

Strategic Priority Delivery Group updates for Wildlife Crime Tasking & Coordination Group - Public Version



June 2022

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Table of Contents

Badger Persecution Priority Delivery Group	3
Bat Crime Priority Delivery Group.....	7
CITES Priority Delivery Group	10
Poaching Priority Delivery Group – England & Wales	12
Poaching Priority Delivery Group – Scotland	14
Raptor Persecution Priority Delivery Group – Scotland.....	16
Appendix – NPCC Strategy Objectives	20

NB: no updates were received from Cyber PDG; FWPM PDG or Raptor PDG (England & Wales).

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 in the last two years?

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 has also begun two new training initiatives –

- 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. Two of these courses have now been delivered with another 2 courses in the pipeline.

- 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.

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.

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.

Through the NWCUs incident analysis report it has been identified that sett disturbance from development 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).

The Naturewatch Foundation and the Badger Trust School Awareness Programmes are being highlighted to ensure education begins at a young age. This has been adopted by several forces and Badger Groups.

How have you progressed the objectives in the NPCC action plan for Wildlife Crime?– See Appendix for the full objectives from the NPCC wildlife crime strategy:

We have progressed the strategy areas listed below with the following actions.

2 – Both the current and previous chairs have represented the group nationally and internationally 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 identified that training is needed to upskill officers and which in turn will improve investigative outcomes and raise public confidence. The PDG is currently running two training courses – the Badger Crime awareness course (Badger Trust funded), the Advanced Practitioner Course (Badger Trust funded).

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 advanced practitioner course has been a great success and we have received very good feedback from attendees. On the back of this success we are producing the Expert Witness course to further build on this success.

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. We have also begun to reward good work by giving out BPPDG challenge coins and certificates to people who are identified as having helped reduce badger persecution or by bringing offenders to justice – this then in turn allows us to showcase this success and raise the profile of badger persecution to the public.

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 which can then in turn link in with the relevant ROCU's.

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. Myself and other members of the PDG recently presented at the Badger Symposium where we were able to showcase our work to the public and badger groups.

11 - The PDG continues to push (through the NWCU) to improve legislation and to increase the recording of incidents, and intelligence. This is a difficult task and relies on individual forces 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 Analytical Toolkit, where I was able to put forward mine and the PDG's recommendations for changes to the legislation surrounding this priority. All members of the PDG have been pushing hard in various ways for legislation changes to fall alongside the new AWA sentencing powers.

12 – Intelligence sharing is in place within the partnership arena. The NWCU incident analysis figures have been forwarded to all forces and members of the PDG to raise awareness of the current issues. This process will improve when the ISA's are drawn up.

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 has been 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 is a point of contact within the CPS. The Badger trust have also provided recent bespoke training to 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.

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

The three-year targets are:

Prevention

BPPDG quarterly Newsletter is ongoing, promoting the work of the PDG and providing relevant information.

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 Badger app is now in the testing phase, this app will provide the public with greater knowledge and power to report crime.

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.

Incidents of persecution through development has risen by 200% over the past few years. We are looking to bring a local government ecologist onto the PDG to help tackle this.

Intelligence

PDG members actively seek to ensure intelligence is obtained and submitted to NWCU. 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.

Enforcement

The first two advanced practitioner training events have been delivered, 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. We aim to deliver this training in May/June 2022.

Both of the above training courses will ultimately help to achieve more consistent investigations 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.

Wildlife Crime Conservation Advisory Group (WCCAG) Comments:

No comments from WCCAG.

Bat Crime Priority Delivery Group

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

Your objectives:

Present Bat PDG objective and targets - last amended 2020

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.

How have you progressed your objectives in the last two years?

[Numbers in brackets refer to objectives from the NPCC wildlife crime strategy – the full objectives are shown in the Appendix].

