



MINUTES 7th February 2017
Committee Room G, House of Lords
THE FUR TRADE

Attendees:

Theresa Villiers MP, Henry Smith MP, Sir Roger Gale MP, Lord Trees, Rebecca Pow MP, Labour MP, Labour MP, Kerry McCarthy MP, Dr Lisa Cameron MP, Peter Hollobone MP, Alan Meale MP, Stephen Timms MP, Stephen Pound MP, Fiona Bruce MP

Lord McNair, Claire Robinson (RSPCA), Rachel Williams (RSPCA), Drusilla Summers (Conservatives), Fiona Wright (Ethics and Animals), Feargus O'Connor (Animal Interfaith Alliance), Samantha Chandler (Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals) Richard Clare (Cats Protection), Chris Fegan (Catholic Concern for Animals), Lorraine Platt (Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation) , Jacqui Cuff (Cats Protection), James Somerville-Meikle (Countryside Alliance), Becky Thwaites (Blue Cross), Anna Wade (Blue Cross), Alice Braybrooh (Office of Fiona Bruce MP), Christina Dodkin (Animal Defenders International), Maria Irene Ritto (Four Paws), Vanessa Amoroso (IFAW), Heidi Lee (Angels for the Innocent), Judith Williams (Animal Interfaith Alliance), Tisa Kosem (WHW), Harriet Barday (Peta), Sonul Badiani-Hammet (Peta), Kirsty Henderson (Peta), Sam Morland (Animal Welfare Party), Kate Verrain (Animal Welfare party), Misha Buckkowsky (Independent), Charlotte Parsons (Dogs Trust), Claire Calder (Dogs Trust), Claire Wison-Leary (Dogs Trust), Chris Laurence (AWF), Shely Bryan (HSI), Wen Higeth (HSI), Claudia Tarry (HSI), Cordelia Britton (Four Paws UK), Ben Mering (RCVS), Dr Greer Wild (RCVS), Sarah Dunning, Esenam Agubretu (Office of Gary Streeter MP)

1) The Growth in the Fur Trade

Speaker: Claire Bass – Humane Society International

In 2003, fur farming was banned in the UK by the government on grounds of 'public morality', but the UK still imports millions of pounds of animal fur each year, supporting fur farming systems overseas which are as cruel or crueller than the ones we outlawed here. The debate centres around the issue of public morality, the increase in cheap fur, labelling of fur to give consumer choice and whether there should be trade bans.

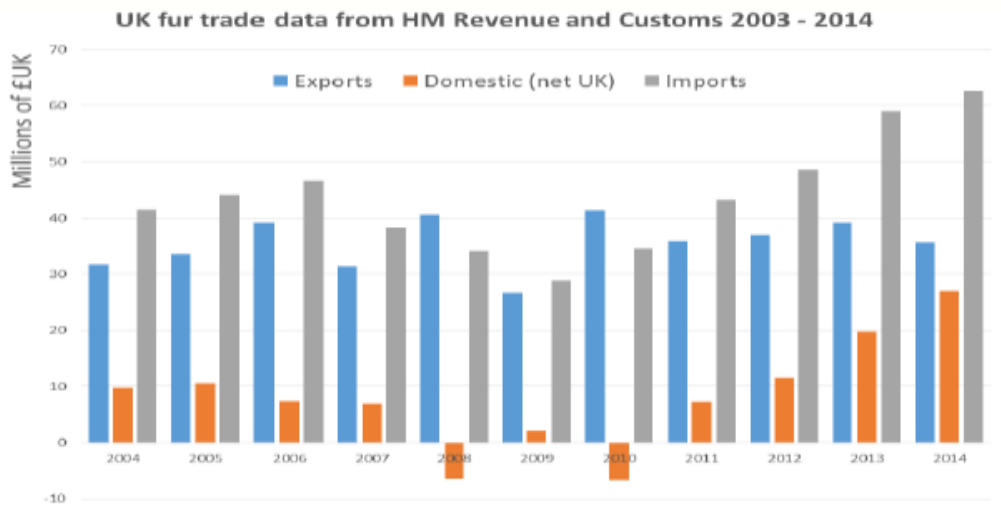
As part of the Fur Free Alliance, HSI has worked on this issue for some time and has compiled a lot of evidence setting out poor practice and low standards of animal welfare on fur farms. Alongside this we have also researched the changing market of fur where items are being sold and have found a huge market online through retailers like Alibaba and Ebay where a raccoon trim collar sells for between \$5 and \$7 and a raccoon collar jacket sells for £21

