

Tactical PDG updates for Wildlife Crime UKTCG (Tasking & Coordination Group) Public version



November 2021

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Badger Persecution Priority Delivery Group

Plan Owner Update:	Badger Persecution Priority Delivery Group
Submitted By:	DC Aaron FLINT – Lincolnshire Police

Your objectives:

- Improve and increase the recording of incidents, crime and intelligence.
- Improve the Investigation Process.
- Increase awareness of the priority across the UK.

How have you progressed your objectives since the last UKTCG? (November 2020)

1 - The PDG has requested that the NWCU identified the top 10 most prolific badger crime offenders in the UK. These offenders have been distributed to the PDG members for the relevant region for them to take ownership of, to ensure every intelligence development and enforcement opportunity is maximised.

2 - The Badger Trust continue to fund and deliver badger crime training to all forces nationally. This training is aimed to upskill all officers despite experience and is a foundation to build upon. The PDG have also begun two new initiatives –
a - an advanced practitioner course – which is aimed at experienced WCO's with a view to pushing their current knowledge and experience to the next level, allowing them to become SPOCs for their regions, there is also an expectation that they will go on to train others within their own force areas.

b – expert witness course – this is a course aimed at experienced ecologists and others with a vast knowledge of an area of wildlife crime, the purpose of the training is to increase the number of experts available for investigations in all of the priority areas; providing the attendees with the skills required to write expert reports/ statements and also giving them court room experience.

3 - PDG continues to lead a coordinated social media campaign in the run up to and over national badger day, to raise awareness and highlight the increase in Badger crime, sett disturbance and other related offences. This campaign was successfully ran over the last 3 years. This empowers our members to showcase their work within the PDG, the days have a national focus, on differing localised issues.

4 - In 2019, a UK-BPPDG newsletter was created and circulated nationally, via chair and partners. This is a quarterly newsletter that features updates from the group and gives accountability for the group actions. The newsletter also holds a feature section shining the spotlight on the work our partners do to assist the group.

5 – Through the NWCU's incident analysis report it has been identified that sett disturbance has risen by 200%. The PDG has spoken at length in relation to the reason for this increase and how to tackle it. We are in the process of inviting a representative from the Association of Local Government Ecologists (ALGE). We will also begin a media campaign to highlight the issue and ensure the law around badger setts is highlighted. On National Badger day (6th Oct 2020) a national Badger crime tool kit was launched to all forces and enforcers within the UK. This project was delivered due to members seeking feedback on recently highlighted investigations and identifying the current operational issues across the UK. Identifying good practice and focusing on areas of improvement - resulting in the items comprising the tool kit.

6 - PDG member Naturewatch Foundation have developed School Awareness Programme for teenagers on badger baiting. This has been adopted by several forces and Badger Groups. This is an ongoing project and has been reduced due to the pandemic, the project will resume in 2021. The Badger Trust also launched their own schools program, aimed at KS1 and KS2 children. On National Badger day 2021 the Badger Trust also produced a 12min film "The Secret Life of Badgers" aimed at KS1 and KS2 learners, with various resources to educate children.

How have you progressed the objectives in the NPCC action plan for Wildlife Crime?

1 – The BPPDG through the NWCU has identified the top 10 badger crime nominals across the country. The regional leads for these areas have been provided with the details of the nominals and have been encouraged to take ownership of the enforcement of these individuals.

2 – Both the current and previous chairs have represented the group nationally and internationally (Feb 2020) at the strategic accountability board help by NYPFCC, giving accountability and representation regionally and locally via accountability sessions and PDG newsletters.

3 – The PDG has assessed the picture of demand regionally and identified the requirement to upskill officers nationally. Upskilling has been implemented via various training sessions.

4 – I chair regular UK BPPDG meetings and sub group meetings, where we discuss and agree proportionate actions as a collective and will meet our strategy through accountability and delivery.

5 – The PDG has been rebuilt from "ground upwards" in respect of configuration, we have also developed a membership understanding around taking responsibility for delivering strategy. It was identified that further officer training was required to reduce the number offences/cases being lost. So, it was decided that on top of the 1 day badger crime awareness training provided by the Badger Trust, the PDG would produce an advanced practitioner training course with a view to taking attendees knowledge and training to the next level, with a caveat that those officers would be SPOC's for their region and also train others within their force/region.

6- BPPDG have re-purposed Operation Badger and have held a number of High-Profile events such as national badger day – also providing PDG newsletters. This engagement has spotlighted our work locally, nationally and internationally.

7 – We have adopted and projected our PDG strategy, we have delivered this through proportionate action and high-level partnership working. Our action plan is available for scrutiny where it is evidenced that a number of high value actions have been completed. Such as implementing key group members, opening up to other badger enforcement groups, and working in partnership whilst implementing national guidance.

8 – Problem solving is at the core of our regular PDG meetings. We have an accountable problem-solving plan in place which can be evidenced from our comprehensive action plan.

9 – Our PDG members are accountable to their respective REG's. We have recently identified the most prolific badger criminals and have disseminated their names to the relevant regions for intelligence development and enforcement action.

10 – The BPPDG provides accountability and increases awareness of the group, the work we do and our priorities by publishing a newsletter – having a strong online presence and networking across the UK. Our work is also championed by the BPPDG partner agencies such as the RSPCA, Badger Trust and Naturewatch foundation.

11 - The PDG continues to push (through the NWCUC) to improve legislation and to increase the recording of incidents, and intelligence. This is a difficult task and relies on individual force policies, I feel this will only meaningfully change when the offences become recordable. I, as chair, was interviewed for the UK ICCWC Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit, where I was able to put forward mine and the PDG's recommendations for changes to the legislation surrounding this priority.

12 – Intelligence sharing is in place within the partnership arena and within the Police force representatives. The NWCUC incident analysis figures have been forwarded to all forces and members of the PDG to raise awareness of the current issues.

13 – Various days of action have been conducted across the country targeting badger criminals. National Badger day involved a social media push to encourage the public to report crime to their respective forces and to showcase the hard work of the PDG.

