

PRESS RELEASE

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SHOOTING ESTATES AT HEART OF EFFORTS TO INCREASE HEN HARRIER NUMBERS

Shooting estates are at the heart of efforts to improve hen harrier numbers in Scotland.

An estimated 330,000 acres of sporting estates – including many driven grouse moors - are now involved in the Heads Up for Harriers Project that aims to increase awareness of the species and examine ways to increase the population.

Scotland has more hen harriers than any other part of the UK with between 400 and 500 pairs over the last 30 years.

David Johnstone, chairman of Scottish Land & Estates, said: “There are a number of initiatives which celebrate the hen harrier and it is heartening to see the enthusiasm of estates and land managers around the country who are committed to doing their bit to boost the hen harrier population.

“We are seeing an even greater commitment to improving the numbers of harriers, which are sensitive to many factors, particularly weather and food supply. There are variations in annual breeding pairs, but we now have a very substantial acreage involved in Heads Up for Harriers which is very encouraging.”

“Illegal control of harriers on grouse moors is commonly blamed for low numbers in parts of Scotland, so it is good to see that raptor crime of all types has been dropping steadily. Real progress has been made and there remains a real desire to see any wildlife crime eradicated.”

The Heads Up for Harriers project is led for the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage and results for this year will be published soon.

“Last year, we saw a record number of chicks fledged from nests and we hope the recent encouraging news from south of the border which has reported the best breeding season there for a decade will be reflected in Scotland”, said David Johnstone.

“We should also remember – on the eve of the grouse shooting season - that grouse moors are also home to a range of birds which feed, breed and thrive, particularly species that have not fared so well in other parts of the country. These include golden plover, curlew, black grouse, ring ouzel, and golden eagles.”

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Scottish Land & Estates

Scottish Land & Estates is a membership organisation for landowners, rural businesses and rural professionals.

Scottish Land & Estates promotes the wide range of benefits land-based businesses provide: tourist attractions, leisure facilities and landscapes enjoyed by the public, as well as, housing, employment, tourism & enterprise and farming opportunities. For more information, visit www.scottishlandandestates.co.uk