

Scottish General Licensing Consultation Response

31 Aug 2026

The Scottish Countryside Alliance is a political campaigning force that promotes and protects the rural way of life, representing the interests of our members and supporters in parliament, in the media and on the ground.

Broader questions on General Licensing

Question 1: Have you used any of the 16 General Licences issued by NatureScot, if you have, which General Licence have you used?

Answer: None as an organisation. However, General Licences are widely used by our members, land managers and rural businesses, so their practical operation and ease of use is vital to the sector.

Question 2a: Do you think the current approach to General Licensing works well?

Answer: Yes

Question 2b: Please explain your answer:

Answer: The general licensing scheme works well and allows land managers and practitioners to carry out certain land management practices with relative ease. We are aware of the SLE suggested wording in this section on the restriction of general licences and fully support their position and suggested wording of the condition.

In short - restriction should require credible evidence linking misuse to a person responsible for managing the land, rather than relying on the location of an alleged incident. This would improve fairness while preserving NatureScot's ability to act where there is reliable evidence of unlawful activity.

Question 3a: On a scale of 1-5 (1 Strongly disagree, 5 Strongly agree), Do you support the

Answer: 5

Question 3b: Please explain your answer:

Answer: The principle of a General Licence is clear, straightforward and easily understood by those required to operate under its provisions. By allowing individuals to undertake specified activities without the need to submit a licence application, provided all terms and conditions of the licence are met, the General Licence system offers a proportionate and efficient regulatory mechanism, as was intended when the system was introduced. It should also be noted that the greater administrative burden placed on operators (many of whom are recreational shooters) the less likely they are to conduct pest and predator control. The knock of effect will be an increase in both crop and livestock damage.

Question 4a: Should all General licences include a condition to provide annual returns?

Answer: No.

Annual returns should only be introduced where NatureScot can demonstrate a clear regulatory need. Any requirement must be proportionate, ensure that it produces reliable information, minimise administrative work, and protect the privacy and safety of licence users. A blanket return policy will create a completely unnecessary administrative burden on both the user and the licensing authority. A large proportion of shotgun certificate holders and air rifle users will, at some point, utilise the general licence system. If returns are mandatory then this will cause such complexities that the system will not operate smoothly and more time will be spent chasing submissions, identifying errors and seeking corrections or simply processing data that is likely to be inaccurate and uncorroborated. The cost of this additional work will be significant. GLs have been utilised with great effect for many years and to upset the apple cart will only have a negative effect on the countryside.

Question 4b: If you selected “Some not all”, Which General Licences should have annual returns, and why?

Answer: N/A

Question 5a: Should new General licences be considered for any other purpose, species or

Response: Yes.

Answer: Yes. Relevant gull species and ravens should be considered where evidence shows that proportionate control is needed to protect vulnerable wildlife, livestock or public safety. General licensing could also allow quicker action and reduce reliance on resource-intensive individual applications.

Question 5b: Please explain your answer:

Answer: The addition of the common gull species added to the proposed GL01, GL02 and GL03. Gulls, namely great black-backed gull; lesser black-backed gull; herring gull; common gull; and black-headed gull are predators of red listed wading birds' nests and chicks.

Proposed GL01 - To kill or take certain birds or destroy their nest and

Question 1: On a scale of 1-5 (1 Strongly disagree, 5 Strongly agree), do you agree with a General Licence to control wild birds for the conservation of wild birds?

Answer: 5

Question 2a: Do you agree with the proposed species listed on this General Licence?

Response: Yes

Question 2b: If no, please select which species you wish to comment on and provide your reasoning for each selected below.

Answer: N/A

Question 2b: Comment on species you have selected above.

Answer: N/A

Question 3: Are there any other species which should be included on this General licence? If

Answer: Add great black-backed, lesser black-backed, herring, common and black-headed gulls, along with ravens. Their inclusion would allow proportionate action where predation threatens vulnerable nesting birds or where public-safety risks are demonstrated. It would also reduce delays and administrative work associated with individual applications.

Question 4a: Do you agree with these permitted methods?

Response: Yes

Question 4b: If no, please select which methods you wish to comment on, and provide your reasoning for each selected, below.

Answer: N/A

Question 5a: Comment on methods selected above.

Answer: Yes. The permitted methods are suitable when used by competent practitioners who follow the licence conditions, relevant guidance and animal-welfare safeguards. Retaining a practical range of methods also allows users to select the safest and most effective option for local circumstances.

Question 5b: Are there any other methods which should be included on this General licence? If yes, tell us which methods and why.

Answer: N/A

Question 6a: Do you agree with the conditions proposed under this General licence?

Response: No

Question 6b: If no, tell us which conditions, why and your proposed alternatives.

Answer: Any restriction should require credible evidence linking misuse to a person responsible for managing the land, rather than relying on the location of an alleged incident. This would improve fairness while preserving NatureScot's ability to act where there is reliable evidence of unlawful activity.

Proposed GL02 – To kill or take birds listed or damage or destroy

Question 1: On a scale of 1-5 (1 Strongly disagree, 5 Strongly agree), do you agree with a General Licence to control wild birds for the prevention of serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables and fruit?

Answer: 5

Question 2a: Do you agree with the proposed species listed on this General Licence?

Response: Yes

Question 2b: If no, please select which species you wish to comment on and provide your reasoning for each selected below.

Answer: N/A

Question 2c: Comment on species you have selected above.

Answer: The listed species in GL02 can have significant local effects through predation, competition or habitat damage. Their continued inclusion allows targeted, proportionate control where evidence shows that vulnerable wildlife or conservation objectives are at risk.

Question 3: Are there any other species which should be included on this General licence? If

Answer: Ravens can seriously affect lambs and other vulnerable livestock and may also prey on ground-nesting birds. Inclusion would support prompt, proportionate action while reducing repeated individual licence applications.

Question 4a: Do you agree with these permitted methods?

Response: Yes

Question 4b: If no, please select which methods you wish to comment on, and provide your reasoning for each selected, below.

Answer: N/A

Question 5a: Comment on methods selected above.

Answer: N/A.

Question 5b: Are there any other methods which should be included on this General licence? If yes, tell us which methods and why.

Answer: N/A

Question 6: Do you agree with the conditions proposed under this General licence?

Response: No

Question 6b: If no, tell us which conditions, why and your proposed alternatives.

Answer: Any restriction should require credible evidence linking misuse to a person responsible for managing the land, rather than relying on the location of an alleged incident. This would improve fairness while preserving NatureScot's ability to act where there is reliable evidence of unlawful activity.

Proposed GL03 - To kill or take or damage or destroy nest and eggs

Question 1: On a scale of 1-5 (1 Strongly disagree, 5 Strongly agree), do you agree with a General Licence to control wild birds for the preservation of public health, public safety and preventing the spread of disease?

Answer: 5

Question 2a: Do you agree with the proposed species listed on this General Licence?

Response: Yes

Question 2b: If no, please select which species you wish to comment on and provide your reasoning for each selected below.

Answer: N/A

Question 2c: Comment on species you have selected above.

Answer: N/A

Question 3: Are there any other species which should be included on this General licence? If

Answer: Add great black-backed, lesser black-backed, herring, common and black-headed gulls. Their inclusion would allow proportionate action where predation threatens vulnerable nesting birds or where public-safety risks are demonstrated. It would also reduce delays and administrative work associated with individual applications.

Question 4a: Do you agree with these permitted methods?

Response: Yes

Question 4b: If no, please select which methods you wish to comment on, and provide your reasoning for each selected, below.

Answer: N/A

Question 5a: Comment on methods selected above.

Answer: N/A

Question 5b: Are there any other methods which should be included on this General licence? If yes, tell us which methods and why.

Answer: No

Question 6a: Do you agree with the conditions proposed under this General licence?

Response: No

Question 6b: If no, tell us which conditions, why and your proposed alternatives.

Answer: Any restriction should require credible evidence linking misuse to a person responsible for managing the land, rather than relying on the location of an alleged incident. This would improve fairness while preserving NatureScot's ability to act where there is reliable evidence of unlawful activity.

Proposed GL04 - To take red grouse using certain methods in order to

Question 1: On a scale of 1-5 (1 Strongly disagree, 5 Strongly agree), do you agree with a General Licence to permit red grouse to be taken by certain methods, in order to administer medication or collect samples?

Answer: Yes

Question 2a: Do you agree with these permitted methods?

Response: Yes

Question 2b: If no, please select which methods you wish to comment on, and provide your reasoning for each selected, below.

Answer: N/A

Question 2c: Comment on methods selected above.

