



Jamie's Helpline:  
0300 1233 088

## Annual Report to the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021

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### **Background**

Despite all efforts, Corvid 19 and further restrictions continued to affect both the shooting season and every individual throughout the UK during the early months of 2021. Storms in the Autumn caused devastation in some areas, particularly the East of Scotland and will have long term consequences as woodlands on a large scale were destroyed. Further proposed legislation in Scotland and alarm raised by extremist groups in the courts, on social media and on individual estates and shoots continue to create concern and real distress. Grouse stocks have been depleted with early cold spells and disease as well as heather beetle. Then bird flu appeared in some isolated areas and sales of game have been severely affected. There have been no shortage of problems coming up the track on any sector one cares to mention.

Despite all this, low ground seasons were generally a success after early dry and unseasonably warm conditions and new and innovative ways of processing and promoting game has been both rewarding and commendable.

Rural communities have proved resilient and cohesive in the face of real adversity and has displayed admirably how people care and look after each other. However, it is clear, rising costs and services which were already under threat or falling budgets will create a shortfall in income and quality of life for those who are already vulnerable or who experience hardship through ill health, disability, or financial difficulty.

### **Introduction**

To minimise individual and collective difficulties the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust has considered carefully further support which would directly assist individuals and families both in work and in later life.

It was clear that in the most difficult circumstances where single incomes for families have incurred hardship either through serious illness or bereavement further support would be helpful in addition to Annual payments and specific requirements. Energy and keeping warm are one of the most important



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issues affecting those whose incomes are curtailed or minimal. Choosing whether to eat or keep warm is simply not acceptable in 2021 and it is the fervent hope that those decisions should not be required in the communities GWT supports. Keeping fit and healthy are the most basic aims for everyone which is taken for granted until no longer apparent. Remaining mentally well is similarly vital for wellbeing and when mental ill health is felt within the family or individual at whatever stage of life, every aspect of living can be affected including the ability to work effectively. It is very often a partner who is keeping the household together, supporting the person who is struggling and ensuring children are thriving. This pressure can impact on their ability to keep well and can have long term effects on mental health, on relationships and family life as well as the individual who is experiencing poor mental health initially. Anxiety, depression, and a whole range of emotional and physical

symptoms can impact on the ability to manage daily life. Therefore, it was felt important to support partners as well as the gamekeeper in work or retired.

A suite of grants and training courses were launched in 2021 to address these needs as follows:

- **Family Grants** – for families who are effectively on one income or none, due to ill health or bereavement.
- **Energy Grants** for individuals or families who are struggling to pay increasing energy bills. We don't want anyone to have to choose between food and keeping warm.
- **Hind Courses** – Recognition of the vital role many partners carry out in support of their gamekeepers a course has been launched to support and assist through tips on mental health, how to cope and talking together.
- Continued distribution of **Gamekeeper & Partner packs** with further fact sheets on energy, financial and housing as well as health.

## Financial Aid



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Direct assistance to individuals and families both in work and in later life and for educational needs during the year is rising exponentially. The expanded range of support available has enabled further flexibility in the approach to assist people in sensitive and practical

### **Jamie's Helpline**

The helpline continues to provide a valuable support and is well resourced, however further work is required to train and recruit volunteers and staff to augment current arrangements.

### **Keeping in Touch**

There are a significant number of beneficiaries and those who have or continue to experience distress through bereavement, ill health, displacement, or a variety of other events which impact on life and health. Support continues to be available and keeping in touch has increased significantly during the pandemic and has proved one of the most appreciated acts of kindness. Monthly cards and small gifts are sent in addition to letters, birthday cards and flowers.

### **Fundraising, Donations and Sales of Merchandise**

Donations to GWT has been more successful than could be envisaged with a rising number of donations from charitable trusts, shoots and individual events. Notable donations have included £12,000 from the Schoffel event in November; Countryside Clay Shoot over £7,000, Tanfield Grouse Charity Clay Shoot £6000, continued incredible support from the family of Jamie Neal £20,000 and £3000 from the Scottish Gamekeepers Association. Fundraising on behalf of GWT has included a magnificent sum raised at the Countryside Clay Shoot run by BASC alongside the most incredible goodwill and hard work by director Steve Bloomfield and staff.

