

From: [Wildlife, Bristol \(NE\)](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Rejection letter, Release site recommendations and Site map, references WLM/2013/1750 to 1752 and WLM/2013/1883 to 1886.
Date: 02 August 2013 10:46:52
Attachments: [WLM-2013-1750 to 1752 and WLM-2013-1883 to 1886 Site Map.jpg](#)
[WLM-2013-1750 to 1752 and WLM-2013-1883 to 1886 Rejection Letter \(2\).pdf](#)
[WLM-2013-1750 to 1752 and WLM-2013-1883 to 1886 Release Site Recommendations.pdf](#)

Dear [REDACTED]

Please find attached letter, release site recommendations and site map.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

Customer Services
Tel: 0845 601 4523
E-Mail: wildlife@naturalengland.org.uk

Our Customer Services Team has been awarded the Customer Service Excellence Standard.

www.naturalengland.org.uk

**We are here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy,
where wildlife is protected and England's traditional landscapes are
safeguarded for future generations.**

In an effort to reduce Natural England's carbon footprint, I will, wherever possible, avoid travelling to meetings and attend via audio, video or web conferencing.

Date: 1st August 2013
Our ref: WLM / 2013 / 1750-1752
WLM / 2013 / 1883-1886



Wildlife Licensing Unit
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Dear [REDACTED]

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

WILDLIFE & COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1981 (as amended)

Location: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I refer to your application (received on 5 July 2013) for a licence to shoot and cage trap common buzzard at [REDACTED] shoots and also the licence application subsequently received on 23 July 2013 to trap and shoot sparrowhawk and common buzzard at [REDACTED]. As licences permit activities that would otherwise be unlawful, Natural England needs to be satisfied on a range of matters before a licence can be granted.

Based on the information provided in support of your application, I regret to inform you that we are unable to issue licences to shoot or cage trap common buzzard or sparrowhawk at any of the four requested locations at this time.

In order for Natural England to issue a licence, the following tests (as laid out in the Defra Wildlife Management policy) must be satisfied:

- The conflict must be sufficiently serious to warrant such action
- The least severe solution should be applied in order to resolve the conflict
- All other less severe methods of resolving the conflict should be shown to be ineffective or impractical and not just difficult to implement
- The action is cost effective and proportionate to the actual or potential level of conflict
- Such action would reduce, or prevent from increasing, the scale of the conflict
- Welfare, disease control and conservation obligations are met

The reasons for rejection for the applications are different in each case and I will explain each in turn:

[REDACTED] Two of the release woods have been thinned this year which has improved the habitat for pheasant release, and the brushings have been used to create hard ground cover. As hard ground cover was severely lacking at these release sites in the past it is expected that habitat improvements should be effective at reducing predation. As the benefits of these improvements have yet to be assessed a licence is not justified for this location this season. The test involving other less severe methods (non lethal options) is not met. This is the primary reason for refusal of this licence application.

These two applications are made subsequent to the granting of two licences in April 2013, each permitting the removal of two nests from the vicinity of the [REDACTED] shoots. Action was taken under these licence and nests were removed.

Licensed action was undertaken to remove active nests of common buzzard in the vicinity of release pens. It is not possible to determine whether this action has, or has not, been effective at reducing predation by reducing the number of birds at each location at this point in time. The aim of nest destruction was to reduce the number of birds in the area, rather than to eliminate them. We cannot currently conclude that the licensed action has been unsuccessful, and hence cannot be satisfied that a more severe solution is required in order to resolve the conflict.

Recent observations were inconclusive as to the current locations of nesting buzzards. Whilst two common buzzards were seen to emerge and fly away from the eastern end of [REDACTED] during our most recent site visit, the birds quickly gained height and flew away some distance, suggesting they are not breeding at this location. Another buzzard emerged from the wood twice, flew low and returned to the wood, suggesting it could be part of a nesting pair. [REDACTED] and I were unable to locate either a nest or any buzzards in the western end of this wood when we returned to search later in the day.

A nest was seen in [REDACTED] and a common buzzard was seen flying overhead, however, it was not possible to determine if this nest was active or even if the buzzard came from this nest.

