

## Responding to:

# Protecting wild birds: Consultation on Amending the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which allows certain species of wild birds to be killed or taken outside of their close seasons.

A Guide for Moorland Association Members

**Consultation deadline: 17 May 2026**

*This guide is produced by the Moorland Association to help members understand and respond to the consultation. It does not represent the Association's official position on any proposal. Members are encouraged to respond individually with their own views and evidence.*

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# 1. What This Consultation Is About

The UK Government (Defra), Scottish Government and Welsh Government have published a joint consultation proposing changes to Schedule 2.1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Schedule 2.1 is the list of wild bird species that may be legally shot outside the close season - the period each year when a species is protected to allow breeding and migration. If a species is on Schedule 2.1, it can be shot during the open season. If it is not on the list, it is fully protected year-round.

This consultation, which opened on 23 March 2026 and closes on 17 May 2026, proposes three types of change:

- **Removing species from Schedule 2.1** - this means the species would become fully protected. Shooting it would no longer be allowed at any time of year.
- **Extending the close season** - the species stays on Schedule 2.1 but is protected for a longer period. The open season starts later, meaning fewer months in which shooting is permitted.
- **Adding a species to Schedule 2.1** - this applies only to woodpigeon, which is not currently on the list. Adding it would create a legal open season for recreational shooting and a close season during breeding months, while general licences for crop protection would remain in place.

The proposals affect nine species: European white-fronted goose, goldeneye, pintail, pochard, common snipe, woodcock, woodpigeon, coot and golden plover. The changes proposed differ between England, Scotland and Wales. The consultation was prompted by reviews carried out by Natural England, NatureScot and Natural Resources Wales, which identified declining populations among several quarry species.

**Your response matters.** Responses to this consultation will be shared across all three governments and will inform decisions on whether to proceed with legislative change.

## 2. Key Dates and How to Respond

**Consultation opens:** 23 March 2026

**Consultation closes:** 23:59 on 17 May 2026

**Important:** Responses received after the deadline may not be considered.

### How to respond

- **Online (preferred):** Via the Defra Citizen Space consultation platform. The link is provided in the consultation document.
- **Email:** WildlifeManagementAndCrime@defra.gov.uk
- **Post:** Wildlife Crime & Management Team, Defra, Seacole Building, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF

**Note:** This is a joint consultation. Your response will be shared with the Scottish Government and Welsh Government, so you only need to respond once, even if your views relate to more than one nation. Responses are not confidential by default - if you wish your response to remain confidential, you must request this.

### 3. Summary Table of All Proposed Changes

The table below summarises every proposed change. Where a cell says “No change”, the species would continue to be huntable on the same terms as now in that nation.

Species	England	Scotland	Wales
European white-fronted goose	Shooting would no longer be allowed (remove from Schedule 2.1)	Already removed - no change	Shooting would no longer be allowed (remove from Schedule 2.1)
Goldeneye	Shooting would no longer be allowed (remove from Schedule 2.1)	Close season extended to 30 September (shooting from 1 October instead of 1 September)	Shooting would no longer be allowed (remove from Schedule 2.1)
Pintail	Shooting would no longer be allowed (remove from Schedule 2.1). Note: Natural England recommended no change, but the Government is testing this view	Close season extended to 30 September (shooting from 1 October instead of 1 September)	Close season extended to 30 November
Pochard	Shooting would no longer be allowed (remove from Schedule 2.1)	Shooting would no longer be allowed (remove from Schedule 2.1)	Shooting would no longer be allowed (remove from Schedule 2.1)
Common snipe	Close season extended to 30 September (shooting from 1 October instead of 12 August)	Close season extended to 30 September (shooting from 1 October instead of 12 August)	Shooting would no longer be allowed (remove from Schedule 2.1)
Woodcock	Close season extended to 30 November (shooting from 1 December instead of 1 October)	Close season extended to 14 November (shooting from 15 November instead of 1 September)	Close season extended to 30 November (shooting from 1 December instead of 1 October)
Woodpigeon	Added to Schedule 2.1 with a close season of 1 February to 31 August. Recreational shooting allowed 1 September – 31 January. General licences for crop protection remain year-round	Added to Schedule 2.1 with a close season of 1 February to 31 August. Recreational shooting allowed 1 September – 31 January. General licences for crop protection remain year-round	Added to Schedule 2.1 with a close season of 1 February to 31 August. Recreational shooting allowed 1 September – 31 January. General licences for crop protection remain year-round
Coot	No change	No change	Shooting would no longer be allowed (remove from Schedule 2.1)
Golden plover	No change	No change	Shooting would no longer be allowed (remove from Schedule 2.1)

## 4. Species-by-Species Guide

This section covers each species where a change is proposed. For every species, we set out the current conservation status, what is being proposed, the government's reasoning, the relevant consultation questions, and points you may wish to consider in your response.

