

[Press release: New general licence for controlling carrion crows comes into force](#)

Natural England has today (Friday 26 April) published the first of the [new general licences](#) for controlling birds.

The licence starts to replace the previous general licences for controlling carrion crows, a priority species for landowners looking to protect against damage to livestock. Further licences will be introduced at pace over the coming days and weeks.

The new licence is part of Natural England's urgent work to identify alternative solutions for all those affected by the decision on Tuesday (23 April) to revoke three general licences for controlling certain wild birds.

Further general licences will be issued as quickly as possible, starting with those species that are most likely to require urgent control. This will mean landowners can continue to take necessary action as they do now, whilst also taking into account the needs of wildlife.

Those who need to control wild birds in the circumstances described in this licence, for example where crows cause harm to new lambs, can now do so without further steps: there is no need to apply for an individual licence. For people in other circumstances who need to take urgent action before new general licences are issued, Natural England has also published a simple online application system for individual wild bird control licences.

The decision to revoke these licences was not taken lightly. Natural England explored all other options available, but was left with no choice but to revoke the licences. This was done to protect people with legitimate reasons to control wildlife from committing offences by acting outside the law.

Natural England's interim chief executive Marian Spain said:

This new licence should give peace of mind to landowners who need to shoot to control certain wildlife that they can do so within the law.

I recognise, as does my team at Natural England, that the interim measures announced earlier this week will cause disruption for licence users. This is not a ban on control, it is a change to the licences that allow control to take place.

We will continue to work hard to ensure new licences are in place as soon as possible which cover other species and situations. I hope the fact that we have been able to provide this one earlier

than first indicated is a sign of our commitment to resolve this problem as soon as we are able and ensure landowners can continue to take necessary action.

Next steps

Natural England is committed to working with farmers, pest controllers, gamekeepers and other professionals who rely on these licences to ensure everyone who needs to control the 16 species of wild birds covered by the revoked general licences can.

What to do if you use a general licence

It is expected that, over time, most situations currently covered by the three general licences will be covered by new licences.

Natural England is undertaking new licensing assessments to support lethal control of certain birds in defined situations. The first of these new licences is now in place to prevent serious damage to livestock from carrion crow. We have also published a timetable to show which licences will be available when.

If people need to take action in the meantime for the species which are still not covered by a general licence, they will need to apply for an individual licence, using our simple application form on GOV.UK.

Background on the general licences

General licences were introduced in the 1990s to allow the legal control of bird species of low conservation concern to protect public health and safety, prevent serious damage and disease, and protect plants and wildlife.

Further details of the wider review into the operation and provision of general licences will be shared shortly. We will seek feedback from those using them and from wildlife protection and other groups. We expect to complete this review by the end of the year.

Part of Natural England's role is to ensure relevant provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are upheld to protect wildlife, as well as recognising the needs of people

Background

- To apply for an individual species licence, please make use of the online application system. Apply now: [Direct link to the online application forms.](#)
- Get the latest comment on this story on the Natural England blog.
- Natural England is working at pace to get the new licensing regime up and running, so users can be sure that they are acting within the law. They will consult with stakeholders in advance of the wider review of general licensing that will take place later this year.

- Currently the three licences subject to the legal challenge cover 16 bird species, including several members of the crow family (crows, magpies, rooks, jackdaws and jays), feral and wood pigeon and number of invasive non-native species (such as Canada goose).

The specific licences:

- General licence GL04: To kill or take certain species of wild birds to prevent serious damage or disease
- General licence GL05: To kill or take certain species of wild birds to preserve public health or public safety
- General licence GL06: To kill or take certain species of wild birds to conserve wild birds or flora or fauna