



Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill

HL Bill 119 of 2022–23

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The [Hunting Trophies \(Import Prohibition\) Bill](#) is a private member's bill sponsored in the House of Lords by Baroness Fookes (Conservative). It is due to have its second reading in the Lords on 16 June 2023, having completed its House of Commons stages in March 2023.

The bill would prohibit the import into Great Britain of hunting trophies from animal species listed in annex A or B of a piece of retained EU law referred to as the 'Principal Wildlife Trade Regulation'. The government describes these lists as "broadly equivalent" to the lists of species in appendices I and II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) that are either threatened with extinction or in which trade is controlled to prevent over-exploitation. Currently, hunting trophies from these animals can be brought into Great Britain if they have the required import and/or export permits. Permits are generally only granted where it can be shown that the import would not have a harmful effect on the conservation status of the species.

The bill was amended during its passage through the House of Commons to remove a power that would have allowed the government to make regulations to change which species were covered by the ban. A new requirement was also added for the secretary of state to establish an advisory board on hunting trophies. This was in response to concerns raised by some that expert opinions differ on what the impacts of a hunting trophy ban might be. For instance, there are disagreements on whether trophy hunting contributes to the funding of some conservation work.

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The bill has government support. The Conservative manifesto for the 2019 general election contained a commitment to ban imports from trophy hunting of endangered animals.

The government has produced [explanatory notes](#) to accompany the bill, although they have not yet been updated to reflect the changes made to the bill in the House of Commons. The government also produced an [impact assessment](#) in 2021 assessing a ban on the import of hunting trophies (although not assessing this bill specifically).

I. What is the background to the bill?

I.1 Regulation of international trade in hunting trophies

The UK is a party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). CITES is an international agreement that aims to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species.¹ CITES regulates international trade in certain species, and products or derivatives of those species. This includes hunting trophies.

The species covered by CITES are listed in three appendices, according to the degree of protection they need:²

- Appendix I includes species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances.
- Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled to avoid utilisation incompatible with their survival.
- Appendix III contains species that are protected in at least one country that has asked other CITES parties for assistance in controlling the trade.

¹ CITES, '[What is CITES?](#)', accessed 19 May 2023.

² CITES, '[How CITES works](#)', accessed 19 May 2023.

Decisions about which species to include in appendices I and II are made by a vote of all the parties to CITES. Each party to the convention can make unilateral changes to the list of species in appendix III.

A specimen of any species listed in one of the appendices can be imported into or (re)exported from a state that is party to CITES only if the appropriate documentation is presented for clearance at the port of entry or exit. Different requirements apply for obtaining the documentation depending on which appendix the species is listed in.³ The CITES website states that the requirements vary slightly from country to country, and national laws may be stricter than the basic conditions under CITES.

When the UK was an EU member state, it implemented its international obligations under CITES through several pieces of EU legislation, referred to collectively as the EU wildlife trade regulations. The main one of these was Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97 on the protection of species of wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein.⁴ The EU also refers to this as the ‘basic regulation’.⁵

Since the end of the Brexit transition period, the retained EU law versions of the EU wildlife trade regulations apply in Great Britain. These versions of the wildlife trade regulations have been modified compared to the EU versions so that they function in a post-Brexit context; for instance, references to bringing species into the EU have been replaced by references to bringing species into Great Britain.⁶ The bill and the explanatory notes refer to the retained EU law versions of the wildlife trade regulations as ‘the

³ For further details, see the ‘[How CITES works](#)’ page on the CITES website.

⁴ The others are Commission Regulation (EC) No 865/2006 laying down detailed rules concerning the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97; Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 792/2012 laying down rules for the design of permits, certificates and other documents provided for in Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97; and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/1587 prohibiting the introduction into the Union of specimens of certain species of wild fauna and flora in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97.

⁵ European Commission, ‘[Wildlife trade](#)’, accessed 19 May 2023.

⁶ For further details of these changes, see Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, ‘[Explanatory memorandum to the Environment and Wildlife \(Miscellaneous Amendments etc.\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2020](#)’, November 2020.

Wildlife Trade Regulations’ and to the retained EU law version of the basic regulation as the ‘Principal Wildlife Trade Regulation’.

The EU wildlife trade regulations continue to apply to Northern Ireland.⁷ The basic regulation is listed in annex 2 of the Northern Ireland Protocol (now renamed the Windsor Framework) as a piece of EU legislation that continues to apply in respect of Northern Ireland.

The Principal Wildlife Trade Regulation lists species in four annexes with varying degrees of protection:⁸

- annex A lists the most endangered species, broadly equivalent to CITES appendix I
- annex B lists species threatened by commercial trade, broadly equivalent to CITES appendix II
- annexes C and D contain CITES appendix III-listed species and some non-CITES species

Specimens of the listed species can be imported, exported or re-exported only in accordance with the conditions set out in the Principal Wildlife Trade Regulation.

