



Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill – HL Bill 119

Briefing for House of Lords Committee Stage – commencing Sept. 12, 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2019 Conservative manifesto committed to ban imports of hunting trophies from endangered species, and intent for such legislation was announced in Queen’s Speeches in 2019 and 2022. Henry Smith MP’s Government-backed Bill delivers on this commitment and as brought from the Commons the Bill would create robust and enforceable legislation for a comprehensive ban.

A 2022 public opinion survey demonstrates that 80% of the British public support a ban on the import of hunting trophies,¹ and the House of Commons passed the Bill with only minor amendments on March 17, 2023. However, the trophy hunting industry has mounted a well-resourced lobbying campaign against the Bill in an attempt to preserve the practice.² Their advocates attempt to position trophy hunting as “a necessary evil” claiming that it generates vital revenue for community development and local conservation efforts. Amendments to the Bill have therefore been proposed to allow hunters to continue to import trophies, including of endangered animals such as elephants, rhinos and polar bears, if they can meet certain criteria around purported ‘conservation benefit’.

Signatories to this briefing recommend that Peers oppose all amendments to the Bill for the following reasons:

- **An import licensing scheme (as suggested by [Lord Mancroft’s proposed amendment to Clause 2](#)) would be unworkable in practice.** Case-by-case assessment of claimed conservation benefits of specific hunting trophies would be dependent on unreliable and incomplete data, making it practically impossible for any Government to do accurately.
- **Creating a loophole in the ban to allow licensed importation of trophies with a purported conservation benefit would be burdensome, disproportionate, and carry a high risk of legal challenge.**³ Examples from other countries indicate that such licensing regimes impose significant administrative burdens in both the importing and exporting countries and would be unreasonably expensive to administer in the UK given the relatively small scale of hunting trophy imports.

- **Claims of trophy hunting's benefits to communities and conservation are at best highly disputed and at worst inaccurate.** Trophy hunting is internationally recognized as a direct threat to some imperiled species and can be a compounding threat to many wildlife populations. Countless scientific studies demonstrate its negative impact.
- **The vast majority of funds generated by trophy hunting never reach conservation programmes or communities.** If and when they do, such funds are negligible compared to the damage caused through the irreversible loss of key natural resources.
- **Trophy hunting perpetuates colonial power dynamics and drives social and economic inequalities in Africa.** Hunting concessions routinely displace local people, obstruct opportunities for community land ownership and management, and facilitate corruption.
- **There are ethical and more sustainable alternatives to generating revenue for conservation and communities in Africa than foreigners killing rare animals.** Trophy hunting is based on an economic model that incentivizes overexploitation of wildlife while distracting investments and political capital away from diversified and sustainable revenue opportunities. It conflicts with and undermines the viability of ethical, non-consumptive alternatives.
- **A comprehensive ban on trophy hunting is supported by many African experts and community members⁴ and the overwhelming majority of the British public.** In the public consultation on this issue, the Government asked whether exemptions should be considered for conservation reasons. Of the almost 45,000 responses, 83% opposed any exemptions to the ban.⁵

The House of Lords has an historic opportunity to align with the British public, the House of Commons, and many African experts and community members by consigning the colonial relic of trophy hunting to the past. We urge Peers to reject all amendments.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST SPECIFIC AMENDMENTS:

Group 1: amendments seeking to permit the importation of trophies for certain purposes

Several proposed amendments to Clause 1 (at lines 10 and 17) from Lord Hamilton of Epsom and Lord Swire seek to qualify permission for trophies to be imported for certain purposes such as for museum exhibitions, scientific or forensic research. These are superfluous since Clause 1, line 15, states that the Act applies only to trophies that are 'obtained for the hunter's personal use.'

Group 2: amendments seeking to introduce licensing for trophy imports under certain criteria

Several amendments to Clause 1 propose to permit the import of hunting trophies under certain conditions. Lord Hamilton of Epsom proposes an amendment, to Clause 1 at line 10, to permit hunting trophy imports 'where an import certificate has been issued under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora' (CITES). This would nullify the effect of the legislation by

allowing imports of species under Annex A (those threatened most by trade) which currently already require a CITES import permit for import. This amendment should therefore be rejected.

Lords Bellingham, Robathan and Mancroft's proposed amendments to Clause 2 all seek to add an exemption to provide for the importation of hunting trophies where they meet certain management or legal criteria, and/or when it can be demonstrated that the hunt has contributed 'to the conservation of the trophy hunted species, including habitat protection, anti-poaching measures, and support for community livelihoods.' This and similar amendments should be rejected on the following grounds:

i) Claims of benefits to communities and conservation are at best highly disputed and at worst inaccurate.

