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Thank you for the invitation to attend the next YDNP / NNL BoP Group meeting. It is with regret that NERF will not be attending this meeting or other meetings in the foreseeable future.

You may be aware that the Moorland Association [MA] has recently been removed from the National Wildlife Crime Unit [NWCU] lead Raptor Persecution Priority Delivery Group [RPPDG], on which both the National Parks and National Landscapes are also represented. Their removal from the RPPDG follows comments made on the MA website about the NWCU's Hen Harrier Action Plan [HHAP], and related email correspondence between the two organisations. You may have seen the FOI correspondence between the NWCU and the MA, published on the Raptor Persecution UK [RPUK] blog. They are still available on-line if you missed them.

The views expressed by Mr Gilruth in respect of the NWCU HHAP are polar opposite to those held by NERF and we fully support the decision made by the NWCU to remove the MA from the RPPDG. As a consequence NERF feels compelled to suspend collaboration with an organisation that seeks to undermine the valuable work of the NWCU in their attempts to Hen Harrier persecution and to muddy the waters with an irrelevant discussion about the IUCN Guidelines. The issue that we face is not human / wildlife conflict; it is ending the criminality associated with game shooting, in this case the persecution of birds of prey. The Environment Council hosted a failed attempt to seek a Hen Harrier conflict resolution over several years when similar arguments to those being expressed now were voiced. On behalf of NERF I took part in the discussions for 6 years before finally resigning from the process due to the continuing lack of progress. The Environment Council's conflict resolution endeavour eventually collapsed and widespread raptor persecution continues to this date.

In their correspondence the MA criticises the use of the term 'persecution', a term used frequently by the IUCN, when related to the unlawful killing protected birds of prey. It is also the term used by Natural England when referencing the main factor limiting the number of breeding Hen Harriers in England. Birds of prey that are killed illegally are persecuted and denying that fact is another attempt at diverting attention away from the root cause of the problem.

Additionally the MA refers to conservationists and those that disagree with their views, I assume that NERF is included, as 'activists' in a derogatory manner. How ironic then that the Oxford English Dictionary defines activism as 'the use of vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change'; something that the MA is particularly adept at using to further their own agenda.

By continuing to engage with the MA in forums such as the YDNP / NNL BoP Group NERF risks facing reputational damage by association and this is unacceptable to our members. However, NERF will continue to support both the YDNP and the NNL in your efforts to protect birds of prey across the Protected Landscapes, for example by sharing the data gathered by our members and working in collaboration on specific projects.

We would hope to return to the group if the circumstances change significantly enough to allow that to happen. In the interim NERF will focus our efforts on supporting the NWCUC, local Police Forces and the RSPB Investigations Team in their efforts to bring about an end to raptor persecution.

In the meantime I wish you every success in bringing raptor persecution to an end within the YDNP and NNL.

Kind regards

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