



# Joint Meeting of Bern Convention SFPs and CMS MIKT on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Wild Birds

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uk|**National Wildlife  
Crime Unit**



# UK National Wildlife Crime Unit and the Harrier Task force

# What do we offer



- Advice and guidance to law enforcement on legislation and procedure. Link to Europol and Interpol.
- Assistance with Operational Planning, deployments, enquires, interview, searches/ warrants, files, court
- Drone support
- Some covert support
- Advice to Crown Prosecution Service
- Intelligence research and development, analytical support, financial investigation
- Mapping/ scoring Organised Crime Groups. Priority delivery groups, Strategic plans (4P plans) and assistance to disrupt dismantle.
- Training – Online/ digital and in person
- Links to other agencies e.g. APHA, Border Force,
- Collaboration and partnership working

# Uk wildlife crime priorities



# The 4 Ps

## Pursue



**Prosecuting and disrupting wildlife crime offenders and OCGs.**

Relentless disruption and targeted action of the most dangerous criminals, adopting and enforcing an all areas approach. Highlighting those who harm animals also harm people and wildlife criminals link to SOC.

## Prepare



**Reducing the impact of wildlife crime offending.**

Profiling the problem and working with the current intelligence picture to maximise the prevention of crime.

## Protect



**Increasing protection of wildlife against offenders.**

Showcasing the importance of policing wildlife crime, how this links to biodiversity and ecology. Being in the right place at the right time.

## Prevent



**Preventing people engaging in wildlife crime.**

Tackling the problem through a focussed policing service, partnership working and subject matter awareness raising.

**Establishing a single whole system approach, expanding our global reach and pooling skills and expertise to tackle wildlife crime**



Example of our  
work - The Harrier  
Task Force.

# The problem

The conflict between driven grouse shooting and hen harrier conservation in the UK - especially in upland moorlands - is one of the most persistent and controversial issues in British conservation. It pits economic, cultural, and sporting interests against wildlife protection and biodiversity.

Driven Grouse shooting is unique to the UK.

The shooting season begins on 12th August, and ends on 10th December each year.

Involves grouse being driven (i.e. encouraged and corralled by beaters) to fly over people with shotguns.

To achieve a good bag on the day (high number of shot birds), the land is managed to artificially achieve high numbers of grouse on the moor, and it is these excess birds that are shot.

Hen harriers can predate grouse and their chicks or disrupt a shoot and this can lead to them being persecuted.



Rare  
breeding bird  
in UK

## The problem

- 2022- 2023 crimes involving Hen Harriers at all time high. Despite on-going consultation with stakeholders and actions plans being implemented.
- Known long standing conflict between Hen Harriers and Driven Grouse Shooting in UK Uplands.
- Polarised views between stakeholders leading to human – human conflict.
- No successful prosecutions – due to difficulties quickly identifying when a crime had occurred, getting police to the scene and finding and gathering evidence.
- Deterrents to make offenders stop were insufficient.

## Hopefully the solutions

- Develop a strategy/ plan and the Hen Harrier task force.
- Utilise a model named Clear. Hold. Build.
- Separate stakeholders into different groups representing Conservation and Shooting, during the Clear and Hold stages. Start to bring them together during the Build phase



# Hen Harrier Task Force strategy



# Standardised and consistent



- Improved reporting and standardized our response.
- Mutual aid to always have a police response for suspected crimes.
- Developed new drone capabilities and wildlife detection dogs.
- Changed the focus from just wildlife crime to include criminal damage and theft of satellite tags.

## Data Led

- Used tag data to identify crime hotspots.
- Mapped these hotspots across the UK and looked for similarities.
- Identified threats and risks to the birds, both natural, man made and illegal.
- Created credible independent records that with stand scrutiny.

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## Community focused

- Raising awareness and education.
- Asking the communities to be our eyes and ears and to report anything suspicious and intelligence.
- Have invested communities and stakeholders so that they take ownership and can police themselves.
- Independent facilitators

