



The Gamekeepers Welfare Trust Annual Report 2024

Introduction

The Wildlife and Muirburn (Scotland) bill became reality in April and proposals around deer management caused concern for stalkers especially around deer management proposals which has potentially serious consequences culling targets are not met. A general election created further uncertainty in rural communities, estates, shoots and farming interests. Changes in environmental payments have also caused estates, farms and shoots to consider budgetary constraints. The trend of the sale of estates for non-sporting interests continued in local areas, affecting communities and local businesses.

All these have direct and indirect consequences for individuals and families whose livelihoods are dependent on land-based occupations; markedly vulnerable where sporting interests are predominant; for the keepers, stalkers, ghillies and allied professions.

Budget cuts during the year impacted immediately on retired and disabled households from the withdrawal of heating allowances. This was followed by impending employers' National Insurance costs and rising basic minimum wages which has caused redundancy rates to rise as a direct consequence.

NHS and local services are under immense pressure which continues to cause anxiety and stress for individuals and families with health concerns.

Charitable and voluntary organisations are working hard to alleviate hardship and counter any measures which directly affect the most vulnerable. The Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust is no exception and is rising to the challenge whilst bolstering infrastructure necessary to continue the provision of an efficient and effective service. Simultaneously to maintain an approach which reflects an empathetic understanding which is encompassed overall is fundamental.

Strategy and Planning

One primary focus of the five-year plan was to provide a more comprehensive support network for the Gamekeepers Welfare Trust particularly in areas where there is little provision to date. Progress has been made by proactive and organic means, however shifting to specific areas of demand in addition to geographical disparities has proved achievable through paid sub-contractors and a team of health professionals. Therefore, a review and consequential modifications to reflect an environment which has rapidly shifted over the past few years is pertinent.

Policies and Processes

Simultaneously policies and processes were reviewed to ensure current guidelines are in place, both to protect the charity, its staff, volunteers and those which are supported. Rev. Dr. Gordon Gatward, Trustee has been invaluable in this process as well as an outside organisation with extensive experience in the mechanics of charitable and voluntary organisations. A comprehensive diagnostic health review highlighted

improvements and changes required to ensure all aspects are considered resilient and fit for purpose. However regular reviews are scheduled to maintain strategic goals and planning.

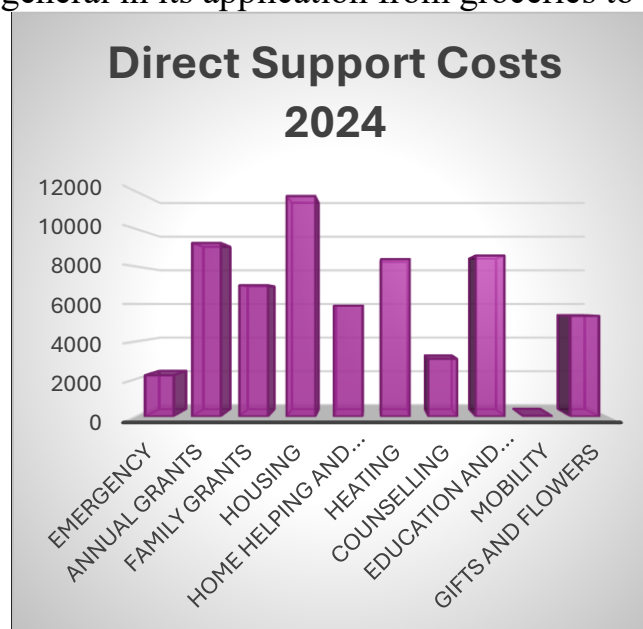
Work force management
Volunteer management
Marketing and communications
Service Delivery
Quality and Impact
Finance
Funding and Income generation
Risk register