Prevention working group

The working group has had a refresh since the last Wildlife Crime Conservation Advisory Group Review, concentrating on core members best placed to drive and achieve group aims. The group have experienced the highest attendance rate in the past 5 years. The PDG have agreed objectives, identified NGOs that would assist the PDG aims and objectives. A new terms of reference document has been produced and agreed to professionalise and maintain standards within the group. The working group consists of Police, four SNCOs, local government planners, ecologists and NGO's. (4, 7, 8, 22)

The Bat Conservation Trust, BCT, (NGO & prevention group lead) has undertaken work that has achieved aims and objectives of the group. The UK Wildlife Crime Enforcers Conference in December 2021 was attended by the BCT wildlife crime project, 'Bat crimes' featured throughout the conference, which included a BCT display. Thirty-six recommendations were produced and consolidated following two workshops, Covid and Bats/Crime prevention & planning (development) at the UK Enforcers conference 2021. (5, 6, 8, 10)

The United Nations Wildlife and forest crime analytical toolkit report was publicly released on the 17th December 2021. The document involved the seven wildlife crime priorities for which the wildlife crime project at the Bat Conservation Trust was involved. The BCT has released a position statement (March 2022) on the report. The BCT supports the recommendations within the toolkit but goes further in identifying a need for accountability on their implementation, which the toolkit does not require. (2, 11, 19)

A National poster has been developed to educate the public of offences against bats and their habitats, it has an area dedicated for the relevant force crest and contact numbers, and this has been circulated nationally. (2, 6, 10)

An analysis of bat crime between 2012 and 2020 has been collated by the NWCU, with assistance from BCT records which provides us with a valuable resource for identifying

trends and potentially repeat offenders. This has given the group a baseline of against which future performance has been measured. (1)

The BCT and the NWCUC regularly publish positive outcomes of bat related crime cases in order to engage the public and drive the work of the Bat crime PDG. Individual forces also publish positive outcomes on various social media platforms and on their own websites. (6)

Police Scotland's Bat Crime phase of Operation Wingspan was delivered from 1st February 2021 to 31st March 2021. The operation included social media posts via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, a website news article. The phase was promoted via the 'Crimes against Nature' podcast in which DS Telford was the featured interviewee and an article published on the Built Environment Forum Scotland website promoting Operation Wingspan and best practice for developers with regards to bat roosts. (6, 10, 22)

A newsletter has been developed and drafted for use following the next PDG meeting. (6, 10)

The BCT project continues its crime prevention conservation work with the police PDG using proactive measures such as vulnerable roost visits through to education and training. In 2021 the BCT have given training to Dorset, Staffordshire, Yorkshire and Hertfordshire Police as well as giving a lecture at Plymouth University on one of its law modules. A MS Teams Education package and training has been provided by the Bat Conservation trust. (1, 6, 10, 16, 19)

Intelligence working group

We have a new NWCUC analyst who has been allocated to the group and the dedication to the group will enhance our effectiveness. (12)

Enforcement working group

A bat crime tool kit has been developed and submitted for inclusion on the Police Knowledge hub, it has also been sent to all specific points of contact to each Force, CPS and SNCO, this also includes an update on Op Bat which is now the lead tactical document that provides advice on investigating bat related crime. The tool kit includes documents that will assist front line officers and investigators to conduct timely investigations that have been investigated to the fullest that in turn promotes the early submission to the CPS. (3, 8, 15)

A planning letter has been developed and is currently being be trialled by Devon and Cornwall Police, the letter highlights the offences and responsibilities of local planning authorities in relation to bats and protected species. In the near future the BCT have plans to explore a pre-sale report for the sale of land and property, similar to an energy performance certificate thus further protecting bats and their roosts. (2, 10)

We have received funding from the NWCUC and further from Dyfed-Powys Police to support the Bat crime PDG, this will be used for prevention and training, assistance with prosecutions and promotion of the group and its achievements. A challenge coin is currently in production, this will be used as a token of gratitude of the group for individuals that have achieved a high standard of investigation and/or successful prosecutions. (6)

A group work plan has been produced and implemented that will focus our priorities, making them SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely) this will

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include a gold, silver and bronze priorities again to focus our actions in working towards the bat crime priorities and the UNODC recommendations. (1, 2, 4, 7, 11)

