



Subject:	Belfast City Airport Request – Rook Management at Victoria Park: Implications to Air Safety
Date:	3 December 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 or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to inform Committee of a request from the George Best Belfast City Airport (GBBCA) to gain access to Victoria Park to continue habitat modifications to mitigate against the risk of bird strikes.
1.2	This work is part of an ongoing control programme in line with the Airport's Wildlife Hazard Assessment and the Civil Aviation Authority licensing requirements.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to agree to the request from George Best Belfast City Airport to grant access under licence to Victoria Park to facilitate rook management, in particular the removal of old rook nests and nest site discouragement, in January 2025.
2.2	Members are advised that any decision to grant this permission is subject to legal agreement, developed by the Council's Legal Services department and includes a requirement to ensure that any works are permissible and that any required NIEA licence and consents are in place.

2.3	<p>As the works need to be completed by mid-January, any licence would be progressed under the Strategic Director's delegated authority, taking into consideration Members views.</p> <p>If agreed, the licence will permit works to commence in mid-December and end by mid-January 2025 (subject to the terms and conditions).</p>
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u> Members should be aware that the control of birds in the flight path to the airport is a requirement of the airport's Civil Aviation Authority licence. In line with GBBCA's national aerodrome license requirements and associated guidance material presented in CAP772: Wildlife Hazard Management at Aerodromes, the airport is required to identify sources of risk and to reduce and maintain risk to an acceptable level in compliance with the Civil Aviation Authority licensing requirements.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Rooks</u> Members will recall granting a similar request for rook management at the January 2024 meeting of People and Communities Committee. GBBCA report that although rook nests reduced around the Sam Thompson Bridge, a new cluster of six nests was located along the southern perimeter of the Park. While the number of nests increased in 2024 for the first year since management prescriptions were introduced in 2020, the number of nests and flock sizes observed have reduced.</p>
3.3	<p>The airport has identified the need to continue the current management to reduce and discourage rooks from re-laying in the areas used in the previous year. The proposed works include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The removal of old rook nests to take place during the works period; 2. Any necessary structural pruning of preferred nesting trees and reducing shelter provided by ivy; and 3. The removal of clumps of Birch Besom.
3.4	<p>GBBCA will appoint a suitable contractor with previous experience to undertake the work. The area in question will be cordoned off and the old nests removed using a cherry picker. They suggest this will take a day to complete.</p>
3.5	<p>If members are content, officers will review the submitted risk assessment and insurance certificates in line with procedure and work with Legal Services to issue the requested licence. The licence will include relevant conditions to ensure that the airport confirm that all work is permissible and that any required licences are in place to allow work to take place within the required timescales. The licence will also place an onus on the airport to ensure that health and safety measures are implemented, essential signage is assembled and one-way systems are established where necessary.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> GBBCA will be responsible for any costs associated with the request.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None</p>
4.0	Appendices
	Appendix 1: Belfast City Airport Report – Rook Management Update & Recommendations at Victoria Park 2024