

A Brief Report on the Second Reading of the Trophy Hunting (Import Prohibition) Bill (HL Bill 119) in the House of Lords 16th June 2023

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July 2023 – Baroness Fookes as the Sponsor of the Trophy Hunting (Import Prohibition) Bill (hereafter referred to as “the Bill”) presented the Bill for the second reading in the House of Lords on the 16th of June 2023.

MP Henry Smith’s original private member’s Bill was “brought from the Commons” for the first reading in the House of Lords on the 20th of March 2023. The original Bill had two significant amendments that had been tabled by Sir Bill Wiggin and Sir Christopher Chope.

The first amendment “would remove the Secretary of State’s discretion to add species” and the second amendment was the adding of a new clause, Clause 4 requiring that the Secretary of State “must appoint an Advisory Board on Hunting Trophies”.

During the second reading in the House of Lords a total of 24 Noble Members spoke on this Bill. Some reminded us that the Bill had the UK Government’s backing and in fact was part of both the Conservative and Labour Parties 2019 manifesto.

Of the 9 Nobles that spoke up in favour of the Bill, though their arguments were made with the best intentions, they were clearly based on a lot of misinformation and animal rights emotive drivel. Naively a few tried to justify their point of view that they weren’t trying to dictate to others to stop trophy hunting but rather to stop hunters from importing “body parts” of what they had hunted into the UK. Disingenuously the most active anti-hunting campaign that many of these Nobles in the House of Lords and politicians previously in the Commons referred to was not the “Campaign to Ban the Import of

Hunting Trophies into the UK” but rather the “Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting”. Likewise, one of the All-Party Parliamentary Groups that most of these Nobles and politicians belong to is not the “All-Party Parliamentary Group on Banning Hunting Trophy Imports” but rather the “All-Party Parliamentary Group on Banning Trophy Hunting”.

Below is just some of the misinformation and drivel relied on in their arguments:

1. The killing off of the best genes with total disregard that most of these trophy animals would have passed on their genetics long ago and are at the end of their breeding life.
2. The supposed public support of the Bill not taking heed of the fact that this support is based on a very selective biased depiction of trophy hunting as reported by an anti-hunting media.
3. The belief that these animals are in “grave danger” and “we are not dealing with animals that are plentiful.”
4. Limited knowledge of the real threats to species survival.
5. The false belief that local communities don’t benefit – I’m always left wondering what percentage of a photo tourists spend should be given to the local community.
6. That hunting contributes very little to countries’ economy.
7. Welfare concerns for animals wounded and dying long slow deaths as hunters are often “inexperienced” and “there is no requirement for hunters to be experienced or proficient at using a weapon”.
8. The role and expertise of professional hunters were questioned with “A private hunter (sic) just has to know how to hunt. What they really need to do is make sure that, if their clients miss, they can tell them where to shoot next. In truth, that is the only tricky bit”. Whereas the perception of a photo/tourism “safari guide

has to learn how to interpret and be respectful of the wilderness and its wildlife. They are the link between nature and guest.”

What always surprises me with these debates is how selective people are of the information they rely on to justify their argument. I’m aware of the scientific arguments and papers that have and are being put forward by some very professional, bright, qualified people such as Professors Child, Dickman and Hart, yet “a rent a crowd” signed HSI letter (103 signatories) of the 12th of June 2023 purporting to be from “wildlife conservation experts, advocates, and community representatives” seems to be the definitive work on African opinion and conservation.

Of the 15 Nobles that spoke up against the Bill it was clear that they understood and had a clear grasp of the conservation benefits of trophy hunting and the livelihood benefits to rural communities. Sadly, this was not enough and after debate “the motion was agreed to, and the bill was committed to a Committee of the Whole House.” At this stage no date has been given when the Bill is before the Committee.

As depressing as this might be for many of us that have tried to educate and highlight why this Bill will be detrimental to conservation and the livelihoods of rural communities, a ray of hope for me personally was Lord Bellingham who was the original sponsor of the Bill in the House of Lords. After doing some research and listening to ‘the number of experts who have come up with very strong arguments to improve it’ Lord Bellingham stated “I thought that it was well-intentioned... but I reached the conclusion that it had flaws.... It sets out to enhance sustainability and improve conservation, but it could do the reverse.”

For an in-depth summary of the Bill, I would encourage the reading of the House of Commons Library Research Briefing by Dr Elena Ares and Georgina Sturge

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9684/CBP-9684.pdf>

and the House of Lords Library Briefing by Nicola Newson

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/LLN-2023-0032/LLN-2023-0032.pdf>