

Written evidence submitted by the British Association for Shooting and Conservation

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC)

1. The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) is the representative body for sporting shooting in the UK with a membership of over 150,000. It aims to protect and promote sporting shooting and the wellbeing of the countryside throughout the UK. It actively promotes good firearms licensing practice, training, education, scientific research and practical habitat conservation.

Which programmes best demonstrate the positive social impact that participating in sport and culture can have on the five central themes of this inquiry?

An overview of the social value of shooting

2. BASC has conducted in-depth research into the benefits shooting and its associated activities have for personal, social and physical wellbeing¹. This can be found online at <https://basc.org.uk/the-personal-value-of-shooting/> and BASC encourages the Committee to refer to that report for an overview of how shooting contributes to social wellbeing in general. Results of this research showed benefits ranging across the key themes of this inquiry, suggesting that shooting actively contributes toward Government wellbeing targets.
3. Shooting can help to get more people active through sport and physical activity, reduce social isolation and promote personal wellbeing whilst encouraging engagement with the natural environment.
4. Shooting also delivers many benefits to local communities – from bringing business, tourism and income into rural areas, to supporting local conservation initiatives, and providing education and training within local communities.

Social mobility

5. Shooting is an all-inclusive sport, which puts those of all ages, backgrounds and abilities on an equal footing regardless of gender, and makes an important contribution to health and wellbeing.
6. BASC's research into the personal value of shooting¹ showed that 97% of respondents surveyed regularly mixed with at least one person as a result of shooting activity – the average number was 23. On average respondents had made 20 friends or acquaintances purely through their involvement in shooting. Without shooting, the majority (77%) of respondents said their social life in general would be poorer, 68% said meeting new people would be harder, 63% said making new friends would be more difficult and 62% said maintaining friendships would be more challenging. Around two thirds of respondents (65%) said the social side of shooting was a reason for taking part in the sport. The overwhelming majority (95%) said shooting was important to their personal wellbeing.

7. Independent research by Public and Corporate Economic Consultants (PACEC)² into the economic, environmental and social benefits of shooting sports in the UK surveyed 16,234 members of the shooting community. This research found that the majority (87%) of respondents felt that shooting contributed to the social fabric of the local area, and that it also contributed to their personal wellbeing. In addition, other far-reaching social benefits were revealed: 81% felt that shooting contributed to employment and skills in the local area. The research also evidenced these impacts.
8. BASC has run a number of successful programmes focused on delivering social wellbeing benefits via engaging in the sport of shooting. One example is Clay Coaching at the Jamboree³, where BASC partnered with the 2016 Essex International Scouts Jamboree to provide clay shooting as the lead activity. At the event, BASC introduced 5,817 Scouts and Girl Guides to clay shooting and taught them basic shooting principles. This event was used by the Sport and Recreation Alliance as a case study in their 2017 *Reconomics* report³, demonstrating the value of outdoor recreation. The report states: "Throughout the week the Scouts and Girl Guides came to understand how shooting has broader positive social outcomes, in that joining a shooting club can give them the opportunity to get out, meet new people and build friendships. They also learnt that shooting has huge personal and physical wellbeing benefits via spending time in the outdoors and providing enjoyment and relaxation."
9. BASC has a 'Scouts Legacy' fund, the aim of which is to 50% fund further interaction with the Scouts and Girl Guides. In 2017, BASC used this fund to introduce 1,000 Scouts and Girl Guides to shooting sports. BASC will again run clay coaching lines at the 2018 'Norjam' Jamboree, where 5,000 Scouts and Girl Guides will be able to try shooting.
10. BASC's long-running Young Shots programme⁴ aims to get more young people involved in the sport of shooting in a safe, social and enjoyable way. The programme incorporates a calendar of local events, activity and training days and a dedicated webpage where youngsters can share photos of themselves and their friends shooting. The programme also incorporates 'Young Shots Ambassadors' (YSA), whose role is a social one in terms of networking and teaching other young people about shooting. Ambassadors attend events and game fairs, organise their own events, give talks in schools and benefit in terms of personal development, an increased sense of responsibility and learning skills important for working life. Jack Depledge, BASC's first Young Shots Ambassador, said: "I really enjoy my work as a YSA because I get great opportunities to meet new people, develop my knowledge and go shooting while representing BASC." Other Ambassadors have also been given opportunities to develop technical and life skills outside of the sport of shooting, for example in assisting with the collation of wildfowling clubs' annual bag returns for the Crown Estate.
11. BASC Young Shots events and activity days range from 'have a go' days which introduce young people to shooting for the first time, to training and activity days aimed at educating youngsters on wider aspects of the sport and conservation elements, such as path maintenance, tree planting, hedgerow maintenance, and feeding wild birds.
12. One example of this type of programme was the recent Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve Litterpick, which involved wildfowlers, BASC Young Shots and college students teaming up to clear the shoreline of litter. After three hours of plastic picking the volunteers then took part in a 'Taste of Game' lunch organised by BASC, with local pheasant and

