

General licences: survey marks new phase of review

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers today (12 September) 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 ensure the licensing system is robust, striking the right balance between the protection of wild birds and the activities people such as landowners and farmers 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.

As a first step, Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers has launched a 12-week online survey to gather evidence on the control that stakeholders consider is required under general licence. This is one strand of the review, with a series of stakeholder workshops also planned to run in parallel.

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers said:

I completely understand the scale of interest in this important issue and the real concern of users who need to have confidence in the licensing system.

Working closely with Natural England, this survey is an important step in our wider review of general licences.

I want to encourage users and other interested parties to take part in the process. This will help us ensure our licences strike the right balance between the protection of wild birds and the important actions users need to take to protect livestock or crops, and for conservation purposes.

[The review was announced earlier this year](#) when Defra issued three new short-term licences to control wild birds to [conserve wild birds and flora or fauna \(WML GL34\)](#); [preserve public health or public safety \(WML GL35\)](#); and [prevent serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables, fruit, growing timber, fisheries or inland waters \(WML GL36\)](#).

The survey will focus on the purposes covered by these three general licences. All information submitted will be considered alongside evidence received during Defra's shorter call for evidence held in Spring 2019, which highlighted some areas where evidence is currently lacking. This survey therefore builds on that call for evidence, asking for more specific information to feed into the development of a future licensing system.

In parallel with the survey, Defra and Natural England will be conducting a

series of workshops with interested groups in the autumn, covering particular topics such as activity on protected sites.

Natural England's interim chief executive Marian Spain said:

Our aim has always been to ensure that there is a robust licensing system in place which takes into account the needs of people and wildlife.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with Defra and with stakeholders and users on the ground to help achieve this.

- On 25 April 2019, following a legal challenge by Wild Justice, Natural England revoked three general licences which enabled users to kill or take certain species of wild birds (GL04, 05 and 06).
- The [general licences subsequently issued by Defra](#) on 14 June (GL34, 35 and 36) were designed to give certainty to users while we reviewed the longer term general licensing requirements.
- This review of the three general licences, in partnership with Natural England, aims to ensure that the general licensing regime is robust and meet user needs. Building on the responses received during the brief call for evidence into general licences in May 2019, a wider and longer period of consulting and engaging stakeholders is an essential part of this review.

Councils awarded over £750,000 to improve services through digital technology

More than £750,000 has been awarded to councils looking to improve services using digital technology, Local Government Minister Luke Hall MP has announced (12 September 2019).

Six projects by local authorities working together across the country have received £753,000 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's [Local Digital Fund](#).

They include projects aimed at improving online housing repairs services,

making websites for planning applications easier to use, and giving residents smoother methods of online payment.

Minister for Local Government, Luke Hall MP, said:

Councils up and down the country are working together to embrace digital technology and improve public services.

They are truly looking ahead and adapting their work to make things better for residents. I'm delighted to invest over £750,000 from our Local Digital Fund into 6 more collaborative projects aimed at improving local services.

Projects funded and the local authorities involved are:

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (lead), Leeds City Council, and Manchester City Council – £350,000.

Providing social workers with better information to cut the time and cost of child referrals. A project to provide social workers with better family context information from other local services for their child referrals. It will speed up children's social workers' decision making, improving the experience of families, and saving money.

Buckinghamshire County Council (lead), Adur and Worthing Council, London Borough of Croydon and Leeds City Council – £50,000.

Prototyping an open community directory of support services. The project will be aimed at developing a community-based service directory in local areas to help residents and council officers know which support services are available locally. This includes both council and third-sector provided support services.

London Borough of Southwark (lead), London Borough of Hackney, Greater London Authority, and Surrey Heath Borough Council – £100,000.

Exploring how to make the planning process more efficient and transparent. The project will look at user-centred digital planning application systems.

City of Lincoln Council, London Borough of Southwark, South Kesteven District and Royal Borough of Greenwich – £100,000

Developing a better online housing repairs system. A project to explore and prototype common service patterns for reporting and managing repairs.

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (lead), Allerdale Borough Council, Cherwell District Council, Huntingdon District Council,

North East Lincolnshire District Council, Sheffield City Council and South Northamptonshire Council – £80,000.