Good practice and successful prosecutions, including POCA fines, have been shared with group members. (6, 10)

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 and the NWCU regularly publish positive outcomes of bat related crime cases in order to engage the public and drive the work of the PDG. Individual forces also publish positive outcomes on various social media platforms and on their own websites.
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. A bat crime tool kit has been developed and submitted for inclusion on the Police Knowledge hub, it has also been sent to all specific points of contact to each Force, CPS and SNCO, this also includes an update on Op Bat which is now the lead tactical document that provides advice on investigating bat related crime. The tool kit includes documents that will assist front line officers and investigators to conduct timely investigations that have been investigated to the fullest that promotes the early submission to the CPS.

Other Issues:

Bat crime is unique compared to most of the other priority delivery groups in that the UK bat is subject to persecution due to being classed as a pest rather than a specifically targeted species. Bats and their roosts are generally seen as an inconvenience by landowners, householders and property developers and tend to be driven out of traditional roosts to reduce costs and improve profits.

Enforcement working group objective –

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.

We have attempted to work to this objective over the past two years, we have identified issues with the reporting of data that the PDG can use to identify issues in this area.

Wildlife Crime Conservation Advisory Group (WCCAG) Comments:

No comments from WCCAG.

CITES Priority Delivery Group

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

Your objectives:

National priorities: Ivory, Reptiles (EU Traffic), Medicinal products, health supplements and beauty products, Trade in Raptors, European eel (*Anguilla Anguilla*) 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. *This is to be amended, updated, and presented to group members for discussion at the next CPDG in June 2022.*

How have you progressed your objectives in the last two years?

Ivory: The impact of the pandemic and subsequent restrictions on staff deployment resulted in a reduction in the number of BF seizures being referred to the Police for further enforcement action.

Reptiles (EU): Border activity has been focused largely on permitting issues of an administrative nature, with one or two exceptions resulting in one referral to the Police for further enforcement action. The threat from the EU is still not clearly identified with a threat/intelligence assessment required.

Medicinal products, health supplements and beauty products: With large numbers of beauty products being imported without the correct CITES documents (particularly caviar extract) it was recommended these products be added to this priority rather than a new standalone priority. New products containing controlled ingredients, predominantly CITES listed plant material, continue to be identified with 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.

Trade in Raptors: BF continued to monitor all exports from the UK during 2021. A review of the licencing issuance process, particularly for Peregrines, with a review of the legislation, marking, registration and notification to APHA of specimens to be included.

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. The issue of the Dalbergia annotation has been finalised and implemented by Defra allowing BF to undertake proportionate enforcement action.

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

- CITES and IWT training continues apace being delivered by numerous CPDG members with awareness sessions being delivered to Border Force officers, the CPS, APHA, Wildlife Inspectors and via numerous Police Wildlife Courses.

- From an academic perspective RBG Kew continues its research into and identification of the illegally imported Agarwood and the international trade in Galanthus bulbs.
- The JNCC are working with CEFAS and the Indonesian authorities and trade organisations involved in the stony coral trade. Internationally the JNCC have coordinated other UK agencies in delivering training to the fledgling Malawi CITES Scientific Authority.
- BF have continued to raise the UK CITES & IWT role with international enforcement partners working delivering CITES and IWT training. Additionally, BF have continued to work with several EU Member States post EU Exit to work on enforcement projects of mutual interest.
- Defra and APHA have been the lead organisations in ensuring the UK Ivory Act 2018 is finally implemented in 2022 working with the Police and Border Force to clarify outstanding issues.
- Work remains for the APHA, NWCU, JNCC and BF raptor group to consider on the ongoing issues surrounding UK raptors. Consideration is being given to forming an enforcement subgroup within the CPDG to move this issue forward.
- Similar consideration is being given to forming an enforcement subgroup of the CPDG to focus on the European eel trade.
- The ongoing multi-agency response to the Global INTERPOL Operation Thunder has continued in 2021 and will be run again in 2022. Hopefully we will be able to build on the successes of 2021 where the UK made almost 25% of the global seizure total.

