

Natural England Consultation on General Licences

Please use this form to reply to the General Licence consultation. This document also includes a general feedback form.

Responses may be returned by email to: wildlifeconsultation@naturalengland.org.uk

We would prefer responses to be submitted electronically but if you prefer to respond in writing, please submit your response to: Natural England General Licences Consultation, c/o Dr Edel McGurk, Natural England, Government Buildings, Otley Road, Lawnswood, Leeds. LS16 5QT.

| | |
|--|---|
| Organisation | Countryside Alliance |
| Respondee Name | James Legge |
| Contact Details <i>Address</i> <i>Telephone</i> <i>Email</i> | 367 Kennington Road London SE11 4PT 020 7840 9263 james-legge@countryside-alliance.org |

The following table lists all of the questions posed in the consultation document. For each question, please indicate whether you support the proposal using the tick boxes, and provide an explanation and evidence in support of your view in the space provided. Where you do not have a view on a particular proposal, please tick 'No Comment'.

The form is designed to be completed on screen; free text boxes will expand as you type.

Confidentiality

We will respect requests for confidentiality. If you wish the information you provide to be treated as confidential, please record your request below; it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information, we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances.

Responses to Proposals

THEME: Obligations to Protected Sites

Question 1: Do you agree with Natural England's proposal to address this concern by drawing attention to the existing obligations on Statutory Undertakers?

Yes No No Comment

THEME: Non-Native Species

Question 2: Do you agree with our proposal to use regulatory measures to facilitate the control or invasive non-native species?

Yes No No Comment

Question 3.1: Do you agree with our proposal to add Ring-necked and Monk Parakeets to the general licence issued for the purpose of conserving wild birds (s.16(1)(c) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981)?

Yes No No Comment

Question 3.2: Do you agree with our proposal to add Canada Geese and Egyptian Geese to the general licence issued for the purpose of conserving wild birds (s.16(1)(c) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981)?

Yes No No Comment

Question 4.1: Do you agree with our proposal to permit the killing/taking of Ring-necked and Monk Parakeet species for the purpose of preventing serious damage to crops, etc (s.16(1)(k) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981)?

Yes No No Comment

We welcome the recognition that the conditions of any licence should not be such as to encourage increased dispersal, but do not understand the example given of physical proofing as a non-lethal alternative which does not lead to dispersal. Physical proofing must surely encourage dispersal. If these birds cannot settle in one place they will surely go elsewhere which must be dispersal.

Question 4.2: Do you agree with our proposal to issue a separate licence for this purpose for invasive non-native species?

Yes No No Comment

Question 5.1: Do you agree with our proposal to permit the killing/taking of Monk Parakeet species under a general licence for the purpose of preserving public health or public or air safety (s.16(1)(i) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981)?

Yes No No Comment

Question 5.2: Do you agreed with our proposal to issue a separate licence for this purpose for invasive, non-native species?

Yes No No Comment

THEME – Review of species listed

Question 6.1: Do you agree that Great Black-backed Gull should only be listed on the general licence permitting take/kill birds for the purpose of preserving air safety? Please provide evidence in support of your view.

Yes No No Comment

While we recognise the need to be able to deal with these birds in respect of air safety, we do not believe that the case has been made that the population of Great Black-backed Gulls is impacted by their being included on the kill/take general licences. Unless their relative scarcity is attributable directly to their inclusion on general licences, then we cannot see any justification for the proposed change.

While there is no evidence that their current inclusion on the general licences is a problem there is widespread evidence that where these birds do cause damage that can be very significant and control is essential. Great Black-backed Gulls represent a significant problem for some sheep farmers in respect of lambs and are major predator of groundnesting birds causing significant damage to Golden Plover, Lapwing, Grouse and Partridge, destroying large numbers of chicks. Thus they are a significant problem on some nature reserves and in many moorland areas and uncontrolled their impact can be devastating. In the press release, of the 11 December 2008, accompanying the launch of the consultation Dr Tim Hill is quoted as saying: “general licences enable responsible management and exploitation of wildlife without superfluous bureaucracy”.

The changes proposed would represent superfluous bureaucracy while doing nothing in conservation terms for the Black-backed Gull, but harming other vulnerable bird species and livestock. When a problem arises land managers need to be able to respond swiftly. If they had to apply for individual licences this would be slow and burdensome and hinder them in preventing the serious damage which these birds can cause.