Exploring income management and e-payments. A project to help councils overcome blockages to adopting existing cost-effective payment and management systems and move away from legacy systems and suppliers.

Worcestershire County Council (lead), Redditch and Bromsgrove Council and Suffolk County Council – £73,000.

Providing registrations data to local authority housing services. A project to use death registration data to reconcile the availability of social housing, reduce the wait time for families on local housing lists and prevent lost council tax revenue.

This funding round was only open to projects which were previously awarded [funding last year](#). A funding round [remains open](#) for new local authority projects to apply to the [Local Digital Fund](#) before it closes on 16 September.

Ideas could range from making people's lives easier with more efficient, online ways to pay for services or get help, to embracing tech to support vulnerable people or making bin collections, social housing repairs and taxi licensing services more efficient.

For the projects, lead councils across the country partner with at least 2 other councils to share knowledge and ideas. This collaborative approach is a key pillar of the government's [Local Digital Declaration](#), launched in 2018, to coordinate public bodies seeking digital solutions

The Fund is also being invested in digital skills and digital leadership training for council staff.

See [more information](#) on the Local Digital Fund, projects previously funded and how to apply.

Only councils in England are eligible to lead on applications; councils in other parts of the UK are still eligible to partner on applications.

[UK and Malaysia join hands in tackling plastic pollution](#)

The British High Commission and the Ministry of Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change (MESTECC) jointly hosted a special reception and screening of BBC Studios' Blue Planet II in Kuala Lumpur today. The event was graced by HRH The Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex and Tengku Zatashah binti Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah, both of whom lent a royal touch to the event.

The screening is the latest in a series of collaborations between the UK and Malaysia government in addressing the global problem of plastic pollution and climate change. The UK is already working with Malaysia on delivering climate change workshops, and will be conducting a venture workshop in December 2019 designed to find innovative solutions to mitigate the use of plastic.

The screening was part of a full-day programme which included an exhibition that showcases joint UK-Malaysian efforts in tackling plastic waste and protecting the environment. It featured British and Malaysian green tech companies, environmental NGOs, as well as teachers and students. Running in parallel to the exhibition was a business dialogue on plastic organised by the British Malaysian Chamber of Commerce. The British Council also ran a number of education workshops featuring ScubaZoo and MareCet which engage and educate school children on the efforts they can take to lead a more environmentally-friendly lifestyle.

Setting up Plastics Pact

MESTECC is currently in talks to set up the Malaysia Plastics Pact with a variety of businesses, government agencies and civil society members, in an effort to bring key stakeholders together to tackle the plastic waste problem in the country.

YB Yeo Bee Yin, the Minister of Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change said:

Malaysia Plastics Pact will complement and drive our efforts in developing a plastic circular economy as outlined in the Malaysia's Roadmap Towards Zero Single-Use Plastics.

YB Yeo Bee Yin called on organisations, government agencies and civil society to be part of this multi-stakeholder platform to address plastic pollution by signing up on Malaysian Plastics Pact at [MESTECC's website](#).

The minister also highlighted that the Blue Planet documentary screening is one way of increasing public awareness on environmental issues.

MESTECC will hold a month-long environmental awareness programme beginning mid-September 2019 focusing on single use plastics. The culmination of this programme is the National Environment Day event on 19 October 2019.

The UK is fully supportive of the ministry's initiative and is offering expertise from WRAP Global, a UK sustainability charity. WRAP Global has already helped set up a UK Plastic Pact which saw more than 70 businesses sign up and pledge that by 2025 all their plastic packaging will be able to be reused, recycled or composted.

Marcus Gover, Chief Executive, WRAP, said:

Plastic pollution is a global problem which requires a truly global

solution which transforms for good the way we make, use and dispose of plastic in the future. We are delighted that the Malaysian Government have been inspired by the trailblazing success of The UK Plastics Pact, developed by WRAP and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, and have committed to working with businesses and organisations to develop their own Pact in Malaysia. Together, we are creating a powerful global platform for change which will help to keep plastic in the economy and out of the environment.

