

**From:** "Thomas Goater" <thomas.goater@rpsgroup.com>  
**To:** "Stephen Austin" <Stephen.Austin@snh.gov.uk>  
**Date:** 3/6/2012 5:27 pm  
**Subject:** RE: Carraig Gheal Golden Eagle Monitoring Programme and Key Decision Dates

Hi Stephen,

Many thanks for agreeing to the proposed golden eagle monitoring programme and for your general advice and support.

To confirm, the eagle nest site is on the western face of an un-named crag just to the north of Creag na h-Iolaire at approximately NM . As discussed this nest site is approximately 1.3km from the WLATHR corridor, but the eastern side of the crag and surrounding moorland is likely to be within line-of-sight of the route due to a forest break. Consequently, depending on if and where the eagles decide to nest, we would advise the contractor to install suitable screening at the forest break (as per WLATHR Planning Condition 21) to avoid any visual disturbance at the nest site. On that note, I would be grateful if you could provide some advice on the type of screening which would be suitable - I think you mentioned that screening had been used at another site?

With regards to white-tailed eagles, I can confirm that we have not observed any nesting behaviour within 1.5km of the WLATHR route or the wind farm site, although a pair have frequently been seen in association with the crags at , to the south of Loch . We have been keeping an eye on the known roost site in Gleann ha h-Airigh ( ) but this has only been used occasionally as a roost with no signs of nesting. Another probable roost was identified during the broad white-tailed eagle surveys. This was in trees along the western shore of Loch at ..

If you could get back to about the black grouse (legal justification) and pine marten (stand-off zones & licensing) issues that would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks again,

Regards,

Thomas

-----Original Message-----

From: Stephen Austin [mailto:Stephen.Austin@snh.gov.uk]  
Sent: 06 March 2012 16:56  
To: Thomas Goater  
Subject: Re: Carraig Gheal Golden Eagle Monitoring Programme and Key Decision Dates  
Importance: High

\*\* High Priority \*\*

Hi Thomas,

Thank you for sending this through. I can agree to this change in surveying.

If you need to discuss this further please get in touch.

Thanks

Stephen

Stephen Austin  
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>>> "Thomas Goater" <thomas.goater@rpsgroup.com> 3/2/2012 5:32 pm >>>  
Dear Stephen,

Following the last correspondence to you informing of the arrival of a sub-adult female golden eagle into the known eagle territory in proximity to the WLATHR (e-mail from David Boyd (GreenPower) dated 30th Jan 2012), I thought I'd give you a brief update on the current status.

Since the arrival of the female bird into the territory at the very end of January, construction works have been stood down along the 'Eagle Section', while more intrusive activities such as blasting and rock pecking have been maintained at a distance of over 1.5km from the nesting territory. Meanwhile RPS have been undertaking weekly surveys to monitor the pair formation and breeding behaviour exhibited by the birds. Throughout February much of the observed activity was associated with pair bonding/forming during which time the majority of flights and breeding behaviour was centred around the crags at [redacted] as opposed to the more recently used [redacted] crags. Then, in the most recent survey (24/02/12) the pair were observed building up a nest on an un-named crag just to the north of [redacted]. No more surveys have been undertaken to date.

In recent discussions with GreenPower and the construction contractor CA Blackwell, and in light of the tight construction timescales, it was proposed that rather than monitor the eagles on a weekly basis, surveys should be targetted ahead of key stages in the eagle breeding season in order to monitor the progress of any nesting/breeding attempts by the pair. Consequently RPS have prepared that attached Golden Eagle Monitoring Programme. The flow chart within this document outlines the survey effort that will be carried out during the various stages in the eagle breeding season. It also identifies key dates by which assessments on the status of the eagle breeding attempt, and decisions regarding resumption of the works will be made. The aim of this programme is to establish set dates at which the restriction of works along the Eagle Section can be reviewed, rather than on a rolling basis.

I would be grateful if you could review the Golden Eagle Monitoring Programme and provide any comments you may see fit.

I hope that you find this document useful and I look forward to any comments you may have.

Kind regards,

Thomas

,

Thomas Goater

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## **Creag / Golden Eagle Nesting Territory Monitoring Programme & Key Decision Dates**

### **Background**

Observations to date show no signs of nest selection by the newly forming eagle pair, which is recognised to take place anytime between October and March. The majority of activity has been observed over Creag suggesting that the birds are showing preference for this nesting area.

In consultation with SNH it has been agreed that if no nesting attempt is made by the end of April 2012 then it will be assumed that the nest site will not be used this year and that works will be permitted to resume along the Eagle Section of the WLATHR (following further consultation with SNH).