The government has explained what the relevant permit requirements currently are for importing hunting trophies to Great Britain:⁹

- A hunting trophy of any wild species listed in annex A and of six species listed in annex B to the Principal Wildlife Trade Regulation currently requires both an export permit and an import permit.
- Hunting trophies from other annex B species require an export permit only.
- Hunting trophies from species listed in annexes C and D to the

⁷ [Explanatory notes](#), p 2.

⁸ As above, p 3.

⁹ As above.

Principal Wildlife Trade Regulations are treated as personal and household effects and generally do not require an import or export permit.

The government said that permits are generally only granted where it can be shown that the import would not have a harmful effect on the conservation status of the species, or the extent of the territory occupied by the species.¹⁰ It also said that the controls are less strict for captive-bred animals than wild animals. An import permit is not required for trophies from captive-bred animals of annex A and six annex B species because “trade in trophies from captive-bred animals is generally less likely to have a harmful effect on the conservation status of the species in the wild”.

As a result of the Northern Ireland Protocol, permits are required for moving CITES specimens between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.¹¹ The government said that the Windsor Framework, agreed between the UK and the EU in February 2023, will remove in most cases previous requirements under the Northern Ireland Protocol for businesses to provide export declarations or equivalent information when moving goods from Northern Ireland to Great Britain when fully implemented. However, it explained that some controls on goods moving from Northern Ireland to Great Britain will continue to be applied “where strictly necessary to manage our international obligations”, including for movements of endangered species.¹² In contrast, the permits and checks usually required under CITES are not required for movements between Northern Ireland and EU member states.¹³

According to figures from the CITES trade database, 190 hunting trophies from CITES-listed species were imported into the UK in 2020 (the most

¹⁰ [Explanatory notes](#), p 4.

¹¹ Animal and Plant Health Agency and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, ‘[Import or export endangered species: Check if you need a CITES permit](#)’, 20 May 2022.

¹² HM Government, ‘[The Windsor Framework: A new way forward](#)’, February 2023, CP 806, p 9.

¹³ House of Lords, ‘[Written question: Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species: Musical instruments](#)’, 12 November 2020, HL9765.

recent complete year for which figures are available).¹⁴ Of these, 3% were from appendix I-listed species, 1% were from appendix III-listed species, and the remaining 96% were from appendix II-listed species. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has calculated that on average, between 2015 and 2019, the UK imported 179 hunting trophies per year from CITES-listed species.¹⁵ Over that period, the average yearly value of hunting trophies imported to the UK from appendix I- and II-listed species was £35,000.¹⁶

1.2 UK government position on banning hunting trophy imports

The Conservative Party manifesto for the December 2019 general election included a commitment to “ban imports from trophy hunting of endangered animals”.¹⁷

In November 2019, the government launched a consultation and call for evidence on controls on the import and export of hunting trophies.¹⁸ The consultation sought views on policy options, the definition of hunting trophies and to which species any further restrictions should apply.¹⁹ The call for evidence sought evidence on the impacts of imports and exports of hunting trophies to and from the UK on conservation and the natural environment, businesses, local livelihoods and animal welfare.

¹⁴ CITES, '[CITES trade database \(version 2022.1\)](#)', accessed 25 May 2023. This figure represents a gross tally of trades; it is possible that some items may have been counted more than once if there are discrepancies in the way a trade is recorded by an importer and an exporter (see CITES, '[A guide to using the CITES trade database](#)', September 2022, p 14 for further details on possible reasons for this).

¹⁵ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, '[Impact assessment: Ban on the import of hunting trophies](#)', 5 August 2021, p 10.

¹⁶ As above, p 3.

¹⁷ Conservative Party, '[Conservative and Unionist Party manifesto 2019](#)', November 2019, p 54.

¹⁸ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, '[Consultation on controls on the import and export of hunting trophies](#)', 2 November 2019 and '[Call for evidence on the scale and impacts of the import and export of hunting trophies](#)', 2 November 2019.

¹⁹ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, '[Consultation outcome: Summary of responses and government response](#)', 10 December 2021.

The government published the outcome of the consultation and call for evidence in December 2021, having received over 44,000 responses.²⁰ The government noted that the responses “indicated a clear preference (86% of responses) for the government to put in place additional restrictions beyond current controls”. The majority of those who responded to the consultation (84%) indicated that their first preference would be for a ban on imports and exports of hunting trophies from all species to and from the UK. However, the government noted that a different picture emerged from the detailed responses submitted to the call for evidence, where around three quarters of the responses did not support a ban on imports and exports of hunting trophies from all species. The government also observed that the evidence about the impacts of trophy hunting was mixed:

We note the evidence which suggests that in some cases, trophy hunting can support species and habitat conservation, as well as local livelihoods, and that there may not always be readily available or feasible alternatives which deliver the same benefits. We also note evidence of damaging impacts of unsustainable and unchecked trophy hunting in some cases, and examples of where local populations do not benefit from the activity.