venison burgers on the menu. The event saw Young Shots as young as seven mixing with and learning from wildfowlers up to the age of around 70. The wildfowlers taught the children about the birds on the foreshore, what the birds on the foreshore were feeding on, and why the foreshore is such an important habitat.

13. In 2017, BASC introduced its 'Lets Learn Moor' project, with an associated social media campaign #LetsLearnMoor. BASC gave £7,000 of legacy funding to the 'Let's Learn Moor' project and North Yorkshire Police donated £3,000 from its Police Property Fund to allow primary school pupils to help with conservation tasks and learn about the region's unique habitats and wildlife. Over three days, more than 300 four to 11-year-olds enjoyed an experience that BASC will repeat in 2018, with continued support from a number of partners including the North York Moors Moorland Organisation (NYMMO), the National Gamekeepers Organisation (NGO) and Countryside Learning. Gamekeepers educated the pupils on conservation tasks, biodiversity, habitat management and moorland species. There was a social responsibility element to this initiative, in terms of teaching the children about wildfire, litter, and responsibility to follow the countryside code.
14. Gareth Dockerty, BASC's Northern Regional Officer, runs the 'Lets Learn Moor' project for BASC. He said: "We have a number of projects running across the north of England that use shooting activities to engage local communities in a number of positive ways. These aim to build relationships, foster social mobility, and teach social responsibility from an early age, with a focus on preventing crime or anti-social behaviour issues like fire damage, litter or wildlife disturbance. The aims of our BASC North Young Shots programme are to educate youngsters from a variety of backgrounds in conservation while building their confidence and life skills, providing them with the communication skills needed for later life when applying for jobs or further education. We are currently working in partnership with NE Youth, a charity who offer sporting and cultural opportunities to children, often from deprived areas of the North East."
15. BASC runs a Ladies Shooting programme⁵, aimed at increasing female participation in the sport of shooting by delivering a package of social sporting events. The programme comprises ladies-only events for groups of women to socialise, meet others and enjoy the sport of shooting together. The programme includes around 30 events and training days a year across the UK, a dedicated webpage and social media channels. The programme also incorporates the BASC Ladies Shooting Awards, where women are encouraged to nominate others based on the social impacts they have had in relation to promoting ladies shooting and encouraging others to enter the sport. The Ladies Shooting blog highlights inspirational ambassadors for ladies shooting – for example, an interview with Anita North, a Commonwealth Games medal-winning shooter representing England internationally. She said of shooting: "I have competed all over the world; it has brought me fabulously glorious times, and equally testing times. But the thing that stands out is the friendships it has brought to me. From competing to coaching I have met an incredible number of amazing people. Shooting has shown me how the sport brings people together."

