

Grouse Moor Management Group

Established by the Scottish Government

Stakeholder Questionnaire from the Grouse Moor Management Group

Background

Following a May 2017 ministerial statement on extra measures to protect Scotland's birds of prey, Cabinet Secretary Roseanna Cunningham MSP set up the Grouse Moor Management Group in November 2017 with the remit:

“To 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”

Further information on the work of the Group can be found at <https://beta.gov.scot/groups/grouse-moor-management-group/>

Questions for stakeholders

Since January the Group has been gathering evidence on grouse moor management practices and issues, including raptor persecution, predator management, muirburn, mountain hare management, use and application of medicated grit, regulation, licensing and Codes of Practice. We have done this by drawing on expertise within the Group and its Specialist Advisers and supplemented, when necessary, by contributions from outside experts.

We now wish to draw upon the wider pool of knowledge and expertise held by others engaged in the science and practice of grouse moor management.

Please note that the list of questions is not comprehensive. We have targeted only what we see as the key issues reflecting our remit, but also invite you to submit further information if you so wish in response to the final question.

Please make your answers focused and concise and **do not exceed 400 words** for a given question, unless you have strong grounds for so doing. If you have additional information you wish to submit, please do so by providing a web-link or URL as our large database of resources may already include that item.

Please note that we are still at the evidence gathering stage of the inquiry. **No inference or conclusion should be reached regarding the specifics of the questions or how they are posed.**

The questionnaire is divided into sections reflecting each of the key issues itemised above. Some respondents will wish to answer all the sections. Others will only wish to complete specific sections. We invite you to complete as many or as few sections as you wish. There is no expectation that all respondents will answer all the questions.

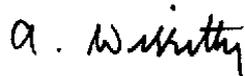
Responses should be sent to:

Karen Rentoul (Secretary to the Grouse Moor Management Group)
GMGSecretary@nature.scot

in a digital MS Word .doc or .docx format and should arrive not later than 19 September.

Responses will be treated as confidential to the Group and Specialist Advisers, and used only for the work of the inquiry. Responses will not be published, but we will publish a list of people/organisations who have responded. Please notify us if you wish your response to be noted as anonymous. This is not a public consultation, but is instead directed to recipient stakeholders.

Thank you for taking the time to read through these questions, and we look forward to receiving your responses.



Professor Alan Werritty
Chair, Grouse Moor Management Group

1. Raptor conservation and predation management

1. Do you consider that illegal killing of raptors is seriously affecting their conservation in Scotland? Is this connected with grouse moor management? Please supply the evidence supporting your view.
2. How might the illegal killing of raptors be reduced?
3. It is difficult to secure a conviction for the illegal killing of raptors. What measures might result in enhanced conviction rates?
4. What actions/principles might reduce the impact of raptor predation on grouse?
5. Which predator species do you regard as most important in limiting grouse? Please supply the evidence supporting your named species.
6. Have you comments on setting 'limits' on number of raptors to control their predation on grouse? If so, what factors would need to be taken into account in setting such limits?
7. Do you know of (or have you tried) non-lethal means of reducing raptor predation on grouse?
8. Is 'diversionary feeding' (providing alternative food at raptor nests for broods) to reduce raptor predation on grouse a workable method?
9. Do you have any evidence that the presence of golden eagles nesting on a moor limit or reduce the number of smaller, grouse-eating raptors which occur there (such as hen harriers or peregrines)?

2. Muirburn

10. In your experience has the frequency of moorland management fires increased or decreased in recent years? Please supply the evidence supporting your view.
11. What proportion of muirburn fires on grouse moors do you consider fail to meet the Muirburn or other regulatory codes of practice (e.g. leaving a fire unattended; burning into woodland/losing control of the fire)? Please supply the evidence supporting your view.
12. If you are involved in muirburn, what intensity of burn is necessary for successful heather regeneration? What proportion of muirburn burns affects the moss/litter layer as well as heather. What difference does this make to vegetation recovery?
13. What are the relative merits of burning versus cutting on grouse moors? Please supply the evidence supporting your view.
14. What proportion of wildfires start from a muirburn getting out of control; and has this proportion changed in recent years? Please supply the evidence supporting your view.

3. Mountain Hares

15. Based on your experience of a particular area, have mountain hares increased or decreased in your area? Please provide the associated location and timescale.
16. Are mountain hares controlled in your area and if so, do you know what the main purposes are? What information or experience guides the number of hares culled? If disease is a control purpose, please specify which disease(s) and what evidence you are using to inform your assessment.
17. Does grouse moor management influence mountain hare numbers? If so, are there ecological consequences?
18. Is mountain hare abundance being assessed in areas for which you have responsibility? If so, how is this undertaken? How are the resulting data used and publicised?

4. Medicated grit

19. How important is the use of medicated grit to yield a shootable surplus of grouse?
20. Can high levels of worm burden in red grouse be effectively controlled without medication and if so, how?
21. If you have any concerns about the use of medicated grit on grouse moors, how can these be addressed?
22. Should practitioner training on the use of medicated grit on grouse moors be compulsory, and if so, who should receive this training?
23. Can veterinary practice be improved to help grouse moor managers make the best decisions on the use of medicated grit, and if so, how?
24. What are the most important management procedures for avoiding, reducing or removing residues of this medication from soil or water?
25. What are the most important management procedures for removing the risk of medication residue in game destined for human consumption?

5. Regulation, Licensing and Codes of Practice

Regulation

26. Are there ways in which the enforcement of the existing laws or Codes of Practice could be improved to reduce unlawful activity? If so, how?
27. Are there adjustments to existing laws which might enable (a) greater flexibility, and (b) improve the likelihood of the overall objectives of the law, being met?
28. What new measures might be introduced to modify or improve the management of grouse moors and discourage illegal conduct? Responses should consider the likely knock-on consequences of any proposal, as well as its direct target and effect.

Licensing

29. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of introducing a licensing system for grouse shooting and/or grouse moors?
30. Were a licensing system to be introduced,
 - a. what activity/ies should a licence be required for?
 - b. who should be required to obtain a licence (land-owner, estate manager, someone else)?
 - c. what should be the criteria for obtaining a licence or having a licence revoked? Should the status of "a fit and proper person" be a requirement?
 - d. what conditions should be included in a licence?
 - e. should compliance with relevant codes of practice be a requirement to obtain a licence, and if so, which?
 - f. what data on grouse moor management should be routinely reported directly to the issuing authority as a condition of holding a licence?
31. Should the licensing system under the current law on protected species be varied to enable the control of raptors in order to protect ground nesting birds, including or apart from grouse, in limited circumstances?
32. What are your views on a system that would require a land owner or land manger to have a licence to manage a grouse moor but which permits an extended range of predator control activities to be undertaken, where appropriate?

Codes of Practice

33. (Relevant codes: Muirburn; Mountain Hares; Medicated Grit; Snaring and other legal methods of predator control)
34. What status should Codes of Practice have in order to encourage compliance?
For example:
 - a. Self-regulation
 - b. Accreditation scheme
 - c. Access to financial incentives
 - d. Statutory regulatory system
35. What incentives and/or penalties might encourage better compliance with existing Codes / Best Practice?
36. Should the existing Codes / Best Practice be incorporated into an overall framework for managing grouse moors in order to encourage greater compliance?

Final question

Is there anything else relating to raptor persecution, predator management, muirburn, mountain hare management, use and application of medicated grit, regulation, licensing and Codes of Practice that you would like to bring to the attention of the Grouse Moor Management Group?

If you are submitting an article or report please just supply the title and URL or web link as the Group may already have access to the item.