

Grouse Moor Management Group

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose

In response to claims and counter-claims surrounding the disappearance of a number of tagged golden eagles, the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform in August 2016 asked Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to report on the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of those and other tagged golden eagles. In response to that request, SNH Commissioned Report 982: Analyses of the fates of satellite tracked golden eagles in Scotland was published by Scottish Natural Heritage on 31 May 2017.

The report studied the movements of 131 young golden eagles over a 12 year period, and found more than 40 had disappeared in suspicious circumstances. It found that many of the birds had disappeared on or close to land managed for drive grouse shooting.

In response to an Oral Parliamentary question on 31 May the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform said:

“I also want to establish a group to examine how we can ensure that grouse moor management continues to contribute to the rural economy while being environmentally sustainable and compliant with the law.”

A Scottish Government press release further specified the intention to:

“The Group will look at the environmental impact of grouse moor management practices such as muirburn, the use of medicated grit and mountain hare culls and advise on the option of licensing grouse shooting businesses.”

Remit

The Group will examine the environmental impact of grouse moor management practices such as muirburn, the use of medicated grit and mountain hare culls and advise on the option of licensing grouse shooting businesses. In doing so it will look at what can be done to balance the Government’s commitment to tackling wildlife crime with grouse moor management practices, so that this form of management continues to contribute to our rural economy, while being sustainable and compliant with the law. The Group will consider other topics relevant to grouse moor management, referred to it by Government, or raised by the Chair.

Recommendations

The Group will set out its recommendations in its final report. The Group will also be able to make interim recommendations to the SG prior to its final report, if the Group considers that appropriate.

Final Report

The Group will submit its final report to the Cabinet Secretary before the end of June 2019. The report will be published as an electronic document on the SG website. The design of the report will be agreed between the Group and SG prior to submission.

The SG will aim to give an initial formal response to the Group's recommendations before the Scottish Parliament's summer recess in 2019.

Term

The term of the Group will end once it has submitted its final report to the Cabinet Secretary, subject to the Chair and one or more members of the Group appearing before the ECCLR Committee after publication of the report, if requested by the Committee.

Membership

The Group will have six members, each of whom will have experience relevant to the Group's remit. They will be appointed by the Cabinet Secretary and be members of the Group in a personal capacity. One member will be appointed as the Group's Chair.