Health

16. BASC's *Personal Value of Shooting* research¹ surveyed BASC members and non-members to understand the social, physical and personal wellbeing benefits of shooting. The study showed that 84% of those surveyed said shooting was important to their physical wellbeing, with shooting most commonly rated 'very important' to physical

wellbeing. The majority of respondents (80%) were likely to be undertaking physical activity either directly while involved in shooting, or indirectly by taking part in other physical activity related to shooting (such as beating, picking up or conservation work for shooting). Overall, 71% said their physical activity level would decline and 72% said their engagement in sport would decrease if they were no longer involved in shooting.

17. BASC also explored the physical intensity of shooting and its associated activities¹. This involved asking people to self-report measures of physical intensity and in addition, using the presence of physical indicators during participation in each activity to understand intensity level. This method was based on that used by Sport England in their Active People Survey, which was used by the Office for National Statistics in their National Wellbeing Programme. In the study, both the self-reported intensity and the physical indicators showed that overall, shooting and its associated activities were moderate intensity to high intensity physical activities. Most (88%) respondents reported one or more of their shooting-related activities as moderate or high intensity. The overwhelming majority of respondents (94%) reported annual 'active days' (where they were physically active for 30 minutes or more) due to shooting. Furthermore, 85% reported active days due to shooting *and* reported that one or more of their shooting activities were moderate to high intensity.
18. In addition to physical activity benefits, shooting also provides wellbeing benefits in terms of getting people outdoors and into the natural environment. The benefits of connecting with the great outdoors are well documented, and shooting is an important driver of people's engagement with the natural environment, getting people out into areas of the countryside where access would not normally be open and learning about the landscape, terrain and conservation of flora and fauna.
19. BASC's research¹ revealed that the majority of those surveyed (91%) said they would spend less time outdoors and in nature if shooting were no longer possible. Furthermore, 84% said their engagement with the natural environment would suffer if they could no longer be involved in shooting and 75% would spend less time on conservation work. In this context, shooting can be viewed as a form of 'ecotherapy', because it supports and encourages people to be active outdoors, thereby improving mental and physical health. Outdoor activity has been shown to help support mental wellbeing (as discussed by Natural England^{6,7}), and can deliver economic benefits for people, communities and the wider economy, while reducing demand for medication and health and social care services⁸.
20. Respondents to the *Personal Value of Shooting* survey¹ talked about what shooting meant to them, in their own words. Some of the comments included: "It gives me a connection with the natural environment which I would not otherwise have", "Shooting is connection with seasons and land, with animals and nature, and the natural cycle of predated and predator; eating what I shoot, creating a better ecosystem as a result, and connecting with ancient skills, field and bushcraft, while being active and engaged", and "It gives me a sense of physical and mental wellbeing. It's my release from the daily grind and to see the conservation benefits to all wildlife from habitat management is immensely rewarding. It also gives an opportunity to put back into the countryside as a thank you for all the enjoyment I take from it". Other comments included: "Shooting is the item most important in keeping me healthy, active, independent and away from the doctor", and "Shooting is very important to me to maintain my personal fitness".

21. Using the World Health Organisation's Health Economic Assessment Tool, Natural England estimated in 2016 that decreases in physical activity due to declining greenspace could lead to an additional 374 deaths per year, with an economic cost of £434 million per year. BASC linked the same methodology to statistics from the Association's *Personal Value of Shooting* study¹ to quantify the benefit of shooting to personal health. This resulted in the estimate that if people could not take part in shooting, an additional 106 deaths per year might occur through inactivity, at an economic cost of £300 million.
22. BASC's programmes often encourage physical activity. For example, BASC's Gareth Dockerty, who organises BASC's 'Lets Learn Moor' project, said: "From planting trees, feeding wild birds or just walking over moorland, BASC's events cover all terrains and abilities, and get people outside exercising and improving wellbeing".

