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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

34th meeting
Strasbourg, 2-5 December 2014

Complaint in stand-by

**PRESUMED RISK OF NATIONAL EXTINCTION
OF BADGERS (*MELES MELES*) IN ENGLAND
(United Kingdom)**

REPORT BY THE COMPLAINANT

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PRESUMED RISK OF NATIONAL EXTINCTION OF BADGERS (MELES MELES) IN ENGLAND

Submitted on 23 October 2013

This complaint denounces badger cull by NFU, with the agreement of DEFRA and under license from Natural England. In parts of England, starting out allegedly as a trial of free-shooting. Now descended into catching badgers in traps and killing them there. Now extended in the west Gloucestershire pilot area today by Natural England after original trial failed even more spectacularly than the west Somerset 'pilot' to reach any of its targets [and hence being, by any sensible measure, a failure]. See, eg, official pages at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animal-diseases/a-z/bovine-tb/badgers/culling/>

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/wildlife/species/badgertb.aspx>

http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/about_us/news/2013/231013.aspx

And for news on the failed Gloucestershire cull, eg:

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/oct/17/badger-cull-gloucestershire-target>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2465489/Badger-cull-fiasco-costing-2-200-animal-campaigners-warn-failure-spread-TB.html>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-gloucestershire-24561955>

Natural England has now gone against the advice even of its own Chair of its own Scientific Advisory Committee, David Macdonald.

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/oct/21/stop-badger-cull-immediately-natural-england-scientist>

Hopefully you have been continuing to follow the UK media since the West Somerset cull was extended earlier this month. The decision flies in the face of all major scientific opinion, the original stated aim of the 'pilot' culls [to test the efficacy of free-shooting – the pilots have conclusively proved that it is not efficient, in terms of time or money] and cocks a snook at the Bern Convention. Instead, Natural England and DEFRA seem hell-bent on continuing killing badgers for as long as it takes to get down to as few animals as possible, no matter what the science says about extended culling periods leading to greater perturbation, the effects on breeding sows, not having a clue as to how many individuals existed before the shooting started, etc, etc, etc.

Social media continues to best represent the majority view of the people of England [of course, this cull is not happening in Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales, where vaccination is preferred], eg: <https://twitter.com/search?q=defragovuk&src=typd&f=realtime>

The west Gloucestershire pilot area lies predominantly within the council districts of the Forest of Dean and Tewkesbury, and parts lie within the districts of Wychavon, Malvern Hills and the south east part of the county of Herefordshire. The area does not include the area of the public forest estate in the Statutory Forest of Dean.

The west Somerset pilot area predominantly lies within the council district of west Somerset and part lies within the district of Taunton Deane.

The Dorset reserve pilot area lies entirely within the county of Dorset.

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/wildlife/species/badgertb.aspx#pilotareas>

Population is unknown [DEFRA cannot count and keep changing their estimated numbers, current cull has reduced population immensely – by many tens of percents – illegal gassing has been confirmed to be taking place, which will not feature in official kill statistics, and general illegal killing by all means – encouraged by the presence of the cull and its discussion over the last year or so – will have further reduced the numbers]. West Somerset population estimates changed from 2400 – the starting point for the trial – down to just 1450 – with no change in the license conditions. Original cull target was 1680, out of what had become allegedly a total of 1450!

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-gloucestershire-24561955>

West Gloucestershire estimates fell from 3644 last autumn to 2350 this year. Such falls have not been observed elsewhere, see eg:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-24554272>

Local extinction is becoming national as the government [DEFRA/Natural England] and NFU together roll out to more areas across the country. Obviously if they kill all the badgers then cattle will never again catch bTB from them – only from themselves. Then again, they could kill all the cows and save the badgers, and no cattle will ever again catch bTB! What is happening is patently wrong

I am not aware of an Environmental Impact Assessment for this cull.

The size of the project foresees the culling of 70% in the two ‘pilot’ areas [though since the population is not known this is a variable number, it appears], before rollout across the rest of England. I read that: The Bern Bureau Standing Committee met in September 2012 and decided that the complaint submitted to them, which denounced a possible breach of the Convention, was to be dismissed. They concluded that the badger control policy “is within the obligation of the UK under the Convention and should not cause a threat to the population if the monitoring is carried out properly” [my emphasis]. It is clear by now that firstly DEFRA did not have any robust *Meles meles* population estimates for the pilot areas and secondly there is no evidence that monitoring is being carried out properly,

Maps not publically available.