The government said that after considering the responses, it would “strengthen and broaden our controls on the import of hunting trophies” by introducing legislation to ban the import of hunting trophies from species of global conservation concern. The ban would cover species listed in annexes A and B of the UK wildlife trade regulations and those assessed as “near threatened, vulnerable, endangered, critically endangered or extinct in the wild” by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). For all these species, the ban would cover the import of hunting trophies from both wild and captive-bred animals. The government said its planned legislation would not ban the practice of trophy hunting itself or the ownership of hunting trophies. The policy would apply in Great Britain only, respecting the terms of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

²⁰ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, [‘Consultation outcome: Summary of responses and government response’](#), 10 December 2021.

In the May 2021 Queen's Speech, the government said it would ban the import of hunting trophies from endangered animals in an animals abroad bill.²¹ However, the government did not introduce such a bill. In the Queen's Speech in May 2022, the government said it was committed to legislating to ban the import of hunting trophies from thousands of species, though it did not name a particular bill that would legislate for this.²²

1.3 Wider debate on trophy hunting

The debate about banning hunting trophy imports is closely tied to the wider debate about the practice of trophy hunting. While some strongly support banning it altogether, others argue that doing so could have negative consequences for conservation and local populations.

Defra carried out a literature review that examined some of the wider costs and benefits of restricting trophy hunting imports:

Costs

A 2019 letter from 130 researchers described how in African countries that practice trophy hunting, more land has been conserved under trophy hunting than under national parks, with hunting areas contributing to landscape connectivity. Some argue that restricting the import/export of trophies from hunting risks land conversion and biodiversity loss, and other alternative area management strategies must be in place to promote conservation, protect endangered species and support livelihoods. Furthermore, many questions remain on whether alternatives such as wildlife tourism can effectively replace trophy hunting, especially in areas with poor political and economic stability, and areas with less aesthetic appeal.

[...] Evidence suggests that trophy hunting can provide a value for

²¹ Prime Minister's Office, '[Queen's Speech 2021: Background briefing notes](#)', 11 May 2021, p 132.

²² Prime Minister's Office, '[Queen's Speech 2022: Background briefing notes](#)', 10 May 2022, p 127.

animals which incentivises their protection for the purposes of hunting rather than indiscriminate removal eg land use change to agriculture. Without trophy hunting, an income stream linked to positive conservation outcomes could be lost and other options need to be in place to address this conflict [between wildlife and local people].

A ban in the legal movement of animal trophies could have unintended consequences, including increasing the illegal trade in wildlife parts which is unregulated. It could also reduce the amount of protein available to local communities as meat is often a by-product of trophy hunts. After a hunting ban in 2014 in Botswana one village lost the provision of 154 tonnes of meat, so less protein was available to the community. This resulted in an increase in illegal poaching and documented declines in wildlife.

One of the major arguments for hunting for trophies is that it provides financial benefits to local communities and without trophy hunting these benefits could be lost. However, the extent to which local communities truly benefit is widely debated.

Benefits

By disincentivising trophy hunting the policy [of banning imports] could have positive knock-on effects on species numbers, biodiversity and ecosystem services.

[...] Trophy hunting is not always sustainable and can lead to population declines in targeted and untargeted species. According to an IUCN assessment in 2004, overhunting (though not exclusively trophy hunting) threatens over 30% of endangered mammal species.

Even in areas where hunting is regulated, trophy hunting can (due to the targeting of animals with certain characteristics, eg large prime male adults) negatively affect population size and growth; interspecies relationships and competition; species migration; and social structure,

behaviour and genetics. These effects are species dependent.

[...] Trophy hunting can also provide a cover for, and consequently increase, illegal wildlife poaching.

Removing revenue generated from trophy hunting may heighten incentives to find revenue from potentially more sustainable forms of tourism, such as photographic wildlife tourism, and other alternative wildlife management strategies. Economic benefits from well-maintained wildlife populations and ecosystems can generate incentives for landowners or communities to conserve or restore wildlife on their land (or to tolerate species which cause human-wildlife conflict).²³

The campaign group Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting argues that trophy hunting is “cruel and inhumane, and needs to be banned for the sake of the animals”.²⁴ It believes that “killing animals for sport is an outdated practice that should have been outlawed long ago”. It calls for (among other things) governments to ban trophy hunting and the import/export of hunting trophies, an immediate halt to the trade in trophies of vulnerable, threatened or endangered species, and trophy hunting exemptions to be removed from existing international conservation agreements.²⁵

Similarly, the animal charity Born Free is “opposed to the killing of any animal for sport or pleasure”.²⁶ It “strongly refutes claims by trophy hunting proponents that their activities support conservation or local communities”. Born Free and 166 other civil society organisations from around the world published a joint position paper in July 2022 speaking out against trophy hunting and urging policymakers to ban imports of hunting trophies.²⁷ It supports the bill.²⁸

²³ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, [‘Impact assessment: Ban on the import of hunting trophies’](#), 5 August 2021, pp 21–3.

