

Advice on Seagulls Nuisance

We received numerous enquiries about this issue each year especially during the mating season, when seagull nuisance increases.

The growth in the seagull population is a national problem. Urban gulls are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act. Culling can only be carried out where there is a threat to public health & safety, or to aircraft. Nuisance alone is not considered to be a reasonable justification for culling.

Additionally local culling may not be a solution, as gulls are not confined to a single centre of activity. They move widely and are capable of making a round trip of 100km in search of food in only a few hours. Secondly they are considerably more intelligent than most and despite the best efforts of pest control agencies to deter or remove them colonies have continued to expand.

Traditional culling methods all have their disadvantages. Plastic owls/birds of prey and distress calls do not work as the gulls soon get used to them. The discharging of firearms in built up areas will have safety implications. The poisoning of birds will engage the minds of the health & safety executive, not only for operatives, but also for passers by, when the moribund fall into the street.

Egg oiling may be a solution, however this runs into legal problems, as the Council will need permission from all householders who have nests, to access their property. Without permission the Council may be accused of trespass.

By far the most difficult situation to deal with would be public reaction. Britain it is said is a nation of animal lovers and trying to resolve the problem at this level would almost certainly result in heated debate, and possibly direct action. One local authority in the north of England was unable to renew their culling licence due to the efforts of a strong willed and articulate lobby of town residents.

With all this in mind Brighton & Hove City Councils strategy for dealing with the seagull problem is to concentrate on the seagull food sources. Our Highways Enforcement Team issue fixed penalty fines on business that litter the streets with commercial food waste. Our Environmental Health Teams ensure business have adequate waste storage facilities and will get remove noxious food waste from private land. The Council has piloted communal bins in the City centre, which is reducing the amount of domestic food waste in our streets. The City domestic refuse services have also been piloting collapsible bins for households, seagull proof bin sacks and wheelie bins. I understand these pilots are soon to be rolled out across the city, along with curb recycling schemes. Our pest control section will give advice on how to pest proof properties to stop gulls from nesting.

In conclusion, the seagull problem is a complex national problem, which has no easy solutions. In Brighton & Hove we target the food sources to keep the population restrained. The public, business as well as the Council has a part to play to ensure that food waste is properly stored and disposed.