The conditions on the day of our most recent site visit were near perfect for buzzard observation, being warm and calm, yet few buzzards were actually seen. We were also unable to locate any nests or buzzards where you had indicated birds were nesting in [REDACTED]

To conclude, it is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of previous licensed nest destruction and thus the test of 'the least severe solution being used' cannot be satisfied for either the [REDACTED] shoot. Additionally, the levels of damage reported for these two shoots means that the test of 'action proportionate to the problem' cannot be satisfied.

[REDACTED] A licence has been requested for this site purely on the basis that sparrowhawk and common buzzard have been observed in the wood. The application states that non lethal measures were unsuccessful last year - yet the reported shoot returns for last season improved considerably compared to previous years. In your application you state this improvement was due to a buzzard being a victim of a road-kill incident. It is not, however, possible to conclude that the death of a single buzzard was responsible for the improved returns rather than the benefits of non lethal measures. There is no evidence of serious damage since non lethal measures were implemented, and it is our assessment that none of the first 4 tests have been satisfied for this application.

Summary

I fully appreciate that you will be disappointed by the refusal of all of your latest applications for licences. Please be assured that we are keen to assist you with any predation problems, and to this end I have attached a detailed breakdown of non lethal measures and activities that we recommend are undertaken for each individual shoot location.

I would urge you to implement the non lethal measures outlined in the attached document.

As always, should circumstances change then please contact either myself [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] – Wildlife Regulation
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@naturalengland.org.uk

Feedback

Natural England is committed to providing a high quality service and values your comments to help us improve the service we offer, so please take a few minutes to complete the enclosed feedback form.

The form can alternatively be downloaded from our website

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/wildlife/contactus/default.aspx#feedback> and emailed to us at wildlife@naturalengland.org.uk

Complaints

If you are dissatisfied with the service you have received, please let me know and I will try to resolve the issue. Alternatively, you may wish to write to the Head of the Wildlife Licensing Unit at the address above. To find out more about Natural England's complaints procedure, you can call our Enquiry

Service (Tel: 0845 6003078; or email: info@naturalengland.org.uk) or view the details on our website [www.naturalengland.org.uk/about us/contact us/complaints.aspx](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/about_us/contact_us/complaints.aspx)

Customer Feedback

To help us improve our service please complete the following questionnaire and return to:

Wildlife Licensing Unit, Natural England, First Floor, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Bristol, BS1 6EB.

Fax: 0845 6013438 or email: wildlife@naturalengland.org.uk

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/wildlife/default.aspx



1. How easy was it to get in contact with the Wildlife Management & Licensing Team of Natural England?

Difficult (1)

☐

OK (2)

☐

Easy (3)

☐

Very Easy (4)

☐

If 1 please specify who you initially contacted in relation to your issue/enquiry?

2. Please tell us how aware you were (BEFORE you contacted us) of wildlife legislation and what it does/does not permit in relation to your enquiry?

Unaware (1)

☐

Very Limited Awareness (2)

☐

Partially Aware (3)

☐

Fully Aware (4)

☐

3. How would you rate the service provided by Natural England?

	<i>Poor</i> 1	<i>Fair</i> 2	<i>Good</i> 3	<i>Excellent</i> 4	<i>Not applicable</i>
Ease of completion of application	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ease of completion of licence renewal form	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advice provided by telephone (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Our web site (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Competence, helpfulness and politeness of staff in licensing unit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Competence of staff and advice provided during site visit or method statement assessment (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speed of process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Overall service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

If 1 or 2 to any of the above please specify why:

4. Was your issue/enquiry resolved by the activity authorised under licence or advice provided by us?

Fully

☐

Partially

☐

Unresolved

☐

If not fully resolved please state what you think could have been done instead (note legislation affects actions which can be licensed):

5. Was there a public reaction to any action taken under the licence or as a result of our advice?

Positive support

☐

No reaction

☐

Negative reaction

☐

6. Would you use a fully online licensing service if it could be made available in the future?

Definitely

☐

Possibly

☐

Unlikely

☐

No

☐

7. Do you have any further comments to make or suggestions for improving our service, if yes please specify.

If you are happy to be contacted at a later date to explore possible improvement options, please tick this box ☐

Recommendations for non lethal techniques that should be undertaken per release site.