15 – The BPPDG is in the process of implementing changes to APP to refresh this guidance in line with the changes in trends. The launch of the BPPDG badger crime tool kit is to be included in the college of policing online knowledge hub.

16 – BPPDG appointed a new CPS enforcement specialist lead who advises the enforcement leads and is an expert in wildlife crime. She is involved in the Up-Skill training and also is a point of contact within the CPS.

17 – The Chair has been liaising with the Chair of the new Cyber PDG to identify ways in which we can better focus on the dark web wildlife crime.

18 – BPPDG is working on a sustainable recording mechanism that is fit for the future and will be able to provide accurate recording figures from a range of sources. This will be drawn from police, volunteers and partners and will be able to support future objectives of the PDG and enhance any evidence to make offences recordable.

23 – As mentioned above the NWCUC has identified the top 10 most prolific badger criminals, these have been pushed out to the relevant regional members of the PDG, asking for ownership of the nominals be taken with a view to developing intelligence and targeting them.

What are your 3 year targets? Evidence how you are meeting them:

The three-year targets are:

Prevention

BPPDG quarterly Newsletter is ongoing, with the 6th edition to be released shortly.

Promoting the group via UK based badger groups is a good preventative measure, utilising communities-based volunteers to be our eyes and ears. This supports increased crime reporting.

The Schools project is ongoing and is being driven by PDG members. This will help educate the next generation and influence change. Specifically pushing the Naturewatch foundation and Badger Trust schools' packages.

Intelligence

PDG members actively seek to ensure intelligence is obtained and submitted. This is an ongoing commitment for the group. Members are encouraged to take ownership of the prolific offenders on their areas with a view to developing intelligence.

NWCU have identified our 10 top badger offenders and have agreed to produce intel packages around them once the new analysts are established in their roles. This will help us to ensure these offenders are more effectively targeted.

Enforcement

The first of the advanced practitioner training events is being delivered on the 23rd Nov, with a further 2 events to be scheduled for next year. The event is intended to upskill officers in badger crime investigations. By increasing knowledge and skills, officers have confidence to manage badger crime scenes either in person or remotely.

The PDG is also in the process of developing an expert witness course, with the aim of training identified experts in writing reports/ expert statements and court procedure, this is with a view to increasing the number of expert witnesses available for cases.

Both of the above training courses will ultimately achieve a consistent investigation and improved sentencing.

Badger Crime Tool Kit – has been rolled out nationally to regional SPOCs, who will then deliver this locally to WCOs. The kit provides investigative support to officers on the ground and will provide clarity in often complex badger crime situations.

Proactive enforcement initiatives have been carried out by Police Service members. Activity is driven by the analytical data compiled by NWCU and intelligence from Police and partners. Analytical data identifies hot spots linked to geographical location, methodology of crime and seasonal timelines. Initiatives such as National badger day, rural crime action week and other operational deployments have provided alternative enforcement opportunities.

The use of analytical data (provided by the NWCU) and intelligence led policing has allowed the PDG to make strong efforts to target the top offenders from around the country. We look to target these criminals not only for badger offences but also for alternative offences. Also, our members have agreed to take ownership of these offenders, ensuring they are kept at the operational forefront, thus keeping the most dangerous badger criminals diverted from wildlife crime.

Other Issues:

Demand brought about by illegal Hunting that bleeds across into the Badger PDG.

Bat Crime Priority Delivery Group

Plan Owner Update:	Bat Crime Priority Delivery Group
Submitted By:	PS 10 Shaun Doble – Dyfed Powys Police

Your objectives:

To reduce bat crime by working with key stakeholders to raise awareness of responsibilities and criminal offences against bats, promoting a preventative approach and improving the submission of intelligence and standards of investigation relating to bats across the UK. To identify and bring to the attention of the TCG any obstacles preventing delivery of our objective.

Prevention working group (BCT lead)

- Should contain at a minimum representatives of the Police, each SNCO, Local Government planners and ecologists and appropriate NGO's. Stand in's should be arranged if lead contact is not available.
- To report to the PDG lead, on initiatives undertaken to prevent bat crime and other work undertaken in support of our initiative.
- To identify how many incidents of crimes being prevented were recorded in 2014 providing a base line against which future performance will be measured.
- To identify and report on good crime prevention practice.
- Produce at least two newsletters a year to be widely circulated containing information that can be used to prevent bat crime.

Intelligence working group (NWCU lead)

- Should contain at a minimum representatives of NWCU, regional enforcement groups and SNCO's.
- To report to the PDG lead, on levels of bat crime recorded since the last meeting and what work has been undertaken in support of our objective.
- To identify groups, individuals and companies suspected of being involved in organised bat crime. To produce and disseminate intelligence packages relating to identified suspects, to develop intelligence and undertake investigations into each package.
- To identify forces who are not submitting intelligence relating to bat crime and to engage with them to address the situation.

Enforcement working group (Police lead)

- Should contain at a minimum representatives of NWCU, regional enforcement groups, CPS, Natural England, Local Government and Bat Conservation Trust.
- To identify best practice and deficiencies in the investigation and prosecution of bat offences across the UK. To undertake, on request, reviews of investigations.
- To identify forces who currently report positive outcomes of investigations, at a rate, below the UK average and to engage with them to establish if performance could be improved.
- To report to the PDG lead on the work undertaken since the last meeting in support of our objective.

How have you progressed your objectives since the last UKTCG? (November 2020)

Prevention working group (BCT lead)

The group currently totals 31 members of which 22 attended the last PDG which is the highest number for the last 4 years. Each Police regional enforcement group, NWCU and the Crown prosecution service are represented well with stand in's attending where necessary. Natural Resources Wales, Nature Scot and Natural England are represented. We have representation from the association of local government ecologists and chartered institute of ecology and environmental management (CIEEM). The Bat Conservation Trust is always represented at the meetings being the backbone of the group.

- To report to the PDG lead, on initiatives undertaken to prevent bat crime and other work undertaken in support of our initiative.

Operation Wingspan. The Bat Crime phase of Operation Wingspan was delivered from 1st February 2021 to 31st March 2021. The majority of activities relate to communications. Due to the nature of bat crime and Coronavirus restrictions, opportunities for further proactive interventions were limited.