### European White-Fronted Goose

#### Current status

- Red Listed under BoCC5.
- Considered at risk of extinction in Britain due to a dramatic long-term decline in its wintering population.
- The wider European population is assessed as stable, but significant declines have been recorded in parts of the UK.
- Already removed from Schedule 2.1 in Scotland.
- Estimated fewer than 100 shot in the UK in 2016 (Aebischer, 2019).

#### What is proposed

- England: Remove from Schedule 2.1 (shooting would no longer be allowed).
- Wales: Remove from Schedule 2.1 (shooting would no longer be allowed).
- Scotland: No change (already removed).

#### Government's reasoning

- To reduce the impact of shooting on declining non-breeding populations.
- To protect (including from accidental shooting) individuals of the globally endangered Greenland white-fronted goose, which is physically similar and occurs in small numbers in the UK.

#### Consultation questions

- Q 4A1: Do you agree this species should be removed from Schedule 2.1 in England and/or Wales?
- Q 4A2: Can you provide more recent evidence on numbers shot in England and/or Wales?

#### Points to consider in your response

- Given that fewer than 100 birds were estimated shot UK-wide in 2016, does the very low level of shooting pressure justify legislative change, or would voluntary restraint be equally effective?
- Do you have more recent bag data or local observations that might update the 2016 estimate?
- The risk of accidentally shooting a Greenland white-fronted goose (a globally endangered subspecies that looks similar) is cited as a reason for removal. Is this a significant practical risk in areas where you shoot?
- Scotland has already removed this species from Schedule 2.1. Does consistency across Great Britain make practical sense for wildfowlers who shoot in multiple nations?

- Are there any impacts on your business, livelihood or local economy that the government should be aware of?

## Goldeneye

### Current status

- Red Listed under BoCC5; rated Vulnerable to extinction in GB under IUCN assessment.
- UK wintering population has declined by 58% since the early 1990s; England down 41%, Wales down 55%.
- Scarce breeder in the UK; most wintering birds are Scandinavian in origin.
- In Scotland, a small breeding population (estimated 200 females in 2010) is stable or increasing.
- An estimated 450 shot in the UK in 2016 (Aebischer, 2019).

### What is proposed

- England: Remove from Schedule 2.1 (shooting would no longer be allowed).
- Wales: Remove from Schedule 2.1 (shooting would no longer be allowed).
- Scotland: Extend the close season to 30 September (shooting from 1 October instead of 1 September), to protect resident breeding birds before migrant arrivals.

### Government's reasoning

- England and Wales: The precautionary principle is applied because of severe population decline and uncertainty over whether recreational shooting can be managed sustainably.
- Scotland: The breeding population appears stable or increasing. Extending the close season reduces the risk of shooting resident birds before migrants arrive, while still allowing shooting in season.

### Consultation questions

- Q 4B1: Do you agree goldeneye should be removed from Schedule 2.1 in England and/or Wales?
- Q 4B2: Do you agree the close season should be extended in Scotland to 30 September?
- Q 4B3: Can you provide more recent evidence on numbers shot?

#### Points to consider in your response

- The precautionary principle is the primary basis for removal in England and Wales. Is there evidence that shooting is a significant driver of the population decline, or are other factors (habitat change, climate) more important?
- Scotland is taking a different approach (close season extension rather than removal), citing a stable or increasing breeding population. Does this difference in approach seem proportionate to the different population trends?

- Do you have bag data or personal experience relating to goldeneye shooting that could help fill the evidence gap the consultation identifies?
- With only an estimated 450 shot UK-wide in 2016, is the scale of shooting likely to be materially affecting the population?
- Would the loss of goldeneye from the quarry list affect wildfowling participation or businesses in your area?

