The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP

Home Secretary

Home Office

2 Marsham Street

London

SW1P 4DF

Dear Home Secretary,

**Re: Daniel Rogers, Shepperton Swan Sanctuary, Felix Lane, Shepperton TW17 8NN**

I am writing regarding Daniel Rogers, a volunteer at the Shepperton Swan Sanctuary in Surrey. The Sanctuary rescue and treat swans and other wild birds who are injured and/or unwell, covering areas both across Surrey and well beyond. So far this year, the team have been called out to over 30 incidents and have treated more than double that number of casualties.

Daniel is running a petition on parliament.uk (<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/701064>) calling for the sale of catapults and associated ammunition as well as the carrying of catapults in public to be made illegal. The petition has already surpassed 20,000 signatures and the Government have responded committing to keeping this under review and noting the need to balance the risks against the need for legitimate use – notably by anglers.

I appreciate that the safe and legitimate usage of catapults does mean there are challenges when it comes to a blanket ban on carrying in public and welcome the Government’s balanced approach here.

However, as I’m sure you will agree, the damage caused by catapults cannot be ignored. Whether this is in relation to the death or injury of wildlife or the committing of anti-social behaviour and criminal damage in our communities, I have spoken to many residents in Surrey who have been affected.

I know that police officers across our county – and I am sure across the country – use their powers as much as possible to deal with offences where they occur. However, additional powers of seizure to prevent criminal behaviour occurring in the first place would, I’m sure, be of great benefit to communities.

Having spoken to many rural residents and representative groups to ensure I understand their needs, I wondered if you might consider a change in legislation similar to the ‘good reason’ approach to the carrying of knives and other weapons? Anglers with a legitimate reason to be carrying a catapult would be able to evidence this with the presence of bait and/or other fishing equipment, but officers would be more easily able to seize these from those unable to prove a legitimate purpose.

I welcome your thoughts on this approach and would be pleased to discuss this in more detail should you wish. You would also be very welcome to visit the Swan Sanctuary to hear more about their work and see first-hand some of the horrendous injuries they treat on a daily basis. I will be happy to arrange this with your office if it is of interest.

Yours sincerely,

**Ellie Vesey-Thompson**

Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey

Cc: The Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP – Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Rt Hon Dame Diana Johnson DBE MP – Minister for Policing and Crime Prevention

The Rt Hon Chris Philp MP – Shadow Home Secretary

Matt Vickers MP – Shadow Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire