

Raptor Persecution UK

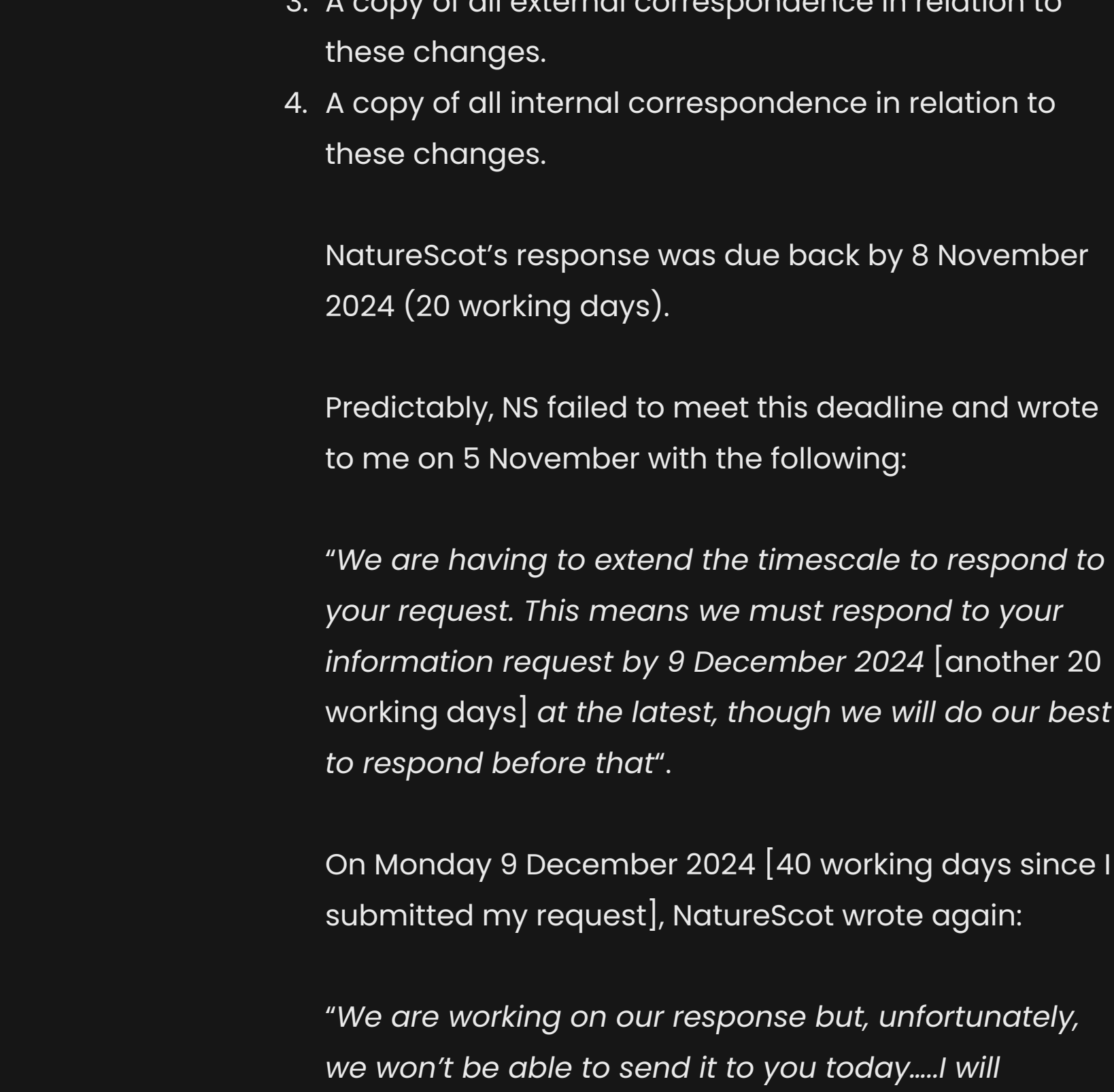
NatureScot is stalling on releasing overdue Fol documents relating to its grouse moor licensing shambles

RaptorPersecutionUK
December 18, 2024
News

There appears to be something very dodgy going on at NatureScot (NS), the Scottish Government's statutory advisor on nature conservation.

There's been some shocking behaviour in recent months, some of which I won't write about just yet because legal proceedings may be imminent, but one thing I can write about is NS's failure to provide documents I requested via Fol/EIR over two months ago in relation to the shambolic grouse moor licences.