## Pintail

### Current status

- Amber Listed under BoCC5; breeding population GB IUCN Red Listed as Critically Endangered.
- Fewer than 30 breeding pairs in the UK, almost all in Scotland.
- UK supports around 22,000 overwintering birds, with a UK-level wintering decline of 10%.
- Scotland's wintering population has shown a significant long-term increase against the wider UK decline.
- Welsh wintering numbers have declined substantially since the early 2000s.
- An estimated 680 shot in the UK in 2016 (Aebischer, 2019).

### What is proposed

- England: Remove from Schedule 2.1 (shooting would no longer be allowed). Note: Natural England recommended no change, concluding that shooting pressure is not likely to be a main driver for any decline. The UK Government is using this consultation to test an alternative view based on the very small breeding population.
- Scotland: Extend the close season to 30 September (shooting from 1 October), to protect resident breeding birds before migrant arrivals.
- Wales: Extend the close season to 30 November.

### Government's reasoning

- The very small UK breeding population (Critically Endangered) is the primary concern.
- Extending or removing the open season reduces the risk of shooting resident breeders before continental migrants arrive.
- The precautionary principle is applied given long-term declines in Welsh and UK wintering numbers and limited bag-recording data.

### Consultation questions

- Q 4C1: Do you agree the close season should be extended in Scotland to 30 September?
- Q 4C2: Do you agree the close season should be extended in Wales to 30 November?
- Q 4C3: Do you agree pintail should be removed from Schedule 2.1 in England?

- Q 4C4: Can you provide more recent evidence on numbers shot?
- Q 4C5: Can you provide evidence on the proportion and destination of shot pintail (e.g. private consumption, sold, given away)?
- Q 4C6: Can you provide evidence on the market price of pintail (wholesale and retail)?

#### Points to consider in your response

- **This is a notable case:** Natural England recommended no change in England, but the UK Government is proposing removal as a precautionary measure and is explicitly testing this view. Members may wish to comment on whether this departure from the SNCB's scientific advice is justified.
- Three different approaches are proposed across three nations (removal in England, close season extension to September in Scotland, extension to November in Wales). Does this variation make sense given the different population situations?
- The consultation asks for evidence on bag numbers, destination of shot birds and market prices. If you shoot pintail, you can provide valuable first-hand data.
- Is the precautionary principle proportionate here, given NE's view that shooting is not a main driver of decline?
- Would the loss of pintail shooting affect your wildfowling activity or local businesses?

## Pochard

### Current status

- Endangered in Britain under IUCN assessment; Red Listed under BoCC5.
- Non-breeding population in England declined 64% over 25 years (1995/96 to 2020/21).
- UK breeding population estimated at 720 pairs; Scottish breeding population is extremely small (2–4 pairs).
- An estimated 370 shot in the UK in 2016 (Aebischer, 2019).

### What is proposed

- England, Scotland and Wales: Remove from Schedule 2.1 (shooting would no longer be allowed in any nation).

### Government's reasoning

- To reduce the impact of shooting on rapidly declining breeding and non-breeding populations.
- To comply with the UK's obligations as a signatory to the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA), which requires prohibition of hunting for species with this conservation status. The UK currently benefits from a legacy EU reservation, which some other countries have already lifted.

### Consultation questions

- Q 4D1: Do you agree pochard should be removed from Schedule 2.1 in England, Scotland and/or Wales?
- Q 4D2: Can you provide more recent evidence on numbers shot?
- Q 4D3: Can you provide evidence on the proportion and destination of shot pochard?
- Q 4D4: Can you provide evidence on the market price of pochard (wholesale and retail)?

#### Points to consider in your response

- Pochard is the only species where all three governments propose the same action (full removal). The AEWA obligation adds an international legal dimension. Members may wish to consider whether this makes the case for removal particularly strong, or whether the legacy reservation remains a valid position.
- With an estimated 370 shot UK-wide, is this level of harvest likely to be contributing materially to the decline?
- Do you have bag data, market price information, or evidence about the destination of shot pochard that you could provide?
- Are there any impacts on wildfowling businesses or rural economies in your area?