Individual fundraising has also been remarkably successful with the "Long Walk Home" where stalkers from Glen Coe walked the West Highland Way and raised over £3000.00 along with significant support from the local community. Georgia and Katie climbed Ben Nevis and carried out numerous other fundraisers prior to the walk which raised over £3000, and the Country Girls were simply magnificent in raising over £5000 in their February challenge with superb videos and social media during and prior to the challenge itself. Other events and challenges were carried out and all immensely appreciated in terms of valuable funds but also highlighting services available.

GWT has also been the recipient of multiple donations through services and Just Giving in memory of loved ones. These funds are particularly poignant and humbling.



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Shoots throughout the country have contributed with generosity through keepers' shoots, white pheasant fines, sweeps and other innovative means.

Sales of merchandise continues and the range of goods on offer increases assisting in funds but most importantly in ensuring that GWT is in the hearts and minds of the gamekeeping community throughout the UK.

### **Events**

Due to continued restrictions during the year events attended were similarly curtailed. However, The Game Fair was attended by Communications Manager, Ruth who ensured she visited stands to highlight GWT with particular emphasis on ghillies/gillies and fishing managers who are included within the remit of support available but who are not necessarily accessing or understanding that GWT is available for themselves and their families. She also was a guest on the Field Sports Channel.

Scone Game Fair at Perth was attended in September and was a successful event although the stand was rather a singular representation on the Gamekeepers row due to the absence of feed firms and other gamekeeping related stands. Shows and fairs continue to be a valuable opportunity to showcase the charity and welcome those who have been supported, those who wish to know more and potential supporters and colleagues in other organisations.

Game and Country, a long-standing firm of high repute in the Gamekeeping community both on the Borders and throughout the country held a trade weekend where GWT was present and supported with donations from refreshments. Ruth and Alan attended on behalf of GWT.

### **Presentations and Awards**

The Game Bird was awarded in August during the Tanfield Grouse Clay Pigeon Shoot Charitable event where GWT was also recipient of funds. Sue Stringer was a worthy winner and was presented her award by GWT Honorary President Sir John Scott Bt.

Later in the year GWT was again awarded significant sums through the Black Friday event held by Schoffel in November and filming of the Year of the Gamekeeper, Matt Tipping at Whatton House near Kettering. The Young Gamekeeper Award was presented by Sir John Scott to worthy winner John Tipping aged 10, who is clearly passionate about gamekeeping at an early age.

### **Training**



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Stag training and Hind training was severely curtailed however Hind courses were delivered in small groups online and in person in October. Stag training was delivered in Scotland in June and it is hoped that further training will resume in 2022.

### **Colleges**

Due to Corvid restrictions, it was not possible during 2021 to visit students and over 300 packs were sent by post to all students studying gamekeeping and countryside management throughout the UK.

### **Rural Recruits**

The website continues to provide a source of information and support for prospective job seekers and has experienced a rise in advertisements therefore enabling independent funding for manager Ruth Benson releasing GWT from direct cost.

### **Staff**

The promotion of Ruth to Communications Manager was warmly welcomed as an important step in her invaluable work predominantly online, through social media channels but also in person at events. Her innovative and informative approach is incredibly important in a constantly evolving world of communication and interaction with a variety of platforms.

Alan Tweedie continues to build on his valuable work in Scotland with his presence at events but also behind the scenes supporting individuals and continues as representative to the Firearms group with Police Scotland. He has also encouraged shoots on the Borders to contribute principally through Keeper's days which has been a huge success.

### **Volunteers**

The small team of volunteers continue to raise profile, assist in their own communities and support GWT through their areas of expertise including gamekeeping knowledge, mentoring, fact sheets and mental health support and training. Thank you most sincerely to everyone involved.

Recruiting volunteers continues to be one of the most challenging issues in working towards an effective and comprehensive service throughout the country. This is in part due to the range of specific requirements and effective reach in areas of concern. The pandemic has curtailed plans which will be resumed in 2022.



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## **Summary**

Whilst strategy for the future (five year plan) as outlined in 2020 have not progressed as it was originally anticipated, it is recognised that events have changed focus to immediate need. It is felt that the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust has its rightful place within the communities it serves and can build on these fortified foundations for the future. This stance is not only through the support given through various means, but information and enhanced perception principally through various media channels due to a professional, innovative and dedicated approach from our Communications Manager, Ruth.

2022 is a year to celebrate but also cement relationships, continue to expand support available and ensure that the gamekeepers, stalkers, ghillies and their families, past present and future know where to come for help, feel able to do so knowing that they will receive a warm welcome in confidence for as long as required.

HMJB

22.03.22