As many of you will know, the new grouse moor licences, introduced this year as part of the Wildlife Management & Muirburn (Scotland) Act, have already been sabotaged by the grouse shooting industry and as a result have been significantly weakened by a new licence condition introduced by NS, meaning the licences no longer cover an entire shooting estate but just the parts of the estate where red grouse are 'taken or killed', which on a driven grouse moor could effectively just mean a small area around a line of grouse butts (see previous blogs [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) for background details).



Grouse moor photo by Richard Cross. Annotation by RPUK

I submitted an Fol request to NatureScot on Friday 11 October 2024 and asked for the following information:

1. A copy of the legal advice NatureScot received in relation to these changes.
2. A copy of all correspondence between NatureScot and Ministers in relation to these changes.
3. A copy of all external correspondence in relation to these changes.
4. A copy of all internal correspondence in relation to these changes.

NatureScot's response was due back by 8 November 2024 (20 working days).

Predictably, NS failed to meet this deadline and wrote to me on 5 November with the following:

"We are having to extend the timescale to respond to your request. This means we must respond to your information request by 9 December 2024 [another 20 working days] at the latest, though we will do our best to respond before that".

On Monday 9 December 2024 [40 working days since I submitted my request], NatureScot wrote again:

"We are working on our response but, unfortunately, we won't be able to send it to you today....I will contact you again later this week to update you on progress. We aim to send our response by the end of this week at the latest".

On Thursday 12 December I wrote to NS to ask for an update and an explanation for the current delay as it was now well past 40 working days since I submitted my request.

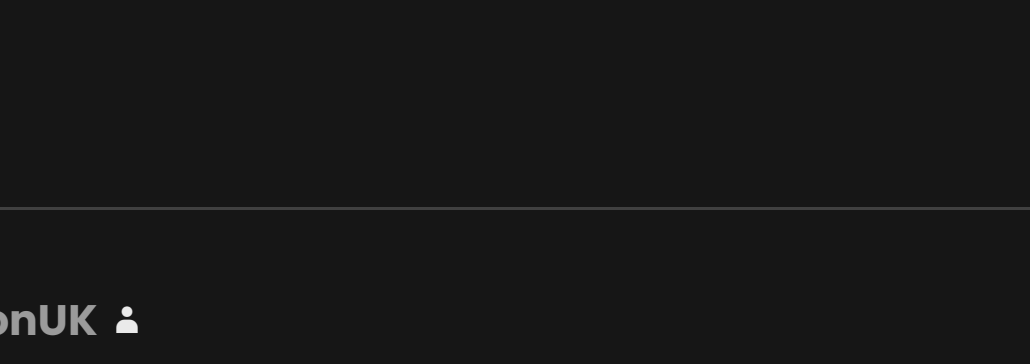
On Friday 13 December, NatureScot replied:

"I am writing to let you know that NatureScot will not be able to provide you with the information you have requested today. We are giving careful consideration to releasing the information you have requested, and this is taking longer than expected. We are aiming to provide you with a response as soon as possible and will update you early next week".

Given it's now Wednesday (i.e. mid-week), and the 'early' part of this week has already passed, today I wrote to NatureScot again and pointed out that they'd already had 46 working days to comply with the Fol regs and as it's now day 47, where is the information that I requested way back in October?

I'm not usually one for conspiracy theories but given what else I know NS has been up to behind the scenes these last few months, I'm deeply suspicious of these stalling tactics. You can only put so much down to incompetence; after that, it starts to look decidedly dodgy.

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8 thoughts on "NatureScot is stalling on releasing overdue Fol documents relating to its grouse moor licensing shambles"

JJMARKLE

December 18, 2024 at 3:26 pm

There are many estates that do "walked up" grouse shooting so surely the whole estate/Moor should covered by licence not just the butts?

Reply

spagnum morose
December 18, 2024 at 5:11 pm

Walked-up is not generally done on estates where it is economically viable to shoot driven grouse. Except for maybe some low-key let days and informal days, or keepers days. If a manager / agent can make the numbers add up in terms of viable return on the total for an owners capital investment & ongoing outlay for roads, houses, keepers wages, etc, etc then Driven Grouse is what they will do every time. It has the prestige – and the two models of management are very different in terms of intensity.

Reply

Andy Mitchell

December 18, 2024 at 3:39 pm

Ruth, I certainly agree with you on this, and particularly your last sentence. But we do have to accept that NatureScot are spectacularly and pyrotechnically incompetent, although they do seem to have gone beyond that this time.