## Common Snipe

### Current status

- Amber Listed under BoCC5; non-breeding population Vulnerable under GB IUCN assessment (30–50% decline over 25 years).
- UK supports an estimated 66,500 breeding pairs and around 1 million wintering individuals.
- Welsh breeding population is much smaller, estimated at 1,100 pairs, with long-term declines.
- An estimated 85,000 shot in the UK in 2016 (Aebischer, 2019).
- The species has a prolonged breeding season (late March to mid-August), meaning birds shot in August and September may have dependent young.

### What is proposed

- England: Extend the close season to 30 September (shooting from 1 October instead of 12 August).
- Scotland: Extend the close season to 30 September (shooting from 1 October instead of 12 August).
- Wales: Remove from Schedule 2.1 (shooting would no longer be allowed).

### Government's reasoning

- England and Scotland: To reduce the impact of shooting on the resident breeding population and their offspring, particularly given that birds shot in August and September may have dependent young. This is framed as both a conservation and animal welfare measure.

- Wales: The very small Welsh breeding population, long-term declines, limited monitoring data and the precautionary principle support full removal.

### Consultation questions

- Q 4E1: Do you agree the close season should be extended in England and/or Scotland to 30 September?
- Q 4E2: Do you agree common snipe should be removed from Schedule 2.1 in Wales?
- Q 4E3: Can you provide more recent evidence on numbers shot?
- Q 4E4: Can you provide evidence on the proportion and destination of shot snipe?
- Q 4E5: Can you provide evidence on the market price of common snipe (wholesale and retail)?

### Points to consider in your response

- The animal welfare argument is prominent here: the prolonged breeding season means birds shot in August and September may have dependent young. Do you consider this a strong justification for extending the close season?
- Snipe shooting is a significant activity on many moors and estates. What would losing the August and September open season mean for your business, driven shooting days, or personal shooting activity?
- The BASC Sustainable Shooting Code already promotes voluntary restraint for certain species. Has voluntary restraint been effective for snipe in your area, and would legislative change be proportionate?
- Wales proposes full removal rather than a close season extension. If you operate in Wales, does this seem proportionate given the size of the Welsh breeding population?
- The consultation asks for bag data, destination of shot birds, and market prices. This is an opportunity to provide evidence directly.
- An estimated 85,000 were shot UK-wide in 2016 - a significant harvest. Is this level sustainable, and do you have local data that could help answer this question?

## Woodcock

### Current status

- Red Listed under both UK and Wales BoCC; breeding woodcock Vulnerable under GB IUCN assessment.
- UK resident breeding population estimated at 50,750 breeding males, bolstered in winter by around 1 million migrant woodcock from northern Europe.
- Breeding males in England declined 22.5% between 2003 and 2023; Welsh breeding population declined 36% over the same period.
- Globally, woodcock is not endangered and is of “least concern”.
- An estimated 140,000 shot in the UK in 2016 (Aebischer, 2019).

### What is proposed

- England: Extend the close season to 30 November (shooting from 1 December instead of 1 October). Current season: 1 October – 31 January.

- Wales: Extend the close season to 30 November (shooting from 1 December instead of 1 October). Current season: 1 October – 31 January.
- Scotland: Extend the close season to 14 November (shooting from 15 November instead of 1 September). The earlier date accommodates the earlier arrival of migratory birds in Scotland.

### Government's reasoning

- To reduce the impact of shooting on the declining British breeding population by ensuring the season opens only when the population is dominated by continental migrants rather than native residents.
- This proposal is intended to strengthen the existing voluntary moratorium on shooting woodcock before December, which is already widely promoted by the shooting community.

### Consultation questions

- Q 4F1: Do you agree the close season should be extended in England and/or Wales to 30 November?
- Q 4F2: Do you agree the close season should be extended in Scotland to 14 November?
- Q 4F3: Can you provide more recent evidence on numbers shot?
- Q 4F4: Can you provide evidence on the proportion and destination of shot woodcock?
- Q 4F5: Can you provide evidence on the market price of woodcock (wholesale and retail)?