In 2000 the then Defra Minister stated that:

"Morality is important when it comes to the treatment of animals. Fur farming is not consistent with a proper value and respect for animal life. Animal life should not be destroyed in the absence of a sufficient justification

in terms of public benefit. Nor should animals be bred for such destruction in the absence of sufficient justification. That is the essence of our argument for applying morality to a Bill of this kind."

The UK has a ban on fur farming but we have seen imports going up in the last few years as the data below sets out:



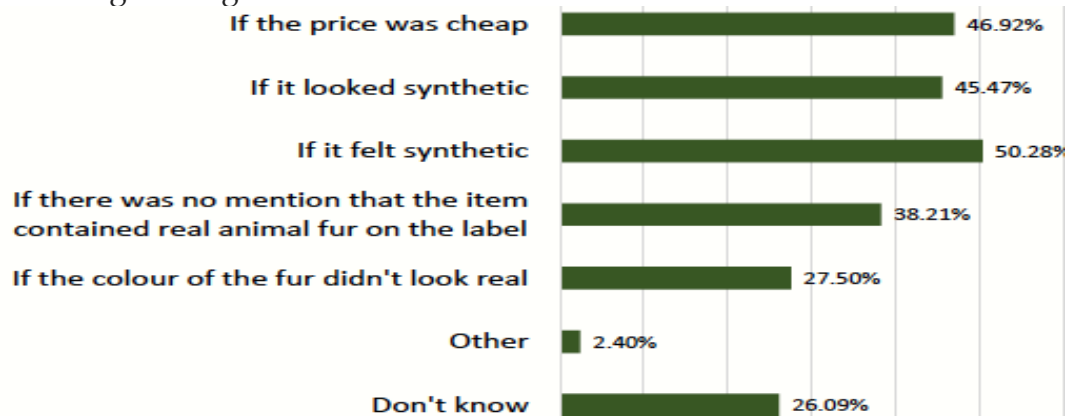
<https://www.uktradeinfo.com/Statistics/BuildYourOwnTables/Pages/Table.aspx>

We are a nation free of fur-farms, but not a nation free of fur. Since banning fur farms in the UK we imported millions of pounds worth of fur from abroad. The fur industry overseas is as – or more – terrible as the fur farms we banned back here in 2003. Alternatively, it is supplied by wild animals caught in agonising, maiming traps for hours or even days before they are put out of their misery.

HSI research hit the news in December when it was found that our high streets are selling real fur under the guise of faux fur. Numerous accessories such as fur bobble on hats, fur keyrings and bits of fur added to jumpers or coats are not being labelled as real fur. Some of the biggest brands are falling foul of fur in their supply chains, despite having fur-free policies – House of Fraser, TK Maxx, Debenhams and Forever 21 are just some of the stores HSI/UK has documented selling real fur despite policies to only sell faux fur.

HSI commissioned a YouGov survey to gain the consumer perspective on how they would tell real fur from fake fur with the following findings:

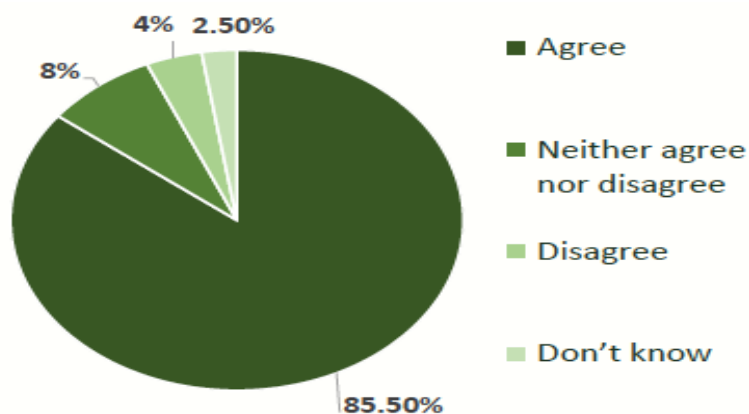
“Which, if any, of the following would make you think that the fur on an item (e.g. of clothing or accessory etc.) was fake? (Please select all that apply).”



