



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

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Rt Hon George Howarth MP  
House of Commons  
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Dear George,

Thank you for your email of 24 October on behalf of a number of your constituents about driven grouse shooting.

Grouse shooting is a legitimate activity and, in addition to its significant economic contribution, providing jobs and investment in some of our most remote areas, it can offer important benefits for wildlife and habitat conservation.

The Government believes that people should be free to undertake lawful activities if they wish to do so.

A recent report by the UK shooting community concluded that the overall environmental and economic impact of game bird shooting is positive.<sup>1</sup> The industry has estimated that £250 million is spent on management activities every year, with substantial benefits for conservation. With regard to grouse shooting in particular, the Moorland Association estimates that estates in England and Wales spent £52.5 million in 2010 on managing 149 grouse moors. The industry also supports 1,520 full time equivalent jobs and is worth £97.7 million across Great Britain.

Grouse shooting takes place in upland areas, which are important for delivering a range of valuable ecosystem services, including food and fibre, water regulation, carbon storage, biodiversity, and recreational opportunities for health and wellbeing. Grouse moor management can offer important benefits for wildlife and habitat conservation, in particular helping to limit the loss of heather dominated landscapes to forest and grassland. More than 60 per cent of England's upland Sites of Special Scientific Interest are grouse moors, which generally consist of heather dominated heath and blanket bog. These are habitats of international importance: the UK has 75% of the world's heather moorland and about 13% of the world's blanket bog.

Upland peatlands are also the most important soils for carbon sequestration. They are responsible for filtering most of our drinking water, play a role in flood risk management, and are internationally important habitats. The Government is therefore committed to helping create a more sustainable future for the English uplands, including by protecting peatlands through measures such as the Peatland Code.

I hope that this reply is helpful.

Best wishes,

*Andrea Leadsom*

**Andrea Leadsom MP**  
**Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**