Grants and Support

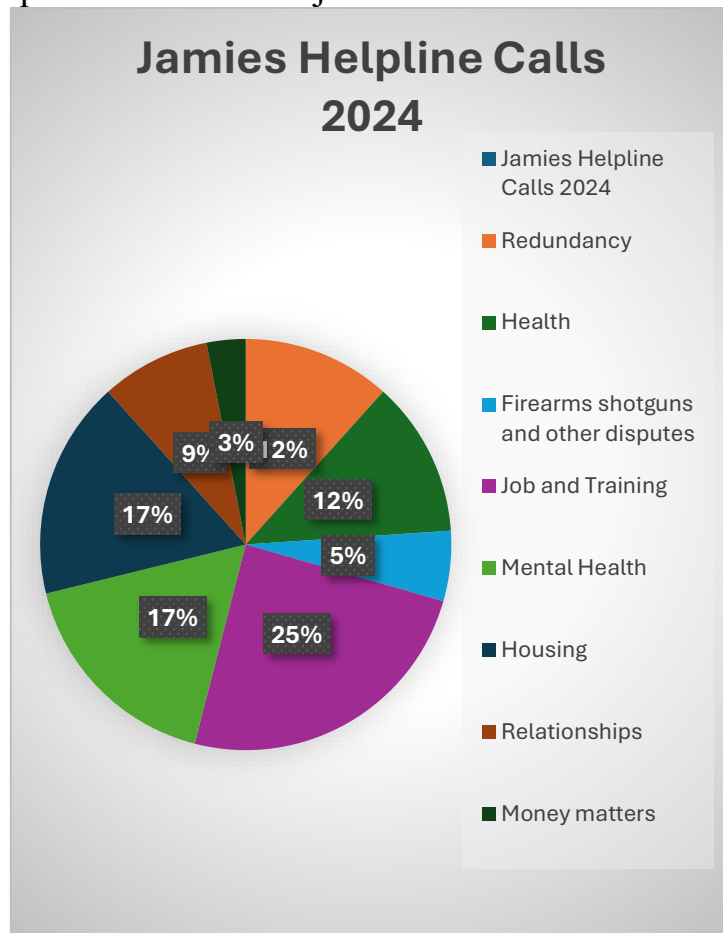
Applications remain modest which is largely a reflection of the stoicism and pride in rural communities. However, where need has been identified particularly in the elderly and widowed annual and energy payments have without doubt alleviated hardship as well as keeping in touch. Reaching out to the elderly remains a singular challenge especially when ill health or leaving local communities has been necessary. Reliance on NHS and social care services to raise a concern for an individual or family continues to be a challenge which it is hoped connections with the nurse team will assist in this aim. The “Check in with a Mate” campaign encompasses a particular application in being aware and highlighting a need in a discreet and sensitive manner.

Applications were received for a variety of reasons but predominantly due to ill health or later life and a reliance on benefits. A chart below demonstrates the full range of support given in 2024 divided into sectors.

Emergency grants continue to provide a lifeline in short measure where immediacy is required but may be general in its application from groceries to heating for example.