The survey also asked people whether they expected fur to be labelled:

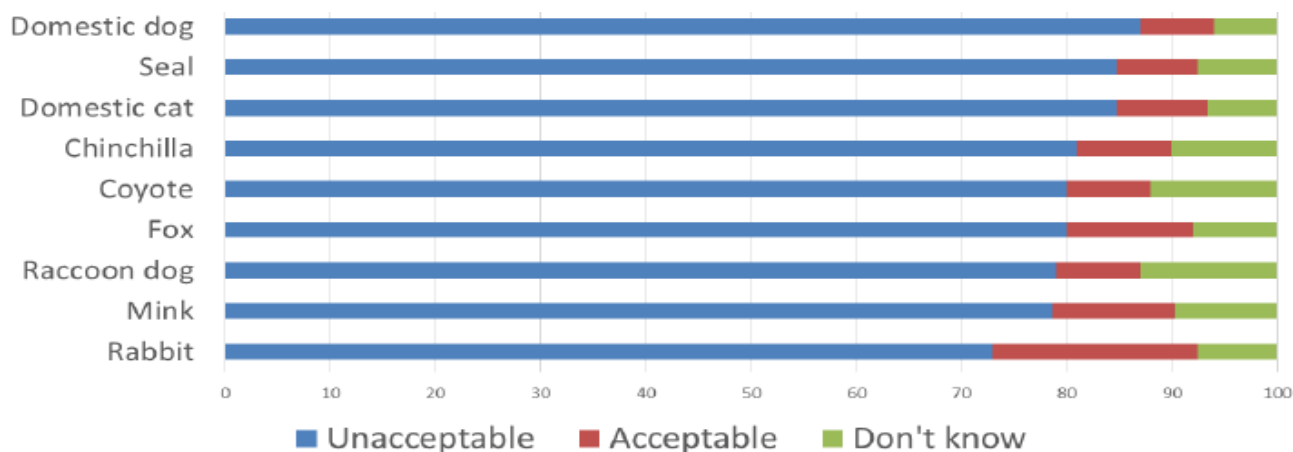
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

"I expect an item (e.g. clothes, accessories etc.) containing any real animal fur (including trims) to have this information clearly marked on its label"



We do have the Textile Regulation (EU) No 1007/2011) but HSI's research in the UK shows a high level of non-compliance meaning labelling is unclear and not being checked.

The final questions we asked through the YouGov survey was to what extent do people think it is acceptable or unacceptable for people to buy and sell products in the UK that contain fur from a range of species. The results were:



So it is clear that people do not think the current situation with no or unclear labelling and the majority of people do not want to see fur being bought and sold in the UK.

There are three things we would like Government to do to improve the fur trade; first to make sure all fur is properly labelled, second, to ensure that the current fur trade bans are brought into UK law post-Brexit and third, to formally examine the animal welfare case and the public mandate for extending bans to all fur-bearing animals.

Speaker: Mike Moser - British Fur Trade Association

It must be acknowledged that the use and public demand for fur is increasing. Global production figures for fur in 2014/15 are:

Mink	71.3m pelts (\$3.57b)
Fox	8.9m pelts (\$1.17b)
Finnraccoon	8.9m pelts
Wild	5.0m pelts (sable, beaver, muskrat, raccoon, marten, coyote, red fox)