Answer: Yes. The permitted methods are suitable when used by competent practitioners who follow the licence conditions, relevant guidance and animal-welfare safeguards.

Question 2d: Are there any other methods which should be included on this General licence? If yes, please provide justification and evidence for the potential inclusion of this/these methods:

Answer: N/A

Question 5a: Do you agree with the conditions proposed under this General licence?

Response: Yes

Question 5b: If no, please outline what conditions you do not agree with and why, and your proposed alternatives.

Answer: N/A

Proposed GL05 - To keep unregistered disabled, wild-bred Schedule 4

Question 1: On a scale of 1-5 (1 Strongly disagree, 5 Strongly agree), do you agree with a General Licence to permit the keeping of unregistered disabled, wild-bred schedule 4 birds for rehabilitation?

Answer: 5

Question 2: Do you agree with the conditions proposed under this General licence?

Response: Yes

Question 2b: If no, please outline what conditions you do not agree with and why, and your proposed alternatives.

Answer: N/A

Proposed GL06 - To keep unregistered disabled, wild-bred Schedule 4

Question 1: On a scale of 1-5 (1 Strongly disagree, 5 Strongly agree), do you agree with a General Licence to permit the keeping of unregistered disabled, wild-bred schedule 4 birds for veterinary treatment?

Answer: 5

Question 2a: Do you agree with the conditions proposed under this General licence?

Response: Yes

Question 2b: If no, please outline what conditions you do not agree with and why, and your proposed alternatives.

Answer: N/A

Proposed GL07 - To rear unregistered chicks from captive-bred

Question 1: On a scale of 1-5 (1 Strongly disagree, 5 Strongly agree), do you agree with a General Licence to permit the rearing of unregistered chicks from captive-bred schedule 4 birds?

Answer: 5

Question 2a: Do you agree with the conditions proposed under this General licence?

Response: Yes

Question 2b: If no, please outline what conditions you do not agree with and why, and your proposed alternatives.

Answer: N/A

Proposed GL08 - To permit the competitive showing of certain

Question 1: On a scale of 1-5 (1 Strongly disagree, 5 Strongly agree), do you agree with a General Licence to permit the competitive showing of certain captive-bred live birds?

Answer: 5

Question 2a: Do you agree with the proposed species listed on this General Licence?

Response: Yes

Question 2b: If no, please select which species you wish to comment on and provide your reasoning for each selected below.

Answer: N/A

Question 2c: Comment on species you have selected above.

Answer: N/A

Question 3: Are there any other species which should be included on this General licence? If yes, tell us which species and why.

Answer: N/A

Question 4a: Do you agree with the conditions proposed under this General licence?

Response: Yes

Question 4b: If no, please outline what conditions you do not agree with and why, and your

Answer: proposed alternatives.

Proposed GL09 - To keep certain captive-bred live birds in show

Question 1: On a scale of 1-5 (1 Strongly disagree, 5 Strongly agree), do you agree with a General Licence to permit the keeping of certain captive-bred live birds in show cages for training purposes?

Answer: 5

Question 2a: Do you agree with the proposed species listed on this General Licence?

Response: Yes

Question 2b: If no, please provide your reason for not supporting the inclusion of any captive bred wild bird species, including which species should be included.

Answer: N/A

Question 3a: Do you agree with the proposed dimensions?

Response: Yes

Question 3b: If no, please select which dimension you wish to comment on, and provide your reasoning for each selected, below.

Answer: N/A

Question 3c: Comment on dimensions selected above.

Answer: N/A

Question 6a: Do you agree with the conditions proposed under this General licence?

Response: Yes

Question 6b: If no, please outline what conditions you do not agree with and why, and your proposed alternatives.

Answer: N/A

Proposed GL10 - To sell certain live captive-bred species of wild bird

Question 1: On a scale of 1-5 (1 Strongly disagree, 5 Strongly agree), do you agree with a General Licence to permit the selling of certain live captive-bred species of wild bird?

Answer: 5

Question 2a: Do you agree with the proposed species listed on this General Licence?

Response: Yes

Question 2b: If no, please select which species you wish to comment on and provide your reasoning for each selected below.

Answer: N/A

Question 2c: Comment on species you have selected above.

Answer: N/A

Question 3: Are there any other species which should be included on this General licence? If yes, tell us which species and why.

Answer: N/A

Question 4a: Do you agree with the conditions proposed under this General licence?

