

Young people and rural voters could all be kept happy with solutions to the Foxhunting debate that are already hiding in plain sight

Adam Tugwell | 25 December 2017



Like Brexit, Hunting has become an emotive subject which is safest left far away from discussion with people we know little about.

Few of us consciously acknowledge why this really is, and the elements of a solution which has the potential to be one supported by all have become hidden by the polarisation of ideas. The inevitable isolation of facts which follows is seen as an unacceptable compromise for each party as they become ever reluctant to recognise validity in any idea which extends beyond the scope and value set of their own.

The biggest elephant in the room for Hunting, is that no matter what supporters or those against this pastime tell us, the debate has long since been anything to do with either the activities or survival of a fox. Yet the actions of both groups in the debate present a story

which is very different. If a resolution that works for all is genuinely to be found, each side and the politicians in between them will have to accept that both sides will have to be far more practical in the way they manage the pathways of their respective idealistic ground.

With the various truths presented as fact by some and interpreted as myth by others, the objective reality of this 'sport' is that it has very little to do with being competitive and everything to do with a highly social and lifestyle movement, which to its own detriment has become obsessive about a perceived right to hunt our indigenous wild-dog.

The world has moved on. Very few of us believe that the most efficient way to control any kind of mammalian pest, is to become hierarchically attired, mount a very expensive and well-kept horse and then charge around what is left of the open countryside with forty or more others doing exactly the same. Trundling alongside a pack of perhaps a hundred English Foxhounds who are never as happy as when they are simply out for a very long run.

In the years since the implementation of the 'hunting ban' under the tenure of the last Labour Government, Hunts around the Country have been doing surprisingly well without any genuine need to reverse the purpose of the Legislation. Hunt protesters and saboteurs would beg to differ, as foxes can often be disturbed and find themselves at the mercy of a brutal, but nonetheless non-intentional act, and it is at this point that we should perhaps all be minded of the propensity of accidents and the fact that many, many more foxes are likely to be killed on the roads during hunting season, than those uncovered accidentally by any hunt which should happen to gallop past.

Open discussion regarding the experience of death for any human or animal concludes quickly for any rational person, as soon as the presence of any deliberate cause or intent is removed. Like it or not, we cannot control that which cannot be controlled, and seeking to prevent any form of accident would easily bring into question just about everything that we do.

Those against hunting - even in its current form should remember this well and be ever mindful of the progressive leap which has already been achieved. There now needs to be an acceptance that this field sport is nothing like what it once was and that any form of resentment based upon perception alone, whilst dressed up as a legitimate debate will help no one.

Hunts and the hunt lobby itself would likewise do well to recognise and accept that killing foxes at any costs by applying the law in its most literal sense is a self-defeating act. Using devices such as large birds of prey to kill foxes they have uncovered, gives the true lie to an unnecessary intention and mindset which itself continues to fuel the antagonistic fervour and physical-activist approach of those against whom they have in some cases become violently opposed.

Hunting in its current form and in the way it really should now evolve, is not just the preserve of the wealthy and the one percent which many now love to hate. It is a lifestyle enjoyed by people from all backgrounds and we are as likely to see a plumber, builder or chef taking part as a rider, as we would a landowner or a London banker out for a day from their country home.

It is time that we recognised that Hunting is not about foxes and can be enjoyed by anyone. The Hunts need to stop attempting to play the rules and accept the spirit of the hunting ban in the manner in which it was implemented. The anti-hunt lobby should accept and recognise that they themselves have no legitimate right to police the activities of any hunt, and that holding a set of different ideas to someone else doesn't mean that we have no choice but to physically collide.

The [Hunting Act](#) desperately needs intelligent and considered reform. There is nothing to be gained from it simply being overturned. The direct and related steps that a government seeking to deliver a revised act that would appropriately consider the rights, welfare and respect for the genuine rule of law for all – including the fox itself, could however include:-

Making it illegal to:

- *Intentionally and/or proactively pursue a fox as, for or as part of a social gathering, either directly with dogs or indirectly with alternative measures such as firearms or birds of prey.*
- *Intentionally and/or proactively interfere with the activities of any hunt, its members, supporters or guests so convened as a social gathering*

Recognising that:

- *Genuine intent is everything. That accidents do occur and no hunt, officer, member, guest or supporter thereof should ever be held liable for the result of any fox or other mammal being uncovered by a group of hounds during the course of a social hunt*

Reviewing the role of the [RSPCA](#):

- *Either restructuring the Governance structure of the Charity's 'Council' to ensure that appointments are democratic and reflective of the impartial and non-political nature of the responsibilities with which the RSPCA has been entrusted*
- *Or removing the responsibility and prosecutorial role of the RSPCA altogether, perhaps passing them to local authorities where democratic transparency and professional impartiality would be easier to monitor and define*

With the current political environment having made hunting feel almost impossible to discuss, it is little wonder that [our embattled Prime Minister is looking to secure votes by being perceived to be considering switching sides](#). The irony of such a choice is that divisive

as Foxhunting may be, the very best solution will be making the effort and winning the arguments which will deliver a less than perfect, but nonetheless beneficial win for all.

Links:

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