



SCOTTISH LOWLANDS BARN OWL FORUM

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Notes of an Exploratory Meeting to set up the Forum **Friday, 10th February 2006** **Vane Farm Nature Reserve, By Kinross**

Present:

Catherine Lloyd	Tayside Biodiversity Partnership (TBP)
Shirley Paterson	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (Fife & Kinross)
Elsbeth Christie	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (Vane Farm)
Julie Horsburgh	Fife Biodiversity Partnership
Mark Oksien	Fife Barn Owl Monitor
Chris Waddell	Stirling Biodiversity Partnership
Louise Bond	Clackmannanshire Biodiversity Partnership (CBP)
Colin Nisbet	Volunteer – CBP
Jean Baxter	Volunteer – TBP

Apologies

Carol Littlewood	Angus FWAG
Richard Lockett	Perth FWAG
Christine Hall	Scottish Agricultural College (Perth)
Keith Cohen	Barn Owl Conservation Network (Fife Local Adviser)

Notes also circulated to: Norman Elkins, British Trust for Ornithology (Fife Representative); Les Hatton, Tay Ringing Group; Scottish Ornithological Society (Edinburgh); Mark Simmons, Perth Museum; Angus Ranger Service; Dundee Ranger Service; Perth & Kinross Ranger Service; Fife Ranger Service; SNH (Battleby and Airlie); Forestry Commission (Perth); National Trust for Scotland (Dunkeld office); Helen Dunlop, Business Environment Partnership (Dalkeith), Fiona McIntyre, Scottish Golf Environment Group (Dalkeith).

1. Welcome and Scene Setting

Catherine Lloyd (CL) welcomed everyone to the meeting. She explained that the Tayside Barn Owl Interest Group had formed some 4 or 5 years ago as part of the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership's Farmland sub-group. Its members include Angus and Perth FWAG, SAC, NTS and the RSPB.

As Fife & Kinross FWAG had previously run a Barn Owl Nestbox Project and there were moves to set up similar projects across Central Scotland it was agreed to have a preliminary meeting to explore best practice and the possibility of setting up an umbrella "Forum" under the aegis of the various Local Biodiversity Partnerships. The Forum would cover the LBAP areas: Tayside (Perth & Kinross, Dundee, Angus), Stirling, Clacks, and Fife.

2. Fife & Kinross FWAG Project

Shirley Paterson (SP) circulated details of FWAG's Fife & Kinross Barn Owl Grant and outlined the original project whereby a FWAG Adviser visit was supplemented by a Barn Owl Management Plan and, if the habitat proved suitable, the provision of a free nest box. The project had proved popular, but no further funding had been available to continue it. SP confirmed her interest in running a similar project in the future saying she could take on c20 sites in one year over both Fife and Kinross-shire.

3. Tayside Projects

The Tayside Barn Owl Survey was launched in 2002, records being collated first by Karl Munday of NTS, and latterly by Carol Littlewood of Angus FWAG. It is still ongoing. Pilot projects were undertaken:

- Angus Glens Barn Owl Project – led by Angus FWAG;
- Tay River Corridor Barn Owl Project – led by Perth FWAG and SAC;
- River Errochty (Highland Perthshire) Barn Owl Project – led by NTS

Funding had been received from SNH and (for the Angus Glens project) the Cairngorms Biodiversity Partnership and Angus Council. The first two projects had been completed; staff changes caused the cancellation of the NTS project.

Details about the Angus Glens project were circulated. CL confirmed that Carol Littlewood would be happy to give further information on the project, but to bear in mind that all FWAG Advisers will be extremely busy until April completing RSS applications.

4. RSPB – Proposed Educational Project

Elsbeth Christie (EC) wants to follow the success of the RSPB's Tree Sparrow Education Project. She is currently co-ordinating funding for a three-year Barn Owl project to work with two secondary schools per year. This would entail making nestboxes, linking with local farmers via the RSPB's Volunteer Farmer Alliance, and possibly contributing to the BTO Monitoring Programme. EC hopes local Eco-schools will get involved. The proposal would entail EC spending between 5 and 8 afternoons with each school - making school visits over the winter months, giving a talk on conservation and arranging a summer site visit.

