

Changes to licensing of the lethal control of herring gull and lesser black-backed gull

Natural England has today [Thursday 30 January] set out changes to licences for the lethal control of herring gulls and lesser black-backed gulls in England to protect these declining species.

Owing to their poor conservation status, herring gulls and lesser black-backed gulls were not included in [Defra's general licences](#) issued last year. The breeding population of herring gull has fallen by 60% in recent decades, with lesser black-backed gulls declining by an estimated 48%.

Assessment carried out by Natural England has since indicated that the scale of activity carried out under licences in recent years is above a sustainable level. Continued activity at these levels is likely to have a harmful impact on the population levels of both species.

For this reason, it is necessary to scale back the lethal control of these gull species. In rural areas, where populations overall are known to be in decline, Natural England will set upper 'safe' number of birds that could be killed. Upper 'safe' levels have not been identified for lethal control in urban populations of gulls, as these are faring better.

Marian Spain, Interim Chief Executive of Natural England, said:

Populations of herring gulls and lesser black-backed gulls have declined significantly in recent years and it's essential that we do all we can to reverse this worrying trend.

I hope that by prioritising the licences we issue, we can ensure that action is taken where it's most needed while at the same time securing the long-term future of these important species. Meanwhile we are working with Defra to explore options for filling current gaps in evidence around urban gull populations, so we can continue to make decisions in the best interests of people and wildlife.

What you should do if you need to undertake lethal control of herring gull or lesser black-backed gull

We have issued a class licence to permit any wild bird control necessary to preserve air safety which covers herring gulls and lesser black-backed gulls.

Beyond this, Natural England will license gull control through individual licences, which will need to be prioritised. Natural England will consider the strength of need in each licence application individually but generally

protecting human life and health will be the overriding priority. Any control undertaken under other purposes such as preventing serious damage and conserving wild birds and flora or fauna will need to be targeted.

In more rural areas, where lethal control may have contributed to declining populations, we have established a sustainable number of birds that could be killed or taken – equivalent to no more than 5% of the natural mortality total of each species – without harming their conservation status.

Control levels of nests, eggs and chicks will not be limited in urban areas, where populations are thought to have better breeding success rates. However, Natural England will continue to promote the use of non-lethal methods through integrated management strategies that reduce opportunities for gulls to nest and scavenge in problem areas within the built environment. These include installing netting or wire over vulnerable roosting areas, keeping food storage and waste facility areas secure and discouraging deliberate feeding of birds by the public.

We are working with Defra to explore options for filling current gaps in evidence around urban gull populations, which would enable us to refine our licensing approach in future.

People who need to carry out licensed activities will be encouraged to submit [individual licence applications](#) in February and March in preparation for the bird breeding season, which is consistent with the majority of user needs. This period will enable Natural England to assess the cumulative scale of control across the applications submitted and take this into account in prioritising the licences to be granted. Natural England will continue to accept licence applications outside this period and will issue licences where there is an imperative need.

[Further guidance to inform potential applicants for licences to control lesser black back gulls or herring gulls is available here](#). We encourage potential applicants to refer to this information before submitting their applications. Applications that have already been made will still be considered by Natural England. In these cases, Natural England will contact applicants if any further information is required in order for Natural England to assess the application.

We have also made available a [Q&A which can be viewed here](#).

Natural England Chair, Tony Juniper's [Letter to Secretary of State](#) (PDF, 89.6KB, 3 pages)

[Over £1m to fund food waste fight](#)

Businesses and not-for-profits in England will benefit from £1.15 million of

funding to help them come up with creative new ways to tackle food waste by changing people's behaviour or transforming it into other materials.

From educating the public on how to store fresh food, to ideas such as turning food waste into new, edible products, grants will be available for creative solutions to address this pressing environmental challenge.

The government's Food Waste Champion, Ben Elliot, also announced today (30 January) he will hold the first ever 'Food Waste Action Week' from Monday 11 May and called on households and businesses across the country to join forces to reduce food waste.

With 4.5 million tonnes of food wasted every year, the new grants are the latest step in the government's drive to reduce food waste in the UK by 20% by 2025 and form part of a wider £15 million scheme to specifically address surplus food from the retail and manufacturing sectors.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

"The UK is a proud world leader in tackling food waste, owing in part to the innovation and creativity of many organisations across the UK – from educating the public on food waste in our homes, to making our supply chains greener.

"I look forward to supporting UK organisations who are taking up the mantle to tackle food waste and to create a better world for ourselves, as well as generations to come. It makes sense in every way – it cuts collection costs, saves the customer money and importantly reduces emissions which benefits the environment."