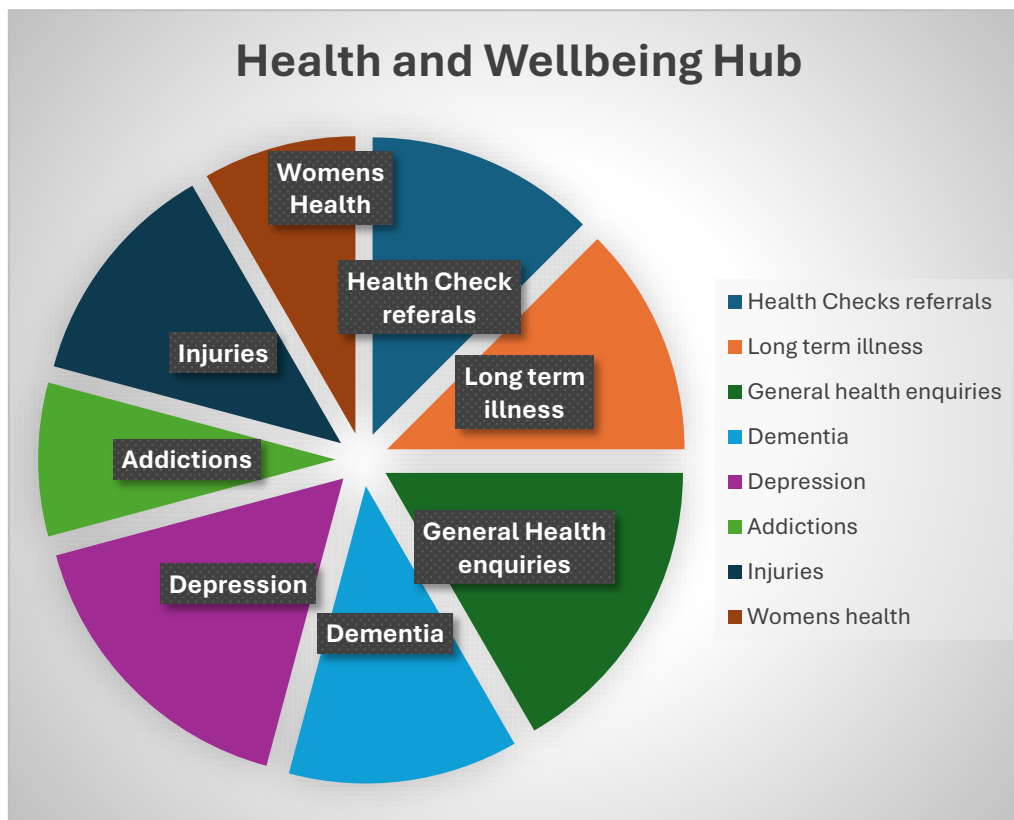


Jamies' Helpline provides vital support both in terms of a listening service and assistance in any issue affecting individuals or families. The helpline is available 24/7 though responses cannot be guaranteed immediately. Calls are always returned as soon as possible in confidence. Housing, Health, Redundancy, Relationships, Mental ill Health, Job related problems are all major reasons for calls outlined below:



Health

The Health and Wellbeing Hub (Nurse Advice Clinic) helps individuals and families, often those who are already on the GWT radar, have called Jamies' Helpline and very often for other initial causes. Identifying and referring with permission remains a key component of the over-riding Health and Wellbeing banner. This may be one consultation or a series of calls to provide support in specific circumstances. A chart to demonstrate need is outlined below:



The cost of this is minimal and is mainly provided by one nurse as and when needed through referral though direct contact is an option.

The Nursing team continues to grow, both in geographical area and specialisms proffered. This enables attendance to a wider range of events around the country and thus reaching a wider audience. In addition, specific queries can be answered and information around relevant topics circulated. This is proving popular both on social media and blogs on the website.

With 915 health checks completed around the country during 2024 and follow up assistance from the Health and Wellbeing Hub this excellent initiative must be considered a resounding success. Furthermore, mental health support has been offered both through trusted counsellors and nurse team with an expansion in terms of the range of support and means of contact anticipated in future.



Education and Training

Continuing distribution of student packs and customary presentations is fundamental to conveying understanding and support available. The Student Support Programme began in 2023/24 where students were asked on visiting colleges, sign a form giving permission to keep in touch. Thereafter a text was sent each month to keep in touch and offer support if required. In 2024 this was continued but more limited in some instances where colleges do not offer collective meetings i.e. University of Highlands and Islands. However, this does provide an opportunity to keep in touch and in two instances i.e. Borders College and Sparsholt, health checks were offered in addition which encourages an early proactive approach to health. College visits included Sparsholt, Borders College, Elmwood, Askham Bryan and Craven College.



There were no Stag or Hind courses undertaken in 2024 however three sessions in Yorkshire, Wiltshire and Northamptonshire were undertaken under the “Into the Future” roadshow to cover health, mental health, housing and financial planning.

Training in terms of financial support were given to two individuals for Tree Surgery, and HGV during the year which enabled new careers and livelihoods for families.

Communications and Publicity

Communications remain a key factor in ensuring the presence and ethos of the Gamekeepers’ Welfare Trust remains high in the gamekeeping community. It is evident there is a shift in emphasis and how different groups glean information and respond as appropriate. A recent poll showed that many groups primarily communicate through WhatsApp and Instagram whilst others retain a keen interest in facebook or the written word through magazines, Youtube and websites. Statistics shown in appendix 1 (RK) demonstrate a range of interest and response.

It is therefore imperative that all lines of communication are kept live and relevant whilst retaining contact with media groups and organisations.

Last year marked a turning point with the Shooting Times which has published a monthly article from GWT since June 24, whilst the SGA and NGO continue to provide a page for GWT on newsworthy topics. The NGO also include information in their newsletter and Field Sports Press include an advert wherever possible free of charge. Other publications include Scotland Sporting and notably a presence and credits in the recent film “The Last Keeper”. A blog was published in the SLE last year and there are other opportunities on occasion. Ruth continues to send press releases for specific projects or awards for example which are published in other press journals from time to time and shared on social media. The Field Sports Channel has regularly featured

relevant issues and hosted Ian Grindy at the Game Fair in 2024 which has featured on the channel again recently.

