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Subject: Planning status of Great Bustard
Date: 26 June 2019 17:36:49

Natural England were asked to advise on the planning status of the great bustard at the recent hearing (14th June). Our advice is as follows:

As a relatively recent reintroduction, the Great Bustard does not feature on Schedule 1 of the 1981 Wildlife & Countryside Act. Therefore, in legal terms, great bustard receives the same protection as other wild birds. Neither (for the same reason) is not listed as a priority species as per section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. It could thus be argued that it should carry little weight in planning terms.

However, as great bustard are clearly very rare, it would be entirely legitimate to argue that it is of very high importance compared to other species. Effects on individuals clearly have capacity to impact the entire GB population. The degree to which such an argument is valid would depend on whether or not the latest evidence shows great bustards are self-sustaining (either currently or there is potential to become self-sustaining at some point in the future) as a population. We are not aware of this evidence.

Regards,

Charles Routh
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Somerset, Avon and Wiltshire Area Team, Natural England.
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