Bat conservation trust (BCT).

Demand is high for the services that BCT's Wildlife crime project provides, both at a strategic level on the priority delivery group and more recently on the PAW training group as well as in such areas as 'position statements' for Sars CoV 2 and police investigations, to LINK based challenges on CPS outcomes on prosecutions. The day-to-day operational work currently comes from the public reporting offences against bats and priority police requests for investigative guidance on bat related occurrences and the need for impact statements. The project as of September 2021 has oversight on one hundred and one police incidents. During the same period in 2020 it had seventy-five police incidents. Working with the police the project has several court cases ongoing and has achieved five restorative justice outcomes in the form of financial reparations for bat offences, in the main for the destruction of bat roosts.

- To identify how many incidents of crimes being prevented were recorded in 2014 providing a base line against which future performance will be measured.

Inter-group working between NWCU and BCT have produced an analysis of bat crime between 2012 and 2020 which will prove invaluable on establishing a base line of reporting and recording. The analysis is based on the incident figures that are supplied by the BCT. We now have nine years of data - which is a phenomenal tool to give us insight into trends, seasonality, hotspots and repeat offenders.

- To identify and report on good crime prevention practice.

Operation Wingspan. Engagement was conducted with regional bat groups. During which they were requested to conduct proactive visits to roosts they deemed to be at risk of criminality, along with a WCO. Due to bat group policy in relation to Covid19 this request was generally declined.

Bat conservation trust - The project continues its crime prevention conservation work with the police PDG using proactive measures such as vulnerable roost visits through to education and training. Working with our PDG partners, future development of documents that can alert statutory bodies regarding allegations made to the police on wildlife offences such as pre planning scrub clearance, as well as engagement with ecologists on the questions to ask before accepting development species survey work is just one direction of focus. The project this year alone has given training to Dorset,

Staffordshire, Yorkshire and Hertfordshire Police as well as giving a lecture at Plymouth University on one of its law modules. With the continuous challenges on funding and capacity the project strives in partnership to protect bats and their habitats in line with BCT conservation priorities, whilst ensuring offenders do not benefit from their illegal actions.

- Produce at least two newsletters a year to be widely circulated containing information that can be used to prevent bat crime.

Newsletters have not yet been produced, they will be re-commenced once our social media platform is established, estimated to be early 2022.

Intelligence working group (NWCUC lead)

- To report to the PDG lead, on levels of bat crime recorded since the last meeting and what work has been undertaken in support of our objective.

BCT and REG's have reported level and types of bat related crime to the PDG, this is discussed during PDG meetings and communicated as and when necessary.

- To identify groups, individuals and companies suspected of being involved in organised bat crime. To produce and disseminate intelligence packages relating to identified suspects, to develop intelligence and undertake investigations into each package.

Due to the nature of Bat crime, bats are not specifically targeted like game, fish, etc. but more as a pest or inconvenience and due to this are persecuted. No organised bat crime has ever been reported or discovered during investigations. The majority of offenders are homeowners and property developers. However intelligence reports have been disseminated and criminal investigations launched reactively.

Dorset Police have dealt with two cases of "urban exploring" a new phenomenon that has swept the UK over the past 12 months.

- To identify forces who are not submitting intelligence relating to bat crime and to engage with them to address the situation.

REG's have previously been identified for low levels of engagement over the past two years, this has been addressed. The majority of forces that do not have dedicated rural and wildlife crime groups have lower levels of recording and reporting, this has been identified as an issue and measures are in place to assist non-specialist officers with recording and investigating bat crime.

Enforcement working group (Police lead – position currently vacant)

Specific, individual local governments are not represented on the group however the "Local government association" have been invited to join the group as they represent 328 of 333 councils in England and Wales.

- To identify best practice and deficiencies in the investigation and prosecution of bat offences across the UK. To undertake, on request, reviews of investigations. Communication between forces and the BCT has improved and advice from the BCT wildlife crime project has been invaluable to investigating officers, this has been fed back to the PDG chair. The Bat PDG chair and BCT investigations officer are compiling a toolkit specifically designed for the investigation of bat crimes, this is in the later stages of development and will be submitted to NWCUC and College of Policing for authorisation and subsequent addition to the Knowledge hub. This investigative tool will be made available to all officers via the hub.

- To identify forces who currently report positive outcomes of investigations, at a rate, below the UK average and to engage with them to establish if performance could be improved.

An analysis of bat crime has been completed, using data from 2021-2020 and this can be used to identify forces reported crimes and types of offences however does not include outcomes of the crimes. Reporting of outcomes is improving with the assistance of BCT, NWCUC and resolution of issues surrounding information sharing protocols. Outcome reporting is on the next PDG agenda.

- To report to the PDG lead on the work undertaken since the last meeting in support of our objective.

All work, as listed above, has been reported to the lead. Relationships between members of the PDG are improving with a relative period of stability of group's members and rising numbers of dedicated rural and wildlife crime units across the UK.

How have you progressed the objectives in the NPCC action plan for Wildlife Crime?

Demand is high for the services that BCT's Wildlife crime project provides, both at a strategic level on the priority delivery group and more recently on the PAW training group as well as in such areas as 'position statements' for Sars CoV 2 and police investigations, to LINK based challenges on CPS outcomes on prosecutions.

The day-to-day operational work currently comes from the public reporting offences against bats and priority police requests for investigative guidance on bat related occurrences and the need for impact statements.

The project as of September 2021 has oversight on one hundred and one police incidents. During the same period in 2020 it had seventy-five police incidents.

Working with the police the project has several court cases ongoing and has achieved five restorative justice outcomes in the form of financial reparations for bat offences, in the main for the destruction of bat roosts.

In addition,

- there has been one police caution for a disturbance offence,
- one conditional discharge with one hundred fifty-pound court costs for the loss of a roost,
- And more recently the project provided investigative advice and an impact statement which resulted in the defendant pleading guilty at court for the destruction of a roost, penalties exceeding sixteen hundred pounds were issued.

These outcomes are a testimony to the partnership work of the Bat Conservation Trust/PDG and the police during this pandemic, yet these results are reactive to offences already committed.

