

**P-04-544 Ban the Shooting of Greenland White-fronted Geese – Correspondence from the Welsh Ornithological Society to the Chair, 30.11.14**

Dear Kayleigh,

Please find attached correspondence from Professor Tony Fox regarding Greenland Whitefronts. Professor Fox is an internationally known expert who has been studying these geese for over 30 years. The reply from Welsh Government states they follow an 'evidence based approach' but appears to ignore all the evidence published by Professor Fox that shows that shooting has a major impact on this species. It also ignores the fact that while there is a welcome voluntary ban this only applies to members of certain associations. Only a legal ban can fully protect this declining species.

I would be grateful if you could bring the correspondence and my points to the Committee

Many thanks

Mick Green CEnv, FCIEEM,

Trustee, Welsh Ornithological Society.



# Greenland White-fronted Goose Study

As from:

Tony Fox  
Ramtenvej 54

DK-8581 Nimtofte  
Denmark

23rd October 2014

Dear Carl Sargeant AM, Minister for Natural Resources Wales

## Protection of Greenland White-fronted Geese from hunting in Wales

I write to you to urge you in the strongest terms that the Welsh Government provide the Greenland White-fronted Goose with protection from hunting in Wales by a change to current legislation at the earliest possible opportunity.

I write personally in my capacity as founder member and Secretary of the Greenland White-fronted Goose Study, a private NGO with the aim of promoting the effective research and conservation of this race of geese. I lived for more than 10 years on the Dyfi estuary in north Ceredigion which was where my great affinity for, and interest in, these geese arose. In my professional capacity, I am now Professor of Waterbird Ecology in the Department of Biosciences at Aarhus University and the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing and have been associated with the research and conservation programmes of the Greenland White-fronted Goose for over 30 years.

You will appreciate that the Greenland White-fronted Goose is Red-listed in the United Kingdom, is recognised under IUCN criteria as an Endangered taxon and has recently been the subject of an international Flyway Action Plan adopted at the Fifth Meeting of Parties of the Agreement on the conservation of African-Eurasian Waterbirds (AEWA) in France in spring 2012. Since the mid 1990s, the small global population has shown consistent declines to the present day, and it is clear that all sources of additional mortality should be avoided at all costs.

The UK and Ireland have responsibility for supporting the whole of the world population of this rare goose in the non-breeding season, and with Iceland and Greenland share the global responsibility for its conservation.

The Action Plan drafted for AEWA at a specially convened international workshop congratulated wildfowling groups for their long-standing voluntary shooting ban on of Greenland White-fronted Geese on the Dyfi Estuary, Wales: *“which had probably avoided that flock becoming extinct. However, the geese remain legal quarry in Wales. Birds using the traditional wintering site of Grindon Loch in northern England are also still legal quarry. Government authorities in Wales and England were urged to remove Greenland White-fronted Geese from the quarry list in those countries at the earliest opportunity.”* In addition, it states: *“With low annual productivity it is critically important to reduce sources of mortality. This will conserve the very small numbers of successful breeders that produce subsequent generations and help restore the population to former levels. To this end, the workshop concluded that hunting cannot currently be undertaken on a sustainable basis and any kill would exacerbate the current unfavourable conservation status of the population.”*

Through a quirk of the existing legislation, Greenland White-fronted Geese are presently NOT protected from hunting in England or Wales, the last two countries in the entire flyway of the population where hunting can still place legally. For some years this has meant that the UK Government has been in breach of its AEWA obligations and the anticipated adoption of the international plan will highlight this.

This issue is more than just of trivial importance however, since it has come to our attention in very recent months that Greenland White-fronted Geese have continued to be shot regularly in Anglesey over the last 15 years, which suggests that the lack of statutory protection continues to be responsible for the population being subject to hunting mortality, in spite of its highly unfavourable conservation status. Given the perilously small numbers now found in Wales (we have just this week published the annual global report on the status of the population in 2013/14 which found just 33 geese on the Dyfi, down from 167 in spring 1998), this could have extremely serious consequences for the persistence of local flocks, their cultural significance and their contribution to maintaining biodiversity in Wales, all factors strongly emphasised as important in the international plan.

Whilst we fully acknowledge the complexities of the issues involved, not least with confusion between this race and the European White-fronted Geese that winter in south-eastern England, we would very much urge a meeting with all concerned stakeholders to seek, discuss and agree a legislative solution to the present iniquity under existing legislation. The Greenland White-fronted Goose Study is very willing and able to make its contribution to these deliberations and is very eager to work constructively with all parties to achieve this aim. Given the extremely tiny numbers of these geese that now resort to Wales and that no responsible wildfowlers are interested in hunting them, we urge you to follow the shining example shown by the governments of Greenland, Iceland, Ireland and Scotland in protecting these incredibly vulnerable birds from any further effects of shooting by protecting them in the Principality.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you require further information

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A.D. Fox', is written over a light blue grid background.

Professor Anthony David Fox, D.Sc, Ph.D, B.Sc.



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref  
Ein cyf/Our ref TO/CS/05350/14

Professor Tony Fox  
Aarhus University

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14 November 2014

Dear Tony

### **Protection of Greenland White-fronted Geese from hunting in Wales**

Thank you for your letter of 23 October to the Minister for Natural Resources concerning Greenland White-fronted Geese (GWfG), I have been asked to reply on the Minister's behalf.

As you acknowledge, the goodwill of the wildfowling community is already making a positive contribution to the conservation of GWfG in Wales. In particular, the voluntary shooting moratorium on GWfG has now been extended from the Dyfi, Dysyni and Mawddach Estuaries to cover the whole of Wales. Wildfowling in Wales are making a significant contribution to monitoring the population, and are continuing to work with our statutory advisers, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), concerning the conservation of this iconic species.

The Welsh Government uses an evidence-based approach to policy making. Records show a cluster of 28 shootings on Anglesey between 1998 and 2004, and a single shooting in 2008/9. The cluster of shootings on Anglesey coincided with a peak of figures for GWfG on the Dyfi. The subsequent decline of numbers of GWfG on the Dyfi does not therefore seem to be correlated with shooting anywhere in Wales.

You state in your letter that your attention has been drawn to the shooting of GWfG in Anglesey over the last 15 years. If you have evidence of shootings since 2009, members of the wildfowling community in Wales would welcome the opportunity to honour their commitment to the voluntary moratorium by investigating. To enable them to do this, they would be particularly grateful if you could provide location(s) on Anglesey, dates, source(s) of the assertion(s), and any other relevant information. As I am sure you are aware, the wildfowling regime has sanctions available that could be used in response to inappropriate behaviour.

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TO/CS/05350/14

The Welsh Government welcomes engagement of all concerned parties in a concerted effort to better understand the actual pressures on this iconic species. We will continue to adopt an evidence-based approach to this issue, and to work with all parties to ensure successful conservation of this species.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Worker', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chris Worker

**Nature Conservation Policy Officer**