Hunt Issues Monday 17th April 2023

Complaint email 1

I am writing to raise serious concerns as a resident of Corewell Lane, in regard to Quantock Stag Hunt activities and behaviour.

On the 17th of April, at around 17:15-30 a gunshot was heard from my address. The source was the QSH, who chased a Stag down through Shervage Woods (National Trust owned, of which they have no permission to be on), onto the A39 and then into the fields adjoining the main road. Multiple witnesses have confirmed they shot the Stag on the boundary of the field in very close proximity to the road (within 50 yards). To reiterate, this was rush hour.

My wife got home at 17:40 and had to manouver her way around the QSH vehicles that were blocking Corewell Lane, and not to mention the horse and horse riders walking their animals back along the road towards the large layby.

This behaviour makes us frankly feel unsafe. Their behaviour is unacceptable for multiple reasons:

* driving a stag onto the A39 at rush hour, a very fast stretch of road, could have resulted in a casualty. I have been involved in a deer accident here before, it is not a nice experience and i was lucky to walk away. Someone could have hit that fleeing deer and QSH would have been to blame. They have public safety responsibility which they are not considering.
* they used a live firearm within extremely close proximity to a road. One mis shot or mishandling and the public could have been at risk of injury. I am aware that it is illegal to have a loaded (unbroken barrel) weapon on a highway, i would strongly recommend following up with the Hunt Sab groups to determine if footage of this exists, as some reports are that it was shot in the field from the highway itself. This is a firearm offence and another public safety concern that should not be taken lightly at all.
* Shervage woods is National Trust land, which they have no permission on. They are trespassing with armed intent. The land to which they flushed the deer to is also private owned, and they did not have this land owners permission either (Faun family at Corewell farm).
* The Quantocks are an AONB and SSSi. This activity is damaging the fragile habitat. This time of year, protected ground nesting birds are using the area. This is the reason the public have to keep dogs on a short lead- why should we expect this of the public if the hunt can do as it pleases and cause damage to this fragile habitat. Natural England should be taking this matter seriously.
* The hunt Sabs reported being assaulted by a member of the QSH when challenging their activities (of which they have the right to do). Whilst this is a police matter, i worry for my familys safety if this behaviour is common place and not followed up by the police.

The above is showing a clear disregard for public safety and protected habitat, that unless actioned, will soon result in serious injury and damage. As a local, I expect this incident to be taken seriously and raised with the necessary authorities and bodies to resolve.

There is no room for this behaviour in society or our community, and plenty of humane and legal ways to control the deer population. Humane control is what the conciencous and safety concerned land owners do in the area.

I want to avoid nebulus arguments upon the potential legality of the hunt itself, which I am sure the hunt Sabs may raise (i am not part of such group for clarity, I am writing as an extremely concerned resident) but from experience from crossing paths with QSH before, I doubt it was (driving across protected land with no permission, using multiple dogs, driving motorbikes with a live firearm, the list is long and nothing seems to ever be done).

Please do contact me for any further information.

Complaint email 2

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the increasing number of vehicles that follow the Quantock Stag hunt. As a resident of Holford village for many years, I was alarmed by the behavior of the hunt followers and the hunt itself last Monday (17 April), and the impact it had on the safety of our community.

On the day in question, many vehicles drove at speed through the village and along a National Trust bridleway that is not suitable or permissible for vehicles. I assume they were following the Quantock Stag hounds, who were out in numbers that day.

Later in the day, as I was driving towards Nether Stowey, I encountered the hunt and their followers partially blocking the A39 just past the turning to Corewell. It was chaos, with numerous vehicles on both sides of the road, people and horses, and motorbikes present. To make matters worse, there was no one warning traffic to slow down, and I had to brake hard to avoid a collision with a bus that was on the wrong side of the road.

I strongly believe that the hunt and their followers were breaking the law, and more importantly putting people in danger due to their irresponsible behaviour on the busy A39, and I am concerned that there seems to be no consequence for their actions. I wish there were more of a police presence on hunt days to ensure that the law is being upheld and the safety of our community is being protected.

I urge the relevant authorities to take action on this matter and to work with the Parish Council to ensure that this type of behavior is not allowed to continue in the future. Thank you for taking the time to consider my concerns.

Complaint email 3

Thank you for the response.

I have reported it on the website. No response yet. Struggling to understand why discharging a firearm on or within very close proximity to the main road is not taken seriously.

All footage is showing they came through National Trust land which they do not have permission. How many laws do they need to break to actually get charged? Raising concerns is never enough, they are breaking the law time and time again, and using "commoners rights" as a reason for their trespass and behavior. This has to stop before someone gets seriously injured.

Not sure how locals would feel if all the footage was on national TV, would have serious reputational damage to the area which has a lot of income from tourism.

Letter to QSH and copied to NT, NE and AONB

I have received 2 formal complaints from residents over the activities of the Hunt on the afternoon of the 17th April.  Both complaints mentioned the issues they encountered on the A39 during the late afternoon when people are coming home from work.  They mention cars and trailers blocking the roads, people and horses walking along the A39 at this busy time, but they reported that there was no-one trying to slow the traffic or warn of the congestion.

The other issues mentioned are vehicles driving at speed through Holford Village, vehicles driving along bridleways, the hunt being on National Trust land without permission from the landowner, the stag being shot on private land without permission from the landowner and worryingly there is a suggestion that the stag was actually shot from someone quite close to the A39 posing a possible risk to road users.

I advised both residents to report their concerns to the police.

Feelings and opinions about the hunt run high on both sides of the debate, and I want to avoid getting into that conversation.  My concerns are the safety of the residents and the people using the A39 and to seek assurances that the hunt is being undertaken legally with the relevant risk assessments undertaken.

To that end, please would you confirm that you will remind your members of the relevant restrictions that apply to the hunt on the Quantocks and your assurance that any relevant risk assessments have been undertaking and this includes any actions to be taken to ensure both the safety of your members and the safety of the public on the A39 and any other public accessible space.

Email to the local PCSOs and PC K Maun

I have received 2 written complaints about the activities on the hunt on the Quantocks on Monday 17th April in the afternoon.

I have requested that both resident make a complaint using the on-line reporting facility but I am copying both emails here so that you are aware of the situation (I am sure you are, but just in case).

Our next parish council meeting is Monday 15th May at 17:00 and you would be very welcome if you think that it may help.

I also sent copies of the emails to Cllr R Woods and Cllr H Davies.