club
AGM	Tuesday 19 th May 2020	Cheltenham Racecourse
Committee	Thursday 10 th September 2020	Cavalry and Guards Club
Committee	Thursday 26 th November 2020	Cavalry and Guards Club