The project recognises this and so continues its crime prevention conservation work with the police PDG using proactive measures such as vulnerable roost visits through to education and training.

Working with our PDG partners, future development of documents that can alert statutory bodies regarding allegations made to the police on wildlife offences such as pre planning scrub clearance, as well as engagement with ecologists on the questions to ask before accepting development species survey work is just one direction of focus.

The project this year alone has given training to Dorset, Staffordshire, Yorkshire and Hertfordshire Police as well as giving a lecture at Plymouth University on one of its law modules.

With the continuous challenges on funding and capacity the project strives in partnership to protect bats and their habitats in line with BCT conservation priorities, whilst ensuring offenders do not benefit from their illegal actions.

Police Scotland's Bat Crime phase of Operation Wingspan was delivered from 1st February 2021 to 31st March 2021. The majority of activities relate to communications. Due to the nature of bat crime and Coronavirus restrictions, opportunities for further proactive interventions were limited. The following was undertaken by Corporate Communications/Police Scotland Wildlife Crime Unit:

- Digital assets developed for social media, provided to divisions and partners
- 3 x social media posts via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
- Website news article
- Refreshed web content
- Guidance material provided to C3
- Operation Wingspan and Bat Crime phase promoted via the 'Crimes against Nature' podcast in which DS Telford was the featured interviewee.
- Article published on the Built Environment Forum Scotland website promoting Operation Wingspan and best practise for developers re bat roosts.
- Engagement with regional bat groups, including presentations regarding Operation Wingspan.

The Police Scotland Wildlife Crime Unit and Nature Scot resourced a virtual 'stall' at the Scottish Housing and Build to Rent Conference in order to raise awareness of best practise concerning bat roosts. During which a best practice presentation was delivered to construction executives. This event is pitched at executives of large development companies, who can cascade the message down throughout their organisations.

Engagement was conducted with regional bat groups. During which they were requested to conduct proactive visits to roosts they deemed to be at risk of criminality, along with a WCO. Due to bat group policy in relation to Covid19 this request was generally declined. However, two proactive visits were conducted.

Police service of Northern Ireland have reported the new look wildlife crime advice and reports website that gives practical advice to members of the public in relation to bat crime and useful tips and contacts. The website covers all aspects of wildlife crime relevant to PSNI.

A National poster has been produced to educate the public of offences against bats and their habitats, this has been sent to all UK forces which are able to add their own Force crest and contact information.

BCT have developed a certificate that will be awarded to any officer or investigator that has carried out commendable work when investigating offences against bats.

What are your 3 year targets? Evidence how you are meeting them:

1. Prevention: Increase awareness of bat crime and wildlife crime in the press and media. The PDG/BCT to generate 2 newsletters per annum and to publish

successful convictions/disposals in public media. BCT regularly publish advice, events and good work via their social media platforms.

2. Intelligence: Improve the flow of intelligence about criminality to inform enforcement action, identify offenders and prevent further criminality. Improved dissemination of intelligence from NWCU/Forces in order to increase likelihood of successful prosecutions.
3. Enforcement: Improve timeliness and standard of investigations and prosecutions. Improved education/processes in the investigation and prosecution of bat crime via aide memoirs, distribution of case studies of successful cases and specialist training for enforcement group members.

3 year targets will be discussed and revised by the PIE leads as part of the Prevention, Intelligence and Enforcement Strategies in light of the increased reporting of bat related incidents in 2021 and data analysis results between 2012- 2020.

Other Issues:

In 2019 the Bat conservation trust wildlife crime project provided advice, support and expertise in relation to 174 cases of wildlife crime that were reported to the police (and countless more cases that were not recorded) and provided training to hundreds of police officers. The BCT project is no longer funded and support is required to continue to provide and expand this critical service. Efforts are ongoing to seek funding to firstly ensure this service is continued but with the hope to expand in the future as without this service the PDG would be at a great disadvantage.

CITES Priority Delivery Group

Plan Owner Update:	CITES Priority Delivery Group
Submitted By:	Liz Down - Border Force

Your objectives: CITES Priority Delivery Group.

Ivory, Reptiles (EU Traffic), Medicinal and health supplements, Trade in Raptors, European eel and CITES listed Timber.

To tackle the illegal import, export, transshipment of protected species listed in the CITES Appendices and Annexes of the EU Wildlife Trade regulations from non-EU countries. Additionally, to ensure all domestic sales of these protected species are compliant with UK & retained EU legislation.

How have you progressed your objectives since the last UKTCG?

Ivory: Ongoing impact of the pandemic includes a reduction in the number of BF referral cases being managed by Police Constabularies. There are ongoing investigations still being conducted by UK Police Forces in relation to illegal ivory sales/exports and some notable prosecution successes. CPDG members have continued to support the delayed implementation of the Ivory bill now expected in 2022 and subsequent design of the registration system for exempted items.

Reptiles: Border activity has been focused largely on permitting issues of an administrative nature. Work is ongoing to determine whether the seizures made to date are deliberate attempts to smuggle or are because of trader unfamiliarity with the new post-EU Exit licencing requirements. Recommendation is that reptiles remain a priority.

Medicinal and Health supplements: New products containing controlled ingredients continue to be identified and intelligence actively shared across European law enforcement via EU Twix. E-commerce trade continues to be a major factor in the operation of this illegal trade. The impact of COVID Safe Systems of Work continues to impact on BF enforcement capability, which has in turn reduced seizure numbers for these commodities.

Trade in Raptors: Work to address the export invoice issue for 2022 has already started with the export agents.

European Eel (Anguilla Anguilla): Op LAKE is ongoing bringing together a wide group of enforcement partners. Some operational work was undertaken by enforcement agencies, limited by Covid safe systems of work still in place.

CITES Listed Timber; Following the decision made at CoP18 and the adoption of a new annotation, musical instruments, musical instrument parts and shipments less than 10kgs in weight are exempt from controls - this has had a significant impact on BF seizure figures. Border Force are working with RBG Kew on the compressed Agarwood powder issue and have supplied samples for testing. This trend needs to be adequately monitored.

