



General licences and the next steps – position statement

There has been a large amount of media coverage and interest in the decision to revoke three general licences (GL 04/05/06). These cover 16 species of birds, including several members of the crow family, Canada geese, some gulls, feral and wood pigeons.

Natural England announced on Tuesday (23 April) that the licences will be revoked at 11.59pm on Thursday 25 April. We did not take this decision lightly. However, in light of the legal challenge by Wild Justice, Natural England concluded that the licences were not issued in accordance with the requirements of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Unfortunately this conclusion, which was based on legal advice, left us with no choice but to revoke these licences.

This note therefore sets out options that are now available to people who have previously used these licences to prevent serious damage and disease, to conserve wild birds, wild flora and fauna, or to protect public health and safety.

Please be assured that controls can still be carried out lawfully. There is no ban to shooting these named wild birds nor will people be breaking the law if they follow one of these routes.

Option 1 New licences are due to go live on gov.uk from 26 April and over the following days. These will cover the majority of circumstances previously covered by the revoked licences, to ensure landowners can continue to take necessary action, whilst also taking into account the needs of wildlife. We enclose an indicative timetable for the new licences at the end of this note. If you are able to wait until the licence you need becomes available you can rely on this and need take no further action if you satisfied that it covers your circumstances.

Option 2 Anybody who needs to act within the law to control wild birds before the licence they need is ready can rely on a simple [online application system](#) for individual licences. This went live on Thursday evening (25 April).

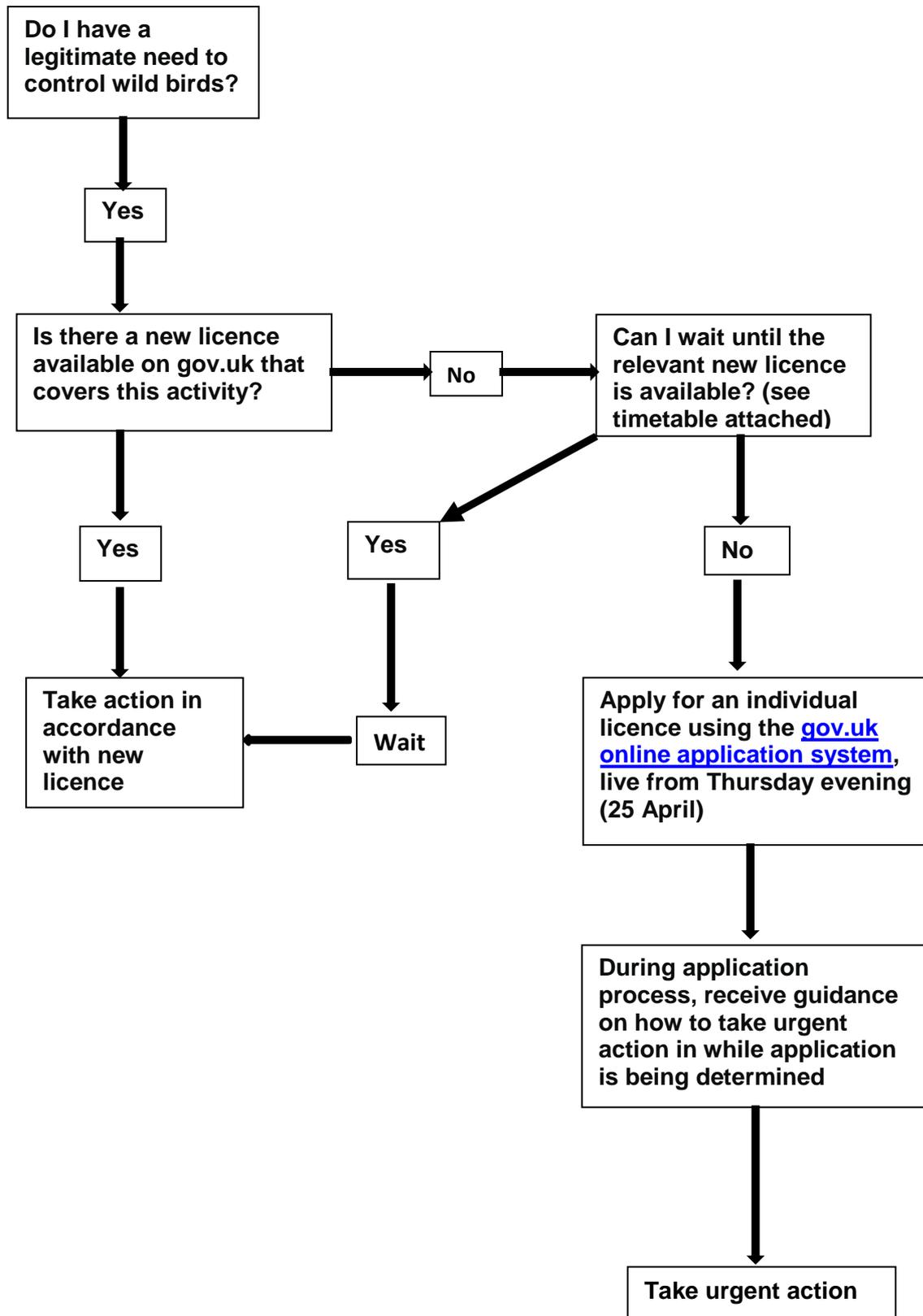
Option 3 If you need to take urgent action before you receive a new licence, you can do so in some circumstances. With regards serious damage to crops and livestock you will need to use a notification system. You will be told how to do this in response to your licence application.