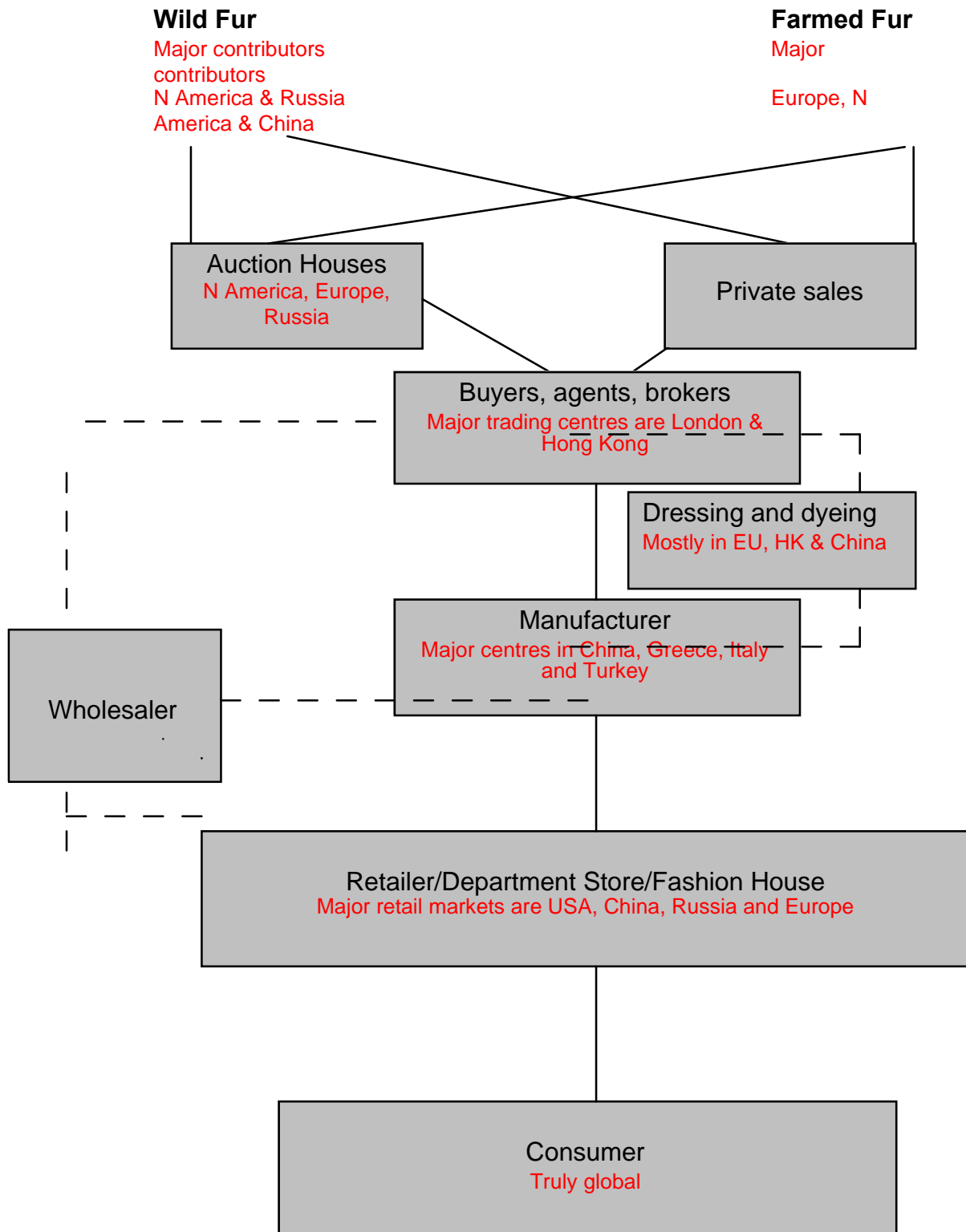
The global employment for this industry is around 1 million. In the UK sales have doubled in past 5 years ("The value of global fur business" (2016) Henning Hansen, Dept of Economics, University of Copenhagen) with c£160m retail sales in 2016. The public demand for fur is evident and so it should not be a debate about banning, but about how best to ensure good animal welfare.