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 WCCWG.

To ensure BF seizure data is passed to the relevant Police forces and NWCU to ensure appropriate investigations are initiated and delivered.

To promote increased collaboration between enforcement partners, Scientific authorities, policy makers and academia on training, research opportunities and operational issues.

Other Issues:

Discussions need to be initiated on the role enforcement subgroups might play if sanctioned by the PDG chair. Recommendations have been made to form enforcement subgroups to consider the illegal European eel trade and the licencing, registration and illegal trade of raptors.

Taskings need to be submitted to undertake or update intelligence assessments of Timber, Reptiles (EU) and ivory priorities to ensure all intelligence is available. This is to include all partners not just the statutory enforcement agencies.

Formally amend the medicinal and health supplement priority to include beauty products.

Identify knowledge gaps on the risks of live plants and live stony corals being illegally imported into the UK and illegally sold or advertised for sale online.

Wildlife Crime Conservation Advisory Group (WCCAG) Comments:

No comments from WCCAG.

Poaching Priority Delivery Group – England & Wales

Plan Owner Update:	Poaching Priority Delivery Group
Submitted By:	Insp 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 in the last two years?

- Week of learning - scheduled for August 2022
- Crimestoppers campaign - took place in Summer 2021
- Analytical work - NWCUC
- BASC podcast - Chair and PPDG members supported this in 2021
- Funding from PPDG to support Northumbria Rural Watch volunteers
- Op Galileo - significant changes to legislation due to take place in Summer 2022
- E-learning animation - training proposal for Control Room, supported by Naturewatch

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

The analytical work being undertaken by NWCUC will look at the threat, harm and risk posed by poaching. This will support an intelligence led and evidence based approach to tackling poaching and hopefully explore a greater link between Rural and Wildlife Crime, and Organised Crime Groups.

Funding has been provided by the NWCUC to support the objectives of the PPDG, this is already being put to use in supporting members, such as the Northumbria police rural watch volunteers.

The work alongside partners has resulted in a significant change to legislation to tackle hare coursing, due to go live in Summer 2022. Op Galileo membership continues to grow and the next conference is due to take place in July 2022.

The educational aspect of the PPDG will focus on improving knowledge through a week of learning, this will use the skills and experience of the membership to support partners in their understanding of poaching, and how to tackle it within the community.

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 PPDG 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 NWCU.

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.

In addition, there is an intention to hold a national 'week of learning' in August 2022, this will focus on improving awareness/understanding of poaching and hare coursing. A working group consisting of PDG members has been set up to drive this.

Other Issues:

Magistrates Association - raised by the Angling Trust, previous guidance from 2010 has been taken down, but there is a need to ensure the impact of poaching is conveyed during the court process.

Wildlife Crime Conservation Advisory Group (WCCAG) Comments:

No comments from WCCAG.

Poaching Priority Delivery Group – Scotland

Plan Owner Update:	Poaching Priority Delivery Group - Scotland
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 in the last two years?

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, podcast, 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 Mauchline, 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 F A R M aide memoirs which advised on easy step by step processes to follow in order to safely report hare coursing.

Increased prevention and enforcement activity

- During the poaching phase of Operation Wingspan WCO's conducted visits to Licensed Venison Dealers.

- During the poaching phase of Operation Wingspan 7 persons have been charged with fish poaching offences, including the poaching of wild Atlantic salmon.
- 11 freezers obtained for storage of wildlife carcasses to support effective investigations. These are located across the country.
- A complete Wildlife Crime E-learning package has now been launched by Police Scotland providing investigative and legislative guidance for all frontline police officers. The E-learning package enables a consistent and professional approach to be applied at all wildlife crime incidents.

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.

Wildlife Crime Conservation Advisory Group (WCCAG) Comments:

No comments from WCCAG.

Raptor Persecution Priority Delivery Group – Scotland

Plan Owner Update:	Raptor Persecution (Scotland) Priority Delivery Group
Submitted By:	DCS Laura Waddell, Police Scotland (Chair)

Your objectives:

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

How have you progressed your objectives in the last two years?