Events

Following a decision to shift emphasis to more local events and with additional support it was possible to plan a raised profile around the country more comprehensively than hitherto feasible. Being proactive wherever possible alongside the nurse team offering health checks wherever opportunity arose added a dimension of interest and support which engendered greater engagement with visitors, keepers and their families. Furthermore, extension of the campaign to “Check in with a Mate” provided occasion to converse and a “lighter touch” involving photographic opportunities.

Attending events around the country remain an important means of keeping abreast of a changing landscape in terms of challenges in different parts of the country, how this impacts on those the Trust supports and keeping in touch with those who have been in touch as supporters or in need of assistance. This also provides an opportunity to recruit volunteers and other assistance necessary to keep a credible presence.

Various events were attended during the year including industry led meetings, AGM for Raising the Game Partners, principally NGO and SGA. Gamekeepers’ meetings followed with a busy show and game fair calendar.

The first event of the year was at Englefield, Berks with a two-day Trusted Game Conference on 7th/8th February. Whilst there was no stand it was useful to attend and be available to discuss current issues affecting the shooting profession and the industry as a whole. Thereafter a fundraising event at Anglesey with Sir John Scott Bt in attendance on 9th February. Then onto the Shooting Show where GWT was again afforded a stand free of charge and opposite the NGO. Jo Pearson, who is also Coordinator of the Calderdale Moorland Group and working with the Moorland Association and others against the United Utilities in their attempt to cease shooting tenancies attended on behalf of GWT and was an invaluable help.

The SGA AGM at Perth, BASC Gamekeepers meeting at Blair Castle, BASC meeting at Swinton followed with health checks available at each event. The NGO AGM was also attended in late March. The Stalking Show hosted by the NGO and East Anglian Game Fair again hosted by the NGO were further opportunities to engage with gamekeepers and their families with health checks available at the latter event. Northumberland Show was attended in May due to proactive supporters Dixon Deer Management and nurses in attendance. The Scottish Game Fair followed with huge success moved to a more productive position next to the SGA with health checks offered throughout. The Yorkshire Show was another opportunity taken up with the NGO followed by the Game Fair kindly hosted by GWCT and run by Jo Pearson for the whole three days. Other Clay Shoots were attended with health checks at the Silver Partridge event in Norfolk, two BASC (Best in Field) events held in Berkshire and North Yorkshire and then Moy Country Fair again with health checks available which also donated funds from their profits to GWT. Ruth organised the Hampshire Country

Fair with a nurse and support from the local fishing association. Chatsworth Country Fair was attended for the first time with Jo in attendance whilst Bellingham Show was also attended in Northumberland. These both offered health checks during the days attended. Dumfries and Galloway Country Fair was attended free of charge and in September for the first time visited Sandringham Country Fair along with the NGO for both days with nurses in attendance.

Other events included three afternoon teas for retired keepers and their partners, one in the North, one in the South and one on the Borders, all of which were enjoyed by those invited.

A summary is outlined below:

Events and Meetings attended or presence in 2024

Event	Month	Location	Hosted by:	Nurse Check available	Attending
Trusted Game meeting	February	South	Trusted Game Partners		HB
Shooting Show	February	Midlands	Own stand - free		JP & HB
SGA AGM	March	Scotland	SGA	yes	HB & AT
BASC Gamekeepers Meeting	March	North	BASC	yes	HB & JP
BASC Gamekeepers Meeting	March	Scotland	BASC	yes	HB & AT
NGO AGM	April	South	NGO		HB
East Anglian Game Fair	April	Eastern England	NGO	yes	HB
National Shooting Show	May	Northern England	BASC & NGO		Sir John Scott, HB & JP
Silver Partridge	May	Eastern England	NGO	yes	HB
Northumberland Show	May	North	Dixon Deer Manage	yes	JP
Golden Grouse	June	North	NGO	yes	HB & JP
Scone Game Fair	July	Scotland	Own stand - paid	yes	HB & AT
Yorkshire Show	July	North	NGO		HB & JP
Game Fair	July	Midlands	GWCT	yes	JP
BASC Clay Shoot Best	July	South	BASC	yes	HB
BASC Clay Shoot Best	August	North	BASC	yes	JP
Retired Gamekeepers Afternoon Tea	August	Borders	GWT		HB
Retired Gamekeepers Afternoon Tea	August	South	GWT		HB & RK
Retired Gamekeepers	August	North	GWT		HB