#### Points to consider in your response

- Many in the shooting community already observe a voluntary moratorium on shooting woodcock before December. Does putting this into law strike you as a proportionate step, or does it undermine the voluntary approach?
- The distinction between resident breeding birds and winter migrants is central to this proposal. In your experience, when do significant numbers of migrant woodcock typically arrive in your area?
- Woodcock shooting is a valued part of many driven and walked-up shooting days. What would the loss of October and November shooting mean for bookings, income, and employment on your estate or shoot?
- Scotland proposes a different date (14 November rather than 30 November) to reflect earlier migrant arrival. Does this difference seem well-evidenced?
- The consultation asks for bag data, destination of shot birds, and market prices. If you shoot or manage land for woodcock, this is an opportunity to provide first-hand evidence.
- With an estimated 140,000 shot UK-wide, this is one of the larger harvests among the species covered. Is this level sustainable alongside the population decline?

## Coot (Wales Only)

### Current status

- Vulnerable under GB IUCN Red List for both breeding and non-breeding populations.

- Amber Listed in Wales BoCC due to long-term breeding declines.
- UK wintering population declined 28% over 25 years; Wales declined 35% over the same period.
- Coot is legal quarry but is taken only infrequently; no UK-level bag estimate is available.

### What is proposed

- Wales: Remove from Schedule 2.1 (shooting would no longer be allowed).
- England and Scotland: No change - NE and NatureScot do not recommend changing its status given the lack of shooting pressure.

### Government's reasoning

- To reduce any potential impact of hunting on declining UK and Welsh breeding and wintering populations.
- The precautionary principle is applied given the species' Vulnerable GB IUCN status and declining trends in Wales.

### Consultation questions

- Q 5A1: Do you agree coot should be removed from Schedule 2.1 in Wales?
- Q 5A2: Do you agree the Schedule 2.1 status of coot should be maintained in England and/or Scotland?
- Q 5A3: Can you provide more recent evidence on numbers shot?

#### Points to consider in your response

- Coot is rarely shot. Does the very low level of shooting pressure justify a legislative change, or is this a largely symbolic measure?
- NE and NatureScot recommend no change in England and Scotland, citing the lack of shooting pressure. Does the same logic apply in Wales?
- If you have any evidence of coot being shot - however infrequently - the consultation is asking for it.

## Golden Plover (Wales Only)

### Current status

- Red Listed on Birds of Conservation Concern Wales due to major declines in breeding and non-breeding populations.
- UK supports 32,500–50,500 breeding pairs and around 400,000 wintering individuals.
- Welsh breeding population has undergone severe decline: from 250–300 pairs in the late 1970s to likely under 30 pairs now (less than 0.1% of the UK total).
- Welsh wintering population has declined 58% over 25 years; UK-wide decline of 26%.
- An estimated 870 shot UK-wide in 2016 (Aebischer, 2019); relatively small numbers.

### What is proposed

- Wales: Remove from Schedule 2.1 (shooting would no longer be allowed).
- England and Scotland: No change - NE and NatureScot do not recommend changing its status. The decline described in Wales does not apply in England or Scotland.

### Government's reasoning

- To reduce the potential impact of hunting on the very small and declining Welsh breeding population.
- A precautionary approach given major uncertainties around harvest levels, population status and wider pressures including habitat change and climate impacts.

### Consultation questions

- Q 5B1: Do you agree golden plover should be removed from Schedule 2.1 in Wales?
- Q 5B2: Do you agree the Schedule 2.1 status of golden plover should be maintained in England and/or Scotland?
- Q 5B3: Can you provide more recent evidence on numbers shot?

#### **Points to consider in your response**

- Golden plover is an iconic moorland species. The Welsh breeding population is extremely small (under 30 pairs), which is the basis for this proposal. Do you consider this a proportionate response?
- NE and NatureScot recommend no change in England and Scotland. If you manage moorland, does the status of golden plover in your area support maintaining the current open season?
- Are there habitat management measures on your land that benefit golden plover populations? The consultation is an opportunity to highlight positive conservation actions by land managers.
- If you have bag data for golden plover, the consultation specifically asks for this evidence.

## 5. The Woodpigeon Proposal - What It Means

The woodpigeon proposal works differently from all the others in this consultation. Instead of restricting or removing shooting rights, it adds a new species to Schedule 2.1 for the first time. This section explains what that means in practice.

