**First draft - NOTES FROM MEETING HELD AT POLICE SCOTLAND , STIRLING, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19TH**

**SCOTTISH ENVIRONMENT LINK WILDLIFE CRIME GROUP**

**PRESENT;** Detective Chief Superintendent David McLaren; Eddie Palmer and Emily Platt (Scottish Badgers), Liz Ferrell, and Pete Charlston (Bat Conservation Trust), Logan Steele (RSPB and Scottish Raptor Study Group), and Doug Peedle (SWT)

**NOT PRESENT** (for information)

Shona MacKinnon W4433 (shona.mackinnon@scotland.pnn.police.uk)

Detective Constable

Wildlife Crime Investigative Support Officer

Specialist Crime Division

Police Scotland

**Agreed** – to circulate notes of the meeting with important points, written by the LINK members, and agreed by all present.

1. Dave McLaren’s background includes sitting on the PAW raptor PDG, and his main interests are in crime investigation. He has an overview of where his role fits within other more strategic roles, and he can become involved at a senior level with local CID divisions.
2. The **current PAW structure** and rationale of groups was discussed, as BCT only has access to a U.K. group, not a Scottish one. DCS McLaren saw PAW as an important communication conduit with NGOs. Could there be a Scottish PDG, as with badgers? The Scottish PAW Executive Group could discuss this.
3. With regard to bat crime, Dave McLaren could discuss with the Scottish Crime Registrar the criming of absolute offences where there is no *mens rea* is evidenced or required in order to pass any evidential test.
4. With regard to LINK group members, the importance of the **Scottish Wild Beaver Group** (now a LINK member) was stressed. It was foreseen that many more calls to the Police will occur when beavers have their legal status confirmed (by rumour, very soon), as there is currently widespread killing of beavers. Beavers should be a future PAW Priority Group. Dave stated that this was part and parcel changing legislation, and Police Scotland has to adapt to new situations and react, this not posing any immediate worries for them.
5. **The current role of NWCU** was not clear to several members present, and DCS McLaren explained it. The Units’ main role is to capture and share intelligence, best practice and support ongoing investigations. NWCU is an invaluable asset to Wildlife Crime Investigation.
6. The role and work of the **Special Constables** in the Cairngorms National Park was examined by way of an initial six month evaluation. This highlighted the valuable community engagement and partnership working activities taking place within the Park. Gauging the effectiveness of the project in relation to Wildlife Crime is difficult to measure and anecdotally, the project has assisted in much wider ranging issues such as antisocial behaviour and issues associated with this. A twelve month evaluation is currently underway.
7. Training of the WCOs in wildlife crime, and also other levels of Officers engaged in other work, and staff were discussed. DCS Mclaren said that Police Scotland was always very grateful for the voluntary input to this by NGOs, and that it was extremely valuable. There are 6 full-time WCOs, (in Lothian and Borders, Tayside, Fife, Forth Valley, Aberdeenshire and North) and this model was warmly supported.
8. The Scottish Rural Crime Initiative was discussed, DCS McLaren is not keen on merging these two areas of focus. Whilst there are clear crossovers between both areas it is important that Wildlife Crime continues as a dedicated area as opposed to be consumed by the much wider priorities in rural crime. Rural and Wildlife Crime will be kept as separate priorities, however, closer working relationships between the two is adopted to address shared priorities such as poaching.
9. Any issues with individual cases (i.e. if not proceeding) to go to Shona and/or Andy Mavin’ successor, as a single point of contact. Shona has a direct line to Dave McLaren, and is there to support wildlife investigations across all divisions, but the investigation remaining with the local division. The Crime Co-ordinator (used to be Andy Mavin), is there to identify and share best practice, and policy work. This post to be appointed very soon.

Eddie Palmer

Chairman

SE LINK Wildlife Crime Group

Feb. 23rd 2019