²⁴ Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting, [‘Why it’s time to ban trophy hunting’](#), accessed 1 June 2023.

²⁵ Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting, [‘It’s time to end trophy hunting’](#), accessed 1 June 2023.

²⁶ Born Free, [‘Trophy hunting’](#), accessed 1 June 2023.

²⁷ Born Free, [‘Global NGOs call for a ban on hunting trophy imports’](#), 7 July 2022.

²⁸ Born Free, [‘Ban on trophy hunting imports a step closer’](#), 17 March 2023.

Some academics have criticised UK plans to legislate unilaterally to ban hunting trophy imports, arguing that such proposals do not take account of the wider context. For instance, commenting on the government’s proposed animals abroad bill, Hugh Webster et al argued that it failed to provide sustainable or funded alternatives to trophy hunting, and that disincentivising trophy hunting “may mean fewer jobs, less funding for conservation (antipoaching etc), and less local tolerance for wildlife”.²⁹ They recommended that legislation aimed at restricting trophy hunting “should be based on meaningful consultation with the affected state governments, Indigenous peoples, and local communities, and should not undermine successful local conservation”. Responding to the present bill, Douglas A Clark et al argued that “trophy import bans are blunt policy instruments that can cause myriad negative social and ecological impacts”.³⁰ They argued that CITES “remains the authoritative multilateral instrument for allocating and exercising control over cross-border trade in listed species” and that “a renewed commitment to international deliberation through CITES would be a constructive step toward democratising global conservation efforts”.

However, not all academics involved in wildlife conservation take this view. For instance, Dr Hans Bauer, African lion research fellow at the University of Oxford, has argued that a UK ban on trophy hunting imports could help to reduce or even reverse a decline in natural ecosystems that has contributed to falling lion numbers.³¹

The CITES secretariat recently clarified on Twitter that CITES’ position on hunting trophies is set out in a resolution the parties to CITES adopted in 2016.³² One of the recitals to the resolution recognises that “well managed and sustainable trophy hunting is consistent with and contributes to species

²⁹ Hugh Webster, Amy Dickman, Adam Hart and Dilys Roe, [‘Keeping hunting bans on target’](#), *Conservation Biology*, 2022, vol 36, issue 4.

³⁰ Douglas A Clark, Peadar Brehony, Amy Dickman, Lee Foote, Adam Hart, Charles Jonga, Moreangels M Mbiza, Dilys Roe and Chris Sandbrook, [‘Hunting trophy bans proposed by the UK may be ineffective and inequitable as conservation policies in multiple social-ecological contexts’](#), *Conservation Letters*, 2023, vol 16, issue 1.

³¹ Hans Bauer, [‘Trophy hunting will not save Africa’s lions—so the UK ban on imports is a positive step for wildlife conservation’](#), *The Conversation*, 29 June 2022.

³² CITES, [‘Official Twitter account’](#), 27 March 2023.

conservation, as it provides both livelihood opportunities for rural communities and incentives for habitat conservation, and it generates benefits which can be invested for conservation purposes”.³³ The full resolution calls on parties to ensure in various ways that trade in hunting trophies from species listed in appendix I or II is sustainable and does not undermine conservation.

2. What would the bill do?

The bill was introduced as a private member’s bill in the House of Commons in June 2022 by Henry Smith (Conservative MP for Crawley).

Clause 1(1) would prohibit a hunting trophy that met the following criteria from being brought into Great Britain:

- it came from an animal to which the bill applies (as defined in clause 2)
- it was being brought into Great Britain by or on behalf of the hunter
- it was brought into Great Britain in the course of transferring it from the place where the animal was hunted to a place where the hunter resides
- the animal was hunted on or after the day on which clause 1 came into force

Clause 1(2) would define a ‘hunting trophy’ as the body or readily recognisable part or derivative of an animal that is obtained by a person through hunting the animal for their own personal use. Personal use would not include consumption. This would apply whether or not the body, part or derivative of the animal had been processed in any way.