EC was happy to spread the project across the Scottish Lowlands area and confirmed she needs £2,000 per year for 3 years to undertake the project.

5. Stirling and Clacks Projects

Louise Bond (LB) and Chris Waddell (CW) said that discussions are under way to set up a joint LBAP project with the Central FWAG Adviser. Mike Steward, ex-Forestry Commission, is also involved in the project. An awareness-raising campaign, with a survey, will be set up first. LB circulated the draft posters for discussion.

6. Monitoring

Mark Oksien (MO) outlined his longstanding voluntary work throughout Fife and confirmed he had put up c40 boxes in the area, although there was great scope for many more. He has been keeping his own records (for the period 1998 to 2004).

MO circulated details of the BTO's Barn Owl Monitoring Programme. There are two levels:

- Option 1 involves monitoring at least one Barn Owl nest site, checking nest sites on two or more occasions for occupancy, assessing fledgling success and checking for signs of re-nesting and second broods. A series of brief visits at monthly intervals from April to October is required. Although the option involves minimal disturbance to the species, fieldworkers are still be required to have a 'nest disturbance' licence to ensure full compliance with the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.
- Option 2 of the programme involves recording additional information about eggs or young. Only experienced, licensed ringers are eligible to take part in this.

Further information is available via www.bto.org/survey/bomp/index.htm.

It was agreed that the BTO Option 1 programme would be championed, where feasible, across the Scottish Lowlands area. CL agreed she would approach the BTO Nest Records Officer. All queries would be routed via MO.

MO suggested the various Raptor Groups might be interested in Barn Owl records across the Scottish Lowlands area. It was confirmed that the Central Raptor Group already does this.

CL circulated the A4 poster used to launch the Tayside Barn Owl Survey. Each member of the Tayside Barn Owl Interest Group personalised it with their own contact details and distributed it in their own areas. This had resulted in an increase in sightings being reported to individual members of the Group who, in turn, forwarded the details to the central database kept by Angus FWAG. A Newsletter will be prepared this spring to report on the Tay River Corridor and Angus Glens projects, as well as publicising the results of the survey.

7. Proposed Scottish Lowlands Barn Owl Forum

As there are barn owl projects at different stages throughout the Scottish Lowlands area, it was agreed to set up an informal Forum to pull together – where appropriate - funding opportunities, publicity, survey methodology, general good practice, etc. Regular meetings are not envisaged, but rather an e-group who can liaise with each other as necessary. It might be appropriate to meet once a year to discuss progress from each of the areas, or to arrange an appropriate workshop or training session.

8. Proposed Scottish Lowlands Barn Owl Project (for BAGS Application)

It was agreed that Julie Horsburgh (JH) would gather information to compile a joint application to the Biodiversity Action Grant. EC said she had probably already got funding for the RSPB project, but SP confirmed she would need funding for a Fife and Kinross Project. CL said she would check with the Tayside Barn Owl Interest Group as to their future plans now that the pilot projects had been completed.

It was suggested that rather than a full Barn Owl Management Plan being produced each time a 2x page laminated Barn Owl Advice Note could be prepared showing the appropriate

habitats in the area on a map with specific 'boxed' advice, photographs of species benefiting from the change in management, and a short table profiling specific UKBAP species. This would be multi-use – either for the farm office, or to display in farm shops, nature trails, etc (where it was sure there would be no disturbance to the birds). SP said she would be happy to work with other FWAG Advisers to prepare such a template for use across the Scottish Lowlands region.

9. Action Points Arising out of Meeting

JH (Fife)

- look into BAGS 2006 funding, liaise with appropriate Forum members and draw up a proposed project brief to circulate for comment before completing an application form.