General

In addition to the detail provided for each release site below, the following basic measures should be implemented at each release site. This advice applies to both the release sites for the shoots covered by the current licence applications, and those for other shoots under your management.

Stocking older/larger sized poults – poults should be stocked at a minimum age of 9 weeks, and preferably as large as possible, to make them less vulnerable to predation.

Use of barrier tape (or preferably single sided reflective tape) – this should be used across open areas and rides within woods. This should be placed at a variety of heights to provide a physical barrier to flightlines.

Increasing ground cover – There are two approaches to increasing the ground cover to protect poults from avian predation:

1. Brash piles are in place in a number of pens. These should provide cover and allow the birds to pass through them from one side to another (so not be against fences, etc). They should also be spread out to provide cover throughout the release pen.
2. Management of woodland is recommended, although it is recognised that for some of the woods this may not be possible due to tenancy and ownership of the sites by the [REDACTED] estate. However where management is possible through site ownership, then it should be given full consideration. Management should include selective thinning to create warm spots and encourage ground cover growth. Planting could also be used to enhance shrub cover (elder for speed, blackthorn and hawthorn for dense cover in time). Any brushings should be used to provide brash piles/wigwams – as per 1, above.

[REDACTED] in particular appears to have previously been severely predated. Everyone visiting this pen last spring (2012) felt that providing additional ground cover here (especially near feeding locations) was a key part of the solution, as currently there is very little cover for the poults.

Audio / visual deterrents - It is recommended you continue to use of deterrent methods (CD's, feed sacks, car radios, etc) at the release sites, to be installed immediately upon arrival of the poults. (This timing is to limit the amount of habituation effect that will occur to predatory birds.)

NB Radios should not be used at [REDACTED] release sites to reduce the risk of poults being flushed from the woods.

Offsetting feeders and drinkers - All feeders and drinkers should be placed offset from straight lines along rides and woodland edges. They should be set back and into existing gaps in vegetation or by creating small 'scallops' with a strimmer/brushcutter. Feeders along the northern side of [REDACTED] are an example of where they are located in the open along a straight line and here could be easily offset from this flightline.

Location of feeders and drinkers – These should be located close to cover so that poults can quickly move away from these if threatened by predation.

Scarecrows - Consideration should be given to providing a human type scarecrow at release locations. As specified previously, this should be as human-like as possible, with realistic eyes which are visible to the bird. A shop dummy type mannequin is recommended for this. The scarecrow should be regularly moved around and between pens when stocked poults are checked, which will reduce the amount of additional effort required to very little more than normal.

Pen corners - Where there are any square corners to pens (thought to be very few in this case), reduce and limit these where possible.

Other predator control should be maintained – fox control and that of other ground vermin as well as electric fencing around the perimeter of the pen fences.

Perch removal - Should there be any obvious, frequently used raptor perches in and around pens, these should either be removed or proofed against perching. 6-8 inch nails partly hammered into wooden surfaces where birds perch should be effective, such as on posts or obvious low branches.

on attached map.

This wood was not thinned in 2013 and remains dark and cold. Brash has been moved from thinning/felling elsewhere and has been made into wigwam piles within the wood along the ride. Some brash remains 'unused' and it is recommended that this extra brash is used to create some wigwams or windrow(s) near the entrance to the feed ride to provide additional cover outside the wood.

Feeders should be placed near to and between the wigwams to give poults chance to move to cover if attacked when feeding.

Ideally additional brash should be brought to site to form wigwams and provide additional hard low level cover outside the wood, as this is limited. The cover crop is now 3 years old and is sparse in places, predominated by oxeye daisy and thistle and providing little in the way of cover or shelter. The retention of a wide strip of wheat in the adjacent field as part of the new agri-environment scheme will be beneficial in providing additional cover.

on attached map.

This wood has had a light thinning in the spring/summer of 2013, which has had the effect of increasing open areas and light to the woodland floor, but only to a limited amount. Although the woodland will be lighter and warmer until the canopy closes once more (in only a few years) ground cover is unlikely to establish quickly and in sufficient type and quantity.