Clause 1(3) would provide that if the import of a hunting trophy was

³³ CITES, [‘Conf 17.9: Trade in hunting trophies of species listed in appendix I or II’](#), October 2016.

prohibited under clause 1(1), provisions in the Wildlife Trade Regulations that prohibit, restrict or impose conditions on importing hunting trophies would not apply. The explanatory notes state this would mean that the existing regime under the Wildlife Trade Regulations would not apply to the movement of hunting trophies covered by clause 1(1). As explained above, the existing regime allows the import of hunting trophies under licence in some circumstances. Clause 1(4) lists the pieces of legislation that make up the Wildlife Trade Regulations.

Clause 2 provides that the bill would apply to an animal of a species listed in Annex A or B of the Principal Wildlife Trade Regulation.³⁴

In the original version of the bill introduced in the House of Commons, clause 2 would have given the secretary of state powers to:

- exempt species listed in Annex A or B of the Principal Wildlife Trade Regulation from being covered by the bill
- extend the bill's protections to other species not listed in the annexes

However, these powers were removed by an amendment to the bill at report stage in the House of Commons (see section 3.3 of this briefing for further information).

Clause 3 would govern how the import prohibition would work when moving goods from Northern Ireland to Great Britain. Clause 3(1) would ensure that bringing a hunting trophy into Great Britain includes both importing it into Great Britain from outside the UK and moving it into Great Britain from Northern Ireland.

Clause 3(2) would apply the Customs Management and Excise Act 1979 to

³⁴ Clause 1(4) specifies that [Council Regulation \(EC\) No 338/97 of 9 December 1996 on the protection of species of wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein](#) would be referred to as the 'Principal Wildlife Trade Regulation' for the purposes of the bill.

hunting trophies being brought into Great Britain in contravention of clause 1(1) whether the trophy was moving into Great Britain from Northern Ireland or being imported from outside the UK. The explanatory notes state that the Customs Management and Excise Act 1979 makes it an offence to export or import goods with intent to evade a prohibition or restriction on those goods.³⁵ Goods that have been imported or exported in breach of a prohibition or restriction are liable to forfeiture.

However, clause 3(3) provides that the ban on importing hunting trophies would not apply to “qualifying Northern Ireland goods” moving from Northern Ireland to Great Britain. Clause 3(4) specifies that the definition of “qualifying Northern Ireland goods” would be that set out in the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 and regulations made under that act.³⁶

At the bill’s committee stage in the House of Commons, the bill’s sponsor, Henry Smith, provided more information about how clause 3 would function. He said clause 3 took account of the principles in the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 that give “unfettered access” to the UK internal market for qualifying Northern Ireland goods.³⁷ He explained that the definition of “qualifying Northern Ireland goods” included goods that are “present in Northern Ireland and are not subject to any customs supervision, restriction or control which does not arise from the goods being taken out of the territory of Northern Ireland or the European Union”. He said hunting trophies from all annex A species and from six

³⁵ [Explanatory notes](#), p 4. The explanatory notes relate to the original version of the bill introduced in the House of Commons. They have not been updated to reflect amendments made to the bill at report stage in the Commons.

³⁶ The definition is set out in the [Definition of Qualifying Northern Ireland Goods \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2020](#) (SI 2020/1454), made under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018.

³⁷ House of Commons Public Bill Committee, ‘[Hunting Trophies \(Import Prohibition\) Bill](#)’, 25 January 2023, session 2022–23, cols 8–9. Section 47 of the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 gives “unfettered access” to the UK internal market for Northern Ireland goods. It requires authorities not to exercise their functions in a way that would result in a new check, control or administrative process on the movement of qualifying Northern Ireland goods from Northern Ireland to Great Britain. It also provides that an exercise of a function should not result in an existing check control or administrative process being used for the first time, or for a new purpose or to a new extent. However, it does not prevent the exercise of a function if it is necessary to secure compliance with the UK’s international obligations.

annex B species that had been issued a UK import permit and lawfully imported into Northern Ireland would meet this criterion for being “Northern Ireland qualifying goods”. They would therefore not be subject to the bill’s import ban. Mr Smith said they could be moved from Northern Ireland to Great Britain with a CITES permit.

The government has said that no permits for importing hunting trophies to Northern Ireland have been issued in the past five years.³⁸ Clause 4 was added to the bill at report stage in the House of Commons (see section 3.3 of this briefing for a summary of the debate). It would require the secretary of state to appoint an advisory board on hunting trophies, consisting of up to three members. When making the appointments, the secretary of state would have to have regard to the members’ expertise in matters relating to the import of hunting trophies. The board’s role would be to advise the secretary of state on:

- Any question relating to the bill that the secretary of state referred to “the committee”. (“The committee” is not defined in the bill, and it is possible this was intended to be a reference to the advisory board itself.)
- Any matter relating to the import to Great Britain of hunting trophies derived from species which appear to the secretary of state to be endangered or likely to become endangered.