The key point to ensuring animal welfare is that it should be objective, measurable, consistent. The majority of exporting fur farms are located in Europe and North America and wild fur is produced in North America and Russia. The EC recommendations concerning fur animals are based around

- Biological characteristics
- Level of specialist knowledge and training of farm workers
- Appropriate and careful handling
- Daily inspection of animals
- Species specific provisions
- Housing: size, environment
- Access to food and water
- Breeding

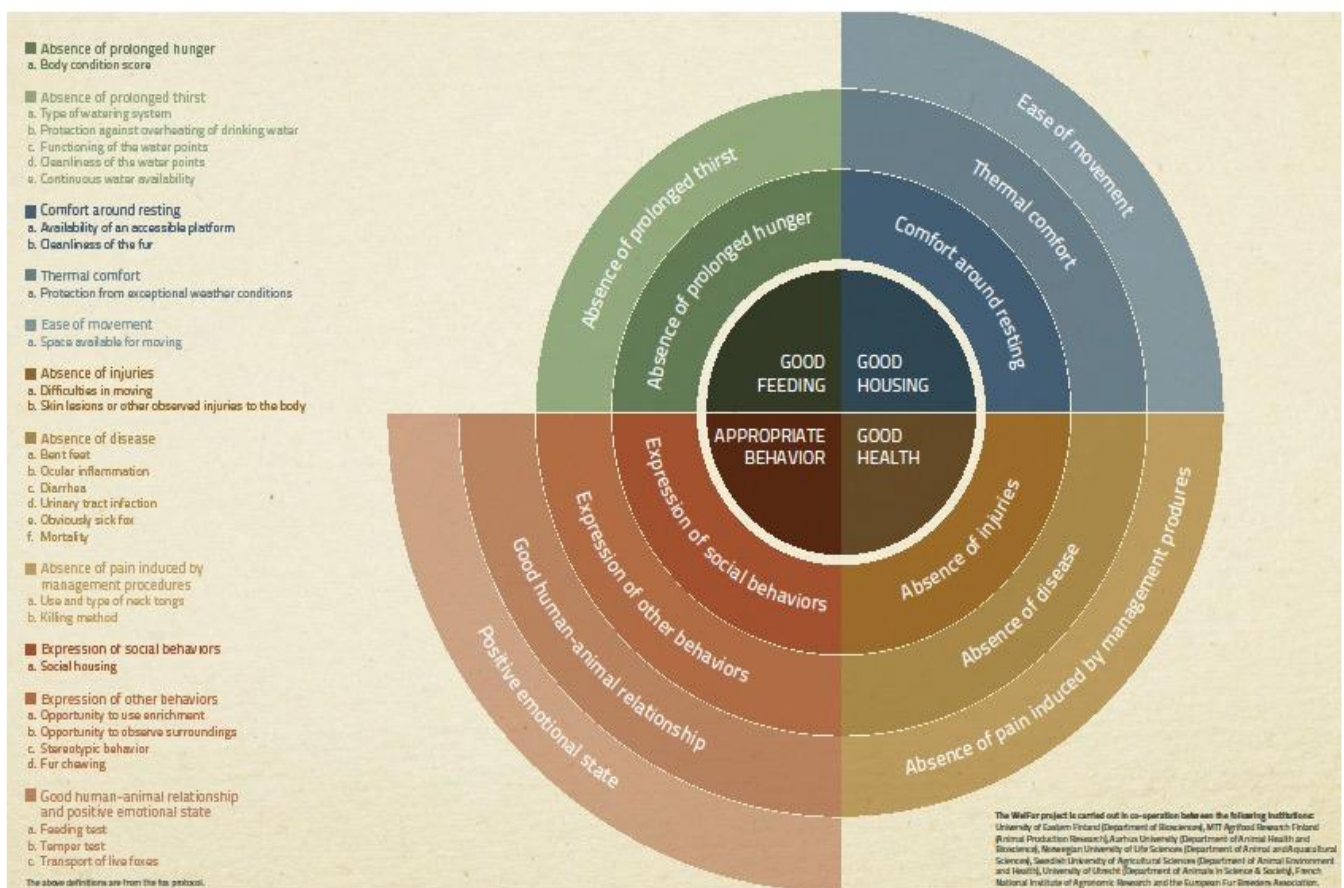
The Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 (Slaughter Directives) General is relevant to all animal bred and kept for production and there is an Annex that is specific for fur animals. The following diagram sets out the supply chain in which EU play a large part:

INTERNATIONAL FUR TRADE SUPPLY CHAIN



So there are regulations on how fur animals are kept within the EU and other countries also have their own regulations and standards. In Europe, we have gone further than this regulatory minimum by developing Welfur, a welfare assessment programme that follows the standards and methodology of the EU's Welfare Quality® project. At its heart are the four welfare principles of Good Feeding, Good Housing, Good Health and Appropriate behaviour.