Update on Actions from your last Priority Delivery Group meeting:	
Action	Update
Collate list of European reptile & parrot shows	Ongoing
New organigrams for CPDG attendees to be provided	Ongoing
BF to supply non nominal seizure stats for Agarwood to RBG Kew	Completed
APHA provide update on Wildlife Inspectors	Ongoing

What are your 3 year targets? Evidence how you are meeting them:
To monitor the enforcement response to the UK national CITES priorities, ensuring they are fit for purpose following consultation with the WCCAG. To promote increased collaboration between enforcement partners on training and operational issues.

Other Issues:
Multi agency activity during the latest of the INTERPOL “Thunder” operations. Training, both national and International, has been scaled back due to pandemic, although a further 200 UK officers have received CITES EU Exit and enforcement training via Skype during this period. Online training has also been developed and delivered, including a week-long training event delivered to Malawi, co-ordinated by the JNCC which included Kew and Border Force inputs. Border Force have also delivered bespoke training events to enforcement officers in Peru, Georgia, and Thailand, in addition to assisting the CITES secretariat with regional workshops.

Cyber Enabled Wildlife Crime Priority Delivery Group

Plan Owner Update:	Cyber Priority Delivery Group
Submitted By:	T/Detective Sergeant M Walker - Merseyside Police

Your objectives:

In March 2021 a new Chair and Deputy Chair/Secretary for the Cyber Enabled Wildlife Crime PDG were appointed. The new Chair is T/D/Sgt Walker from Merseyside Police, an officer who has been working in Digital Policing since 2014, across different Law Enforcement bodies and several different digital disciplines. The Deputy Chair/Secretary is the Head of Intelligence for an animal welfare body, with a vast range of law enforcement and digital investigation experience.

Since the inception of the new Cyber PDG work has gone on to recruit a small number of core members and the drafting of the following new set of 12 objectives, which are designed to complement the NPCC strategy.

Prevention

- Develop plans at the strategic, regional, and local levels when appropriate
- Raise the profile of cyber enabled wildlife crime
- Increase awareness via partners, the public and law enforcement agencies
- Set objectives to tackle wildlife crimes

Intelligence

- Develop academic engagement
- Develop a clear communication plan
- Increase developmental intelligence sharing between stakeholders with a focus on quality

Enforcement

- Identify and provide evidence for changes to legislation and work with partners to provide meaningful change
- Coordinate a national and international cross border response to cyber enabled wildlife crime
- Focus on online and dark-web wildlife crime
- Increase the base understanding of cyber capabilities and their application in investigations for PWCO's and associated wildlife investigators

How have you progressed your objectives since the last UKTCG? (November 2020)

As the objectives have been set after the last UKTCG there is no update. There has however been progress with regards to a number of the new objectives and a number of actions surrounding the staffing of the group.

- Terms of reference drawn up and produced for the PDG covering membership and objectives
- In addition to the new Chair/Deputy Chairship further members have been recruited from Academia, Government and the Third Sector

In terms of the Cyber PDG Objectives the following progress has been made:

Prevention

- **Increase awareness via partners, the public and law enforcement agencies:** Initial plans regarding improving social media communications with regard to cyber wildlife offences

Intelligence

- **Develop academic engagement:** PDG member from Academia recruited

Enforcement

- **Identify and provide evidence for changes to legislation and work with partners to provide meaningful change:** PDG members have engaged with various ongoing reviews into the investigation of wildlife offences
- **Coordinate a national and international cross border response to cyber enabled wildlife crime:** Overtures made to build links with Cyber investigators in other jurisdictions and ascertain cyber wildlife investigative status
- **Focus on online and dark-web wildlife crime:** Research taskings made in relation to online trade in the darkweb, and a campaign of engagement being devised to interact with specialist units. Also information capture is ongoing from the survey described below
- **Increase the base understanding of cyber capabilities and their application in investigations for PWCO's and associated wildlife investigators:** A detailed survey has been created. This survey is designed to capture data with regard to the current cyber skills and resources held by Wildlife Crime Officers, so that the PDG can begin to address common areas of skills deficit, improving capability at a force level.

How have you progressed the objectives in the NPCC action plan for Wildlife Crime?

Covered in section above

What are your 3 year targets? Evidence how you are meeting them:

As mentioned, the PDG targets have only been recently set.

Other Issues:

Operation Visualise has been launched and is a service open to WCO's within UK forces and focuses on the enhancement of Visual Evidence (most often CCTV footage).

Freshwater Pearl Mussel Priority Delivery Group

Plan Owner Update:	Freshwater Pearl Mussel Priority Delivery Group
Submitted By:	Iain Sime, NatureScot

Your objectives:

In March 2021 we reaffirmed our group's objective. The chair of the group remains in NatureScot, the Statutory Nature Conservation Body in Scotland. We appointed a vice-chair – the wildlife crime lead for N Division in Police Scotland. And the enforcement, awareness and intelligence leads remain in Police Scotland, NatureScot and NWCU.

The group's objective is focussed on awareness raising and is:

To raise awareness of the threat posed by criminality and help communities in hotspots to prevent criminality and identify offenders

How have you progressed your objectives since the last UKTCG? (November 2020)

In order to contribute to the overall objective, the following actions were undertaken since Nov 2020:

We have continued to support a number of ongoing actions.

Training was provided to ranger staff, particularly seasonal staff who were employed to support the increased 'staycation' tourism boom during summer 2021.

Of particular note, 'Operation Wingspan', a Police Scotland led partnership operation, focused on freshwater pearl mussels during July to October 2021. A communications strategy was implemented including a poster campaign, articles, a podcast, rural watch alerts and social media posts. A social media toolkit was developed for partners. The reach of the FWPM post has not been ascertained but across the operation the reach of the social media posts was approximately 2.6 million.

Awareness was further raised amongst Police Scotland officers and staff via an internal intranet article, and guidance material was provided to the Police Scotland control rooms to ensure incidents regarding pearl mussels were processed correctly. Filming of freshwater pearl mussels, the threat posed by wildlife crime and the PDG's work also took place in spring 2021 for BBC Two's 'Great British Railway Journeys' programme – due for broadcast in early 2022.