Education

23. Target shooting has clear educational benefits – teaching pupils personal responsibility and self-control, and allowing those who may not excel at team games to compete. It promotes self-worth in pupils with low-self-esteem when they succeed.
24. The Scouts⁹ say: "Target shooting brings forward many virtues. Guns are potentially dangerous but only if handled incorrectly and any young person participating will need to learn and apply the safety rules without exception and accept the control and discipline imposed on a range if they want to take part. Sometimes this strict level of discipline is not present elsewhere in a young person's life. They can learn about the law and the consequences of breaking it and that it is not optional, in this way they have to make decisions about their own behaviour and what is or is not acceptable to others. Self-discipline is required for undertaking shooting, coordination in the aiming and firing process along with focused concentration in short bursts, patience, self-control and self-awareness. Dedication and attention to detail is needed to improve shooting technique and gain better scores. Participating in a sport as an individual competing against yourself and yet part of a team at the same time. All of these virtues are of great benefit in the development of a young person and can be learnt if the young person wants success and has goals to achieve."
25. The *Reconomics* case study³ on the BASC Clay Coaching at the Jamboree programme states: "Shooting sports provided a fun change in activities, but also instilled the importance of safety aspects and personal responsibility", and "Throughout the event all the young people were supervised and mentored on the high standards of self-discipline required when shooting, therefore ensuring each individual gained and developed new skills and knowledge."
26. The theme for BASC's 2018 'Lets Learn Moor' project is safety and social responsibility, involving the fire brigade, police and mountain rescue.
27. Another example of this type of project to teach young people the importance of safety and responsibility, comes in the form of BASC Scotland working with Wallace Hall Academy to teach rural skills students. Donald Muir, BASC Scotland's events and training officer, said: "Shooting is an important element of many rural professions and the students are taught that safety, discipline and responsibility for themselves and those around them are the most important aspects of shooting. As an approved training provider, BASC Scotland is able to provide constructive and safe shooting training for students. Students

learn that people have to be responsible and law-abiding to be able to hold a firearm certificate and that can be key to their future career prospects.” The day came about through the Queensbury Initiative which links local schools and businesses. Leanne Peoples, project officer for the Queensbury Initiative, said: "The Queensberry Initiative has been lucky enough to work with BASC on a number of occasions. We find these sessions are valuable to our pupils to help them understand the importance of safety and respect for guns but also the importance that the game sector has in Scotland's economy and tradition."

28. Research by PACEC (2014)² revealed that 22% of shooting providers had links with training organisations. In addition, 16% had links with local educational establishments, or provided school visits. These included providing shooting experience days and training to school cadet forces, scout groups and Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme members. In total, 6% of shooting providers offered apprenticeships to young people, most commonly including gamekeeping but also incorporating farming and gunsmithing. PACEC collated a range of case studies and stakeholder interviews to support its survey work, which highlight examples of educational links in these, and other areas.
29. BASC offers a host of training and educational courses¹⁰ for people of all ages - from Deer Stalking Certificates to butchery courses, and from firearms awareness training to courses specifically for Young Shots. These courses reach hundreds of people each year, and are designed to foster good understanding of safe and responsible shooting in line with Codes of Best Practice, in addition to educating participants about sustainable habitat and wildlife management. BASC delivers many talks and training sessions in schools and colleges – from ‘Talking Stalking’ evenings, to working with residential centres for inner city school children, teaching young people about the countryside, conservation and the role of the gamekeeper.
30. BASC’s ‘Duck Nesting Tubes Project’ saw BASC providing funding to Newton Rigg college in Penrith to buy materials in order to build duck nesting tubes. This project was run by a BASC Young Shots Ambassador, and the nesting tubes were used by local wildfowling and conservation clubs. The students learned about conservation, practical tasks and gave something back to the community in this project. BASC Scotland have also organised similar events at high schools across Scotland, including running an event where over 300 hundred primary school children from the Borders attended a talk on wild game management and had the chance to try wild game food.
31. BASC supported the formation of the Burrard Academy, which was established to provide training to the shooting industry as a whole in the hope that traditional gunmaking skills will be preserved.
32. BASC and BASC’s Taste of Game initiative launched the ‘Game Changer’ programme, aimed at teaching 60,000 students about the provenance of game and how to cook game by 2020. The initiative was launched in June 2017 and has been a great success, already engaging with more than 200 schools. This project involves close collaboration with local communities, in terms of support from local game dealers and shoots. BASC has also established, with Scottish Natural Heritage, ‘Scotland’s Natural Larder’ to reconnect people, including school children, with hunted and foraged natural foods.

