

Badger Cull in Tewkesbury is Not the Solution

Written by Rebecca Trimnell

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The announcement that trial badger culls are set to be carried out in Tewkesbury have been met with alarm from County Liberal Democrats who are in favour of exploring other alternative solutions.

The news that Tewkesbury is one of the areas where the trial is to be held came hours after a full council meeting at Shire Hall passionately debated the issue. Liberal Democrats who condemned the trial badger culls are concerned that an industry led shooting spree on badgers will almost certainly end in failure.

Councillor Klara Sudbury (LD, All Saints) said: "The focus should be based upon the scientific research that is accepted by Government, which had concluded that culling would be impractical, uneconomic and unpopular as well as the fact that 'controlled shooting' as proposed by the Government has not been tested in any scientific studies and so could increase the incidence of bovine TB in herds." (See note below.)

Councillor Sudbury added: "I want to make it clear that we are not anti farmer, but instead pro investment in effectively tackling bTB. Those in favour of culling seem to base their arguments solely on the misery bovine TB causes for farmers, which I accept is appalling but scientists warn these actions could increase incidents of the disease and so increase their misery. The response of Government to this problem must be investment in an effective cattle vaccine, acceptable to the EU, which allows UK cattle exports to continue. A badger vaccine could also help to reduce the disease in hotspot areas. Bio security measures that would see doors kept shut on farm buildings, electric fencing around farms, improved testing for TB in cattle to include both skin testing alongside blood tests, these will make a difference NOT badger culling in Tewkesbury."

Liberal Democrat Leader Councillor Jeremy Hilton said: "Farmers will bear the financial cost of a process that needlessly kills healthy badgers and which most likely will increase bovine TB in their herds. This is a no win solution which should not go ahead."

Note: The increase in incidences of bovine TB in herds is through what is known as the

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perturbation effect, i.e. a change in the behaviour of badgers and an increase in the range of their movements as a result of culling.