

COMMITTEE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
WILDLIFE AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT BILL
PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for the Environment is commencing the Committee Stage of the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill. Any organisation or individual with an interest in the proposed Bill is invited to submit written evidence to the Committee by e-mail to doecommittee@niassembly.gov.uk) or by post to the address below:

The Committee Clerk
Room 247
Parliament Buildings
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Written submissions should be structured to address specific clauses of the Bill. Information regarding the Bill can be obtained from the Assembly's website – http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/legislation/primary/2009/nia5_09.htm

If you do not have access to internet or e-mail facilities or you have any other enquiries please contact the Committee office on (028) 905 21240 or (028) 905 21720.

The closing date for submissions is Friday 19 February 2010.

Letter to the Assembly on the Wildlife and Natural Environment bill

Tact (Talnotry Avian Care Centre) is a wildlife rehabilitation and education centre which looks after sick and injured wildlife, mainly wild birds, but also other wild animals brought to us by the public.

T.A.C.T (Talnotry Avian Care Trust) operates a voluntarily run Wildlife Centre in the village of Crumlin, County Antrim, Northern Ireland. The Charity cares for and rehabilitates sick, injured and abandoned wild birds and mammals. The Trust's primary aim is to return birds and mammals back to the wild where practicable. T.A.C.T however operates a policy whereby **NO** animal is humanely destroyed if it cannot be released or found a good home

Animals that cannot be returned to the wild are given a home at the Centre and looked after for the rest of their natural lives by a team of dedicated staff and volunteers. Over the years thousands of animals have been brought to T.A.C.T from a wide variety of sources, including vets, members of the public, the farming community and other animal trusts.

T.A.C.T cares for a variety of birds and mammals native to Ireland, as well as a few non - native birds and abandoned animals. T.A.C.T currently has around 350 animals in its long term care. These include gannets, swans, kestrels, sparrowhawks, owls, foxes, hedgehogs, geese and ducks, as well as rabbits, guinea pigs, cockatiels, budgies, pigeons, terrapins and ferrets

Our main aim is to rehabilitate the casualties and release them back to the wild .We also provide an education resource and jobs for disadvantaged and young adults with social problems.

There is a weakness in the current legislation in that there is ***no provision to licence wild birds and animals to be cared for if they cannot be returned to the wild***. The current proposal envisages a licence where wild birds can be rehabilitated, namely nursed to health and then released back to the wild. T.A.C.T does this whenever possible. However in many cases the birds can be nursed back to health but are not able to be released back into the wild. This can occur, for example, where a wing or a foot has had to be amputated. The bird is quite happy to be provided for, but would die is released back to the wild. The current draft order does not provide for this situation. T.A.C.T is a rescue and rehabilitation centre, and we request that this situation be addressed in the Order, as follows:

We would ask that the following be added to Article 18 (2)

(h) for the purposes of caring for sick and injured wild birds.

We would further request that a group licence be made available to cover the work of a centre like T.A.C.T. Individual bird licences for such a large number of birds, with a high turnover arising from new arrivals, releases and deaths are administratively burdensome and not practical for a centre of this type.

We would request that a licence be added to cover the work of a licensed rehabilitation centre, that would not require each bird to be separately licensed.

Yours sincerely

Peter JG Baillie, FCA

Chairman of Board of Trustees T.A.C.T