Clause 5 would provide for the bill’s extent, commencement and short title. The bill would extend to England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Clauses 1 and 2 would come into force on a date appointed by the secretary of state in regulations. The other clauses would come into force when the bill was passed.

³⁸ House of Lords, [‘Written question: Hunting Trophy \(Import Prohibition\) Bill: Northern Ireland’](#), 5 April 2023, HL7042.

3. What happened in the House of Commons?

3.1 Second reading

The bill's second reading in the House of Commons took place on 25 November 2022.³⁹

Henry Smith, the bill's sponsor, argued that British trophy hunters were “among the world's most active killers of endangered species”.⁴⁰ He said CITES data showed the most popular trophies imported into the UK from Africa were from elephants, hippos, leopards, zebras and lions. He said elephant species were classed by the IUCN as “endangered” or “critically endangered”, and hippos, leopards and zebras as “vulnerable to extinction”. He argued that trophy hunting could “push otherwise resilient populations to extinction when the environment changes” because hunters tended to kill animals with the highest-quality genes.⁴¹ He also argued that stopping trophy hunting could lead to “significant recoveries of wildlife”. He believed that trophy hunting was “cruel and immoral” and that the “overwhelming majority” of the British public agreed with this view, citing the 86% of respondents to the government's consultation who supported greater controls on trophy hunting.⁴²

Mr Smith emphasised that the bill was not about what happened in Africa, but about the UK's import policy and “what we, as a sovereign nation, choose to allow through our borders”.⁴³ He argued that a British ban on hunting trophy imports would “help to save thousands of animals that are threatened with extinction” and “make a strong statement to the international community that we must act decisively to conserve our living planet”.⁴⁴

³⁹ [HC Hansard, 25 November 2022, cols 570–607](#) .

⁴⁰ [HC Hansard, 25 November 2022, col 570](#).

⁴¹ [HC Hansard, 25 November 2022, col 571](#).

⁴² [HC Hansard, 25 November 2022, col 572](#).

⁴³ [HC Hansard, 25 November 2022, col 573](#).

⁴⁴ [HC Hansard, 25 November 2022, col 574](#).

Sir Roger Gale, chair of the all-party parliamentary group (APPG) on banning trophy hunting, said the bill had his full support. He argued it was a myth that the proceeds of the “big business” of trophy hunting funded conservation or supported local communities.⁴⁵ He believed it was a “perverse argument” to suggest that trophy hunting was equivalent to properly conducted game management.

Margaret Ferrier (independent MP for Rutherglen and Hamilton West), vice chair of the APPG on banning trophy hunting, spoke in support of the bill and raised concerns about the sources of funding for some groups that had been lobbying against it.⁴⁶ John Spellar (Labour MP for Warley) also voiced his concerns on this point.⁴⁷

Ruth Jones, shadow minister for environment, food and rural affairs, voiced her support for ensuring that “British involvement in this grotesque industry comes to an end once and for all”.⁴⁸ She said the UK had a right to decide what could legally be brought into the country, and the “overwhelming majority” of the British public supported the ban. She said it was time to deliver on the commitment that had been in both the Conservative and Labour manifestos in 2019 and support the legislation.

Rebecca Pow, parliamentary under secretary of state for environment, food and rural affairs, confirmed the government was supporting the bill and was determined to fulfil the manifesto commitment to ban the imports of trophies from endangered animals.⁴⁹ She acknowledged there was a “wide-ranging debate about trophy hunting and how it fits into the bigger picture”.⁵⁰ She said the UK was committed to working with nature-rich countries and using overseas development assistance funding to protect and restore nature in ways that would be sustainable for both endangered species and indigenous people.

⁴⁵ [HC Hansard, 25 November 2022, col 577.](#)

⁴⁶ [HC Hansard, 25 November 2022, col 576.](#)

⁴⁷ [HC Hansard, 25 November 2022, col 599.](#)

⁴⁸ [HC Hansard, 25 November 2022, col 583.](#)

⁴⁹ [HC Hansard, 25 November 2022, col 584.](#)

⁵⁰ [HC Hansard, 25 November 2022, col 585.](#)

Ms Pow also said the power then contained in the bill that would have allowed the secretary of state to add or remove species from the scope of the ban was important as it would ensure that the import ban remained comprehensive. She said the government planned to make regulations using this power to cover species of conservation concern that were known to be targeted for trophies, such as the African buffalo and reindeer. However, this power was subsequently removed from the bill at report stage (see below).

