

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

27th October 2020

Dear Constance,

RE: GENERAL LICENCING.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of general licensing for the control of wild birds; your comments upon which I have read with great interest.

I understand the concerns that you have raised. In June last year, DEFRA simultaneously issued new interim general licences and launched a review to inform longer-term licensing arrangements. I am aware that the review has made significant progress; however, I understand that additional time is needed to thoroughly analyse the evidence and to fully develop a general licensing solution for protected sites.

I am pleased that six general licences for the control of wild birds have now been reissued on a temporary basis ahead of new licences coming into force on the 1st January 2021. No action is required by licence users, beyond the ongoing requirement to act in accordance with the licence conditions. DEFRA intends to publish new licences in November to allow user groups to become acquainted with the changes before they officially come into force.

In 2019, herring gull and lesser black-backed gull were removed from DEFRA's general licences due to their red and amber conservation status respectively. As a result, the lethal control of gulls has been via individual licence this year. I am aware that this is also the case for wild bird control on, and near, European sites - however, this is an interim position while DEFRA concludes its review, which will work towards a general licence solution for these sites.

I am aware of calls for a feasibility study into DEFRA taking back control of individual licensing from Natural England. While I recognise frustration around the individual licence process this year, Natural England is England's statutory nature conservation body and has the right specialist expertise and site-based knowledge to make licensing decisions.

I would like to reassure you that Natural England, DEFRA and my ministerial colleagues, are all committed to achieving a general licensing regime for wild birds which is both robust and workable for users, ensuring that longer-term licensing arrangements are informed by the best available evidence.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,
A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom'.

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

LISTENING TO YOU - CAMPAIGNING FOR YOU
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