The purported benefits of trophy hunting to local communities are highly exaggerated. Trophy hunting makes up only a tiny fraction of economic activity, estimated to be as low as 0.03% of GDP across 8 trophy hunting nations in southern Africa. Of this small percentage, often very little makes it to the local households. As Dr Bertrand Chardonnet, an expert on African protected areas, explained in the June 2022 All Party Parliamentary Group on Trophy Hunting report, *"The income local communities here [in Namibia] are receiving from trophy hunting is virtually nothing. The amount available for conservation does not even equate to 10 cents per hectare per year. What was supposedly a huge success story is in fact a failure."*

Dr Mucha Mkono, a lecturer in sustainable tourism at the University of Queensland Business School, stated, *"My research indicates that trophy hunting's contribution to local communities is minimal at best. It contributes no more than 3% to local people. For every US \$100 of revenues from trophy hunting, just US \$3 of that trickles down to the local communities - and that is in the best-case scenario."*

In a 2019 report for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Dr Bertrand Chardonnet concluded: *"The absence of the economic profitability of big game hunting, confirming that consumptive management (and thus big game hunting) cannot generate sufficient income to conserve nature, does not make this management an adequate conservation tool for the future."*⁶

Numerous scientific studies have demonstrated that trophy hunting can negatively impact populations of many species.⁷ Removal of animals can have ripple-effect negative conservation impacts, such as increases in infanticide in territories where male lions are killed,⁸ and the disruption of complex social or territorial structures of animals including African elephants⁹ and leopards.¹⁰ Trophy hunting has also been linked to other negative impacts including genetic erosion, as animals are taken out of the gene pool,¹¹ and phenotypic changes (alterations of physical characteristics) e.g., horn size.¹² These impacts in turn can also compound other threats that species face, including climate change, habitat degradation and poaching.

Trophy hunting industry claims that funds derived from trophy hunting reduce poaching, are also generally unfounded.¹³ South Africa, the largest exporter of hunting trophies on the continent, lost 394

rhinos to poaching in 2020 and 451 in 2021.¹⁴ Additionally, the increased profits from alternative industries can be applied to proven poaching prevention initiatives.

Reliance on trophy hunting as an approach to funding long-term conservation efforts is also ill-advised. In Zambia and Tanzania, 40% and 72%, respectively, of trophy hunting areas were abandoned once hunting had depleted wildlife populations and was no longer profitable.¹⁵ Successful conservation funding requires an ecosystem-wide approach.

ii) Case-by-case licensing for hunting trophy imports would be dependent on unreliable and incomplete data, resulting in a high risk of negative conservation outcomes.

‘Non-detriment’ (to conservation) findings required under CITES to permit trade in listed species are typically fraught with outdated, unverified, unscientific, incomplete or false data generated by exporting countries or by the trophy hunting concessions. Population assessments are frequently years out of date, and management authorities often lack the expertise or capacity to rectify this. Additionally, in countries such as South Africa, there can be a lack of clarity over who is responsible for monitoring between provincial and national governments.

Given this dearth of adequate data it would be impossible, in practice, for the UK Government to verify any purported conservation benefits on a case-by-case basis. The UK should learn from the difficulties and mistakes experienced by other countries attempting to enforce licensed imports, like the U.S. Permitting the importation of hunting trophies from endangered species, such as leopards and rhinos, would be against the precautionary principle and would fundamentally undermine the core purpose of a ban.

iii) A trophy licensing regime ban would be burdensome, disproportionate, and carry a high risk of judicial review

A case-by-case licensing scheme would impose significant costs and create an administrative burden for officials. Scrutiny and decision making on license requests for import of trophies, including of endangered species, into the UK would lie with Defra and the Animal Plant Health Agency, agencies that already experience serious capacity issues. Examples from other countries like the U.S. demonstrate how burdensome such a system can be for officials. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has stated that it is experiencing a backlog of applications and has insufficient staffing and resources to keep up with the very high workload created by requirements to attempt to verify whether the proposed import enhances the survival of the species in the wild.

In addition to the administrative burden, the U.S.’s hunting trophy licensing scheme has resulted in many legal challenges. According to a LexisNexis search, over the last 20 years (2003-2023) the U.S. federal government has faced more than two dozen lawsuits over its administration of permits for hunting trophies, with suits filed by both conservation organisations and hunting organisations. Prominent examples may be found in the [HSI/UK ‘Reasons to reject a ‘smart ban’ amendment’ briefing¹⁶](#).

