

Joint Hen Harrier Recovery Plan

Note of 1st Brood management trail meeting

Date: 29th March 2016

Present: Teresa Dent (GWCT), Steve Redpath (independent academic), Phillip Merricks (H&OT), Phil Holms (H&OT), Amanda Anderson (MA); Robert Benson (MA); Rob Cooke (NE - Chair), Adrian Jowitt (NE).

Points discussed and agreed:

Trial purpose:

The purpose of a licence application would be for a trial of brood management. This would mean an application under Section 16(1)a of the Wildlife and Countryside Act: for scientific, research or educational purposes.

The trial would test

- a) The practicalities of brood management: can eggs or chicks be taken from the wild and raised in captivity, can those chicks be released back into the wild and what are the implications for productivity and survival.
- b) For changes in social attitudes by those involved in upland land management to the presence of Hen Harriers on grouse moors.

In addition the trial would report on the number and type of interventions undertaken.

It was acknowledged that it would be difficult to measure the success of the trial in terms changes to Hen Harrier numbers because there were other activities on going, not least actions 1 to 4 of the recovery plan. Therefore any change in harrier numbers would be accounted to the plan as a whole although the social science undertaking would give us an indication of the direction of brood management's contribution.

Practicalities

Following a brief discussion on the practicalities of the captive rearing parts of the trial PH agreed to take away an action to draft up an outline of the process with Jemima Parry Jones. It was agreed that the who and where could be slotted in once we understood these practicalities.

Funding

It was agreed to revisit the costs once we had a better idea of the practicalities. Notwithstanding this the MA felt that they would be able to make a contribution. It is also hoped that some contributions may be in kind or come from existing resource operating in the area.

Need for a qualifying population

The Brood management proposal has always been framed as addressing local density issues in the expectation that would alleviate predation pressures.

We acknowledged the productivity of broods “managed” within such a trial was likely to be higher than that of broods left due to reduced risk of losses to predation or adverse weather conditions, resulting in a greater number of birds entering the population. There are precedents elsewhere of rare species being raised in captivity to increase productivity. Thus the trial would not seek to reduce the population of harriers in the uplands, and, if the technique works it will in all likelihood enhance it.

Taking these points on board our working assumption is that a trial would start independent of any a population threshold.

Trial area

The Moorland Association is keen that all its members have the option of being included in the trial. This would make clearer any possible widespread social response to the trial, within the moorland management community, compared to a situation where some were excluded. Since we do not know where birds will settle defining a trial area on an ecological basis would be difficult.

Taking these points on board we will, taking account of advice received (see below) prepare a licence application on this basis.

We agreed that we would meet again to discuss progress in about a month’s time.

Action:

Who	What	By when
PH	Write a paper setting out the mechanics of a BM scheme	Next meeting
SR	Sketch out a social science survey	Next meeting
RC	Commission advice on the content of a licence application, especially with respect to what might be captured within the definition of a trial under the Act.	Next meeting
RC	Agree date for next meeting	