

## Gun licence scandal

The Prime Minister, himself a pheasant shooter and deer stalker, is understood to have intervened in December to stop a rise in the cost of a gun licence, which has been frozen at £50. This is just over a quarter of the £196 that it costs police to issue the licence. Gill Marshall-Andrews, the chair of the Gun Control Network, said that the intervention of ministers to halt a planned increase is a disgrace.

"Everyone wanting a gun should be checked for a history of domestic violence, mental illness, and drug and alcohol abuse. These checks cost money but they do save lives," she said. "The fact that the gun lobby's friends in cabinet are blocking the increase is a scandal."

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/stop-subsidies-to-gun-licenses-and-grouse-moors>

## Hare sighting in snow.

It was almost with baited breath that I started in the latest snow and even I was surprised. The double tracks of a brown hare were the first and it always amuses me the way the rear legs are brought forward ahead of the front ones to create an unmistakable track. The hare had come through a large hole in the bottom fence, along with pheasants and mallard. It went up the short slope to the track and then to the pond, and I just followed it before I lost it in the myriad of tracks around the pond margins.

An old statute (14 and 15 Henry VIII. c.10) inflicts a penalty of six shillings and eight pence for tracing and killing a hare in the snow. (The 1<sup>st</sup> of James 1. c. 27) inflicts three months imprisonment on the offender for tracing or coursing a hare in the snow; unless the offending party pay to the churchwardens, for the use of the poor, twenty shillings for every hare or within one month after commitment, become bound with two sureties in twenty pounds each not to offend again in like manner. Two witnesses are necessary in this case, as also two justices of the peace.

## Outlook for the Hunting Act from Alan Kirby

It's very bad news. By my reckoning, the repeal bill would pass with a majority of more than 50 votes. This is how I have calculated the likely outcome. I assumed that only English and Welsh MPs would be allowed to vote. With the SNP saying they won't vote, even if the remaining Scottish and the N.Irish MPs were allowed to, it would make hardly any difference. I have used LACS' record of what MPs from the last Parliament told them about how they'd vote on repeal. That gave 227 pro repeal and 203 anti. There were 138 'unknowns', most of them newly-elected MPs. 91 of these 'unknowns' are Tories, 45 Labour, 2 PC. I assumed that 10% of the 'unknown' Tories would vote 'anti'. This is a somewhat higher proportion than declared as 'antis' in the last Parliament. That amounts to 9 voting anti, 80 pro and 1 abstaining. I assumed that 43 of the 'unknown' Lab MPs would vote anti, 2 abstain, none vote pro, and that the 2 PCs would split one each way. This gave final voting figures of PRO REPEAL 308 ANTI REPEAL 256. Sorry about that. It seems pretty decisive and unless there are very many more anti Tories among the unknowns than I think possible, or the anti side can perform a miracle and change a lot of pro-repeal leaning MPs' minds, the Hunting Act looks doomed. If it's any comfort, even if the SNP MPs were allowed to vote, we'd have needed nearly all of them to vote anti to win by a whisker. Seems unlikely that would have been the case.

## Electoral reform

Opinion polls predicted a very different election result, but the reason the polls misjudged this so severely is because we have an electoral system that simply isn't fit for purpose. The first past the post system is designed for two-party politics. But that's just not on our landscape any more. Over 1 million voted for the Green Party and got just one seat and whether you agree with them or not, UKIP also suffered from this yawning democratic deficit. With 1 in 3 people not bothering to vote, we need to reconnect politics back to the people. Let's end the era of wasted votes and create a system where every voice in Britain matters. Let's call on all our MPs to fight for an electoral review as soon as parliament reconvenes.

[SWAFH@actionforhares.org.uk](mailto:SWAFH@actionforhares.org.uk)