**Minutes from LINK Crime Sub Committee**

**Date: 21st August 2019**

**Time: 11.00-13.00**

**Location: RSPB offices**

**Those in attendance**

* Eddie Palmer, Scottish Badgers
* Emily Platt, Scottish Badgers
* Ian Thomson, RSPB
* Liz Ferrell, Bat Conservation Trust
* Beryl Leatherland, Scottish Wild Land Group
* Dougie Peddle, SWT
* Joe Connolly, Scottish Countryside Rangers Association
* Logan Steele, Scottish Raptor Study Group
* Pete Charleston, Bat Conservation Trust, (phone)

**Apologise**

* Dilraj Sokhi Watson, LINK
* Sarah Dolman, Whale and Dolphin Conservation

Eddie gave a personal update and expressed his thanks to Liz for temporarily taking over and requested that she continue to be the main contact point for the time being. Liz will shout up if she requires any help

Joe Connelly, announced that this would be his last meeting as he is stepping down due to pressures of work. Several people expressed sadness and thanked him for his contribution over the years and wished him well for the future. Joe would continue to receive minutes and will continue to contribute where and when he can.

**Parliamentary Event**

Liz, said that this was the main topic for the meeting and the key action was to spend today’s meeting to progress Dilraj’s draft briefing.

A draft is to be submitted to Dilraj by Friday so an urgent response to Liz’s draft document was urgently required, *this has since been sent out*. **Responses by COP 23/08/19**

**Break out discussion notes**

Parliamentary Briefing Event: Has the last 20 years of the Scottish Parliament protected our wildlife from crime?

The framing of the event is our title - Has the last 20 years since the Scottish Parliament was founded protected our wildlife from crime?

Donald Dewar, Scotland’s first First Minister said that raptor killing in Scotland was a national disgrace. We should all be ashamed of it and do our utmost to stop a horrible crime.

As a group we acknowledge that things have improved but there is a long way to go to achieve a system that is effective at preventing, detecting, investigating and reporting wildlife crime.

Aim of the event: The briefing event will explore the role of improved legislation in increasing the effectiveness of law enforcement and prevention of wildlife crime.

Ask:

* Better legislation to increase the effectiveness of law enforcement

Solution:

* A change to various pieces of Scottish legislation in light of the need for wildlife crime to be defined as a serious crime

Agenda

18.00 Participants and speakers assemble in Scottish Parliament reception

18:20 Attendees register at committee room and get refreshments

18:55 Welcome and introductions, by Colin Smyth MSP

19.00 Presentation 1 – Ian Thompson

*Where are we currently with wildlife crime – what are the issues from an NGO perspective. All link subgroup members to contribute data and information*

19.10 Presentation 2 – Lloyd Austin

*Highlighting some of the opportunities and solutions and their likely gains in terms of wildlife crime reduction but also wider impacts*

19.20 Q&A moderated by Colin Smyth MSP

20:00 Event Closes

Attendees list (to be contacted)

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Name | Title | Additional info |
|  |  | All MSP’s |  |
|  |  | Wildlife crime subgroup | Approx. 7 people? |
|  |  | Link staff | 2-3 people? |
| Lloyd | Austin | Environmental policy advisor | Potential speaker |
| Gary  | Cummingham | Police Scotland | Det. Ch. Supt. |
| Robert | More | Police Scotland | Sergeant |
| Louise | Hubble | NWCU | Head of UK’s NWCU |
| Charlie | Everitt | NWCU |  |
| Sara  | Shaw | Crown Office?? |  |
| Roseanna  | Cunningham | Scottish Government |  |
| Hugh | Dignon | Scottish Government |  |
| Mariam  | Mahmood | Lib. Dems | Environment spokesperson |
| Francesca  | Osowska | SNH |  |
| Prof. Colin | Reid | Grouse moor management group | Colin is Professor of Environmental Law at the University of Dundee and has written widely on environmental law for varied audiences, with particular research experience in nature conservation and biodiversity law. He is Convener of the Legislation, Regulation and Guidance Group of the Partnership for Action against Wildlife Crime Scotland (PAWS). |

**Poustie Report**

A brief discussions ensued and several submissions from individual members were made before the deadline of 16th August. Mention of tougher penalties in the responses in organise crimes was thought to be a good thing. The recent changes on animal welfare was thought to be helpful and may lead to a more joined up approach. Eddie mentioned that the authorities were more concerned with injuries to dogs as much to wild animals, like badgers. It was agreed that enforcement is the big issue and the feeling anecdotally was that wildlife crime is not taken seriously enough by the police despite some individuals within the force being dedicated in their role. This was because of the perception that wildlife crime was not taken seriously due to pressures to pursue other ‘more important crimes’ and perhaps ones that could be successfully closed more quickly. It was as thought that pressure from above was prematurely closing cases. It was also felt that this was a cultural matters and would take some time to change, if at all. It was felt that the of enforcement was another key issue and thought to be because of the difficulty in pursing such crimes. Several individual examples were discussed. Eddie mentioned the issue of case precedents in England not being applicable in Scotland. Rob Moore is the new wildlife crime coordinator and Gary Cunningham is the new Chief Superintendent taking the lead on Wildlife Crime.

 **General Licence Consultation**

A brief conversation followed but more by way of an update on the current situation with the closing date of 9th October for those wishing to make a submission.

**Grouse Review Panel**

Matters are a bit in limbo until the Werrity report is published thought to be September. Ian reminded us that it is a report from which the SG can chose to adopt or make their own recommendations. It was thought unlikely that any primary legislation will be enacted in the next parliamentary year, and with various political events over the next two to three implementing any changes may take some time.

**Draft Sentencing Letter**

Everyone present was pleased with the draft and thanks were expressed to Dilraj and despite the Poustie Review, it was still thought to be a valuable contribution to the discussion.

**AOCB**

Beryl made everyone aware of the LINK advocacy training programme on 17 September. Details will be in the LINK bulletin.

# **Table of Actions**

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| Action No. | Action | To be actioned by | Deadline |
| 1 | Send outline and focus of October event to Dilraj | Liz  | DONE |
| 2 | Send draft link event briefing to subgroup members | Dilraj | End of August |
| 2 | Follow up on DPF fund application progress | Liz | End of August  |
| 3 | Post and / or email letter to Stephen O’Rourke QC | Liz | End of August |
| 4 | Send round doodle poll for meeting before October event | Liz | DONE |
| 5 | Confirm meeting date ahead of October event | Liz | DONE |
| 6 | Individual responses to consultation on proposed Protection and Conservation of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Bill and general licenses consultation sent to Dilraj  | All | ASAP and 11 September respectively |