Community engagement and diversity

33. PACEC (2014)² collated a range of case studies and stakeholder interviews to support its survey work, which highlight examples of community engagement. Examples include shoots offering work experience, apprenticeships, training days and visits to local colleges and students, working with local schools to host visits and talks on farming, grouse management, deer management, habitat management and forestry, having links with the Barnardos Get Ready for Work Scheme, running local training sessions on conservation and environmental stewardship, and having close links with local groups such as Scouts and Cadets. The research also identified the important links shooting has with local conservation and community groups, in addition to other outdoor recreational groups.
34. Shooters are a highly diverse community, because the nature of shooting is all-inclusive: it has no barriers to any age, gender, ability or background. In addition, shooting is not only a sport for those who live in rural areas. In fact, shooting has no clear-cut rural/urban divide.
35. The sport can deliver specific benefits to particular age groups: it can help young people develop their character, skills, and learn responsibility, while helping older people engage with others and stay active and healthy in mind and body.
36. Shooting is a versatile activity, which can be moulded to fit people's needs and circumstances. It is accessible. The Disabled Shooting Project¹¹ say: "Target shooting is the most accessible, inclusive and integrated of all mainstream sports." The Scouts⁹ say: "Shooting allows those who are less physically able to participate and gain the self-esteem from competing on equal terms with physically able young people."
37. BASC's research into the personal value of shooting¹ involved gathering qualitative data based on respondent comments. These included: "In my experience the shooting community is diverse and inclusive regardless of gender, race, age or disability and I am proud to belong to that community", "The ability to shoot is not limited by age, gender, social background or disability. This makes the sport accessible to all and that is what I value most", and "Shooting is a great leveler – men and women can shoot alongside each other on an equal basis while having a fun, enjoyable and sociable day out".
38. BASC supports 'Shooting for Heroes', a part of the Help for Heroes charity, facilitating training and awareness events for injured soldiers as part of their rehabilitation programme. This includes undertaking training modules in gamekeeping and deer stalking. Some veterans have gone on from the programme to turn shooting sports into a career in shooting as a result.
39. Shooting delivers great benefits to local communities, bringing money and tourism into rural areas – both directly and indirectly. PACEC research² revealed that in the UK as a whole, shooters spend an estimated £246 million annually on local food and accommodation for shooting activities, shooting supports 5,200 paid full time equivalent jobs in the food and accommodation sector, and shooting generates an estimated four million overnight stays in local accommodation (on average, 59 visitor nights generated per UK shooting provider). PACEC also estimated that around 81% of game meat sold for food stayed in the local UK area. A Sport and Recreation Alliance Case Study for the *Reconomics* report¹² showed that grouse shooting alone increased in out-of-season hotel occupancy in shooting areas by around 30%.

How can access to cultural and sporting professions be improved to enable greater diversity? How can the Government build a pipeline of talent?