Reply

Wilf Norman

December 18, 2024 at 3:47 pm

Can such prevarication be allowed to go on indefinitely Ruth?

Reply

RaptorPersecutionUK
December 18, 2024 at 3:50 pm

Hi Wilf,

No, there's a legal process NS must follow, and also I must follow it before making a complaint to the Information Commissioner. Watch this space.

Reply

Wilf Norman

December 18, 2024 at 3:56 pm

Figured there had to be. Power to your keyboard, Ruth!

Reply

geomurdol

December 18, 2024 at 3:48 pm

Place too much strain on a cover and the internal structure begins to take shape.

Reply

Andy Pay

December 18, 2024 at 4:20 pm

Your tenacity is admirable. Thank you so much.

Reply

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- 2000 persecution incidents (3)
- 2001 persecution incidents (7)
- 2002 persecution incidents (3)
- 2003 persecution incidents (13)
- 2004 persecution incidents (6)
- 2005 persecution incidents (8)
- 2006 persecution incidents (16)
- 2007 persecution incidents (14)
- 2008 persecution incidents (13)
- 2009 persecution incidents (48)
- 2010 persecution incidents (71)
- 2011 persecution incidents (51)
- 2012 persecution incidents (124)
- 2013 persecution incidents (147)
- 2014 persecution incidents (182)
- 2015 persecution incidents (103)
- 2016 persecution incidents (147)
- 2017 persecution incidents (143)
- 2018 persecution incidents (206)
- 2019 persecution incidents (210)
- 2020 persecution incidents (265)
- 2021 persecution incidents (220)
- 2022 persecution incidents (144)
- 2023 persecution incidents (113)
- 2024 persecution incidents (51)
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- December 2024 (13)
- November 2024 (26)
- October 2024 (19)
- September 2024 (17)
- August 2024 (20)
- July 2024 (13)
- June 2024 (16)
- May 2024 (17)
- April 2024 (20)
- March 2024 (28)
- February 2024 (23)
- January 2024 (27)
- December 2023 (22)
- November 2023 (29)
- October 2023 (21)
- September 2023 (17)
- August 2023 (50)
- July 2023 (20)
- June 2023 (36)
- May 2023 (37)
- April 2023 (31)
- March 2023 (27)
- February 2023 (24)
- January 2023 (30)
- December 2022 (16)
- November 2022 (15)
- October 2022 (22)
- September 2022 (14)
- August 2022 (33)
- July 2022 (21)
- June 2022 (26)
- May 2022 (32)
- April 2022 (26)
- March 2022 (34)
- February 2022 (28)
- January 2022 (31)
- December 2021 (27)
- November 2021 (22)
- October 2021 (29)
- September 2021 (24)
- August 2021 (26)
- July 2021 (21)
- June 2021 (15)
- May 2021 (35)
- April 2021 (41)
- March 2021 (38)
- February 2021 (42)
- January 2021 (38)
- December 2020 (33)
- November 2020 (48)
- October 2020 (29)
- September 2020 (41)
- August 2020 (50)
- July 2020 (40)
- June 2020 (38)
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- October 2019 (30)
- September 2019 (23)
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- March 2019 (42)
- February 2019 (23)
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- July 2018 (26)
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- December 2015 (12)
- November 2015 (23)
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- August 2013 (22)
- July 2013 (32)
- June 2013 (12)
- May 2013 (18)
- April 2013 (13)
- March 2013 (23)
- February 2013 (22)
- January 2013 (24)
- December 2012 (21)
- November 2012 (20)
- October 2012 (32)
- September 2012 (16)
- August 2012 (27)
- July 2012 (23)
- June 2012 (20)
- May 2012 (26)
- April 2012 (17)
- March 2012 (27)
- February 2012 (28)
- January 2012 (13)
- December 2011 (20)
- November 2011 (26)
- October 2011 (11)
- September 2011 (20)
- August 2011 (18)
- July 2011 (19)
- June 2011 (16)
- May 2011 (23)
- April 2011 (14)
- March 2011 (13)
- February 2011 (6)
- January 2011 (7)
- December 2010 (10)
- November 2010 (7)
- October 2010 (6)
- September 2010 (10)
- August 2010 (11)
- July 2010 (3)
- June 2010 (10)
- May 2010 (13)
- April 2010 (3)
- March 2010 (96)

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