Response: Yes

Question 4b: If no, please outline what conditions you do not agree with and why, and your proposed alternatives.

Answer: N/A

Proposed GL11 - To sell feathers and parts of certain dead birds

Question 1: On a scale of 1-5 (1 Strongly disagree, 5 Strongly agree), do you agree with a General Licence being permit the selling of feathers and parts of certain dead birds which have been captive-bred or legally taken from the UK?

Answer: 5

Question 2a: Do you agree with the proposed species listed on this General Licence?

Response: Yes

Question 2b: If no, please select which species you wish to comment on, and provide your reasoning for each selected, below.

Answer: N/A

Question 2c: Comment on species you have selected above.

Answer: N/A

Question 2d: Are there any other species which should be included on this General licence? If yes, please provide justification and evidence for the potential inclusion of this/these species:

Answer: N/A

Question 4a: Do you agree with the conditions proposed under this General licence?

Response: Yes

Question 4b: If no, please outline what conditions you do not agree with and why, and your

Answer: proposed alternatives.

Proposed GL12 - To sell certain dead birds which have been captive

Question 1: On a scale of 1-5 (1 Strongly disagree, 5 Strongly agree), do you agree with a General Licence to permit the selling of certain dead birds which have been captive-bred or legally taken from the European union?

Answer: 5

Question 2a: Do you agree with the proposed species listed on this General Licence?

Response: Yes

Question 2b: If no, please select which species you wish to comment on, and provide your reasoning for each selected, below.

Answer: N/A

Question 2c: Comment on species you have selected above.

Answer: N/A

Question 2d: Are there any other species which should be included on this General licence? If yes, please provide justification and evidence for the potential inclusion of this/these species:

Answer: N/A

Question 4a: Do you agree with the conditions proposed under this General licence?

Response: Yes

Question 4b: If no, please outline what conditions you do not agree with and why, and your proposed alternatives.

Answer: N/A

Proposed GL13 - To take unsuccessful eggs laid by wild birds from

Question 1: On a scale of 1-5 (1 Strongly disagree, 5 Strongly agree), do you agree with a General Licence to permit the taking of unsuccessful eggs laid by wild birds from nest boxes?

Answer: 5

Question 2: Do you agree with the conditions proposed under this General licence?

Response: Yes

Question 2b: If no, please outline what conditions you do not agree with and why, and your proposed alternatives.

Answer: N/A

Proposed GL14 - To use certain traps to kill stoats for the

Question 1: On a scale of 1-5 (1 Strongly disagree, 5 Strongly agree), do you agree with a General Licence to permit the use of certain traps to kill stoats for the conservation of wild birds or for the prevention of serious damage to livestock?

Answer: 5

Question 2: Do you agree with the conditions proposed under this General licence?

Response: Yes

Question 2b: If no, please outline what conditions you do not agree with and why, and your proposed alternatives.

Answer: N/A

Proposed GL15 - Sale, advertisement, possession & transportation of

Question 1: On a scale of 1-5 (1 Strongly disagree, 5 Strongly agree), do you agree with a General Licence to permit sale, advertisement, possession and transportation of Greylag geese & Greylag goose meat by hunters, caterers and retailers?

Answer: 5

Question 2a: Do you agree that this General Licence is restricted to Greylag goose only?

Response: Yes

Question 2b: If no, please tell us which species should also be included and why.

Answer: N/A

Question 2a: Do you agree with the proposed areas listed on this General Licence?

Response: Yes

Question 2b: If no, please select which areas you wish to comment on and provide your reasoning for each selected below.

Answer: N/A

Question 2c: Comment on areas you have selected above.

Question 3: Are there any other areas which should be included on this General licence? If yes,

Answer: tell us which areas and why.

Question 5a: Do you agree with the conditions proposed under this General licence?

Response: Yes

Question 5b: If no, please outline what conditions you do not agree with and why, and your proposed alternatives.

Answer: N/A

Proposed GL16 - Sale, advertisement, possession & transportation of

Question 1: On a scale of 1-5 (1 Strongly disagree, 5 Strongly agree), do you agree with a General Licence to permit sale, advertisement, possession and transportation of Mountain Hare & Mountain Hare meat by hunters, caterers and retailers?

Answer: 5

Question 2: Do you agree with the conditions proposed under this General licence?

Response: Yes

Question 2b: If no, please outline what conditions you do not agree with and why, and your proposed alternatives.

Answer: N/A