Naturewatch Foundation Calls for Stronger Action on Catapult Misuse at Home Office Roundtable

Thursday 11 June, 2026

Naturewatch Foundation has joined police leaders, government officials, wildlife organisations and responsible catapult users in calling for stronger action to tackle the growing misuse of catapults across the UK.

On Tuesday, Naturewatch Foundation's Wildlife Crime Campaign Manager, Jim Clark, attended the Misuse of Catapults Roundtable at the Home Office, where he addressed Policing Minister Sarah Jones MP alongside representatives from government departments, senior police leadership, frontline officers, clinical experts and animal welfare organisations

The meeting reviewed mounting evidence linking catapult misuse to anti-social behaviour, wildlife crime, criminal damage and serious injuries to both people and animals.

Attendees heard alarming examples from across the country, including 105 recorded catapult-related incidents in a single Kent constituency over a 12-month period. Kent Police also reported receiving 277 animal-related catapult incident calls between 1 January and 7 June this year alone.

Clinical experts highlighted the severe consequences of misuse, presenting cases involving teenage victims who suffered facial and eye injuries after being struck with ball bearings. Several cases required surgery, and some resulted in permanent vision loss.

Jim Clark raised concerns about the role of social media platforms in normalising and encouraging dangerous behaviour. Attendees discussed how videos depicting catapult attacks and reckless use can rapidly spread online, amplifying harmful trends and reaching young audiences. Concerns were also raised about inconsistent moderation and limited engagement from some social media companies.

"The current system is failing to prevent children from accessing potentially dangerous weapons," said Jim Clark. *"Online retailers must be held accountable for the products they sell and the age-verification measures they have in place."*

The roundtable also identified significant challenges facing enforcement agencies, including inconsistent recording of catapult-related incidents across police forces, difficulties in assessing the power of seized devices without forensic testing, and the limited effectiveness of existing local measures such as Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs).

During the discussion, Jim Clark presented draft legislative proposals developed by Naturewatch Foundation to strengthen police powers and improve public safety. The proposals received considerable support from participants, many of whom agreed that primary legislation is now needed to address the growing problem.

Among the measures discussed was the introduction of a "legitimate purpose" test for carrying catapults in public, similar to provisions already used in knife legislation".

"The roundtable was extremely valuable in discussing how the misuse of catapults may be tackled" added Jim. "*I am encouraged that everyone around the table shares a commitment to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour in both urban and rural communities, as well as preventing the persecution of wildlife, I am looking forward to working with Members of Parliament to progress legislative change."*

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Related Keywords:

Wildlife :: Wildlife Crime :: Catapults :: Retail :: Ban :: Government :: Petition :: Birds :: Injury :: Crime :: Police :: Hunting ::

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About Naturewatch Foundation: Naturewatch Foundation is a UK-based animal welfare charity dedicated to ending cruelty and improving the lives of animals through campaigning, education and advocacy. For over 30 years, the charity has led initiatives to tackle illegal and unethical practices, including puppy farming, animal experiments and wildlife crime. By working with policymakers, enforcement agencies and the public, Naturewatch Foundation strives to make the world a kinder place for animals. Visit naturewatch.org to find out more.

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