

2014-15 Report for the FBF Website and Member Organisations.

FBF/NCA Activities 2014 -15

FBF delegates to the NCA (Dave Paine, Dennis Webster) attended all NCA meetings held during the year. Dennis Webster was elected by the NCA Committee to serve as President of the NCA from the 2014 AGM until the 2015 AGM (April 2015).

The NCA as an organisation had its 70th birthday on March 8th 2015, having been formed on that date in 1945, just before the war ended.

The FBF has not had a sufficient reason to formally meet in the last year.

The NCA has continued its affiliation to the Sustainable Users Network (SUN), which is basically a widely based hobby-group organisation which has regular meetings with Government. Relationships between SUN and Government departments within DEFRA continue to be very positive, although progress is slow. In part this is due to frequent changes to the DEFRA organisation resulting from Government attempts to reduce spending. For example, the Animal Health group (AHVLA) was merged with FERA on 1st October 2014 to form a new Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA). The SUN group met with them on 15th October 2014, and again on 24th February 2015.

Work is still going on in trying to resolve the “Meally Redpoll” question and the more general one of ring sizes. Proposals for consultation with the Welsh and Scottish governments concerning the trade in captive bred birds were at last published, followed by a public consultation. Hopefully a number of organisations and individuals within FBF-affiliated Societies responded to this consultation. CSUG (the user group that SUN members are a part of) has pointed out that the extensive delays have led to additional costs by traders, which may require compensation.

Another area of concern is the new General Licenses. There are several of these covering various aspects, and Government want these to be consistent, one with another. One GL will cover the exhibition of captive bred birds. However if the conditions for the sale of some captive birds (eg British) is carried over to exhibitions, there could be the requirement for birds being exhibited needing to have documentation relating the bird's ring number as proof of captive breeding, and this would be needed to accompany the bird(s) to the show (and therefore be available for examination). Ian Clark, the Director of the Scottish Association for Country Sports is seeking clarification on this *before* the draft GL's are issued for consultation.

The Law Commission review of the Wildlife and Countryside Act will be completed with the issue of a final report and a draft Bill, which will be considered by DEFRA. After review DEFRA will make its response.

Jim Collin (SUN Co-ordinator) and two other SUN members participated in the last Callisto meeting in Brussels at the end of October. This group is responsible for a 3-year project funded by the EU, with the Federation of European Veterinarians (FEV) named as the lead organisation. It is important to recall that FEV have been strongly in favour of “Positive Lists”. Also at the meeting were representatives for various European NGO's opposed to keeping of animals (except dogs and cats!) in captivity. SUN and its allies have countered the

worst excesses of this, and have insisted on all proposals being backed up by robust data and assessment. The Final report from this group is awaited.

Nevertheless, it is also reported that the Scottish Environment Minister (Richard Lohead of the Scottish Nationalist Party) is planning to launch a review of the “exotic pet hobby” shortly after the General Election, with a view to producing a short “positive list” of species that hobbyists would be allowed to keep. It is believed that he has had talks with one of the animal rights groups. Also recently, the Animal Protection Agency (APA) has been successful in having a reptile market at the Doncaster Racecourse closed down.

It is important that we continue to back the efforts of SUN/NCA. With the General Election due in May, we know that both Conservative and Labour are committed to further decreases in spending in Government departments like DEFRA, and so SUN are already taking steps to arrange a meeting with whoever is made responsible for DEFRA/APHA in the new Government. A concern is that it appears possible that a new coalition will need to be formed; possibly with parties whose stance on birdkeeping issues we as yet do not have much information on.