Raise community trust and awareness

- From May-July 2021 Operation Wingspan focussed on raptor persecution. A communications strategy was implemented, including news pieces, poster campaign, articles in partner's publications, podcast and social media posts. 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.
- To ensure effective procedure moving forward the satellite tag protocol was updated. This protocol was introduced by Police Scotland along with partner agencies to ensure all relevant information is captured and passed to Police Scotland to establish potential criminality when a sat-tagged bird stops transmitting in suspicious circumstances.
- Social media messaging regarding Operation Easter and nest interference ongoing to raise awareness.
- SLE undertaking projects such as SSGEP and East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership to help raptors breeding.
- SLE developing monitoring methods and helping members to monitor and record raptors.
- SLE developing photographing / videoing of raptors via regional moorland groups and Gift of Grouse and showing on social media, along with stories of raptor rescues etc to promote a positive attitude to raptors.
- Heads Up for Harriers project conclusion, key stats: project worked with 31 estates, over 6 years, successfully fledged 120 young harriers. In November 2020 a report was produced which analysed the findings of over 2million nest camera images and identified factors affecting nesting success.

Facilitate intelligence and incident reporting

- Significant work conducted with C3 (communications division) to improve wildlife crime reporting practises moving forward. 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.
- 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.

- NatureScot are currently exploring options for grouse moor licensing, on behalf of the Scottish Government. It is expected a recommendation will be with the Scottish Government by autumn 2022 and a public consultation will be undertaken in 2023.

Increased prevention and enforcement activity

- Several significant enforcement operations conducted across the country recently involving multiple partner agencies and police units.
- To enable first responders to effectively conduct raptor persecution investigations at the initial stage, a wildlife Crime E-Learning package has been developed, including a Raptor Persecution section.
- To enable WCO's to conduct effective investigations a 2022 training diary has been implemented, including a raptor persecution forensics workshop delivered by SASA and RSPB Investigations.
- Social media messaging regarding Operation Easter and nest interference ongoing to raise awareness.
- Police Scotland continue to assist NatureScot in consideration of imposing General Licence restrictions on estates causing concern and will continue to do so.
- To improve evidence handling and forensic procedure 11 freezers have been obtained for storage of raptor carcasses (as well as other wildlife carcasses). These are located across the country.
- Funding of £34k was allocated to enable partner organisations to deliver wildlife crime projects in 2021/22. These include ongoing support for the RSPB Investigations Team, Operation Wingspan and peregrine DNA research by SASA.
- Funding for the NWCU Scottish Investigation Support Officer (SISO) post.

How have you progressed the objectives in the NPCC action plan for Wildlife Crime? See Appendix for the full objectives from the NPCC wildlife crime strategy:

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.

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 improved infrastructure including 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 via multi-agency debriefs and opportunities for improvements are identified.

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 communications strategy was implemented, including

news pieces, poster campaign, articles in partner's publications, podcast, social media posts and electronic signage at train stations. A social media toolkit was developed for partners. A 'Best practice session' was delivered to executives of major construction firms via a national housebuilders conference.

Utilise effective problem solving

Police Scotland and partners have 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 the hunting with dogs bill and trapping and snaring. Such engagement has been via informal consultation, or through more structured advisory groups.

Increase developmental intelligence sharing between stakeholders with a focus on quality

Information Sharing Agreements are currently being developed between Police Scotland and NatureScot.

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.

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 was delivered to COPFS in January 2022 whereby COPFS (non WECU) were 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

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 2023.

Seek accreditation for national training for PWCOs from the College of Policing
Police Scotland has developed an e-learning package aimed at first responders to wildlife crimes, and a course aimed at newly appointed WCO's. Once these courses are completed accreditation shall be sought from COP.

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 set.

Wildlife Crime Conservation Advisory Group (WCCAG) Comments:

No comments from WCCAG.

Appendix – NPCC Strategy Objectives

NPCC Wildlife Crime Strategy 2018 – 2021 – numbered objectives

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