The assessment protocols were developed by independent welfare scientists working at University of Eastern Finland, MT Agrifood Research Finland, Aarhus University of Life Science, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, University of Utrecht and French National Institute of Agronomic Research. In all there are 22 separate on-farm welfare measurements taken for mink and 23 for fox.



The Welfur programme was initiated in 2009 and in 2015 farm implementation began. This year we will have begun farm certification and the aim is that by 2020 only certified European skins will be sold by the international fur auctions. This will account for around 75% of all fur.

Welfur, and its equivalent programmes elsewhere, will provide the bedrock for evaluating the performance of individual farms and therefore full supply-chain traceability and consumer-focused labelling. Currently, there is only one statutory labelling that covers fur items, the EU's Textile labelling. But the industry is fully supportive of a species label that, in identifying the type of fur, will indicate to consumers that real fur is being used. But ultimately, the industry is working towards a

“Certified” label whereby consumers can make informed buying decisions on the welfare conditions of the animals providing the fur.

In summary, we are making real steps towards ensuring that the demand for fur is met with high animal welfare standards. We want consumers to be able to make informed buying decisions and labelling is key to achieving that. Mislabelling of products at the cheap-end of the market is an issue for trading standards to investigate and take action. But the introduction of a species label will help to differentiate from fake fur. Ultimately the full implementation of Welfur and farm certification will help deliver full supply chain traceability. That will tackle the cheap imports and make it clear to the public where they can buy high welfare fur.

2) Questions

Rebecca Pow MP - The fur industry makes it sound straightforward but are there some countries who are not so easy to work with for certification? You need an amenable industry to do what you set out otherwise it will not work and we will continue to have cheap fur undercutting any of a higher standard.

Mike Moser – That is an important point. We are held accountable for the global industry but it is fragmented by geography and culture but it is improving. I worked with the Chinese Government to look at revising their welfare legislation which they drove. They came to me to put together an expert group. As a result, last year a white paper was published to bring standards up to match those in Europe. But of course, regulation is one thing, enforcement is another. In any sector there will be rogue traders. We are bringing both political and commercial pressure to the industry. Good quality fur will command a premium. The vast majority of farms in China are well run.. The owners have recognised good quality gets a good price so they need to keep the animals in good condition.

Peter Egan – Why was fur farming banned in 2000?

Claire Bass - Eliot Morley, the Minister, ascribed the reason for the ban as public morality. They asked the Farm Animal Advisory Council to look at conditions and standards for UK fur farms and they said they could not do it with confidence. A decade worth of public opinion polling showed 70-80% of the public opposed fur. The essence was public morality. The WTO seal skin ban was also upheld on public morality.

Mike Moser – In terms of morality it is a much bigger debate than just looking at fur. Morality is a personal choice. We should all agree that the fundamental right to use fur is based on having good welfare and that then has to be based on a scientific basis. If I say to people what is good welfare they might say a happy animal, what does that mean? The Welfur initiative scientifically and objectively measures welfare. If I take Claire’s statistics, which I do not recognise, if 80% of people do not wear fur 20% would which is about 13 million people and they have a right to make their choices so we have to provide for that.

Claire Bass – It was a YouGov poll that I used so it is very valid and it also showed 6% of people thought it was fine to wear dog and cat fur. As a society we make our rules based on a majority view. Maybe 10% of people want to eat whale meat or wear seal skin which we do not allow so we need a consistent point of law.

Sir Roger Gale MP – This has always been the All Party Animal Welfare Group not the Animal Rights group so I respect Mr Moser coming along. What I do not understand is why we have not progressed. My grandmother had a fur coat, there are Inuit populations in Canada who eat and wear seal because they have to. We have alternatives with synthetics of fur which have developed enormously. I cannot understand the justification for using fur from animals when there are viable alternatives.