How have you progressed the objectives in the NPCC action plan for Wildlife Crime?

The outstanding objective from the NPCC action plan is "to identify and provide evidence for changes to legislation..." This needs to be picked up during late 2021/early 2022 – there is a proposal from the fishery sector in Scotland to extend the power of fishery bailiffs to include freshwater pearl mussels. This should be referred to the legislative PAW subgroup in Scotland to determine if it is appropriate and feasible (it is perhaps worth noting that salmon/freshwater fishery enforcement legislation is complex in Scotland, and different to the legislation in England).

What are your 3 year targets? Evidence how you are meeting them:

Prevention: Increase awareness of freshwater pearl mussels and wildlife crime in the press and media. The PDG aims to generate >3 news releases that feature in local and national media per annum.

Intelligence: Improve the flow of intelligence about criminality to inform enforcement action, identify offenders and prevent further criminality. 100% of suspected crimes to be reported directly to the police.

Enforcement: Over 3 years from 2019, at least 8 pro-active operations to be initiated and actioned by the police, in collaboration with key partners.

All of the targets have been met. It is also worth noting that, during 2021 there was a pronounced drought in north and west Scotland during the late spring/summer which resulted in an increase in reports of, and awareness about, pearl mussels that were stranded and at risk during the low flow conditions. The proactive work of 'Operation Wingspan' further increased awareness.

Other Issues:

1. During 2021 a research project was undertaken by Marine Scotland Science to investigate major die-offs of freshwater pearl mussels in 3-4 small watercourses. In two of those, wildlife crime has been suspected of being the major contributory factor in the die offs. This project followed a finding from Sweden that mass mortalities of pearl mussels were the result of a previously unknown pathogen. Samples were collected from all populations, and two control populations from unaffected regions, during summer 2021. Marine Scotland Science's results failed to detect the pathogen recorded in Sweden or any other potential sources of infection that might suggest a pathogenic reason for the mortalities. Therefore, at this stage, the most likely reason for mortalities continues to be wildlife crime – justifying the continuation of a project to deter such activity at those locations. (Note: this action helps contribute to academic engagement in NPCC strategy).
2. As mentioned above, a significant drought affected a number of pearl mussel populations in late spring/summer 2021 in Scotland. This resulted in a number of communities helping to translocate pearl mussels to ensure they did not dry out - several social media posts at the time helped raise awareness. Given that it is likely that similar extreme weather conditions will re-occur in the future, guidance is being prepared to inform the public about the issue, how/when they can help and to help ensure that they do not inadvertently break the law when trying to help the conservation of pearl mussels. A comms strategy to accompany the publication of such guidance will be implemented during Spring 2022.

Poaching Priority Delivery Group – England & Wales

Plan Owner Update:	Poaching Priority Delivery Group – England & Wales
Submitted By:	Inspector Amy Hunter – North Yorkshire Police

Your objectives:

3-year targets as at November 2020:

- A consistent approach, following established best practice in tackling poaching and hare coursing across England & Wales
- A measurable reduction in poaching and hare coursing
- Advice on methods readily available to help deter and prevent poaching and hare coursing
- Measurable increase in awareness and recognition of the issues associated with poaching and hare coursing

How have you progressed your objectives since the last UKTCG? (November 2020)

Amy Hunter took over as Chair in May 2021, since this time there have been two PPDG meetings. A number of new members have also joined the PPDG over the last few weeks/months.

The PPDG have worked with Crimestoppers to support the launch of their Rural crime campaign which began in August 2021. Some of the members have supported this by writing blogs around the impact of poaching on the community.

Op Galileo brought together all forces to co-ordinate the approach to Hare Coursing nationally. Analytical work by the NWCUC has identified the 'Top 10' Tier 1 offenders. In addition, officers have been working closely with Defra to support proposed changes to legislation around Hare Coursing. This has been supported by the PPDG.

BASC produced a Podcast in September 2021 which was supported by the Chair and members of the PPDG.

Work is ongoing with the CPS to improve the standard of prosecution files and to create 'best practice' guides, and to improve the use of sanctions such as CBOs. Regional Enforcement Groups have been encouraged to try and collaborate. Super CPNs have worked to good effect in the South of England. Community Impact Statements are also being explored.

A decision has been made to discontinue the newsletter that was previously produced by BASC for the PPDG, this took a great deal of time and effort to produce, and the PPDG are now exploring alternative means of highlighting news, such as via Social Media.

How have you progressed the objectives in the NPCC action plan for Wildlife Crime?

As above

What are your 3 year targets? Evidence how you are meeting them:

3 year targets as above.

The refreshed focus on the group is not necessarily to reduce reports of hare coursing and poaching - I would like to see an increase in reports, as we know that the issue is massively under-reported. As a PDG I would like us to focus on improving the confidence of the communities in reporting hare coursing and poaching, and in improving our response. This in turn will support any national analytical work with the NWCUC.

There is an intention to improve CPD/training for Police and partners in relation to Poaching/Hare Coursing, many PPDG members have already expressed an intention to support this and host webinars on specific topics.

Poaching Priority Delivery Group – Scotland

Plan Owner Update:	PAW Scotland Poaching & Coursing Priority Delivery Group
Submitted By:	John Bruce – British Deer Society

Your objectives:

“To build a greater level of public awareness of poaching and coursing as serious wildlife crime, to continue to build working relations, communications and information share between all agencies and organisations and rural communities in order to increase prevention activity and enforcement.”

