

Proposed Terms of Reference: Irish Forest Birds Monitoring Group, with initial focus on hen harrier & merlin

Scope of the Group

- The group is a voluntary, non-statutory group which promotes the surveying, monitoring and reporting on hen harrier and merlin with the aim of conserving the species in the context of the forestry sector.
- The group will monitor the population of both species through annual surveys and report on their findings. The group will have a mandate to publish its findings following consultation with NPWS and DAFM. The group will support the conservation objectives of the species and the objectives of statutory agencies.
- The group will support their monitoring activities with research aimed at improving knowledge of the species in the Irish landscape and how they interact with forestry and forest habitats and may make recommendations to Government on measures to improve the status of the species.
- The group will report annually on its activities.

Membership

- The group should aim to bring together a wide range of active stakeholders who are active in surveying and monitoring the bird species concerned.
- The group should have representatives from relevant government agencies, non-governmental agencies who produce survey data and engage in scientific assessments and reporting of the bird species concerned, survey groups and knowledge-holders, and representatives of forest owners.
- A sample membership should include: NPWS, Birdwatch Ireland, DAFM (Forest Service), Coillte and representatives of the wider forestry industry and forest owners.

Governance

- The group should be represented by members nominated by partner founding organisations and have relevant experience which supports the work of the group.
- The group will elect a chairperson on an annual basis.
- Each group member will have one vote and majority vote will decide.
- All data including survey data will be shared within the group and discussed in relation to agreeing the group activities.
- The group will agree an annual work programme and such programme will be costed. Funding will be sought from established EU and National funding programmes and from partner members of the group.

Monitoring and Reporting

- The group will publish an annual report covering its activities and the work of the group.
- The group will commission annual surveys, based on the best scientific approach, of the hen harrier and merlin.
- The group will commission other relevant studies as required to bring about improvements to the habitats for the species.
- The group will review the effectiveness of its activities within 2 years and make whatever changes it considers necessary to its Terms of Reference

END