



Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust

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For nature, for everyone

Date: 20th December 2018

To the Right Honourable Mr Michael Gove MP

Dear Mr Gove

It is some time since we have exchanged correspondence in relation to the issue of Sheffield's Street Trees.

On this occasion, I am writing to you on behalf of Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust to raise a different matter. We urge you to ban 'stink pits' and the excessive use of snares on our local and internationally important moorlands in the Peak District National Park (which in part overlaps with the Sheffield boundary).

Please find attached our petition asking you to ban the use of stink pits. The petition ran for only a few months and has 4,831 signatures.

As you will know, our local moorlands are internationally protected habitats that support important local wildlife. However, the future of these incredibly special local places and the biodiversity they support is in jeopardy. Intensive management practices threaten many of this landscape's most iconic creatures and their habitats, including illegal wildlife persecution, excessive heather burning and drainage and the use of stink pits and snares.

In case you are not aware, 'stink pits' are fenced enclosures, bins or holes constructed by gamekeepers who fill them with rotting carcasses, including discarded game birds and other wild animals in order to attract 'target' species into a large quantity of surrounding snares.

At one local stink pit we have seen at least 12 snares set within a small fenced area, with single snares also set within the vicinity. This illustrates an excessive use of snares by local gamekeepers and does not follow Defra's code of practice on their use, or industry good practice guidance of "quality over quantity" (BASC).

We have evidence of numerous mountain hare carcasses in local stink pits – a non-target, priority species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, found only in the Peak District outside of





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Scotland. The current approach to managing Sheffield's moors appears to be having a significant and detrimental effect on the local mountain hare population.

The UK Government has committed to leave the environment in a better state for the next generation. We do not believe the use of stink pits fits within this vision, nor the excessive use of snares, in our most protected landscapes.

Just this week proposals are under discussion in relation to a future Environment Act. I ask you to make stink pits illegal within that Act, to license and tag snares (as recently implemented in Scotland) and give better legal protection to the mountain hares of the Peak District.

This is clearly an issue many local people care about enough to sign our petition. I am very interested to hear you response in relation to the above requests.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this letter, and I look forward to hearing from you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Liz Ballard

Chief Executive

Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust

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