### Current situation

Woodpigeon is not currently listed on Schedule 2.1. There is no legal open season or close season for recreational woodpigeon shooting. Instead, all woodpigeon shooting in England is carried out under general licence GL42, in Scotland under GL02, and in Wales under GL001. These general licences allow year-round control to prevent serious damage to crops. Users do not need to apply individually but must comply with the licence conditions, which require that the purpose is crop protection.

In practice, there is evidence that some woodpigeon shooting is carried out for recreation and food rather than explicit crop protection.

### What is proposed

All three governments propose to add woodpigeon to Schedule 2.1 with a close season of 1 February to 31 August. This would create a legal framework for shooting woodpigeon recreationally or for food during an open season of 1 September to 31 January, separate from crop protection activity.

### What changes

- A legal open season (1 September – 31 January) would be created for recreational and food-harvesting shooting.
- A close season (1 February – 31 August) would apply during the breeding season, during which recreational shooting would not be permitted.
- The distinction between recreational shooting and crop protection shooting would be formalised in law.

### What stays the same

- **General licences (GL42, GL02, GL001) are NOT being removed.** Year-round shooting for crop protection under general licence conditions would continue.
- If you are shooting woodpigeon to prevent serious damage to crops, and you are complying with general licence conditions, this proposal does not change your ability to do so at any time of year.

### Practical effect

- **If you shoot woodpigeon recreationally or for food (not for crop protection):** You would be able to do so during the open season (1 September – 31 January) without a licence. During the close season (1 February – 31 August), you would not be able to shoot recreationally.
- **If you shoot woodpigeon for crop protection under general licence:** No change. You can continue to do so year-round under the conditions of the relevant general licence.

## Government's reasoning

- To distinguish in law between recreational hunting and pest control.
- To promote higher standards of animal welfare by reducing the number of adult birds shot during the breeding season when they have dependent young.
- The woodpigeon population is increasing (36% increase in breeding abundance since 1995), so this is not a conservation-driven restriction.

## Consultation questions

- Q 4G1: Do you agree to adding woodpigeon to Schedule 2.1 in England, Scotland and/or Wales?
- Q 4G2: Can you provide more recent evidence on numbers shot?
- Q 4G3: Can you provide evidence on the proportion and destination of shot woodpigeon?
- Q 4G4: Can you provide evidence on the market price of woodpigeon (wholesale and retail)?

### Points to consider in your response

- This proposal does not reduce your ability to shoot woodpigeon for crop protection under general licence. Does the creation of a separate recreational open season seem like a practical and workable arrangement?
- In practice, how easy is it to distinguish between recreational shooting and crop protection shooting? Could the new legal distinction create enforcement difficulties or uncertainty for shooters?
- The close season is intended to reduce shooting of adults with dependent young, on animal welfare grounds. Do you consider this proportionate given the species' increasing population?
- An estimated 1.9 million woodpigeon were shot in the UK in 2016. If you shoot woodpigeon, the consultation is asking for evidence on numbers, destination and market prices.
- Would this change affect your shooting activity, income, or land management practices in any way?

## 6. General and Cross-Cutting Questions

The consultation includes a number of general questions (Q1–Q11 and Q6.1–6.3) that apply across all species. Here is a brief guide to what each one is asking, so you can decide which are relevant to you.

### About you (Q1–Q5)

- Q1: Whether you want your response to be treated as confidential.
- Q2: Your name.
- Q3: Your email address.
- Q4: Who you are responding as (e.g. member of the public, shooting organisation, other).
- Q5: If responding on behalf of an organisation, its name and category.

### Business impacts (Q6–Q10)

- Q6 (previously Q7 in the document): Asks whether you can provide feedback on wider impacts to business, competition, trade, skills and investment within the sector.
- Q7 (previously Q8): If you are a small or micro business (1–49 employees), asks about impacts and additional costs.
- Q8 (previously Q9): If you are a medium-sized business (50–249 employees), asks about impacts and additional costs.
- Q9 (previously Q10): Whether you foresee any impacts on business from proposals being different between regions across the UK.

*Note:* These questions are particularly relevant to members who run shooting businesses, estates, game dealers, or related rural enterprises. Even if you are a small operation, your evidence about business impacts is valuable.

### Geographic coverage (Q11)

- Q11: Asks which nation(s) your response relates to. Select all that apply.