Sir Bill Wiggin (Conservative MP for North Herefordshire) argued the legislation was “not as necessary as has been made out”, while recognising that it was “an emotionally weighted subject”.⁵¹ He believed it was “fundamentally wrong, post-colonial and possibly racist” to tell Africans how to manage their wildlife, and for that reason said he could not endorse the bill.⁵² He said passing it would be “undermining support for licensed hunters who operate professionally and contribute to conservation efforts in Africa”.⁵³ He believed the right approach was to strengthen CITES, “rather than overrule it with the proposed ban”.⁵⁴

3.2 Committee stage

Committee stage of the bill took place in a public bill committee on 25 January 2023.⁵⁵ No amendments were tabled. The bill was agreed to unamended, without any divisions.

Sammy Wilson (DUP MP for East Antrim) raised a concern that because hunting trophies could be imported into Northern Ireland under the applicable EU law, Northern Ireland could end up becoming a “depository”

⁵¹ [HC Hansard, 25 November 2022, col 586.](#)

⁵² [HC Hansard, 25 November 2022, cols 586–7.](#)

⁵³ [HC Hansard, 25 November 2022, col 588.](#)

⁵⁴ [HC Hansard, 25 November 2022, col 589.](#)

⁵⁵ House of Commons Public Bill Committee, ‘[Hunting Trophies \(Import Prohibition\) Bill](#)’, 25 January 2023, session 2022–23, cols 3–16.

for hunting trophies, or being used as a “conduit” or “back door”.⁵⁶ Trudy Harrison, parliamentary under secretary of state for environment, food and rural affairs, said that by virtue of the Northern Ireland Protocol, current CITES controls on hunting trophies contained within EU legislation would remain in force for Northern Ireland, “effectively maintaining the status quo”.⁵⁷ She said there was “no back door through which trophies can enter Britain”.

Henry Smith and Trudy Harrison both confirmed the bill’s import ban would apply to trophies from captive-bred animals—so-called “canned” hunting—as well as wild ones.⁵⁸

Trudy Harrison said the government did not anticipate that the Border Force would require additional equipment to enforce the import prohibition.⁵⁹ She said Border Force staff were already experienced in dealing with imports and the government expected it would have skilled staff available at ports and airports.

Several members raised concerns about the timing of the passage of the bill and bringing it into force. Ms Harrison said she would work with her Lords counterparts and the whips office to do all she could to secure the bill’s passage through both Houses.⁶⁰

3.3 Report stage

Report stage took place on 17 March 2023. Two amendments to the bill

⁵⁶ House of Commons Public Bill Committee, ‘[Hunting Trophies \(Import Prohibition\) Bill](#)’, 25 January 2023, session 2022–23, cols 10–11.

⁵⁷ House of Commons Public Bill Committee, ‘[Hunting Trophies \(Import Prohibition\) Bill](#)’, 25 January 2023, session 2022–23, col 15.

⁵⁸ House of Commons Public Bill Committee, ‘[Hunting Trophies \(Import Prohibition\) Bill](#)’, 25 January 2023, session 2022–23, cols 6 and 13.

⁵⁹ House of Commons Public Bill Committee, ‘[Hunting Trophies \(Import Prohibition\) Bill](#)’, 25 January 2023, session 2022–23, col 16.

⁶⁰ House of Commons Public Bill Committee, ‘[Hunting Trophies \(Import Prohibition\) Bill](#)’, 25 January 2023, session 2022–23, col 16.

were made without division:

- new clause 4 introduced a requirement for the secretary of state to establish an advisory board on hunting trophies
- amendment 1 removed provisions that would have allowed the government to make regulations to change which species were covered by the bill

Sir Christopher Chope (Conservative MP for Christchurch) moved new clause 4. He explained he was doing so because there were “diametrically opposed expert opinions on what would be a good hunting trophies ban and what would not be”.⁶¹ He referred to the work of Dr Dilys Roe, chair of the IUCN’s sustainable use and livelihoods specialist group, and Professor Adam Hart, another member of that group, who had expressed concerns about the bill and the risk of the government ignoring scientific advice.

Sir Christopher argued that setting up an advisory panel would facilitate listening to “informed voices”.

Sir Bill Wiggin said he and Sir Christopher had had “productive talks” with the government on new clause 4.⁶² He believed having an advisory board would be a “helpful step forward”. He hoped that the expertise of African community leaders would be reflected on the board.⁶³

Sir Bill Wiggin moved amendment 1, which removed provisions from clause 2 of the bill that would have allowed the secretary of state to add or remove species from the list of those covered by the bill. Sir Bill said his amendment was important as it would “close the loophole” that would have given the secretary of state the power to extend the bill to animals that were not endangered species.⁶⁴ He argued this would have gone beyond the Conservatives’ 2019 manifesto commitment to ban the import of hunting trophies from endangered species.

