



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Themple Quay
Bristol BS1 6PN

T: 03459 335577
helpline@defra.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/defra

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Dear Stakeholder

Survey on general licences for the control of wild birds

Defra has today launched a public survey as part of a planned review of general licences to manage wild birds in England. The aim of the review is to deliver a robust system of licensing to manage the issues that arise between the protection of wild birds and the legitimate activities people need to carry out for specific purposes such as protecting livestock or crops and for conservation purposes. Defra is leading this review in close partnership with Natural England.

You will be aware that all wild bird species, their eggs and nests are protected by law. However, licences in the form of individual, class or general licences can be issued to allow wild birds to be removed or lethally controlled where they are causing problems and certain legal tests are met. Government wildlife management policy is that people should be free to manage wildlife but, before carrying out lethal control, they should first consider taking less harmful action to resolve the issue.

Defra issued three new general licences for the control of certain species of wild birds on 14 June 2019. These licences are due to expire in February 2020 and were designed to give certainty to users while we reviewed the longer term general licensing requirements.

In parallel to seeking information in this survey, Defra and Natural England will be conducting a series of workshops with interested stakeholders to cover other issues such as activity on or near protected sites. We will also compile and consider other available evidence to inform the review.

The survey and workshops will build upon the useful information that stakeholders provided as part of the call for evidence in May 2019. This highlighted some areas where

evidence is currently lacking (see the government's response <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/use-of-general-licences-for-the-management-of-certain-wild-birds-a-call-for-evidence>). The survey asks for more specific information to feed into the development of a future licensing system.

The survey asks what you consider general licences for the following purposes need to cover, and what should not be covered, and asks for evidence to support your view:

- to kill or take wild birds to conserve wild birds and to conserve flora and fauna
- to kill or take wild birds to preserve public health or public safety
- to kill or take wild birds to prevent serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables, fruit, growing timber, fisheries or inland waters

It also seeks information on other related issues including alternatives to lethal control and record keeping when acting under general licences.

Responses

If you represent an organisation, it would be helpful if you can collate evidence from your members. There is a document copy of the survey which can be downloaded to support this.

To submit your response please complete the survey questionnaire provided through Citizen Space (an on-line survey tool): <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-management/wild-birds-general-licence-survey>. Responses should be received by 5 December 2019.

If you have any queries, please contact us as above.

Yours faithfully,

Alexandra Cran-McGreehin

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Deputy Director
General Licensing Review

GLTeam@defra.gov.uk

[General licences for wildlife management information](#)
[Government response to the call for evidence](#) - Use of general licences for the management of certain wild birds