

**Title: Wildlife Crime Update**

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***Background/Progress***

The Welsh wildlife crime enforcement group met at the Welsh Governments offices in Aberystwyth. The actions from the meeting dated 17<sup>th</sup> January 2012 are attached (Appendix 1). One of the actions finalised at this meeting was the issue of Welsh Wildlife Crime Priorities, after an exercise mirroring that carried out nationally it was agreed that in addition to the National Priorities the issue of damage and destruction to protected habitats within Wales would be made a priority for wildlife crime enforcement within Wales. An action plan to identify and deal with the main issues involved in this area is now being compiled.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2011 a training day was held at the Forestry Commission offices in Resolven for 9 new wildlife crime officers appointed to the South Wales Police. It is hoped to run a one week Foundation Course for these officers and other newly appointed officers in Wales in April 2012.

The Welsh Wildlife Crime Conference was held at the Dyfed Powys Police HQ's on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2011, due to the present financial situation the conference was moved from two days to a one day conference. The feedback from those attending was very positive and it is planned to hold a similar conference in November 2012.

A report into wildfires within Wales has been produced and has been handed to Chief Superintendent Gwyn Thomas (Dyfed-Powys Police) who will take the report to the all Wales Community Safety Partnership (senior level) and disseminate to the relevant senior/chief officers concerned for consideration. It is hoped that the majority of recommendations contained in the report will be implemented in an effort to address the problem of wildfires within Wales.

The House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee announced that they are holding an inquiry into wildlife crime in England and Wales. They held such an inquiry in 2004 and now want to see how much progress has been made in relation to their recommendations. The following provides a link to the announcement -

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environmental-audit-committee/news/wildlife-crime-inquiry-terms-of-reference/>

## Cases

At the beginning of November two North Wales men pleaded guilty at Prestatyn magistrates' court to an offence of third party damage to the LLwyn, Llanrahedr SSSI. This related to a track that had been constructed through a woodland within the SSSI. The case was the first Section 28 offence to be taken on by the CPS within the UK and is a significant step forward in dealing with environmental crime within Wales. The hearing is currently adjourned for a restoration agreement to be formulated and the two suspects to be sentenced.

As a result of this successful case two further cases relating to SSSI's in Rhondda Cynon Taff and Carmarthenshire have been referred to the CPS for advice.

A 20 year old man from the Pwllheli area received a formal police caution for an offence under Section 1 of the Deer act 1991. The male was initially arrested for an offence of theft, but during the subsequent investigation further evidence came to light of deer poaching offences.

A Dolgellau man was convicted at Dolgellau Magistrates of a charge brought under the Animal Welfare Act. This charge followed on from a search warrant that was conducted at his home address earlier this year by the North Wales Police, assisted by the RSPCA. The warrant was taken out in relation to a badger related offence, however no evidence was found with regards to this. During the search a Patterdale terrier dog was found to have significant lower jaw injuries, which had been left untreated by the owner. He was fined £330.00 and £15.00 victim surcharge including contribution to costs of £750.00.

After a police investigation at Dyffryn Gardens in the Vale of Glamorgan into the draining and painting of a number of ponds which had previously contained Great Crested Newts one member of staff received an official police caution for offences contrary to the Habitat Regulations whilst proceedings against another member of staff were withdrawn by the CPS after previous court hearings.

Complaints were received in November relating to aircraft flying at a very low level above the Whiteford National Nature Reserve which is within the Whiteford Burrows SSSI, the actions of the planes caused waders feeding on the reserve to take flight. As a result of this advice was provided to Swansea Airport about the protected areas in the vicinity of the airport and warning/advice letters were sent to the owners of the two planes involved in the incident. Information regarding the protected area is also being put on the Micro-Light Aircraft Internet Forum.

The foot of a hippopotamus and 10 carved ivory ornaments have been seized from a passenger at Cardiff Airport by UK Border Agency. Officers searched the bags of a 58-year-old Cardiff woman arriving from Zambia via Amsterdam. When questioned

the woman said she had cleared a relative's house in Zambia and was unaware that she needed a licence to bring the items into the UK.

***Plan/Proposals***

***Action Requested***

- Form a task and finish team to carry out next step NO
- Approve us to carry on as suggested above YES
- Ask all WBP members to comment on the format of the report YES