



Press Release – embargoed until 20 July, 2011

The independent experts who make up the Langholm Moor Demonstration Project's Science & Technical Advisory Group (STAG) have recommended to the Project's Directors that the project should continue for another three years. Their review, available for the first time today (www.langholmproject.com) identifies a promising start to the project.

The Project is a unique partnership, comprising: Scottish Natural Heritage, Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, Buccleuch Estates, RSPB and Natural England. The Project aims to demonstrate an effective means of resolving the raptor-grouse moor controversy by restoring grouse moor management to the Langholm Moor SPA/SSSI as a way of meeting the conservation objectives of the site. The duration of the project is up to ten years, subject to review every three years.

Based on the progress during the first three years, the experts recommended that the Project continue as planned. They noted that while progress towards the targets has been made, indicating that ultimate success is likely, the yearly variability in growth of grouse numbers, the difficulties in managing heather (especially in the face of heather beetle) and harrier, wader and passerine numbers not yet responding to increased management means that it is not certain when key goals, such as sustainable driven grouse shooting may begin. This month agreement was reached between project partners that there would be no grouse shooting this year at Langholm.

Professor Jeremy Greenwood, outgoing chairman of the LMDP STAG, said: "It has been fulfilling to be involved in such a worthwhile co-operative enterprise, aimed at benefiting not only grouse and harriers but also those people who appreciate the uplands and have to make a living in them. The scientists and land managers on the Scientific and Technical Advisory Group have worked effectively together to address the controversial issues involved in the project. It has also been a delight to support the dedicated and effective team of keepers and researchers at Langholm, who have not only worked effectively with the STAG but also closely and harmoniously together towards the common goal."

Views from the key stakeholders, represented by the project Board of Directors, backed the generally positive review and outlook. Outgoing chair of the board Susan Davies, Director of Policy and Advice at Scottish Natural Heritage said: "The Langholm Project demonstrates just how important it is to have clear management objectives, a clear evidence base and a willingness to adopt an 'adaptive management' approach; reviewing and adjusting the land management activities as issues unfold on the moor. There are significant challenges ahead that will undoubtedly challenge conventional conservation approaches, requiring the project partners to find creative solutions. However, with the tremendous dedication of the Project's gamekeeping and scientific staff at Langholm, we should keep making progress."

The incoming board chair, Mark Oddy of Buccleuch Estates said: "Buccleuch Estates has long been instrumental in advocating the critical role that land managers play in the management of the uplands. The Langholm Project is just another example of our involvement in trying to find adaptive management solutions that will allow all of us to manage for a balance, while recognising commercial imperatives. The robust science which underpins the entire Project will give stakeholders and policymakers the confidence required to make challenging decisions in the future."



Duncan Orr-Ewing, Head of Species and Land Management at RSPB Scotland, commented:

“The Langholm Moor Demonstration Project is emerging as the most important test bed for resolving conflicts, and developing shared solutions, to management issues relevant to large areas of the UK uplands. For example, it has already made a major contribution to informing the outcome of the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011. Conservationists and sporting interests share many common interests, including the desire to see thriving bird populations and sustainable sporting enterprises in our upland areas. This Project is starting to show the way forward as to how we can best work together to deliver our ambitions.”

In summary Teresa Dent, Chief Executive of Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust said: “The efforts by the Project keepers and scientists to deliver driven grouse balanced with raptor populations at Langholm deserve the highest praise. They have improved grouse numbers since the low point of 2004, through the estimated 70% reduction in fox numbers and attention to restoring habitat quality. But the Project’s management and knowledge exchange successes in the first three years are tempered by the reality of only modest numbers of harriers and grouse. We look forward to addressing these issues by examining the patterns of overwinter raptor predation on grouse, what is holding back the modest numbers of wading birds, further tagging of harriers and treating heather beetle damage.”

Notes for Editors

The Langholm Moor Demonstration Project is funded by Scottish Natural Heritage, Buccleuch Estates, Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, Natural England and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The Project was launched by the Environment Minister, Michael Russell MSP in September 2007. It aims to re-establish driven grouse shooting thereby providing the management required to maintain the nature conservation objectives of the site. Langholm Moor has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Protection Area for the upland habitat assemblage, range of breeding birds, geological exposures and for the aggregation of breeding hen harriers. The delivery of the Project is being undertaken by a recently formed company, the Langholm Moor Demonstration Project Limited. This Company employs the Project Manager, the Gamekeeping team and funds the essential scientific monitoring. It is guided by a board of directors, with each funding partner being represented.

For further information on the Langholm Moor Demonstration Project please contact Graeme Dalby, the project manager: graeme.dalby@snh.gov.uk or Adam Smith: scottishhq@gwct.org.uk