40. BASC wants to encourage people at all levels and in all shooting disciplines to develop their skills so that they can enjoy this sport.
41. BASC has invested heavily to provide a network of highly qualified airgun and shotgun coaches nationwide. These coaches provide tens of thousands of adults, children and young people with shooting opportunities annually ranging from public places such as shooting clubs and countryside fairs to schools, scout jamborees and cadet camps.
42. BASC has a 'Shooting Simulator', which allows people to have simulated introduction to shooting sports before booking their first lesson. The simulator is also an educational tool, which can help people to improve their shooting skills. Roughly 5,000 people a year are introduced to shooting this way, at game fairs, shows and events including national sports roadshows, throughout the UK. BASC is currently investing in more shooting simulators.
43. BASC recommends that regional centres of excellence for shooting sports are developed across the UK so that talented shooters can be identified and coached in a consistent way to build a pipeline of talent.
44. The success of team GB at the Olympics and Commonwealth Games in target and clay shooting reflects the historical importance of shooting sports and the passion that this country has for the sport despite having few modern facilities to train at.
45. BASC is disappointed that shooting will not be represented at the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. However, we are encouraged by the positive statements made in support of target shooting on 21st March 2018 by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport during a House of Commons adjournment debate 'Birmingham Commonwealth Games and Shooting'. This included the Minister's congratulations to veteran shooter David Calvert who has been selected for his 11th Commonwealth games at the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games, having won eight medals since 1978, including four golds, and who has "inevitably inspired many others to compete in Commonwealth and Olympic games".
46. A special dispensation was arranged for our Commonwealth and Olympic pistol shooting teams to train in the UK and participate in the 2012 London Olympics and the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth games. But this offers no avenue for new people coming into the sport. It also places serious limitations on the UK's ability to compete at a high level in the future.
47. Target shooting is an all-inclusive sport, with less-able-bodied, deaf and visually-impaired people competing with the able-bodied on an equal basis at all levels and within all disciplines.
48. Shooting is a major international competitive sport in which the UK has a long history of success. BASC believes that legislative changes that enable British athletes to participate on a level field with other international teams would be beneficial.

49. BASC recommends that the Government amends the Firearms Acts to allow the ownership and use of .22 target pistols for competitive sporting purposes in England, Wales and Scotland. Prior to the pistol ban in 1997 competitors could legally purchase, own and use .22 calibre pistols for target shooting competitions at approved clubs to Olympic level.
50. The following legislative changes are requested:
- Repeal the Firearms (Amendment) (No. 2) Act 1997
 - Amend the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1997 such that the following sections remain repealed; a. Section 12, 1(c); and b. Section 13.

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References

¹ **BASC (2016)** *The personal value of shooting: The social, physical and personal wellbeing contribution of shooting in the UK*. Available at: <https://basc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2016/10/The-personal-value-of-shooting-LOW-RES.pdf>

² **PACEC (2014)** *The economic, environmental and social benefits of shooting sports in the UK*. Available at: <http://www.shootingfacts.co.uk/pdf/consultancyreport.PDF>

³ **Sport & Recreation Alliance (2017)** *Reconomics Plus Case Study: Clay Shooting at the Jamboree*. Available at: <http://sramedia.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/0c05838b-d649-4b71-a0b6-fcda3ca6cd56.pdf>

⁴ **BASC's Young Shots programme – further information**. Available at: <https://basc.org.uk/youngshots/>

⁵ **BASC Ladies Shooting programme – further information**. Available at: <https://basc.org.uk/ladies/>

⁶ **Natural England (2016)** *Links between natural environments and mental health: evidence briefing (EIN018)*. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5748047200387072>

⁷ **Natural England (2016)** *A review of nature-based interventions for mental health care (NECR204)*. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4513819616346112>

⁸ **Mind (2013)** *Feel better outside, feel better inside: Ecotherapy for mental wellbeing, resilience and recovery*. Available at: <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/336359/Feel-better-outside-feel-better-inside-report.pdf>

⁹ **Scouts (no date)** *Shooting: Types of shooting*. Available at: <https://members.scouts.org.uk/supportresources/4459/shooting-types-of-shooting?moduleID=10>

¹⁰ **BASC training and education programmes – further information**. Available at: <https://basc.org.uk/sporting-services/basc-training-courses/>

¹¹ **Disabled Shooting Project (no date)** *Target shooting: THE sport for ALL!* Available at: <http://disabledshooting.org.uk/>

¹² **Sport & Recreation Alliance (no date)** *Reconomics: Case Studies*. Available at:
<http://sramedia.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/1223c299-d131-48cf-99d9-0bb54dd39b04.pdf>