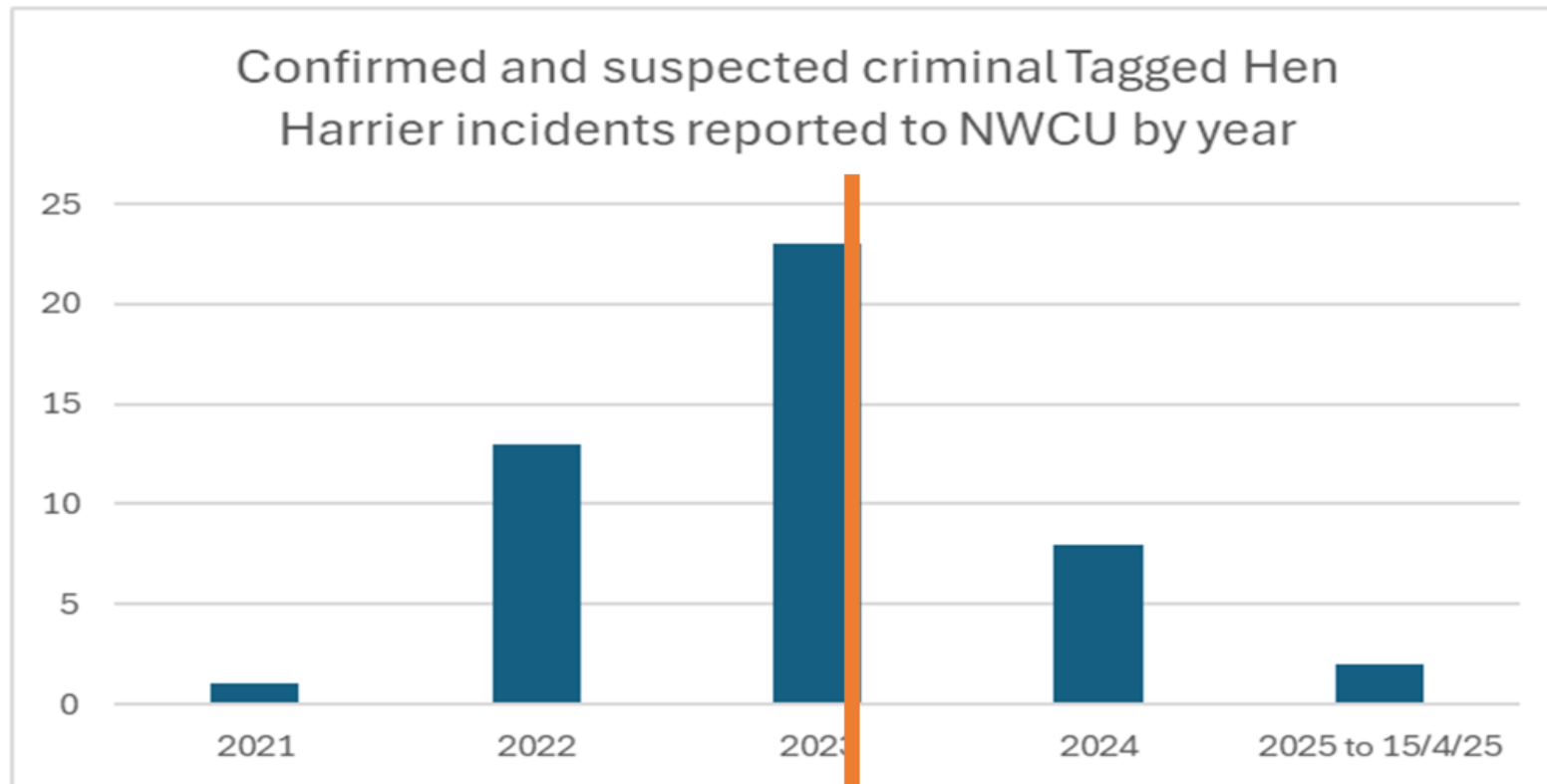
# Is it working ?

Number of incidents on hotspots since we started this work in January 2024.



Zero

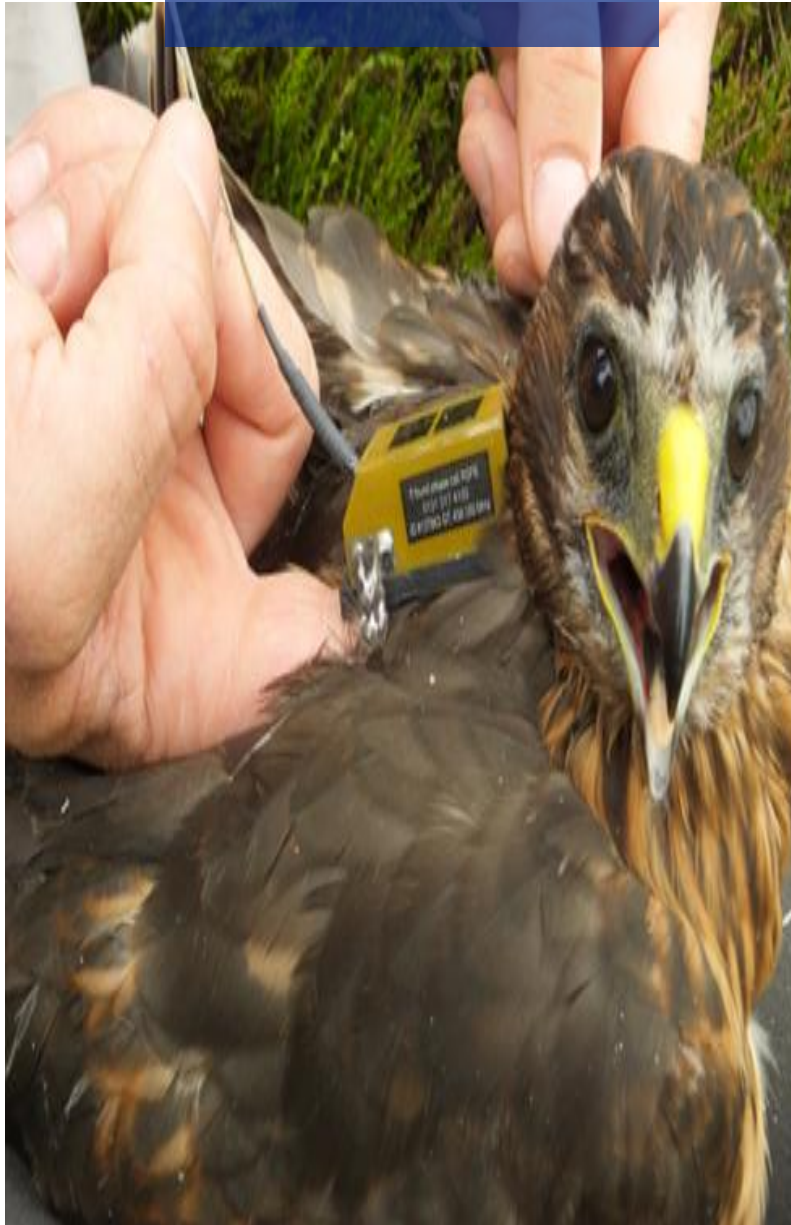
Note this is tagged birds only which intelligence and evidence suggest that criminals are targeting untagged birds now.



End of 2023 HTF was introduced and hotspot visits commenced.



THANK YOU!



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