



Subject:	George Best Belfast City Airport request to facilitate ongoing greylag goose control at Victoria Park
Date:	12 March 2024
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Stephen Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in
Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of the report is for Members to consider a request from George Best Belfast City Airport (GBBCA) to continue the ongoing greylag goose control programme at Victoria Park through a 3-year legal agreement.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Note the report from GBBCA on Greylag Geese Management at Victoria Park,ii. Consider permissions requested to enter Victoria Park to facilitate the continuation of pricking of un-hatched greylag goose eggs under licence issued by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA); andiii. Instruct officers to work with legal services to issue a relevant licence for a period of 3 years which will be subject to annual review in advance of renewal.

3.0	Main report
3.1	Members are aware that control of birds in the flight path to the airport is a requirement of the airport's Civil Aviation Authority licence.
3.2	The GBBCA bird control programme has been underway for a number of years and is underpinned by scientific surveys and research. Council previously agreed a range of measures to control greylag goose numbers within Victoria Park including habitat modifications, dissuading members of the public from feeding the birds and annual egg pricking under licence. Management interventions are monitored by GBBCA to assess their effectiveness.
3.3	A report provided by GBBCA (See Appendix 1) provides information on how the control programme, aimed at making the site less attractive to geese, has been effective with a steady decline in numbers. Egg control at Victoria Park over the last licences period averaged 68.3 eggs per year compared to 74.4 for the previous three year period (2018 – 2020), with a corresponding drop in monthly average count from 18.3 to 10.5. This continuing decline in numbers at the park is mirrored by a decline in runway observations Appendix 1 (Table 1 and Figure 2).
3.4	It reports that although there is an overall declining trend for greylag geese in the area, runway observations still record peaks during Spring and Autumn while at Victoria Park numbers have increased sharply over the last six months. The report also states that at a national level numbers of greylag geese are also increasing.
3.5	The report concludes that with greylag longevity c.20 years, seasonal peaks still evident from runway observations and a recent increase in greylag at Victoria Park, the recommendation to continue with egg control management is well-founded. The recent rise in numbers at Victoria Park however, introduces trend instability which along with a risk of displacement from other sites, would suggest any cessation of management effort in the short-term would be premature.
3.6	On this basis, GBBCA has approached council to request continued access to Victoria Park to facilitate the continuation of pricking of un-hatched greylag goose eggs under licence issued by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA).
3.7	If members are content, officers will work with Legal Services to issue a relevant licence for a period of three years which will be subject to annual review in advance of renewal.
3.8	To support the review, GBBCA will be required to submit an annual report outlining their Wildlife Control Management Plan (WCMP) noting recommendations based on the risk assessment made in the annual Wildlife Hazard Assessment (WHA) and incorporating any new control methods as they become available.
3.9	Officers will review the submitted risk assessment and insurance certificates in line with procedure. The licence will include relevant conditions to ensure that health and safety measures are implemented, and that any other necessary arrangements are put in place.
3.10	Members will recall that at it's January 2024 meeting, members agreed to a request from GBBCA agreed to the request from George Best Belfast City Airport to permit access under licence to Victoria Park to facilitate rookery management, in particular, the removal of old rook nests and nest site discouragement during January 2024. The Committee agreed that the Council write to George Belfast City Airport asking it to clarify if it was seeking to reduce

<p>3.11</p> <p>3.12</p> <p>3.13</p> <p>3.14</p>	<p>and manage the number of rooks at Victoria Park or to ultimately eradicate them from the area.</p> <p>GBBCA responded on 1 March 2024 (copy attached at Appendix 2) to advise that due to high strike posed to aircraft by rooks, that they have a legal responsibility to safeguard the airport and surrounding areas from flocks of birds which could pose such a risk. To attempt to prevent year on year expansion, they are using habit manipulation techniques to discourage rather than prevent breeding altogether in order that rooks and their young may in time naturally find an alternative location – these techniques are only progressed following consultation with subject matter experts and obtaining the necessary permissions, with work undertaken by qualified personnel.</p> <p>GBBCA have offered to meet with members in Victoria Park for an overview, if interested.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> GBBCA will be responsible for all costs associated with the request.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices</p>
	<p>Appendix 1: Greylag Management at Victoria Park, Belfast Summary Report for Management Agreement 2021-2023.</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Copy of response received from GBBCA on 1 March 2024</p>