

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RESTRICTED: Gloucestershire Extension
Date: 16 October 2013 11:43:45

[REDACTED]

We spoke yesterday afternoon about Natural England's process and timing for issuing an extension to the cull in Gloucestershire. You asked for clarification on some final points to inform your consideration of the licence application for Gloucestershire. As I explained, the expert advice we have already sent you, alongside [REDACTED] letter of 10 October, applied to both pilots and so is still relevant, indeed one of the implications of the CVO's advice is that the disease control need for an extension is even greater in Gloucestershire than in Somerset. Nevertheless, to confirm:

The CVO has clearly stated that if the number of badgers culled is short of the target reduction, the benefits of reducing the disease risk to cattle from the badger population by extending the period of culling to reduce the badger population are likely to outweigh any effects of perturbation of the badger population caused by culling. Disease control benefits are likely to be increased by an extension of the culling period. A cull should be long enough to make practically possible delivery of a population reduction approaching the target 70% level of the central population estimate. An extension that would achieve that level of reduction should be considered on the basis of experience to date. The CVO confirmed that he agrees that the closer to this level of reduction or beyond the better in terms of the aim of achieving disease control benefits.

Given this advice and using experience to date, it would seem to be a reasonable assumption that the current run-rate would inform your consideration of how long might be needed to deliver a population reduction approaching the target 70% level. I also made the point that there was no reason that we were aware of to expect current progress not to continue at a similar rate under the extension. Indeed, our expectation is that applying the lessons learned from the first 6 weeks in Gloucestershire and the transfer from Somerset of expertise (e.g. cage-trapping) and resources, especially thermal imaging equipment, may even increase the rate of progress during the extension. Given this, the 8 week extension period proposed by the cull company seems reasonable. [REDACTED] confirmed that she would be having a conversation with the NFU later today to understand how their experience to date and revised operational plans for the extension would enable them to continue to make steady progress in Gloucestershire towards a significant further reduction of the badger population.

The CVO also said that the culling of any as yet un-culled pockets of land is important to

the aim of achieving disease control benefits. In that respect, I explained that following discussions with the police at a senior level in HO and Defra a couple of weeks ago, new policing arrangements had been put in place to help tackle this issue. Following on from that discussion, as of a week or so ago, the NFU and Police were deploying their agreed strategy and procedures to enable the cull companies to access two areas a night of Gloucestershire that have been highly restricted to date. After some initial success, progress has been slow, but the expectation is that this procedure will start to bite with the experience gained so far. There remains a strong commitment from the NFU to work closely with the police as they move forward.

Subject to [REDACTED] discussions with the NFU today not raising any concerns that current steady progress will not be at least maintained under an extension, you were unable to commit to the new licence being issued tomorrow, but were confident it could be done early on Friday.

Finally, I understand a number of your Board members wish to have a discussion on the Gloucestershire extension and that this is planned for this afternoon for those Board members that are available. [REDACTED] is very happy to participate in that discussion if you would find this helpful.

Regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Director, Animal Health and Welfare

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

[REDACTED] Nobel House | 17 Smith Square | London SW1P 3J

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]