

Autumn hunting 'curfew' to stay

Despite never having been recommended by the Ornis Committee to date, this year the FKNK were outvoted, when at the last Ornis Committee Meeting it was proposed that the September afternoon hunting 'curfew', imposed by Government for the past 5 years should be retained. This afternoon ban, only serves to give more freedom of movement to abolitionist organizations whilst depriving the Maltese hunters from participating in a full open hunting season as opposed to their counterparts in all other European Member States for whom an open season is an open season.

The Committee therefore decided to recommend to the Minister that a 'curfew', albeit maybe with revised timings, should still be imposed this autumn. Government's decision could be intent on pleasing BirdLife Malta (BLM) even more if their request to extend such curfew to October is accepted. The Meeting outvoted a further proposal for 'collective punishment' should the recommended 'curfew' be somehow violated.

This Committee's decision to impose the 'curfew', may be, in the FKNK's opinion, inconclusive, since before the final vote was taken on whether or not a 'curfew' should be imposed, three previous related votes which proposed different 'curfews' did not manage to obtain a majority vote.

The Meeting also voted in support of having fixed open hunting seasons as from this autumn/winter. The Committee turned down another BLM proposal to further hassle and burden hunters during the autumn open hunting season.

Live-finch capturing will most likely not be permitted

Notwithstanding, that the FKNK is under the impression that live-finch capturing for this autumn is not a likely possibility, since Government fears it is not adequately prepared to apply the relative derogation in time, this topic, together with the application of derogation to permit live-capturing of *hunnable* species this autumn/winter, will be the agenda items for discussion at the next Ornis Committee meeting set for August.

It has to be emphasized that the FKNK has already, quite some time ago, supplied Government, the Opposition and the Malta Ornis Committee with adequate proposals and tools for the correct application of derogations to permit the Maltese traditional socio-cultural recreations of live-bird capturing in autumn/winter.

Finally, and for the benefit of its members, the FKNK will continue to work constructively in order that any further "gold-plating" (non-EU requisites) such as the autumn curfew will not reoccur and also to work incessantly such that live-finch capturing will have a correct derogation applied in the spirit of and in line with the PL/FKNK working group discussions since 2010 and the Joint media release of both parties dated the 4th March 2013.

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