

BMC Position Statement on Driven Grouse Moor Management

The BMC works to conserve the upland environment by advocating measures to protect its special character, landscape, wildlife, freedoms and access which are integral to the enjoyment of 'wilder' places. This includes protecting nesting birds through an extensive national network of voluntary restrictions and working alongside landowners and conservation organisations to help protect wildlife and habitats in the uplands. However, unregulated, driven grouse moor shooting, with its attendant effects on raptor populations, damage to upland peatland habitats and persecution of mountain hares, is negating some of this work.

The BMC supports measures to stop burning on upland peat moors with the consequent loss of biodiversity and release of CO₂. Apart from its impact on the landscape, where it results in large areas of heather monoculture, this practice damages peatland ecosystems and their associated wildlife, reduces species diversity by encouraging the growth of a limited number of species and dries out the peat thus releasing CO₂. This is contrary to all efforts to reduce global CO₂ emissions and improve the condition of habitats and wildlife. Reduction in water quality and increased flood risk are additional unwanted side effects which have significant negative impacts on society.

The BMC is not anti-shooting but is against the illegal killing of raptors, and supports sustainable management practices in the uplands. For these reasons, the BMC wants to see driven grouse shooting regulated and for government to strengthen and enforce legislation to stop the illegal killing of raptors. Other activities to increase number of grouse shot, such as construction of inappropriate access tracks and killing of mountain hares, also contribute to the degradation of the upland landscape and its habitats. These practices should also be subject to stricter controls and stringent penalties where appropriate. We call on grouse shooting enterprises to adopt more environmentally friendly management schemes and manage their land less intensively and with lower grouse numbers. Government should encourage this through safeguards and incentives within the new Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS). The BMC is not against shooting, providing it has a low impact on the environment.

The regulation of driven grouse shooting is one part of the BMC's vision for sustainable management of our uplands. Alongside many other organisations, the BMC has declared a climate emergency. In 2020, through its Access and Conservation Trust (ACT), The Climate Project was launched to support peatland restoration in the UK. Nature recovery is a key part of tackling climate change and achieving net zero carbon emissions with our peatlands having a key role to play.

In summary, the BMC's key asks for uplands in respect of driven grouse shooting are:

- Protected sites managed to return to and/or maintain favourable ecological condition;
- An immediate end to the illegal killing and disturbance of birds of prey across the uplands;
- A reduction in the intensity of managed vegetation burning and a cessation of burning on upland peat soils, particularly on SSSIs and in drinking water catchments;
- The restoration of degraded upland peatland and moorland, now dominated by heather, to a healthy environment with a more diverse range of flora and fauna.

