



GAMEKEEPERS WELFARE TRUST ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Jamie's Helpline:
0300 1233 088

Background

Whilst Covid 19 and Avian Flu retreated substantially during 2023, some estates/shoots and game farms were directly affected, and the economic effects of Covid 19 in addition to avian flu and government policy has led to changes in direction for individual estates/shoots and consequentially a rise in redundancies. GL43, proposed restricted releasing of game birds in Wales and banning of snaring as well as the Muirburn and change of deer seasons in Scotland will inevitably have consequential change in practices and long-term plans for estates and shoots.

Adapting to change often causes understandable anxiety and uncertainty. Being prepared for different situations can be difficult and it is hoped that being alongside and underpinning support by providing a safety net of financial, emotional, and practical help, GWT continue to make a difference to individuals and families within the Gamekeeping community.

Communications and Publicity

Social media continually requires investment, in time, in expertise and imagination to ensure content is relevant, timely and eye catching. Sharing content with others as well as providing direct information is important and its success is in the uptake of support, supporters and being in the mind's eye of those who may need GWT, who wish to engage, and those who wish to support the charity. A presence at events is also important, not least in providing an opportunity for those who have been supported to call in and engage with GWT if they wish and is without doubt the most rewarding part of our work. Editorial continues to form part of the armoury of the charity in continually reminding rural communities of the range of services offered by GWT. Ensuring information is relevant and interesting as well as promoting events, fundraising and services GWT offer is important summarised by the report of Social Media activity during 2023 enclosed.

Fundraising

Donations and fundraising on behalf of GWT has been incredible and again, beyond all expectations. From running a half marathon, to ultra events as well as clay shoots, balls, and dinners, individuals and groups have worked hard to support GWT up and down the UK. Trust donations have also increased and include significant support all of which is appreciated and demonstrates that the work of the Trust is recognised.

Awards

The Lady Scott Award, Young Gamekeeper awards and "Kind Star" have all provided an opportunity to thank those who give so much to support their families in the "job" whether assisting on shoot days, catering and a myriad of tasks involved and have gone above and beyond in specific circumstances. Without doubt, these are occasions of celebration and create further opportunities for engagement and publicity.

Merchandise

The primary objective in offering merchandise is to promote GWT and display items which engage with keepers and their families and encourage inclusivity. For a charitable organisation without a membership base along with social media this can reap dividends, not least in support but for those who may need support, crucial.

Job Register and Advertising

Rural Recruits is run independently of the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust however continues to provide assistance to gamekeepers entering the profession, moving on and advertising on behalf of GWT on occasion when required.

Grants and Support

Expenditure has continually risen with particular reference to Annual, Housing, Family and Emergency Grants whilst new applications have remained relatively low. Uncovering need is a continual challenge, though profile, word of mouth and calls provides an opportunity to open conversations and explain the range of support available. See appendix 2 for a more detailed breakdown which includes health services.

Jamies' Helpline continues to form the backbone of support through listening, information, and signposting to various services within and without GWT. Self help guides are available on the website, Gamekeeping for Life and Ladies packs are available free of charge and a wide range of assistance on a 24/7 basis with the caveat that calling back may be an option should the phone lines be unavailable for a short period.

Calls are predominantly around redundancy, firearms and shotgun issues, mental health and housing as well as retirement and relationships. The provision of specific health assistance has become a vital arm of support for many individuals and families.

Education and Training

GWT continues to visit and support students in college and out with college sending student packs and survival kits. Changing practices in college, in some cases amalgamating to countryside management rather than gamekeeping or ceasing apprenticeships has complicated access however visits to colleges were welcomed.

Training within GWT has been limited i.e. Stag and Hind courses with less demand or opportunity as well as limited resources within GWT to actively promote courses.

Health

Various health initiatives have raised awareness and have been effective in creating opportunities to improve wellbeing and individuals to take steps to improve health as well as offering support when ill health causes problems, either in work, at home or economically.

Free at the point of delivery, the Nurse Advice Clinic, Health checks and counselling have made a real difference to individuals, both working and retired and have actually changed, and indeed saved lives, both for mental wellbeing and physical wellbeing.

Nurses from all over the UK have joined to form a team available to offer support as well as core expertise for the Nurse Advice Clinic. Feedback has been positive and has highlighted the importance of regular checks with some alarming symptoms now under control through individual local health care.

Counselling provides an important service to those affected by mental ill health and providing a “go to person” or reimbursement of costs has proved invaluable.