Question 6.2: Do you agree that the Herring Gull should only be listed on the general licences permitting

a. the killing/taking of birds for the purpose of preserving air safety?

| |
|---|
| <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Comment <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <p>b. the destruction of eggs and nests for the purpose of preserving public health and public safety? Please provide evidence in support of your view.</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Comment <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <p>We accept that the Herring Gull should remain on the licences for air safety and public health and safety. However, we do not believe that they should be removed from kill/take licences for the same reasons given for the Great black-backed Gull given above.</p> |
| <p>Question 7.1 Do you agree with our proposal to issue a limited general licence permitting the taking/killing of House sparrow, Starling, Robin and Blackbird in food production/handling premises for the purpose of preserving public health or public safety (s.16(1)(i) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981)?</p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> No Comment <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <p>Perhaps the licence should extend to include agricultural premises such as grain stores where clearly the same reasoning would apply as in a food processing premises.</p> |
| <p>Question 7.2 If such a licence is issued, do you agree that it is appropriate to require users of the licence to register their first use of the licence with Natural England and to keep written records of action taken under the licence?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Comment <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <p>This would represent “superfluous bureaucracy” and is contrary to the nature and purpose of a general licence. We fail to see what benefit this additional burden would bring.</p> |
| <p>THEME – Sales of birds</p> |
| <p>Question 8.1: Do you agree with the proposal to consolidate the sales licences?</p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> No Comment <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <p> </p> |
| <p>Question 8.2: Do you agree with the proposal to continue to allow the birds listed on the appendix (and their eggs) to be sold without a ring?</p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> No Comment <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <p> </p> |
| <p>Question 8.3: Is the list of species that are exempt from ringing correct (see draft licence for list)? If you disagree, please state why and provide evidence.</p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> No Comment <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <p> </p> |
| <p>Question 9.1: Do you agree with our proposal that no species be excluded from sale under the</p> |

general licence on the grounds of risks to their conservation status from illegal take from the wild? If you disagree, please provide grounds and evidence for your position? If you do disagree, please provide grounds and evidence for your position.

Yes No No Comment

Question 9.2: Do you agree that Ruddy Duck and Egyptian Goose should continue to be excluded from the general licence permitting sales on the grounds of potential risks to native species, and that Canada Goose should be added to the list of exclusions?

Yes No No Comment

Question 9.3: Do you agree that sales of Eagle Owls under the general licence should be subject to a registration scheme on the grounds of potential risks to native species?

Yes No No Comment

We do not favour an additional licensing system. There is already a system of registration for owls bred, under European Cites, Article 10 certificate, administered by Animal Health. While accepting that escaped Eagle Owls can cause localised problems, it is hard to see how the licensing of sales would help prevent problems. It would seem to be another layer of unnecessary and costly bureaucracy with little, if any, benefit.

Question 9.4: Do you believe that other bird species should be added to this list of exclusions on the grounds of potential risks to native species? Please consider the possible candidates suggested above; you may suggest other species and explain why, providing evidence.

Yes No No Comment

Question 10: Do you agree with our proposal that sales of dead Barnacle Goose and White-fronted Goose (Greenland race) be permitted under the general licence?

Yes No No Comment

It is currently unlawful to sell dead geese and this has ensured no development of a commercial interest in the killing of geese.

The current proposals would allow the sale of dead Barnacle geese and White-fronted geese (Greenland race) which can only currently be shot under licence. Under the current proposal it would remain impossible to sell other geese such as Pink Foot or Greylag which can be shot without a licence. The proposal would thus create a legal anomaly and widespread confusion.

Question 11.1: Do you agree that Natural England should provide guidance on what might constitute suitable documentary evidence?

Yes No No Comment

Question 11.2: Do you agree that the wording we propose is appropriate? If not, please provide alternative wording.

Yes No No Comment

THEME – Understanding and awareness of the general licences & their conditions

Question 12.1 Do you believe that there is sufficient widespread understanding of the General Licences, the circumstances in which they may be used and the conditions that apply. Please provide evidence in support of your answer where possible.

Yes No No Comment

The problem with general licences is their current complexity, the fact that they are devolved and vary between the different parts of the UK and that they are subject to continual change.

They are also poorly advertised. Indeed, at the time of writing, the 2009 general licences applicable in Wales were not available on the internet.

As a key wildlife management tool it is essential that they should be easily accessible, clear, easily understood and as far as possible uniform throughout the UK. There is undoubtedly some need to publicise these licences and improve general awareness and understanding.

Question 12.2 Do you have any suggestions as to how we could raise the level of awareness?

When the reviewed licences are issued in 2010 there should be an associated advertising campaign in the rural, sporting and farming press. Natural England should also prepare a package for dissemination to members of organisations such as the Countryside Alliance, National Farmers' Union, National Gamekeepers' Organisation and Country Land and Business Association, British Association of Shooting and Conservation and Hawk Board. It would also be worthwhile having a single website that made available the different licences in the different parts of the UK so that there was a single point of reference.

Please scroll down to the next part of this form if you wish to provide us with general feedback on this consultation package and exercise.