

## **Urban Gulls – a scrutiny inquiry**

### **Briefing paper on Council actions to mitigate the impact of urban gulls**

This briefing paper supports a presentation at the Scrutiny Inquiry Day regarding the current situation on gulls in urban areas of B&NES. It describes the actions which have been completed by a range of Council teams in 2013. It also outlines relevant information in relation to one of the main aims of the day - gathering feedback from residents, businesses and visitors on how we can better engage with the public on these actions and what further affordable, improvements we can make together to mitigate the impact of gulls for everyone.

#### **Communications**

So far in 2013, the gull webpage has received 409 hits. Whilst still a relatively small amount, is a significant increase from the number of hits received in 2012. In 2013, we have taken a number of actions to better inform our customers about what the Council is able to about mitigating the impacts of gulls. These include:

- Publicity in the local media about what the Council is doing to tackle the problem. This included interviews and debates on Radio Bristol and articles in the local print media
- Updating the Council's webpage with revised Frequently Asked Questions and production of a new leaflet to provide advice to the public about proofing buildings against gulls, which can be downloaded from the Council's website.

#### **Egg replacement service**

This is a chargeable service provided by the Council's Pest Control team where real eggs are replaced with plastic 'dummy' eggs. This dupes the gull into believing that the eggs are going to hatch and when it becomes apparent that this is not going to happen, it is too late for the pair to have a second breeding attempt. This is an intervention method that other local authorities have also adopted to try and control the gull population.

In 2013 we had a poor response for this service despite advertising on our website and in local media. We are keen to receive feedback on why we received this response and how we can improve the accessibility of this service to our customers.

#### **Trial of 'fire gel' product on the parapets of the Roman Baths Kitchen**

This is a new product being trialled by a number of local authorities including B&NES. The gel is placed at intervals along parapets of buildings. It has ultra-violet light effects which makes it appear to gulls that it is 'on fire' and so they are deterred from landing on the gel and therefore the building. The gel was trialled on the roof of the Roman Baths kitchen during the summer and appeared successful in reducing the complaints from customers about gulls. Council teams are considering using this again in the 2014 breeding season.

#### **Commercial Waste Enforcement**

Operations 'Sunrise and Sunsets' are initiatives to raise awareness about the need to present waste at the correct collection times to reduce the likelihood of scavenging by animals. Enforcement Officers have worked within the business community through early

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morning and late night patrols. The team has issued over 100 letters to businesses and has received positive feedback on the improvements which have been achieved through this intervention.

### **Domestic waste enforcement**

Enforcement Officers have worked proactively with the Waste Campaigns team to identify specific areas where domestic waste is put out too far in advance of collection. Action so far has been through educating and encouraging but there are some areas that we are now escalating to include enforcement actions. Results so far have been very encouraging with the vast majority of residents changing their behaviour as a result of these notices.

In particular, officers from the campaigns and enforcement teams have been working together to engage with residents in New King Street, Bath. A dramatic improvement has been witnessed in the cleanliness of the street and in the reduction of waste not contained in gull-proof bags through this work.

### **Other Enforcement Action**

The Council is challenging members of the public who are known to be feeding gulls and requesting that they refrain from this practice. We welcome information from members of the public with details of times and locations where significant quantities of food are being left for birds, so that we can positively engage with the members of the public involved.

We will also consider the use of statutory nuisance powers on premises to oblige the owner or occupier to take preventative action in cases where their premises are clearly and demonstrably contributing to 'gull-related' nuisance to local residents.

### **Extension of gull-proof, re-usable rubbish sacks**

This trial provides householders with a robust sack which prevents scavenging of waste by gulls and other wildlife. The sacks were originally trialled on 1,000 homes in September 2012 and proved popular, with 86% of residents wanting to continue to use them at the end of the trial. The scheme has since been extended to cover almost 2,500 homes in the city. Proposals are being scoped to trial making the use of these bags compulsory in streets where they have been provided.

### **Solar Compacting Bins in Bath city centre**

There are now 55 of these bins in the city centre which are effective in containing waste so that the gulls are prevented from accessing food waste. This helps to prevent scavenging and creating litter. The bins also have the potential to carry promotional messages about not feeding birds and this is being considered for the future.