



Subject:	Belfast City Airport Request – Rookery at Victoria Park: Implications to Air Safety
Date:	12 th January 2021
Reporting Officer:	Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Cate Taggart, Neighbourhood Services Manager (East)

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 type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	<p>The purpose of the report is for Members to consider a request from Belfast City Airport (BCA) to gain access to Victoria Park to carry out works to mitigate against perceived risk of bird strike from rooks. The request is as a result of the BCA reporting an increased frequency of rook occurrence around the airport and their plan to manage any associated risk, in line with their Wildlife Hazzard Assessment and the Civil Aviation Authority licensing requirements.</p> <p>The requests seeks permission from the Council, via an agreement, to carry out works such as;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The removal of old rook nests by Mid-January 2021;

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Thinning of sheltering pines, structural pruning of preferred nesting trees, and reducing shelter from high level ivy; 3. Potential removal of nest foundations in late February / March, should nest building resume.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>Members views are sought on the request from Belfast City Airport to grant them access under licence to Victoria Park to facilitate;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The removal of old rook nests by Mid-January 2021; 2. Any necessary thinning of sheltering pines, structural pruning of preferred nesting trees, and reducing shelter from high level ivy; 3. Potential removal of rook nest foundations in late February / March 2021, should nest building resume. <p>Members are advised that any agreement would be developed by the Councils Legal Services Department and will include a requirement to ensure that any works are permissible, the required licences are in place, an effective communication plan is agreed and the needs of the park users are taken into consideration.</p> <p>Any licence would be progressed under the Directors delegated authority, taking into consideration Members views.</p>
3.0	Main report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	In line with Belfast City Airport's national aerodrome license requirements and associated guidance material presented in CAP772: Wildlife Hazard Management at Aerodromes, the airport have a concern regarding the recent establishment of a rookery at Victoria Park.
3.2	In spring 2020, rooks formed a small colony containing 20 nests in the northern corner of the park - 300 metres from the airport's southern approach. As the habitat currently selected for nesting is prevalent throughout the park, the airport is concerned of the potential for this rookery to expand unless some level of intervention can be explored.
3.3	In response to officer request for more detailed supporting information, BCA submitted the attached report. The report outlines George Best City Airport's Wildlife Hazard Assessment. The assessment identifies the source of the risk, assesses the relative severity of the risk, and outlines the recommended action in order to reduce and maintain

	<p>the risk to an acceptable level in compliance with the Civil Aviation Authority licensing requirements.</p>
3.4	<p>In the interest of public safety and to meet their obligations to act with due diligence, the airport have identified the potential threat presented by the small rookery (circa. 20 nests) which became established at the northern corner of Victoria Park in spring 2020, 300 metres from the Airport's southern landing approach.</p>
3.5	<p>BCA are seeking to carry out initial remedial actions in the first instance which would involve the removal of old nests – outside of the breeding season - to prevent them advertising the suitability of the site to new prospecting pairs. in order to mitigate against the associated risk, the old rook nests should be removed from trees by mid-January in advance of the 2021 nesting season in an attempt to reduce the area's attractiveness to prospecting rooks</p>
3.6	<p>As site fidelity after only one year might still be strong, any signs of rebuilding would need to be discouraged until the habitat can be modified to the extent that rooks no longer find it attractive. Such management prescriptions would include thinning of sheltering pines, strategic structural pruning of preferred nesting trees, and reducing shelter from high level ivy.</p>
3.7	<p>The concern is that rooks will start to rebuild nests this coming Spring. The intention is that the requested access to Victoria Park to support an early removal of nest foundations will decrease the probability of nesting at this site. The report suggests that, given there is similar habitat contiguous to the present rookery, it would be prudent to assume that after any breeding success the colony will likely expand further into the park.</p>
3.8	<p>The BCA report notes that if the proposed measures have limited success and nest building resumes, the issue of active discouragement by regular removal of nest foundations in late February / March becomes a more delicate necessity. They recognise this will require an active stakeholder communications plan in order to manage any negative feedback. They note that habitat modification should be explored as a longer-term solution going forwards from Autumn 2021.</p>

3.9	Belfast City Airport have confirm that any necessary activity to mitigate against any risk would be exercised under a general wildlife licence. They note that habitat modification should be explored as a longer-term solution going forwards from Autumn 2021.
3.10	If members are minded to support the request, BCA will appoint a suitable contractor with previous experience to undertake the work.
3.11	<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 Belfast City Airport confirm that all works is permissible and any required licences are in place to allow work to take place within the required timescales. The licence will also place an onus on Belfast City Airport to ensure that health and safety measures are implemented, essential signage is assembled, one-way systems are established where necessary, and any COVID specific mitigations are in place.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p>
3.12	<p>BCA will be responsible for any costs associated with the request.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.13	None
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Belfast City Airport Report – Rookery at Victoria Park: Implications to Air Safety