How have you progressed your objectives since the last UKTCG? (November 2020)

Raise community trust and awareness

- Operation Wingspan is a Police Scotland led partnership operation, delivered from October 2020 – October 2021, incorporating interventions, preventions and enforcement of wildlife crime. From July - October 2021 the operation focussed on poaching and hare coursing. A communications strategy was implemented, including news pieces, poster campaign, articles in partner's publications, podcast, social media posts, rural watch alerts and electronic signage at train stations. A social media toolkit was developed for partners. Across the operation as a whole the reach of the social media posts was approximately 2.6 million. The hare coursing post received the greatest response of all the posts.
- As part of the Operation Wingspan poaching phase Reporting Scotland and STV News filmed a poaching feature. PDG members were interviewed along with a farmer. The estimated TV ratings of these news pieces was almost 800,000.
- WCLO's visited members of the agricultural community and distributed posters to display on their land and also aid memoirs which advised on processes to follow should they witness hare coursing.
- WCLO's and partners raised awareness of poaching and hare coursing via a stall at Perth game fair, utilising Police Scotland's wildlife crime trailer.
- Fish Poaching awareness event conducted Awareness event conducted in Ayrshire by Ayrshire Rivers Trust, Fisheries Management Scotland and Local Wildlife Crime Officers. During which various scenarios were discussed, a number of demonstrations of legal / illegal practices were given and there was a range of exhibits
- East Lothian WCO conducted a number of events across his region offering advice to stakeholders and encouraging farmer participation by reducing vehicular access to private land.

Facilitate intelligence and incident reporting

- Significant work conducted with Police Scotland communications division to improve wildlife crime reporting practices. This includes flowcharts outlining reporting procedures, FAQ's, amendments to resource management system to allow control

room staff to promptly identify which WCO's are on duty and implementation of divisional wildlife crime mailboxes.

- WCLO's visited members of the agricultural community and distributed posters to display on their land and also aid memoirs which advised on processes to follow should they witness hare coursing.

Increased prevention and enforcement activity

- During the poaching phase of Operation Wingspan WCO's conducted visits to Licensed Venison Dealers. Throughout October a number of hare coursing days of action are being delivered across the country, utilising roads policing resources and police quad bikes where available.
- 11 freezers obtained for storage of wildlife carcasses to support effective investigations. These are located across the country.

How have you progressed the objectives in the NPCC action plan for Wildlife Crime?

The NPCC strategy has been progressed within the Police Scotland strategy as a whole, but there are no additional specific actions from the Poaching PDG.

Raptor Persecution Priority Delivery Group – England & Wales

Plan Owner Update:	Raptor Persecution Priority Delivery Group – England & Wales
Submitted By:	Insp Matt Hagen – North Yorkshire Police

Your objectives:

To greatly reduce the incidence of raptor persecution and increase the number and range of breeding raptors by:

- a. Increased awareness of raptor crime, and efforts to combat it, amongst all sections of society.
- b. Ensuring effective deterrence, detection and prosecution measures are in place.
- c. Increased collaboration by promoting a multi-agency partnership approach to promote education, training and prevention.

How have you progressed your objectives since the last UKTCG? (November 2020)

Annotated numbers below reference specific objectives in the NPCC action plan (see section below for NPCC objectives):

1. Terms of reference have been introduced for the PDG, clarifying the terms of membership engagement. O1, 2, 3, 4
2. An Enforcement sub-group has been set up to progress objective (b) above. O6, 10, 12
3. Membership has been increased and widened to include regional reps and agencies such as the CPS. O2, 6, 10, 12, 16
4. Regular meetings have been set up with the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme, ensuring effective practice in suspected poisoning incidents. O3, 10, 12
5. There have been 13 multi-agency operations coordinated countrywide. O3, 5, 10
6. Officer has joined the NWCUC from NE to assist with education and enforcement. O3
7. The RSPB have produced a comprehensive guide to investigation for officers. O1, 8, 10
8. The action plan has been reviewed and reduced from 8 pages of A3 to 3 pages of A4 and is much easier to navigate and understand. O1, 2, 3, 4
9. Contribution to the Yorkshire Dales National Park management plan (C5) and Nidderdale AONB group on raptor persecution. O10
10. The instigation of a Hen Harrier breeding season discussion group between NE and the RSPB, promoting collaboration to reduce persecution and ensure breeding success. 2021 was the best year for hen harrier breeding in England since the 1960s. O1, 10
11. Engagement with the UNODC assessment of the UK's response to wildlife crime. O13
12. Multi-agency training days planned and already being delivered for wildlife crime officers. O1, 3, 6, 10

On the collaboration objective, members of the PDG have directly contributed to: The Peak District Bird of Prey initiative, the Durham Moors Red Kite Project, the North York Moors National Park Forum, an estate led merlin ringing programme and engagement with the Hen Harrier Recovery Plan. O10

How have you progressed the objectives in the NPCC action plan for Wildlife Crime?

See annotated numbers above referencing specific objectives in the NPCC action plan.

NPCC action plan:

1. Adopt a clear philosophy based upon intelligence led and evidence based approaches, inclusive partnership, infrastructure that drives improvement, prioritisation against greatest risk, effective prevention, engagement and communication
2. Develop plans at the strategic, regional, and local levels
3. Recognise and plan for both operational and organisational requirements
4. Agree priorities and support those through sound infrastructure
5. Incrementally build on successes which are appropriately resourced, tested and assessed for benefits
6. Raise the profile of wildlife crime
7. Set objectives to tackle these wildlife crimes
8. Utilise effective problem solving
9. Develop strong links with all Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU) through a regional structure to tackle Organised Crime Groups (OCG) causing significant harm to wildlife
10. Increase awareness via partners, the public and law enforcement agencies
11. Identify and provide evidence for changes to legislation and work with partners to provide meaningful change
12. Increase developmental intelligence sharing between stakeholders with a focus on quality
13. Coordinate a national and international cross border response to wildlife crime
14. Establish senior officer leads for all police forces in tackling Wildlife Crime and raising internal police awareness
15. Continue to develop the briefing notes available on the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice (APP) to assist investigators and call handlers
16. Train and develop the understanding of wildlife crime for members of the Crown Prosecution Service and courts to improve convictions and deliver proportionate sentencing
17. Focus on online and dark-web wildlife crime
18. Widen the number of recordable wildlife crimes so as to better understand and reflect the range and scale of the portfolio
19. Develop academic engagement
20. Secure future permanent funding for NWCU and dedicated PWCO's
21. Seek accreditation for national training for PWCOs from the College of Policing
22. Develop a clear communication plan
23. Strengthen the approach to tackling Organised Crime Groups

What are your 3 year targets? Evidence how you are meeting them:

The action plan for the group has been recently updated and this will form the basis of the three-year-plan for the PDG to focus on.