The diagram below presents the various options open to users. The attached Q&A gives more information to help you decide on the best course of action. Please refer to gov.uk for the relevant licences and applications. If this does not answer your questions, you may contact our general enquiries line on **0300 060 3900** or enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk and our staff will do all they can to assist you.

Natural England recognises that this change will cause disruption for people who make use of these licences, but is working hard to ensure it is kept to a minimum.

Looking ahead, we want to make sure our licensing system is robust and proportionate, taking into account the needs of wildlife and people and we shall bring forward a planned review of the general licensing system later this year once we have implemented these interim measures. We will consult widely and fully with all those with an interest in this subject in as part of this review.

New licences – decision ‘flow diagram’



Indicative timetable for new licences issued on a priority basis (subject to the assessments for each of the licences being confirmed)

Priority 1: To be issued from w/c 29 April or sooner

Prevent serious damage to livestock – Carrion crow
Conserving wild bird – magpie
Conserving wild bird – Carrion crow
Prevent serious damage to crops – woodpigeon
Prevent serious damage to crops – Rook
Prevent serious damage to crops – Canada goose
Preserving public health and public safety – Feral pigeon
Preserving public health and public safety – Canada goose
Preserving public health and public safety – Lesser Black Backed Gull
Preserving public health and public safety – Herring gull

Priority 2: To be issued from w/c 13 May

Conserve wild birds - Canada goose
Prevent the spread of disease - Feral pigeon
Prevent serious damage to foodstuffs for livestock – Carrion crow
Prevent serious damage to foodstuffs for livestock – Rook
Prevent serious damage to foodstuffs for livestock – Carrion crow
Prevent serious damage to foodstuffs for livestock – Rook
Prevent serious damage to foodstuffs for livestock – Magpie

Priority 3: date to confirmed

Preserving public health and public safety - Monk parakeet
Conserve wild birds - Rook
Conserve wild birds - Jackdaw
Conserve wild birds - Jay
Conserve wild birds - Ring-necked parakeet
Conserve wild birds - Monk parakeet
Prevent serious damage to crops - Feral pigeon
Prevent serious damage to crops - Carrion crow
Prevent serious damage to crops - Jackdaw
Prevent serious damage to crops - Egyptian goose
Prevent serious damage to vegetables/fruit - Wood pigeon
Prevent serious damage to vegetables/fruit - Rook
Prevent the spread of disease - Rook
Prevent the spread of disease - Jackdaw
Prevent the serious damage to foodstuffs for livestock - Woodpigeon
Prevent the serious damage to foodstuffs for livestock - Feral pigeon