Brash from the thinning has been used in part of the wood to create a number of wigwam piles, the remaining half (which was only thinned in the last couple of weeks) remains as loose brash. It is strongly advised that time is spent utilising this brash for construction of wigwams and windrows both inside and outside the wood.

As for the above wood, feeders should be placed near the brash piles and these should be offset from any easy flight lines available to predatory birds.

on attached map.

This wood is previously unseen and consists of mature but apparently slower growing Scots pine and is on the edge and running down a moderate slope. The canopy is much less dense than the spruce wood elsewhere and a light thinning has occurred in the wood above the slope. There is evidence of previous ground vegetation being present (notably bracken and some bramble) and this should increase with the increased open canopy allowing more

light to the woodland floor. Here brash has been pulled into wigwam structures affording low level harder cover from aerial predation. The wigwams are close together, and a better spread would be recommended.

There is more cover outside this wood available to poult released at this location as the wood runs down a small dene that is vegetated with mixed conifer and broadleaf tree and shrubs.

All 3 woods at [REDACTED] would benefit from additional harder cover at ground/shrub level to give poults protection when leaving the wood release sites.

[REDACTED] –The interior of [REDACTED] was not viewed during the July 2013 visit, but no habitat management measures were reported to have been undertaken here. Previously this pen would have benefitted from a light thinning to create more open areas and allow more light and ground vegetation to grow. There is some mid-height vegetation in the form of elder, which could be split and semi-laid to form additional cover at ground level. Tapes over open and more vulnerable areas should also be used here. The pen would also benefit from feeders along the northern edge being offset from the line of the ride and set back from a straight line along the ride. Scallops in the edge of the ride would be beneficial and any cuttings used to create structure to provide cover in open areas or adjacent to feeders etc.

[REDACTED] was not visited in July 2013. This pen had some felling in winter 2011/12 and the brushings from this felling were used to create piles and wigwams to provide cover for the stock released into this wood – again at vulnerable areas, near feeders open areas etc. These should be checked and where necessary bulked out/re-constructed to ensure they offer the maximum amount of protection.

[REDACTED] – It is now apparent that the canopy of this mixed woodland has closed somewhat and light levels at the woodland floor are diminishing, which may be impacting upon the ground flora and hence cover levels. During our visit of the 11th July 2013 it was noted that there a closed canopy with quite an open area beneath. The shrub layer is relatively thin however ground vegetation remains fairly well established, but with some areas of low density in places.

Where areas of low cover exist inside and in the immediate vicinity of the pen and feeders, attempts should be made to provide additional cover in the form of brash piles as well as taping over open areas to break flight lines. Again feeders and drinkers should be placed close to cover and protected by tapes.

This is one site where in particular diversionary feeding would be recommended. The historical described pattern of predation is two pairs of buzzards regularly feeding upon the poults released into this pen, and establishing feeding stations immediately prior to release could have a beneficial effect of limiting the need for predation upon poults and there is strong evidence from colleagues in Scotland that this can be very effective.

Diversionsary feeding should begin 1 week before poults are placed in the pen and only continue for as long as the poults are vulnerable to predation. Feed should be locally sourced species that are normal prey or carrion for buzzards (wood pigeon, rabbit etc) and can be gathered and retained from other pest control operations throughout the year. Diversionsary should be provided at the rate of one carcass every other day per territorial pair. At this level of feeding it is very unlikely that the extra feed will artificially increase common buzzard population levels.

Carcasses should be provided at a sufficient height off the ground to reduce mammal scavenging , i.e. on a 6' post, and provided early in the morning so that birds leaving roost can feed from the carcass. Feeding stations should be in the territory of the nesting pair and do not need to be exactly at the release site, but should be nearby. A circular profile 'T' piece

of about 18" in length and 2-3" in diameter should be affixed to the top of the post. Carcasses should be placed within the territory of the nesting pair and if near the release site around 50 yards from the pen or edge of the wood. The feeding station should be in an open area where it can easily be seen and accessed by buzzards. This should be close enough for predatory birds to be drawn to the 'bait', but not close enough so that they key into the poults.