The pro-hunting lobby – the same pro-hunting lobby that is behind attempts to create a conservation permit loophole in the UK Bill - is highly critical of the U.S. permitting process and “enhancement finding” requirements, describing them as “tedious”. It consequently has been pushing for the abolition of the permitting program in the U.S. in order to make imports easier.

A hunting trophy licensing scheme from the UK would also create a paperwork burden for exporting countries, many of which are already highly oversubscribed trying to prevent illegal trade in CITES-listed species. Additional demands on their capacity to assist the UK in certifying trophies according to a new licensing scheme would further stress an already overburdened system.

Given the comparatively low number of hunting trophies imported into the UK each year, the assessment system that trophy hunting advocates are calling for would likely cost far more to effectively administer than any financial losses incurred as a result of the introduction of a comprehensive ban. Such funds would be better spent on genuine humane conservation efforts, rather than propping up an outdated and damaging industry.

What are the alternatives to trophy hunting?

Non-consumptive revenue-generating industries like photo tourism bring vastly greater value to communities and conservation efforts than trophy hunting. An elephant trophy fee typically amounts to 20,000 to 40,000 USD, whereas it is estimated that an elephant can generate about 1,600,000 USD in tourism revenues¹⁷ over the duration of their life.

In Kenya, Maasai Mara conservancies engaged in ecotourism enterprises paid around \$40/ha/year to local communities between 2013 and 2015 compared to trophy hunting zones in Tanzania which only paid out \$0.08/ha/year over the same period.¹⁸

There are countless conservation programmes operating around the world which do not involve killing the animals they are meant to protect. Kenya, which does not allow trophy hunting, has seen increases in populations of elephants, rhinos, lions and giraffes, among other imperilled species.¹⁹ Reports from Gabon, which does not allow trophy hunting, have shown significant increases in populations of Forest elephants through conservation funded by sustainable forest management and carbon sequestration programs rather than trophy hunting.²⁰ Tanzania and Kenya also have successful carbon sequestration programs²¹, and Tanzania and South Africa have demonstrated success in agri-tourism.²² Trophy hunting can actually inhibit development of these industries and consumes funding and political capital better spent on alternatives.²³

South African economist Dr Ross Harvey, stated “There is a strong argument to say that trophy hunting could actually be holding back development in Africa in large parts of the continent. It prevents alternatives from developing or flourishing that could be both more ecologically sustainable and more labour-absorptive. The connecting up of currently fragmented and privately-fenced reserves could provide the space required to create true wilderness landscapes that don't block migratory corridors for elephants and predators. If non-consumptive biodiversity tourism in South Africa alone supports 90,000 jobs, then there seems to be a very strong argument to transform as much hunting land into exclusively

non-consumptive tourism land as possible. This would create many more opportunities and much greater prosperity for local people and communities.”

Rather than allowing unethical, extractive industries like trophy hunting to continue, the UK Government should be investing more in non-consumptive conservation efforts that genuinely benefit local communities and help to restore biodiversity. As a scientist from Oxford University’s Wildlife Conservation Research Unit wrote recently: *“Ultimately, international solidarity is a much more substantial, and sustainable, source of funding than trophy hunting...now is surely the time to focus our efforts on far better alternatives for the conservation of lions and other endangered species.”*²⁴

CONCLUSION

A comprehensive ban on imports of hunting trophies would meet the expectations of the British public and would be in solidarity with African wildlife conservation experts, advocates, and community representatives who wrote to the Noble members of the Lords prior to the Bill’s Second Reading, stating that the ‘...Western-conceived, profit-driven trophy hunting industry perpetuates colonial power dynamics and continues to drive social and economic inequalities every day across many communities.’²⁵

It is the UK Government and Parliament’s prerogative to decide what it permits to be imported to and exported from the country, as we have demonstrated with the Ivory Act. This Bill does not tell any other country what to do; it is the UK aligning its own domestic policy with scientific recommendations to protect biodiversity in the face of our global biodiversity crisis. The UK must take a precautionary approach and close our borders to the import of hunting trophies.

Trophy hunting is an unethical, unsustainable industry that is recognized internationally as a threat to the welfare and survival of many wild animals. Viable, ethical and more sustainable alternatives for conservation exist and should be pursued in place of supporting the ‘pay-to-slay’ hunting of charismatic and endangered wildlife for fun or home décor.

We urge noble Peers to support the Government to deliver its manifesto commitment and reject all amendments, including those for an unworkable licensing loophole system which in other countries has failed to protect animals, imposed significant costs and administrative burdens on government officials, and invited repeated legal challenges.

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- ⁴ <https://www.hsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Trophy-hunting-Import-Prohibition-Bill-support-from-African-experts-and-leaders-letter-to-Peers.pdf>
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