Afternoon Tea					
Moy Country Fair	August	Scotland	Own stand paid charity fee	yes	HB, LP & Sir John Scott & Lady Scott
Dumfries and Galloway	August	Scotland	Own stand - free	yes	HB
Chatsworth Country Fair	August/Sept	Mids	NGO	Yes	JP
Hampshire Country Fair	August	South	Own stand- free	Yes	RK
Bellingham Show	August	North	Dixon Deer Manage	yes	HB
Sandringham Country Fair	September	Eastern England	NGO	yes	HB
BASC Gamekeepers meeting	October	Northern England	BASC	yes	HB
Gamekeepers Discussion Meeting	October	Wales	Discussion group	yes	HB SS SS

Fundraising

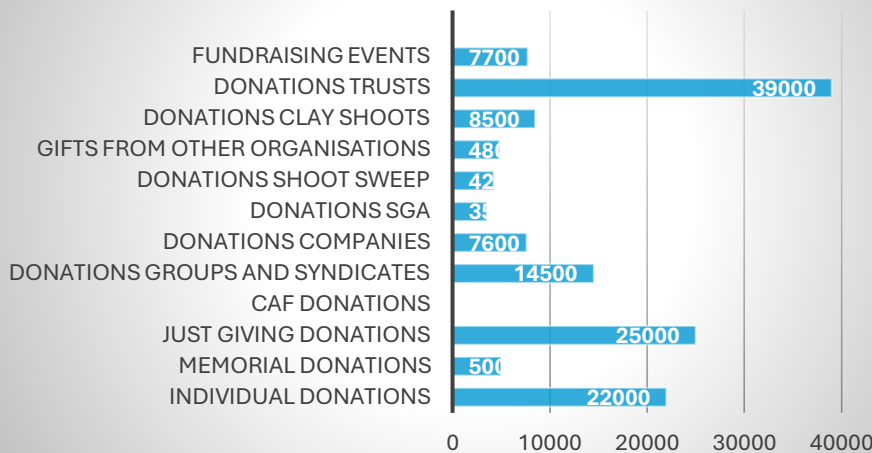
Without doubt, fundraising on behalf of the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust has risen both in the breadth of events chosen, individual challenges and estates and shoots during the shooting season. The Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust is totally dependent on other organisations, trusts, individuals and supporters and is immensely appreciative whatever is raised and howsoever it is achieved.

Individual challenges have included bungee jumps and marathons whilst others have given their time to organise a Beaters Bash, Ghillies Ball, with an auction or raffle. An outstanding effort from two gamekeepers' wives, Chloe and Samantha was the Gamekeepers Ball held in March of 2024 in North Yorkshire raising over £10,000.



Platforms include "Just Giving" and "Go Fund Me" as well as in memorials through individual funeral directors and "Much Loved" memorial pages.

Donations 2024



Merchandise

Sales are modest online and at events but are important to promote the charity and engender a loyal supporter base. Beaters flags continue to be popular with the addition of pink flags and a few other items of interest to broaden support.



Ambassadors

The role of ambassador in a supporting role to represent the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust at various events and fundraising presentations has proved successful in 2024 with Steve Stringer in Wales, Darren Preece in the Midlands and Jen Anderson in the Southeast. Steve attended a rugby match in Herefordshire as well as a gamekeeping evening in the Autumn in addition to his own fundraising efforts. Darren as a long-standing volunteer has also set up a WhatsApp group which proved incredibly useful with an evening meeting "Into the Future" gathering in April. Furthermore, Jen in the Southeast attended a Young Gamekeepers' presentation in October and has kept a watching brief and practical support for gamekeepers and their families in the area.

Further ambassadors are being sought for other areas in due course however GWT Trustees are invaluable too in providing a presence and conveying appreciation as David and Brian both attended events during the year where fundraising was prevalent.



Jen Anderson



Darren Preece



Steve Stringer

Awards

These presentations offer an additional opportunity to present a united front with the shooting community, that all the family are part of the team, on shooting estates and shoots throughout the country. It is an occasion to celebrate and recognise individual members of the family in a lighthearted approach.

The Lady Scott Award was presented in 2024 to Caroline Hogg by Sir John Scott Bt and Lady Scott at Moy Country Fair in the Scottish Gamekeepers' Association stand.

The Young Gamekeepers Awards were presented at Grinton Estate by Sir John Scott Bt. to Aulie Swires as senior young gamekeeper. The junior awards were given on site to the Cox children, Arthur, Amber and Beanie presented by Lord Dalhousie with an address by Lord de la Warr and a special afternoon tea organised on by Lady de la Warr with Jen and Helen attending. A later presentation to be made to the youngest applicant William Phillips who is the tender age of six years but who has demonstrated his passion for gamekeeping along with his father Tom.



