

# PETER GIBSON MP



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

July 2022

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for your email about the Queen's Guards ceremonial caps.

I am aware of the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals' (PETA) ongoing campaign to replace the real fur used in the bearskin Queen's Guards ceremonial caps with faux fur and the corresponding debate scheduled for 11 July.

I am assured that bears are never hunted to order for use by the MOD. Bear pelts that are used for the Queen's Guards ceremonial caps are the byproducts of a necessary cull, licenced by Canadian authorities as part of a programme to manage the wild bear population, as opposed to fur being harvested from an animal being bred for this sole purpose. Therefore, any reduction in the number of bearskins procured by the MOD would not equate to a reduction in the numbers of bears being culled.

Guardsmen take great pride in wearing the bearskin cap which is an iconic image of Britain. It must look smart but also be practical for the guardsman to wear in wet or dry weather. While I understand that a man-made fabric manufactured by Ecopel was passed to an independent testing house, and PETA shared these results with the MOD, MOD analysis of the results shows that the faux fur does not in fact reach the standards needed to provide an effective replacement for the caps. The faux fur met only one of the five requirements to be considered as a viable alternative for ceremonial caps, as reiterated by MOD Minister of State Baroness Goldie on 23 May.

Whilst it met the basic standard for water absorption, it showed unacceptable rates of water shedding and performed poorly on the visual assessment. As the artificial fur sadly didn't meet the standards required for a ceremonial cap which is worn throughout the year and in all weathers, the MOD has no plans to take this faux fur forward.

As well as passing initial laboratory tests, any new fabric would have to meet with user approval for shape and comfort for a parade length of duty. This would look at whether the fabric could maintain its shape over time, whether it is comfortable and safe for the user - including ensuring any waterproof backing is breathable - and whether the faux fur is waterproof after the shaping, sewing and perforation that would be involved.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter Gibson".

PETER GIBSON MP

*Member of Parliament for Darlington*

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