

Written submission from Scottish Natural Heritage

Update from Scottish Natural Heritage on General Licence Restrictions and other Wildlife Crime related work

Background

In 2013, Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Paul Wheelhouse, asked Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to '*examine how and in what circumstances we can restrict the use of General Licences to trap and shoot wild birds on land where they have good reasons to believe that crimes against wild birds have taken place*'.

General Licences represent a relatively 'light-touch' approach to regulation, allowing persons to carry out activities without the need of applying for a specific licence. The rationale behind imposing a restriction on the use of General Licences is that light-touch regulation should not apply in situations where the regulator has lost trust or confidence.

The Minister has now approved the framework by which we intend to take this forward. This was announced, and the framework published, earlier this month.

Key aspects of the proposal are summarised below—

- Restrictions can be imposed if there is evidence of crimes being committed against wild birds on an area of land in question.
- Decisions to implement restrictions will be made on the basis of evidence collected by the Police, which will be routinely shared with SNH (under the terms of an Information Sharing Protocol).
- Evidence of crimes that has been gathered since 1st January 2014 will be used in considering whether or not to implement a restriction.
- Restrictions will apply for three years, and can be extended if further evidence of offences is found.
- Restrictions will prohibit the use of General Licences over a specific area of land.
- Owners of the land in question will be notified of any intention to restrict the use of General Licences on that land and restrictions will be published on SNH's website.
- Potential restrictions will be discussed with the Police and Procurators Fiscal prior to implementation to ensure that they would not jeopardise ongoing investigations or judicial processes.
- There is an appeals process open to those affected by a potential restriction.

Further information on General Licences and the full details of the process for considering and implementing restrictions can be found at: <http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/species-licensing/bird-licensing/general/>.

Other work

In 2013, SNH created the role of Wildlife Crime Project Officer to help the organisation deliver on its remit of wildlife crime prevention and education. Key to this role are the provision of organisational guidance and delivery of training for all lead contacts within SNH operational areas.

SNH are working closely with Police Scotland to deliver wildlife crime objectives. As detailed in the wildlife crime priority chapter on [Raptor Persecution](#) in the Wildlife Crime Report 2013, this includes the development of restrictions on the use of general licences.