Basic costs of support grants, health and other assistance are outlined in Appendix 2 as an approximate summary which does not include post and flowers as below.

Keeping in Touch

Monthly notes and gifts are sent to keepers, and their partners as well as those on their own through bereavement or isolation. That it is appreciated is in no doubt from the messages, notes and calls to thank GWT. Flowers are sent on birthdays principally to widows and are also gratefully received. Whilst rising costs for postage and other gifts are causing an increase in expenditure these small gestures are well worth the effort with benefits far outweighing costs incurred.

The Memory Tree

Remembering loved ones is so important and the Memory Tree and list every day throughout November has resonated with many families. Continued additions to the listing is offered to honour keepers/stalkers and ghillies who have worked throughout their career or for a substantial period in the profession.

Mobility scooters

One of the most enjoyable events for gamekeepers and their families are social events to come together, learn and relax at the Game Fairs held up and down the country. For those who are less mobile this can be an expensive and difficult exercise and inhibit attendance. Therefore, GWT has offered reimbursement for those who hire mobility scooters or wheelchairs. There has been a modest uptake to date but will be re-offered in future as information is circulated, ensuring that individuals can attend wherever possible should they so wish.

Student Support Programme

Following on from visits to colleges highlighting support available and the provision of Student packs, contact is now active with individual students who are apprentices, or on placement and who are receiving notes and packages to ensure support is continued. This also offers the opportunity for students to contact GWT should they require support on any issue of concern.

Campaigns

The “Check in with a Mate” campaign has been amazingly successful, keepers, their families and students have taken on board the ethos of the idea and encourage everyone to “check in with each other.

Volunteers and Staff

Whilst GWT has gained support from individuals particularly around fundraising, it continues to be a challenge to recruit individuals with the experience and time to support Jamie's Helpline and specifically distress calls. However, the Nurse team have helped to meet this need, and it is hoped other specialists will assist in specific queries for example financial or housing need as suitable candidates are sourced.

One of the aims of the Five-Year Plan was to source individuals who could promote GWT in specific areas of the UK. The appointment of a Welsh Ambassador has been a considerable asset but a “go to” person in East Anglia has also proved helpful both for local knowledge, events and generally liaising with estates, shoots, organisations and forwarding any issues of concern.

Raising the Game Partners

Working with other organisations reaps benefits both to ensure those who may require assistance are constantly reminded where and how to reach support, donations, and awareness.

Summary

The environment in which the Gamekeepers, Stalkers, ghillies and families work, is changing at a rapid pace which will inevitably affect the lives of those who depend on the profession for their livelihood. Where estates and shoots have prepared for the future and can adapt as regulation, consequences and perceptions of climate change and the political landscape dictates the future is more assured. For those shoots and estates which are less robust or for those which are not perhaps as committed to shooting as their forebears then viability and the will to succeed is more precarious. Younger generations are better placed to adapt to new conditions whether through education, or the absorption of new ideas and willingness to embrace change.

Health is the most important assets one can possess and is a topic which is becoming more acceptable to listen and take on advice whether this is healthy eating, avoiding substances i.e. smoking, or looking after mental wellbeing. The Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust is committed to supporting the gamekeeping community at whatever stage of life to assist and support individuals and families not only in grant aid but in preventative measures and proactive assistance. The Nurse Advice Clinic and health checks have proved their worth.

Financial and Housing aid is similarly important and steps in preventing hardship and difficulty in an environment of shortages and an economic downturn is a priority for the future.

Whilst editorial and social media continues to be increasingly important and at a relatively modest cost, there is a benefit in being present at events and meeting people face to face. This should be borne in mind in budgeting forward though continuing to innovate and accessible on all platforms.

The profile of GWT and the support which is engendered is active and in general held in high esteem. It is important to continue to grow, to innovate and provide support in a range of areas required. Future plans and review of the five-year plan is a continual process adjusting to and anticipating opportunities whilst being cognisant of challenges in 2024 and beyond.

HMJB 17.03.24

GWT GRANT AND SUPPORT EXPENDITURE 2023

Emergency	3716.39	Heating	7041.92
Annual Grants	9500.00	Counselling	1534.00
Family Grants	6500.00	Education	516.00
Housing	11520.00	Mobility Hire	90.00
Home helping and welfare	5213.50	Osteopath	420.00
Mobility Support	10000.00	Gifts and Flowers	5895.80