Following recent discussions with CA Blackwell, the following Golden Eagle Monitoring and Key Decision Dates Flow Chart has been produced to identify the proposed survey programme which will be put in place to monitor the breeding status of the eagle pair during the breeding season. In addition the chart identifies key dates on which decisions will be made on the resumption of construction works within the Eagle Section. Any decisions will be based on the results eagle monitoring surveys and in relation to key recognised stages in the eagle breeding season (i.e. egg laying, incubation, hatching, fledging etc.).

### **Notes to accompany the Golden Eagle Monitoring and Key Decision Dates Flow Chart**

<sup>(i)</sup> Sufficient evidence to suggest that no breeding attempt is being made would include a combination of the following;

- repeat observations over successive surveys where only a single bird is present within the territory;
- no selection of a nest site by the pair or signs of nest occupancy after extensive searching;
- no indication that any eggs have been laid and/or that the female is incubating eggs during the incubation period; or,
- repeated sightings of a pair of birds together away from the nest site during the incubation period.

<sup>(ii)</sup> Sufficient evidence to suggest that a nesting attempt has failed at the incubation / hatching stage would include a combination of the following;

- repeated sightings of a pair of birds together away from the nest site during the incubation period (particularly if eggs are known to be / have been present);
- the presence of a full clutch of broken eggs within the nest; or,
- evidence that the full clutch of hatched eaglets have died.

<sup>(iii)</sup> Sufficient evidence to suggest that a nesting attempt had failed at the rearing stage would include a combination of the following;

- repeated and prolonged sightings of a pair of birds together away from the nest site during the chick rearing period (particularly if eaglets are known to be / have been present); or
- evidence that the full clutch of eaglets have died.

Sufficient evidence to suggest that young had dispersed and no were longer dependent on the nest would include the following;

- repeated sightings of fledged eaglet(s) away from the nest site with negligible to no dependence on the nest site;
- limited to no attendance by the parent birds; or,
- cessation of food provisioning by the parent birds.

**Mid-late April** *Egg laying (early Mar to mid-Apr) & Incubation (early-Mar to early June)*

Intensive programme of surveys carried out between mid-late April (e.g. one visit every 5 days in optimal weather conditions) to determine whether; A) the eagle pair are still together, B) a nest site has been selected and C) egg laying has taken place (based on the presence of an incubating bird).

**Breeding / nesting confirmed**

Continue to monitor during incubation and hatching period (see below).

**Evidence suggests no breeding attempt <sup>(i)</sup>**

Contact SNH on **30<sup>th</sup> April** for agreement to resume works along the Eagle Section.

**May to mid-July** *Incubation (early-Mar to early July) & Hatching (mid-April to early-July)*

Continue monthly observations to monitor nesting progression and hatching / rearing of young.

**Incubation and hatching confirmed**

Continue to monitor during rearing, fledging and dispersal period (see below).

**Evidence suggests nesting attempt failed at incubation / hatching stage <sup>(ii)</sup>**

Contact SNH on **15<sup>th</sup> July** for agreement to resume works along the Eagle Section.

**Mid-July to late-August** *Rearing (mid-April to mid-September), Fledging (July to mid-September) & Dispersal (August onwards)*

Continue monthly observations to monitor rearing and fledging of young. Between mid-late August increase survey frequency (e.g. one visit every 5 days in optimal weather conditions) to determine whether the young have successfully fledged and dispersed and are no longer dependent on the nest in anticipation of the end of the indicative eagle breeding season as per WLATHR PC16 (August 31<sup>st</sup>).

**Young fledged but not dispersed and/or still dependent on the nest**

Continue to monitor until young have dispersed and are no longer dependent on the nest (see below).

**Either evidence suggests nesting attempt failed at rearing stage or young successfully fledged, dispersed and no longer dependent on the nest <sup>(iii)</sup>**

Contact SNH on **31<sup>st</sup> August** for agreement to resume works along the Eagle Section.

**Early-mid-September** *Dispersal (August onwards)*

Continue mid-late August survey intensity to monitor fledging and dispersal of young.

**Young fledged but not dispersed and/or still dependent on the nest**

Continue to monitor until young have dispersed and are no longer dependent on the nest (see below).

**Young dispersed and no longer dependent on the nest <sup>(iii)</sup>**

Contact SNH on **15<sup>th</sup> Sept** for agreement to resume works along the Eagle Section.

**Mid-September onwards** *Dispersal (August onwards)*

Continue observations until young have dispersed and are no longer dependent on the nest. Observations will be undertaken weekly. Following the first survey on which no eagle young have been observed at the nest a second visit will be carried out the following day (or within 3 days). If no dependence is still observed, young will be considered to have dispersed. If young return to the nest site, return to weekly monitoring schedule as above.

**Young dispersed and no longer dependent on the nest <sup>(iii)</sup>**

Contact SNH once two consecutive surveys have been undertaken where no dependence has been observed for agreement to resume works along the Eagle Section.