

News Release

Issued on behalf of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prosecution.

REPORT ON PREVENTION, INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF WILDLIFE CRIME PUBLISHED

A joint thematic inspection report on wildlife crime was published today by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Scotland (HMICS) and the Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland.

This report highlights the need for a clear wildlife crime reduction strategy from the Scottish Government and for an inclusive national partnership structure to take this forward.

The recommendations include:

- That ACPOS develops and implements a minimum standard of investigation to ensure that wildlife crime is thoroughly investigated throughout Scotland and the skills of supporting agencies are appropriately used;
- That each police force in Scotland designates a lead senior officer to take oversight of wildlife crime issues and progress them locally;
- That each police force in Scotland has a full-time wildlife crime co-ordinator to act as a focal point for investigations and partnership working;
- That there is full implementation of the stated specialist wildlife prosecutor role within the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary Paddy Tomkins said:

"During this inspection we have seen good practice in forces such as Grampian and Tayside that provide a sound foundation from which a strong and resilient structure right across Scotland can be built.

"If this is combined with the national wildlife crime reduction strategy and partnership structure that we have recommended, I am confident significant progress can be made.

"Wildlife crime detracts from one of Scotland's greatest assets – its natural and national heritage. This review confirms that the public indignation that such crimes create deserves and can be met with a professional and effective level of response from enforcement agencies. In doing so we will further marginalise and isolate those few offenders who continue to commit wildlife crime."

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prosecution Joe O'Donnell said:

"We noted with approval the innovative COPFS strategy of appointing specialist prosecutors to deal with wildlife crime and that this strategy received considerable support from other agencies. We found at inspection that the majority of cases were dealt with appropriately and in line with Crown Office policy. Nevertheless there were some instances where cases were not dealt with by the specialist prosecutor and therefore we recommend full implementation nationally of the specialist wildlife prosecutor role in both case handling and partnership working.

"The recommendations within this report should help to improve the prosecution of wildlife crime and improve understanding and communication of policies and decisions, helping to strengthen the system for dealing with those suspected of harming our wildlife"

Notes for News Editors

1. The report followed a debate at the Scottish Parliament on October 4 last year relating to increasing concerns about wildlife crime. The remit of the inspection was to consider, and make recommendations on, the arrangements for the prevention, investigation and prosecution of wildlife crime.

2. The report is available from

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/04/03143616>

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