### Other species (Q6.1–6.3)

- Q6.1: Do you think any other species should be removed from Schedule 2.1?
- Q6.2: Should other amendments (e.g. extending or shortening a close season) be made to any other Schedule 2.1 species?
- Q6.3: Should any other species be added to Schedule 2.1?

*Note:* The consultation document highlights that capercaillie is still theoretically listed on Schedule 2.1 in England and Wales despite being extinct there for centuries. If you consider it should be removed, you may wish to mention this under Q6.1 or in the open text box.

## 7. Tips for Writing a Strong Response

A well-crafted consultation response carries more weight. Here are some practical tips to help you make your response count.

- **Respond as an individual, even if an organisation also responds.** The more individual responses, the more evidence that the consultation has been widely engaged with. Your personal experience is different from an organisational position.
- **Use evidence and personal experience.** If you have bag data, records of species sightings, information about market prices, or direct experience of shooting any of the species covered, include it. The consultation specifically asks for evidence in many questions.
- **Answer all questions relevant to you.** You do not need to answer every question, but do answer all those that relate to species you shoot, areas you manage, or impacts on your business.
- **Be factual and measured in tone.** Responses that are evidence-based and calmly argued are more persuasive than emotional or adversarial language. Stick to the facts.
- **Keep your response focused on the questions asked.** While there is an open text box for other views, the species-specific and business-impact questions are where your evidence will be most useful.
- **Reference specific species and geographies.** If you shoot snipe on a North Pennine moor, say so. If your estate depends on October woodcock shooting, explain the impact. Specific, localised evidence is more valuable than general statements.
- **Highlight where you disagree with the evidence base.** If your local experience contradicts the population trends cited, say so and explain why. If you believe the precautionary principle is being applied disproportionately, set out your reasoning.
- **Note the deadline.** The consultation closes at 23:59 on 17 May 2026. Do not leave it to the last day - submit in good time.
- **Respond via Citizen Space if possible.** Online responses are easier for the government to process and analyse. Use email or post only if you cannot respond online.

## 8. Glossary

The following terms appear throughout the consultation document. Here is what they mean in plain English.

Term	What it means
<b>Schedule 2.1</b>	Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It lists the wild bird species that may legally be killed or taken outside the close season. If a species is on this list, it can be shot during the open season. If it is removed, it becomes fully protected.
<b>Close season</b>	The period each year when a species is protected by law to allow breeding, nesting and migration. Shooting is not permitted during the close season. The dates vary by species.
<b>BoCC5</b>	Birds of Conservation Concern 5 - the fifth assessment of the conservation status of UK bird species, produced by a coalition of conservation organisations. Species are classified as Red (highest concern), Amber (moderate concern) or Green (least concern) based on population trends and other factors.
<b>IUCN Red List</b>	A global and regional assessment by the International Union for Conservation of Nature that classifies species by extinction risk. Categories range from Least Concern through Vulnerable, Endangered and Critically Endangered to Extinct. The GB IUCN Red List applies these criteria to species in Great Britain.
<b>Precautionary principle</b>	A decision-making approach used when there is scientific uncertainty about the risk of environmental damage. It means that a lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent potential harm. In this consultation, it is used to justify restricting shooting where there is uncertainty about whether it is contributing to population decline.
<b>General licence</b>	A licence issued by the relevant authority (Natural England, NatureScot, Natural Resources Wales) that permits certain activities - such as shooting specified species to prevent crop damage - without the need to apply individually. Users must comply with the licence conditions. General licences GL42 (England), GL02 (Scotland) and GL001 (Wales) are relevant to woodpigeon.
<b>WeBS</b>	The Wetland Bird Survey - a long-running monitoring scheme that counts waterbirds at wetland sites across the UK. WeBS data provides the main evidence base for population trends of ducks, geese and wading birds mentioned in this consultation.
<b>AEWA</b>	The Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds - an international treaty to which the UK is a signatory. It requires parties to take measures to conserve migratory waterbird species, including prohibiting hunting of species with vulnerable conservation status. Relevant to the pochard proposal.
<b>Bag data / bag recording</b>	Records of the number of birds shot (the "bag") on a given day or season. Bag data is a key source of evidence for understanding harvest levels and whether shooting is sustainable. The consultation repeatedly asks respondents to provide bag data where they can.