Raptor Persecution Priority Delivery Group – Scotland

Plan Owner Update:	Scottish Raptor Persecution Priority Delivery Group
Submitted By:	DCS Laura McLuckie – Police Scotland

Your objectives:

- Raise community trust and awareness
- Facilitate intelligence and incident reporting
 - Increased prevention and enforcement activity

How have you progressed your objectives since the last UKTCG? (November 2020)

Raise community trust and awareness

Operation Wingspan is a Police Scotland led partnership operation, delivered from October 2020 – October 2021, incorporating interventions, preventions and enforcement of wildlife crime. From May-July 2021 the operation focused on raptor persecution. A communications strategy was implemented, including news pieces, poster campaign, articles in partners publications, podcast, social media posts and electronic signage at train stations. A social media toolkit was developed for partners. Across the operation the reach of the social media posts was approximately 2.6 million.

Police Scotland and RSPB developed a video to raise awareness of the various forms of raptor persecution, the role of police and partners in tackling raptor persecution, and to encourage the public to report offences. The video was circulated via social media platforms and achieved 79,000 views.

WCO's and partners raised awareness of raptor persecution via stall at Perth game fair, utilising Police Scotland's wildlife crime trailer.

A programme of wildlife crime presentations was delivered, including to Scottish Eagle Festival, BASC, Dundee University, Raptor Study Group and ranger services.

Annual meeting of Satellite Tag Practitioners, organised by NatureScot to improve communication and address and potential issues experienced by satellite taggers operating in Scotland.

Facilitate intelligence and incident reporting

See aforementioned Operation Wingspan communications media strategy, which encouraged public to report incidents / intelligence.

Implementation of shoot notification form. This form is emailed to Police Scotland by public in relation to planned pest control or sporting shoots, to ease burden on 101 and streamline process for reporters.

Increased prevention and enforcement activity

In response to allegations of wildlife crime several warrants were simultaneously executed during the raptor persecution phase of Operation Wingspan. 50 police officers and partners were in attendance during the day of action.

Police Scotland continue to assist NatureScot in consideration of imposing General Licence restrictions on estates causing concern and will continue to do so.

How have you progressed the objectives in the NPCC action plan for Wildlife Crime?

Develop plans at the strategic, regional, and local levels

At the strategic level Operation Wingspan was implemented to address the 7 NPCC priorities. Taskings were identified and devolved to territorial divisions. This process was formalised within an operational order, specific to each phase. Discussions are ongoing to potentially develop a Police Scotland Wildlife strategy by April 2022.

Recognise and plan for both operational and organisational requirements

Significant work has been undertaken to develop a sustainable wildlife crime infrastructure, including acquisition of 11 wildlife carcass freezers, recruitment of 60 new WCO's and amendments to control room procedures to provide greater efficiency.

Agree priorities and support those through sound infrastructure

Current priorities are in line with those identified in NPCC strategy, which were aligned to the prescribed Operation Wingspan phases. The priorities are supported by development of electronic and live-time training courses.

Incrementally build on successes which are appropriately resourced, tested and assessed for benefits

Significant incidents / cases are reviewed and opportunities for improvement are identified. These review processes often include partner agencies.

Raise the profile of wildlife crime

Operation Wingspan is a Police Scotland led partnership operation, delivered from October 2020 – October 2021, incorporating interventions, preventions and enforcement of wildlife crime. A 'Best practice session' was delivered to executives of major construction firms via a national housebuilders conference.

Utilise effective problem solving

Police Scotland has consistently utilised innovative investigative techniques and has worked with partners, drawing upon their areas of expertise.

Identify and provide evidence for changes to legislation and work with partners to provide meaningful change

Police Scotland and partners have engaged closely with Scottish Government in relation to proposed changes to legislation concerning hunting with dogs and trapping and snaring. Such engagement has been via informal consultation, or through more structured advisory groups.

Coordinate a national and international cross border response to wildlife crime

As a national force Police Scotland is not encumbered by force boundaries. Over the past year there has been little engagement between Police Scotland and overseas agencies in relation to wildlife crime. However, discussion is ongoing with NWCU to establish mechanisms by which this can be achieved effectively. It is likely that this shall be required to progress an ongoing CITES investigation.

Establish senior officer leads for all police forces in tackling Wildlife Crime and raising internal police awareness

Over the past 12 months the role of divisional wildlife crime lead has entered in to the portfolio of divisional Detective Superintendents, providing uniformity nationally and direct line management from the national lead.

Continue to develop the briefing notes available on the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice (APP) to assist investigators and call handlers

A Police Scotland toolkit for first responders to wildlife crimes has been developed. A package of guidance / defined procedures has been developed and adopted in to control room processes to ensure greater efficiency.

Train and develop the understanding of wildlife crime for members of the Crown Prosecution Service and courts to improve convictions and deliver proportionate sentencing

Biannual forums are conducted between WCO's and COPFS Wildlife and Environmental Crime Unit (WECU) whereby cases are reviewed and learning points are identified. A CPD session is scheduled for January 2021 whereby COPFS (non WECU) shall be given a presentation regarding wildlife crime.

Widen the number of recordable wildlife crimes so as to better understand and reflect the range and scale of the portfolio

COTES 2018 offences have recently been added to Scottish crime recording systems, and subsequently crimes have been recorded under this legislation.

Develop academic engagement

During the CITES phase of Operation Wingspan Police Scotland partnered with the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology who proactively monitored online sales on behalf of Police Scotland. Early discussions have been conducted with an academic college with a view to the syllabus being amended to include wildlife crime and associated input from WCO's. Wildlife Crime presentation delivered to students from University of Dundee.

Secure future permanent funding for NWCU and dedicated PWCO's

Funding has been secured from NatureScot to part fund the NWCU Scottish Investigative Support Officer until 2022, with a view to this funding being extended to the 2022/2023 financial year.

Seek accreditation for national training for PWCOs from the College of Policing

Police Scotland currently has a wildlife crime course under formal development aimed at newly appointed WCO's.

Develop a clear communication plan

Police Scotland has a wildlife crime communications plan.

What are your 3 year targets? Evidence how you are meeting them:

No targets have been set.