Emily Wall (Fur Designer) – A number of younger people in our industry have discovered that they love fur. I graduated three years ago and I come from a background where I spent time in a factory producing synthetic garments. There are vast amounts of waste created to produce 10,000 viscose leggings, which survive three washes and then go to landfill. As a furrier, I can use furs and then years later remodel them which gives it a long lifetime and makes it more sustainable.

Stephen Pound MP – When was the last time that you removed someone from your membership for breaching the Codes?

Mike Moser – Within the UK nobody has breached our Codes as we are not a massive association. We have around 50 members. The Norwegian Association expelled a farmer 3 years ago. It would all depend how severe the non-compliance was.

Lord Trees - I support the comment made by Sir Roger, this is a welfare group and we cannot stray too much into morality. I would prefer that nobody wore fur but whilst it is legal we have to think how sensibly we can improve welfare. By banning fur farming in Britain but allowing them to buy fur we simply exported the welfare problems out of our control without having really dealt with the issue. We might have been better to properly regulate our fur farms. The Welfur scheme only pertains to the EU and 10% are still wild caught, how are they killed? What proportion are trapped live?

Mike Moser – Welfur is a European initiative but other initiatives being developed in U.S and Canada. I worked with the International Trapping Group who standardised the use of traps. Trapping is highly regulated in all of the major trapping countries/jurisdictions (Canada, US, Europe and Russia) to ensure that it is sustainable and humane, controlling the types of traps and the seasons when they can be used for each species. Trappers generally take training courses before receiving their trapping licenses, and the sale and transport of fur pelts (nationally and internationally) is monitored and regulated.

Fiona Wright – Do you have any images of the farms that come under Welfur? Could sales have increased because the public are buying fur thinking it is faux? Where is the demand being driven from? Fashion designers?

Mike Moser – You would not make £160m of trade on low cost sales. The problem items are around £10-15 and you would have to sell a lot of them to make an impact. The designs on the catwalks will rarely be on the streets. The growth has been in the beautiful fur trims on hoods and mixtures of cashmere and fur. Accessories and gilets also have fur trims now. People want to buy fur. 70% of the 2016 Autumn Winter collections from the four major fashion weeks featured fur or shearling.

Emily Wall – I got defensive when Mike asked me to come as it is my field of work and I will defend it. I see a lot of fur farms and I have seen thousands of healthy mink. I can show you lots of pictures.

Claire Bass – We are seeing a growing list of retailers joining the fur free retailers and a number of designers like Giorgio Armani saying no there is enough synthetic versions not to use real fur.

Lorraine Platt – My organisation campaigns against animals being confined in small cages so can you give us an example of cages for a fox or raccoon dog in the fur trade? What size are they?

Mike Moser – It is an area of research for the scientists who work on fur welfare to look at cage sizes. The presumption that increasing cage size will improve welfare is incorrect and it is more about population in the cage. Smaller cages with less animals are better.

Peter Egan – Morality was considered when the law on fur farm ban came in. Young designers need to be more creative and not to use cruel products. It is so cheap and easy to use an animal and yet there are other options. I accept this is an animal welfare group but animals have a right to live and all of the science about how ok animals are in cages and how people want fur is irrelevant.

Emily Wall – A big decision I have made is to use real fur rather than cheaply using synthetic. There is a massive problem with “fast fashion” and the factory collapse in Bangladesh shows there are humans welfare issues related to this too.

Kerry McCarthy MP - It is nonsense to juxtapose cheap leggings that fall to pieces with a fur coat. It is perfectly possible to make products out of sustainable material such as demonstrated by Stella McCartney. As Sir Roger Gales said have we reached a point where we do not need to do it. I think it is an issue of morality but also welfare is being comprised. Fur farms are not able to meet the welfare needs of wild animals.

Emily Wall – A synthetic coat does not biodegrade. Other materials use for clothing such as wool also have welfare elements.

Lord Trees – I think outside of the law we need to go back to making it uncool to wear fur and to drive the sales down.

Rebecca Pow MP – That needs clear labelling. I have been into shops where I am not convinced about whether it is real or faux and that is a real problem.

Henry Smith MP – I think we will need to look at the labelling issue outside of this meeting.

The Parliamentary Division Bell indicating votes rang closing the meeting at this point