Zeroes waste champions named The Commonwealth Points of Light

At the Blue Planet II screening and exhibition, Khor Sue Yee and Tin Fong Yun were named the Commonwealth Points of Light for their exceptional work as zero waste champions. HRH Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex presented the two co-founders of Zero Waste Malaysia personalised certificate signed by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Khor Sue Yee and Tin Fong Yun are the founders of 'Zero Waste Malaysia', an NGO which is changing the way Malaysians treat waste. As well as teaching people, through workshops and exhibitions, to live more sustainably, Khor Sue Yee and Tin Fong Yun are also focusing on working with businesses to get zero waste policies adopted at an organisational level.

As part of the legacy of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London 2018, Her Majesty The Queen – as Head of the Commonwealth – is thanking inspirational volunteers across the 53 Commonwealth nations for the difference they are making in their communities and beyond, by recognising one volunteer from each Commonwealth country each week in the two years following the summit. By sharing these stories of service, the Commonwealth Points of Light awards celebrate inspirational acts of volunteering across the Commonwealth and help inspire others to make their own contribution to tackling some of the greatest social challenges of our time.

Khor Sue Yee and Tin Fong Yun said:

We are honoured to be named the Commonwealth Points of Light for Malaysia. This is a recognition of the hard work by all Zero Waste Malaysia volunteers and supporters. We hope this will help push forward a stronger zero waste movement in Malaysia.

Charles Hay MVO, British High Commissioner to Malaysia said:

Khor Sue Yee and Tin Fong Yun are role models in living a zero waste lifestyle. Together with the wider team in Zero Waste Malaysia which they jointly founded, they are an inspiration for those who seek to make positive changes in their personal lifestyle or their business model. Their exemplary work truly reflects the values and principles of The Commonwealth and I am pleased that this has been recognised by Her Majesty The Queen.

Blue Planet II series to be aired on Radio Television Malaysia (RTM)

Following the special screening of Blue Planet II, the landmark natural history series about the world's oceans, produced by the BBC Studios Natural History Unit and presented by Sir David Attenborough, will be aired over RTM for nationwide viewing. It is hoped that the acclaimed documentary series will help raise awareness about the importance of marine conservation and the perils of plastic pollution.

HRH Prince Edward's visit to Malaysia

HRH The Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex, is in Malaysia on a two-day visit. The Earl of Wessex started his visit with a meeting with His Majesty Yang di-Pertuan Agong at Istana Negara today. The Earl also met YB Syed Saddiq bin Syed Abdul Rahman, the Youth and Sports Minister at the National Sports Council where they watched Malaysian athletes in action ahead of the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

As the Chairman of Trustees for The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Foundation, The Earl will also attend The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Asia Pacific Regional Conference on 11 Sept 2019, participating in a youth roundtable to discuss the value of non-formal education, as well as meet Award Operators from the region. His Royal Highness will preside over a Gold Award presentation ceremony with over 150 Gold Awardees from across Malaysia.

[Listen to the Regulators Podcast on CICs new Online Account Filing process!!](#)



Following our recent blog, the Regulator of Community Interest Companies (CICs), Ceri Witchard, held a Q&A [podcast](#) on how the new online account filing process will benefit CIC customers.

Ceri was delighted to announce the new online service, and the fact that the

vast CIC community will now benefit from a completely digitised service!

It's a really good option for CIC's. We've been trying for a while to make sure they can benefit from the same range of services that any other company can have.

You can file online yourself. We've designed it with Companies House alongside all of their other services. They've tested it with users to make sure it's easy, takes you step-by-step through the process and, as long as you have your accounts ready to go, you will be able to use this service.

It's quicker. You will get a receipt immediately letting you know your filing has arrived and can use it 24 hours a day. A lot of companies are busy all day and actually want to file their accounts in the evening: it's there for you. You can make payment online: it's a much slicker system and much easier for people.

A link to the new online account filing for CICs is [here](#).

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[Serious operating irregularity at Romney Sands](#)



Romney Sands ticket office and station platform

At around 10:35 hrs on 28 August 2019, a train from Dungeness to Hythe left Romney Sands station and entered the single line section to New Romney. A train from Hythe to Dungeness was in the same section, travelling in the opposite direction. The two trains came to a stand about 316 metres apart.

We have undertaken a [preliminary examination](#) into the circumstances

surrounding this incident. Having assessed the evidence which has been gathered to date, we have decided to publish a [safety digest](#).

The safety digest will be made available on our website in the next few weeks.

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