Announcing the first ever Food Waste Action Week, Government Food Waste Champion Ben Elliot said:

"The country's first ever Food Waste Action Week will be taking place from Monday 11th May and I encourage and implore everyone to get stuck in, joining together and taking the fight to food waste. More details will be provided shortly on what we must all do to reduce food waste at home and at work."

This comes as the government's [landmark Environment Bill](#) was introduced to Parliament today, reconfirming a commitment to reduce the UK's food waste footprint. It sets out how government will mandate weekly collections of food waste for every household, subject to consultation.

The UK is a global leader in tackling food waste, with the government pledging to reduce food waste by 20% by 2025 and total food waste levels already falling by 480,000 tonnes between 2015 and 2018. However, UK households still waste 4.5 million tonnes of food that could have been eaten every year, equivalent to ten billion meals.

The Citizen Food Waste Prevention and Value From Food Waste grants will be managed by sustainability not-for-profit [WRAP](#), which works closely with governments, businesses and citizens to reduce food waste, from running

public awareness campaigns such as [Love Food Hate Waste](#), to working with local councils to offer residents separate food waste collections.

Peter Maddox, Director of WRAP, said:

“WRAP is pleased to be managing the Resource Action Fund on behalf of Defra.

“We are looking forward to receiving applications from innovative and imaginative programmes and projects that will have a real impact in reducing the level of food waste in our homes and making sure we get more value from food waste in supply chains – priorities for both WRAP and Defra.”

This is the next step in the government’s ambition to drive down food waste from all sources. Food Waste Champion Ben Elliot has also helped intensify action, with 129 of the biggest players in food, including all of the UK’s major supermarkets, pledging to tackle the problem.

Today’s funding is the latest in a series of government grants to help tackle food waste, with last year’s Food Reduction Fund ensuring nearly 2,000 tonnes of surplus food did not go to waste.

More information on both grants and to download an application pack, can be found [here](#).

Notes to Editors

- The newly opened £1.15 million will be separated into two small-scale grants: The Citizen Food Waste Prevention grant (total worth of £650,000) and The Value from Food (total worth of £500,000) pilot project grant.
 - The Citizen Food Waste Prevention grant will award grants between £25,000 and £100,000 will be awarded to SME businesses and not-for-profit organisations who are inspiring the public to reduce their household food waste, such as through consumer education programmes on storing food appropriately and understanding their shelf life
 - The Value from Food Waste fund is open for collaborative projects from organisations of any size which are piloting methods to create useful materials out of food that would otherwise go to waste. Funding will be awarded for revenue and capital usage costs between £20,000 and £100,000.
 - In 2017, the government launched a £500,000 Food Waste Reduction fund, which supported eight projects in England redistribute 1,900 tonnes of food. The eight projects supported were: Action Homeless; His Church; FareShare UK; Fareshare Yorkshire; Feedback Global; Food in Community; Nuneaton & Bedworth HLN; REfUSE Durham.
-

UK defence invests more than £1 billion in Wales

[UK defence spending in Wales](#) reached more than £1 billion for the first time last year (2018-19) supporting more than 7,000 jobs.

Ministry of Defence figures published today (30 January) show that the department's procurement spend in Wales increased from £960m in 2017-18 to £1.08bn last year – an increase in per capita spending from £310 to £350.

Major defence projects in Wales include the production of the Army's next generation of AJAX armoured fighting vehicles at General Dynamics UK in Merthyr Tydfil and Oakdale, the development of a new £11m Royal Naval Reserve centre in Cardiff Bay and a £250m contract with Raytheon in Broughton to provide support services to the Royal Air Force's fleet of surveillance aircraft.

It is estimated that around 7,700 jobs in defence in Wales are now being supported by UK Government defence spending, up from 6,300 in 2017-18.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

UK Defence spent more than £1bn with Welsh industry last year supporting thousands of private sector jobs.

This investment in businesses such as General Dynamics, Raytheon and others makes Wales a genuine defence industry hub and one of the most competitive places in the world from which to innovate and deliver security.

Among the military bases in Wales is the home of 160 Brigade HQ Wales in Brecon while a light infantry unit is to be based at MOD St Athan which will become the main Army base in Wales as well as a major RAF base.

In 2017, the runway at RAF Valley on Anglesey was restored as part of a £20m refurbishment extending its operational life for a further 25 years. All new UK fighter pilots pass through Valley before reaching their frontline squadron.