William



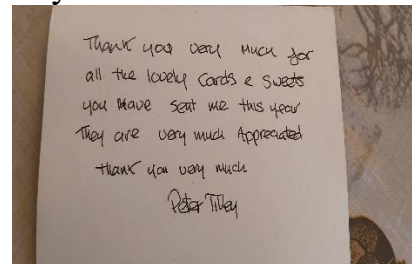
Aulie with his Grandad & Uncle



Arthur, Amber & Beanie

Keeping in Touch

Despite rising costs, the little envelope with a poem and gift continues to over 250 people and is appreciated enormously. Someone who cares, something to look forward to however small is a comfort and a kindness which is considered worthy to continue. Flowers, letters, magazines provided by our Raising the Game partners and the Keepers Cottage booklet are also sent regularly as well as birthday cards and flowers.



The Memory Tree

In its second year the memory tree continues to provide a focus for remembering loved ones. Restricted to keepers, stalkers and ghillies there is a Memory Tree and listing on the GWT website permanently and focussed during November on social media each Christian name is scrolled alphabetically excepting Remembrance Sunday and Remembrance Day itself.



Campaigns

For the second year the “Check in with a Mate” campaign has proved a resounding success with active participation for photographs and taking on board the message to keep in touch.



Volunteers and Staff

One full time staff member continues to provide overall stability and direction however further specialism advice has augmented the team to provide further support both out in the field, at events, for fundraising administration and for Housing and Benefits advice as well as additions to the nurse team both in terms of health checks in different geographical locations and expertise.



Ruth Kerr



Gillian Scott



Alan Tweedie

Ruth Kerr as Communications Manager, remains at the helm of social media with impressive results and continues to provide an important service linking partners,

fundraisers, supporters and crucially the gamekeepers, ghillies, stalkers and allied professions and their families who are the focus of attention. She manages to provide a daily feed in a palatable format and has worked closely with other members of the team to disseminate information and support available. She manages her time and necessary responses on one day per week which is remarkable taken the remit she has day to day.

Alan Kerr has remained a stalwart in Scotland being able to attend meetings, shows and fairs as well as being involved with the Southern Upland Group and local shoots. Gillian Scott joined the team in April after her recruitment as Housing and Benefits Officer one day per week. She has proved very quickly of invaluable assistance, both to individuals but to the Trust as a while providing information on a regular basis which is disseminated through social media, through the website, blogs and YouTube.

Jo Pearson has been appointed Events Manager organising and attending events where feasible. She is contracted on an ad hoc basis and assisted by Chloe Stonehouse who assists with fundraising. Administration has become complicated with numerous avenues to work with and respond to.

The Nurse team are paid on an event basis excepting the Nurse Advice line which is manned by Sue Stringer as lead nurse.

Volunteers continue to provide additional support and one notable longstanding lady is Ruth Minty whose calm common sense as a keeper's wife (retired) and former social worker has been invaluable especially in supporting families who are being monitored by social services or concerned during relationship difficulties and family disputes.

Fraser Thomsett in Norfolk is always willing and able to help and promote GWT in the area, not least in organising a presence at Sandringham Country Fair in September but always throughout the year at events and meetings. His enthusiasm has raised the bar in Norfolk, in the keeping fraternity and in liaising with other organisations.



Janet (nurse) with Jo Pearson



The Team at Moy Country Fair 2024



Fraser from Norfolk Division

Summary

The ability to adapt to change and how resilient both as individuals, as families, and as charitable organisations, estates and shoots is exposed where extreme forces experienced. This may be a single occasion or combination of events which create extreme circumstances. Planning and ensuring that there are contingency plans for each eventually is imperative as is the ability to reconsider and alter existing plans to fit fluctuating conditions and a shifting environment.

Examining each aspect of the operation management and responses has helped to provide solutions which are enabled by generous fundraising support.

This has led to an expansion of staff in communications, in support through health and housing and additional administration to underpin fundraising and publicity efforts.

The Gamekeepers Welfare Trust enjoys a positive and affectionate position in rural communities which is evident from generous support proffered. It is incumbent on the charity to be prudent, professional and well informed whilst supporting those who need help in practical ways as appropriate, with integrity, kindness, and compassion.

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