MO (Fife)

- contact the Raptor Groups in the Scottish Lowlands area to ask if they would like survey records.
- advise JH and SP on gaps in current Fife and Kinross nestbox programme which need to be filled.
- liaise with BTO with regard the Monitoring Programme.

EC (Kinross-shire)

- liaise with all Forum members in the proposed RSPB project area and link where possible.

SP (Fife and Kinross)

- liaise with other FWAG Advisers to create a template for a Barn Owl Management Advice Note.
- liaise with JH as regards project funding needs for a Fife & Kinross Project.

LB and CW (Clacks and Stirling)

- liaise with JH as regards project funding needs for the Clacks & Stirling Project.

CN (Clacks)

- using existing ideas and templates, work up a proposed Scottish Lowlands survey and project poster to circulate to the Forum for comments.

CL (Tayside)

- compile notes of meeting and provide a publications/national advice listing.
- ask the Tayside Barn Owl Interest Group their thoughts on further projects and the potential to link with the wider proposed Scottish Lowlands project.
- contact SITA Environmental Trust to ask about potential Scottish Lowlands-wide project funding.
- ask SNH (and BOCN?) for a list of licensed ringers in the area and circulate to Forum for information.
- contact BTO Nest Records Officer regarding the BTO Monitoring Programme.

9. Publications and National Advice

CL circulated Information Packs from the Barn Owl Trust – further Advice Notes can be downloaded from www.barnowltrust.org.uk.

Details were given about English Nature's free booklet "Barn Owls on Site – a Guide for Developers and Planners". Copies can be downloaded from www.english-nature.org.uk. Single or multiple copies of the booklet can also be ordered via the website.

Construction plans for nestboxes can also be downloaded from www.hawkandowl.org. A Publications list from the Hawk and Owl Trust was also circulated. The Trust has published "The Barn Owl in the British Isles: It's Past, Present and Future" (by Colin Shawyer) and two booklets: 'Boxes, Baskets and Platforms (Artificial Nest Sites for Owls and Other Birds of Prey)'; 'The Barn Owl: The Farmer's Friend Needs a Helping Hand'. Leaflets are also available – "Planning for Barn Owls"; "Building for Barn Owls", and "The Barn Owl and its Habitat".

Pellets can be sent to the Hawk and Owl Trust for free identification - The Hawk and Owl Trust, c/o Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY. Enclose an SAE and indicate where the pellet was found.

Barn Owl Conservation Network (part of the H&OT): www.bocon.org - downloadable Risk Assessment forms, Health & Safety Advice (for nestbox installation), as well as simple Fact Files on Frequently Asked Questions.

14. Future Communication

No date was set for another meeting and the meeting closed at 12.30pm. CL thanked the RSPB for providing the meeting room free of charge.

CONTACT DETAILS

Please advise CL if there are additional names to add to this list.

	Name	Organisation	Contact Details
	Tayside Area		
	Catherine Lloyd	Tayside Biodiversity Partnership	tayside.biodiversity@ukf.net
	Elsbeth Christie	RSPB	Elsbeth.Christie@rspb.org.uk
	Carol Littlewood	Angus FWAG	Angus@fwag.org.uk
	Richard Lockett	Perth FWAG	perth@fwag.org.uk
	Christine Hall	SAC	c.hall@ed.sac.ac.uk
	Shirley Paterson	Fife & Kinross FWAG	Shirley.paterson@fwag.org.uk
	Jean Baxter	Perth College (student)	Via tayside.biodiversity@ukf.net
	Fife		
	Julie Horsburgh	Fife Biodiversity Partnership	Julie.Horsburgh@fife.gov.uk
	Elsbeth Christie	RSPB	Elsbeth.Christie@rspb.org.uk

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	Keith Cohen	Barn Owl Conservation Network (Fife Local Adviser)	bats@keithcohen.co.uk
	Clacks		
	Louise Bond	Clackmannanshire Biodiversity Partnership	LBond@clacks.gov.uk
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	Stirling Area		
	Chris Waddell	Stirling Biodiversity Partnership	waddellc@stirling.gov.uk