⁶¹ [HC Hansard, 17 March 2023, col 1088.](#)

⁶² [HC Hansard, 17 March 2023, col 1083.](#)

⁶³ [HC Hansard, 17 March 2023, col 1084.](#)

⁶⁴ [HC Hansard, 17 March 2023, col 1086.](#)

Trudy Harrison said the government was minded to accept both amendments.⁶⁵ She commended the principle of receiving expert advice from an advisory board, given there were “credible and variable views” on the issue of a trophy hunting ban, and “recognising that, in some cases, trophy hunting supports conservation”.⁶⁶ She said that applying the bill only to species listed in annexes A and B would cover around 6,000 species, including “iconic species that we know are targeted for trophies”, and the identification of endangered and threatened species would be based on the internationally agreed system under CITES.

Henry Smith also accepted both amendments.⁶⁷ He said new clause 4 would cover many of the concerns that Sir Bill Wiggin had raised about the bill.

MPs also raised the question of Northern Ireland at report stage. Sir Christopher Chope tabled new clause 3, which would have required the government to publish a report every two years assessing the bill’s impact on Northern Ireland. Sir Christopher argued the bill failed to deliver in full on the Conservatives’ manifesto promise to ban the import of hunting trophies from endangered species into the UK because it would not apply to Northern Ireland.⁶⁸ Sammy Wilson asked for assurances that Northern Ireland could not be used as a “back-door way of circumventing the important provisions of the bill” to bring hunting trophies through Northern Ireland into the rest of the UK.⁶⁹ The proposed new clause was not moved to a vote.⁷⁰

3.4 Third reading

Third reading took place immediately after report stage on 17 March 2023. Henry Smith emphasised that the bill was not about telling other countries

⁶⁵ [HC Hansard, 17 March 2023, col 1087.](#)

⁶⁶ [HC Hansard, 17 March 2023, col 1090.](#)

⁶⁷ [HC Hansard, 17 March 2023, col 1087.](#)

⁶⁸ [HC Hansard, 17 March 2023, col 1088.](#)

⁶⁹ [HC Hansard, 17 March 2023, cols 1087–8.](#)

⁷⁰ [HC Hansard, 17 March 2023, col 1088.](#)

how to run their trade, conservation or hunting policies, but about the UK playing a part in conserving endangered species listed in the relevant CITES appendices.⁷¹

Alex Sobel, shadow minister for environment, food and rural affairs, said Labour was strongly committed to a ban on hunting trophy imports and was supporting the bill.⁷²

Sir Bill Wiggin expressed gratitude to the government for recognising that the UK should be consulting Africans on how best to support their conservation efforts.⁷³

Sammy Wilson again raised his concerns about the risk of Northern Ireland being used as a back door.⁷⁴ In response to this, Trudy Harrison said the government would do “everything [it] possibly can” to ensure that Northern Ireland would not be a “stepping stone for imports to Great Britain”. She explained the current CITES controls on imports would continue to apply to Northern Ireland, in line with the Northern Ireland Protocol and the Windsor Framework. She said the government would scrutinise import permit applications carefully to ensure that imports would not be moved onwards. Movements of hunting trophies from Northern Ireland to Great Britain would be subject to the import ban unless they met the criteria for “qualifying Northern Ireland goods”. Ms Harrison said the government would continue to review this.

Ms Harrison emphasised actions the government was taking to support biodiversity, such as providing £90mn for the Darwin Initiative and Darwin Plus, £30mn for action on illegal wildlife trade, and £100mn for the biodiverse landscapes fund.⁷⁵ She recognised that some income from trophy

⁷¹ [HC Hansard, 17 March 2023, col 1091.](#)

⁷² [HC Hansard, 17 March 2023, col 1098.](#)

⁷³ [HC Hansard, 17 March 2023, cols 1095–6.](#)

⁷⁴ [HC Hansard, 17 March 2023, col 1093.](#)

⁷⁵ [HC Hansard, 17 March 2023, col 1100.](#) The Darwin Initiative is a UK government grants scheme that helps protect biodiversity, the natural environment and the local communities that live alongside

hunting had contributed to protecting habitats and preventing poaching. However, she said bringing in the body parts of endangered species was “not the way forward” and it was “clear that it is time for change”. She said the bill would send to the rest of the world “the strong message that we in this country demonstrate where we can our support for endangered species across the world, as set out in CITES”.⁷⁶

The bill received its third reading without division.

it in developing countries (Darwin Initiative, [‘About us’](#), accessed 18 May 2023). Darwin Plus is a UK government grants scheme that funds projects that aim to protect biodiversity and improve resilience to change within the UK overseas territories (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [‘Darwin Plus: Environment funding for the UK overseas territories’](#), 3 November 2022). The biodiverse landscapes fund aims to reduce poverty, protect and restore biodiversity and lessen the impact of climate change in six “environmentally critical landscapes” (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, [‘Biodiverse landscapes fund: Policy information’](#), 15 February 2023).

⁷⁶ [HC Hansard, 17 March 2023, col 1102.](#)

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