



Registered charity no. 1186850

Oxfordshire Badger Group



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Re: Badger Cull could come to Oxfordshire this summer despite OBG's vaccination scheme

31/07/20

Dear Anneliese,

Can I first congratulate you on your new post as Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer.

I am writing to you Chair of the Oxfordshire Badger Group, regarding the Government's cruel, unscientific and costly policy of culling badgers, which I know that the Labour Party are opposed to.

Oxfordshire Badger Group, which recently gained charitable status, started a badger vaccination programme last year working with farmers, BBOWT, The Badger Trust and other badger groups. We have more and more farmers signing up to join the scheme and have just finished the first phase of our vaccination for this year and are about to start the second phase. All this has been possible because of a dedicated group of trained volunteers and supporters who have contributed to our gofundme appeal, as we have had no financial aid from DEFRA.

Despite our established vaccination programme and the fact that Oxfordshire is generally a low risk area for bTB, it looks very likely that the cruel and ineffective badger cull will be licensed in some areas of Oxfordshire in the next month or so.

We have recently written to all Oxfordshire's District Councillors and Oxford City Councillors (link attached) urging them to do all they can to stop the cull being expanded to our county. We would very grateful if, as an Oxfordshire MP, you could write to George Eustice, Secretary for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs urging him not to expand the badger cull to Oxfordshire but instead implement a non-lethal strategy to tackle bovine TB in England, as recommended in the Godfray report on bTB and extend and fund badger vaccination and implement cattle control measures: stricter biosecurity, improved testing, cattle vaccination and stricter movement controls. This will be better for taxpayers, farmers and the future of our precious wildlife.

The Government announced an exit strategy in March to phase out culling and replace it with vaccination but this needs to be implemented now, not in 5 years' time as suggested. The trust of the British public, the majority of whom are opposed to the cull, will have been betrayed if the cull not only continues but is extended. 100,000 badgers have been killed since 2013 and another 30,000 could be killed in the next few months. The Government and NFU have cherry picked evidence to justify continuing their flawed policy of badger culling.

Data does not support the claim that bTB is endemic in badgers. The focus has to be on cattle to cattle transmission. Many badgers will die in agony and whole badger clans will be wiped out, leading to local extinction in the largest slaughter of a 'protected' species ever. This is a national disgrace.

We live in the most nature depleted country and we read today that 1 in 4 mammals is threatened with extinction. Badgers could join this list if the mass indiscriminate slaughter of this iconic and much loved protected wildlife species continues.

OBG have tried, through our elected Councillors, to put pressure on the Government to prevent the badger cull being licensed in Oxfordshire. We were encouraged that Cllr Susanna Pressel was successful in 2018, in getting a motion passed by Oxfordshire County Council opposing the licensing of a badger cull in Oxfordshire. Cllr Andrew Coles(Witney Central) West Oxford District Council, has been fighting the badgers' cause for some years, but his motion to halt the cull until an independent advisory panel had reviewed the issue, was voted down by block voting of the Conservative majority supported by some Liberal Democrats. We would be grateful if you and the parliamentary Labour party could hold the Government to account on the mass slaughter happening in our countryside even now. Most of the electorate will be appalled that our countryside will be filled with the sound of gunfire, as thousands of a 'protected' wildlife species are cruelly shot.

The Government will be held to account by the electorate for their reluctance to deliver on their promises on a range of animal welfare issues like ending live transportation (sheep were due to be transported even today with the high temperatures) , banning the import of hunting trophies, increasing sentencing for animal cruelty, and the slaughter of badgers. We need strong leadership on protecting our diminishing wildlife against the interests of lobby groups who seek to exploit and destroy it. We hope that the Labour party will be the voice for the voiceless and challenge the Government on these issues at every opportunity. It is hard to believe that even during a pandemic, our wildlife is being cruelly killed through a policy which is indefensible and totally inhumane. We need to live in harmony with our natural environment and the wildlife species that depend on it. A radical rethink of policies is needed before it's too late.

Thank you.

Kind Regards,

Julia Hammett

Chair, Oxfordshire Badger Group

<https://mailchi.mp/693e8041a3c9/ban-badger-culling-on-districtcouncil-owned-land>

Kind regards,

Linda Ward
Secretary and Trustee
Oxfordshire Badger Group