

Statement to Council 12/11/20

Urban gulls in Bath

Good Evening,

I've come to speak on behalf of a group of active residents who believe gulls to be an invasive species, harmful to the social and environmental wellbeing of residents.

We believe gull control should be a Local Authority matter and that Natural England and DEFRA have got the facts wrong on two main points.

1. Herring gulls and Lesser Black Backed Gulls are NOT endangered.
2. Gull colonies do not depend on city centre food waste.

- Addressing the first point, Herring Gulls are red listed by Natural England because their coastal numbers have shown a steep decline but we know that urban gulls have been omitted from the census data. In fact, urban populations have had a very healthy growth rate for the last twenty years. Despite this, Natural England has used the incorrect endangered status to tighten Council licensing requirements.

Many residents are happy to pay for regular nest removal to control gulls and BANES should lobby Natural England and DEFRA to revert to the more easily accessed licences especially for Councils.

- The second point is that Natural England have linked urban gull colonies with food waste. However, recent research concludes that "... while keeping urban areas cleaner and free of consumable rubbish is highly desirable, it has not prevented gull numbers from increasing in towns and likely never will". The attraction of urban sites is the safe rooftop nesting locations while gulls will feed from more substantial food sources beyond city centres.

Finally, there is an opportunity here for the Council to reset its gull control plans through the gull proofing of city centre roofs. This is cost effective and longer term than nest removal. One contractor has given a verbal estimate of £700 to proof two neighbouring Georgian buildings. The entire city centre cannot possibly be covered in a single year but the Council could start work on its own buildings, setting an example for residents who are motivated to do something themselves. Scarborough, which has a similar problem, is going down the route of gull proofing its buildings. We would welcome the Council redirecting its gull budget from nest removal to proofing the city's rooftops.

Two research papers providing all the data behind these points have been submitted to the Council.

Where ever it may be, the gull problem is always local and it is best tackled at local level by Local Authorities.

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