The area around Brecon and Sennybridge are home to major Army training facilities and every year hosts Exercise Cambrian Patrol which sees military units from across the world travel to Wales to test themselves on the demanding two-day course.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

Defence continues to provide security and prosperity as we see billions invested across the UK and the subsequent hundreds of thousands of jobs supported.

Other recent UK Government defence investments in Wales include the awarding of an £82m contract to Qioptiq, based in St Asaph, to maintain surveillance and targeting equipment over the next five years.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

[Aspiring teachers to benefit from simpler application process](#)

Aspiring teachers will benefit from a simpler application process to get into teaching following the launch of a brand-new service.

Designed to better meet the needs of potential trainees applying for teacher training, it will ensure universities and schools can make the best decisions on matching applicants with teacher training courses.

The government signalled its determination to attract the best talent into teaching and recognise the great work of hardworking teachers by raising teachers' starting salaries to £30,000 – among the most competitive in the graduate labour market.

The South-West will be first to benefit from the pilot, before it is rolled out across England to fully replace the existing UCAS service from October 2021. Universities providing teacher training will also be able to join the pilot from October 2020.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

There's never been a better time to become a teacher – this year we have announced a 2.75% pay rise for teachers, alongside outlining plans for starting salaries to rise to £30,000 by 2022-23.

We are removing the barriers that can deter some people who could be excellent teachers from applying and that includes making the application process simpler, more straightforward and intuitive. This new service does just that.

In the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy, published in January 2019, the Government committed to help great people become teachers by introducing a new application system for initial postgraduate teacher training.

The service will be easier to use for both candidates and training providers and is fully integrated with Find Postgraduate Teacher Training.

James Noble-Rodgers, Executive Director of the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) and Emma Hollis, Executive Director of the National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT) said:

As representative bodies for providers of teacher training, we are very supportive of the work the Department for Education is doing to simplify and modernise the service for candidates and providers, and have been working closely with the team to help shape Apply for Teacher Training.

We are pleased that our members are working with the Department for Education to test the service, with some SCITTs receiving applications through Apply for Teacher Training already, and universities signing up to start piloting from October this year. We look forward to continuing to work closely with the Department for Education to support this important work.

Hester Hodgson, Senior Teaching Schools Administrator at Gorse School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) said:

At Gorse SCITT, we are delighted to be one of the providers taking part in the pilot for DfE Apply.

We are passionate about improving the application journey for candidates, so we jumped at the chance to test this new service. It's great seeing candidates coming through, and we're looking forward to continuing work with the Department for Education to shape the new Apply service.

Providers interested in the pilot can find out more here:
<https://www.apply-for-teacher-training.education.gov.uk/provider>

[UK defence procurement spend worth more than £1.7 billion a year to](#)

Scotland

This is up from £1.64 billion the previous year and an increase in per person spend to £320.

And the number of Scottish industry jobs this supports has increased from 10,100 to 10,200.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Douglas Ross said:

These figures show that not only does defence play a crucial part in the security of the United Kingdom but it also contributes to Scotland's prosperity in high-skilled employment and investment.

The UK Government is ensuring this continues. We have announced that Babcock – including its key Rosyth yard – will build the MOD's Type 31 Frigate keeping Scotland at the forefront of a renaissance in UK shipbuilding. The Type 26 programme has already secured 4,000 Scottish jobs and 20 years of work on the Clyde.

Our nation has a proud military history, and also a bright future in Scotland and across the rest of the UK.

Thousands of regular personnel and reserves are based in Scotland.

A further 550 extra military personnel and their families will be based in Moray by 2024 and the numbers of personnel at Her Majesty's Naval Base on the Clyde is also increasing.

The MOD's equipment plan is supporting Scottish business, jobs and skills far into the future; helping to make Scotland one of the most competitive places in the world to innovate, build business and deliver security.

Scotland will see a further £1.5 billion of defence investment in infrastructure over a 10-year period on improved facilities at Faslane, Coulport and RAF Lossiemouth.

Further benefits of defence investment in Scotland include:

- Scotland's HMNB Clyde will be home to all of UK's submarines by 2020.
- RAF Lossiemouth is one of the RAF's three fast jet operating bases, including Quick Response Alert (QRA) interceptors. It will soon be home to an additional Typhoon squadron.
- The first of 9 Boeing P-8 Maritime Patrol Aircraft will arrive in Scotland shortly.

- In total, RAF Lossiemouth will benefit from around £400 million of investment.
- Boeing and the UK Government are building a new £100 million operational support and training facility for Poseidon, creating more than 100 new jobs.

[MOD Regional Expenditure with industry statistics 2018/19](#)