

Seagulls Update.

The LTC gull working group has continued to progress the issues around urban gulls in Liskeard.

Currently the group is working to promote the message that now is the time to clear old gull nest sites and carry out gull proofing. An article has been submitted to the Town Crier and it is hoped to gain some time on Liskeard Radio, see below.

Some public rubbish bins, (especially Lux Cross and Church Street/Canon Hill) are attacked by gulls. The working group is in contact with Nigel Carr, (Biffa) to discuss the issue and it is hoped to get better gull proof bins for these effected areas.

After consultation with an urban gull expert, Peter Rock, (details below) and a local contractor, (who currently replaces gull eggs with false ones for a neighbouring council) it was felt we needed to gain a stronger understanding of Liskeard's gull population, and more importantly its likely growth rate. Taking any action without accurate figures, could lead LTC to undertake a programme to manage the gulls with no clear idea of potential costs, the time involved, community reaction, and, more importantly, likely success.

Following our approach to Mr Rock, he kindly gave an hour of his time for a conference phone call on 30th October, which Cllr S.Pike, Cllr D.Ambler and Tony Misson sat in on. It was felt the call had been informative. Mr Rock clarified a lot of the common misconceptions about urban gulls, (like the idea you can drive them back into the countryside).

Mr Rock also stated that gull colonies will interact with neighbouring colonies. Any action to manage Liskeard's urban gulls, could be negated by neighbouring colonies coming in.

Mr Rock has been studying urban gulls for over 30 years and has in the past surveyed gull populations in Cornwall. Mr Rock has offered to provide continued support to the gull working group with education and a survey of our colony. Mr Rock has agreed to speak on Liskeard local radio to promote further understanding of urban gulls.

Mr Rock has already provided an hour of his time for free; to cover any future expenses he is suggesting the following costs.

- 1) £50 to speak on the Liskeard radio station for an hour. This will deliver education, gull tips and hopefully counter a lot of the misconceptions over gulls.
- 2) A presentation at Liskeard, to local councillors, residents and other interested parties about urban gulls. It is the intention to invite as many interested parties as possible to this presentation, as the urban gull population can only be truly managed with the support of partnering councils. An afternoon presentation would cost £150 + expenses, or an evening one £250+ expenses.
- 3) To carry out a full gull survey in Liskeard during April/May at a cost of £500 + expenses and the hire of a cherry picker at £200 per day. This will provide the following deliverables, split into surveys and reports:

Surveys

- 1. Mapping** (to show, precisely, where gulls are breeding).
- 2. Breeding Density** (to show (with figures) the colony's hotspots).
- 3. Species Split** (to determine, precisely, the composition of the colony).
- 4. Age Structure of Breeding Birds** (to determine colonial development)
- 5. Projections** (to show how the colony is likely to grow).

6. **History of the Colony** (as far as it can be deduced by research).
7. **Colour-rings** (to show origins of breeders)
8. **Colony-specific Information** (all colonies are different).
9. **Comparisons with other Colonies.**

Reports

All surveys are accompanied by a comprehensive, illustrated report which will also contain assessments of control methods, the Law in relation to urban gulls, how to identify the species (if required) as well as the most up to date information on the urban gull issue available at the time of writing.

- 4) Mr Rock is also happy to help with a discussion on issues surrounding gull activity at night time.

The information Mr Rock has provided, it is felt, has so far been very informative, and balanced. Mr Rock's continued support is felt very useful to progress the work of the LTC gull working group. It is requested the committee approves the following approach.

- A) **The council pays £50 for Mr Rock to appear on Liskeard local radio to provide guidance, advice and information about urban gulls.**

To consider for the 2018-2019 budget.

- B) **To invite Mr Rock down to do a presentation at a cost of £250+expenses for an evening. This presentation will be open to as many interested parties as possible, neighbouring councils and residents. During this visit Mr Rock will do a brief survey of the town to understand the likely gull nest sites.**
- C) **To gain accurate information on the Liskeard gull population, and more importantly its likely growth rate, invite Mr Rock to carry out an accurate survey of our gull colonies. The cost of this will be £500 + expenses + plus a cherry picker. Mr Rock has said savings could be made to our survey cost, should other local councils desire a survey at the same time.**

I know some members may question the need to continue this work, especially as the gull complaints have reduced now we are out of the breeding season. However, the complaints will no doubt return next year, consuming more office and members time. It is hoped with a comprehensive study, and education, we will be in a better position to answer residents, support them and develop a strategy to live with, as much as manage our urban gulls.

Email From Mr Peter Rock.

Dear David,

A pleasure to talk to you all.

So, if I prepare a short presentation for you for the afternoon (but with time for discussion, too), an accompanied spin around Liskeard would help me to make an accurate assessment of the cost of a survey for you at the end of April/beginning of May should you wish to commission one. That visit would come to £150+expenses. A larger presentation for an evening session would be £250+expenses.

A full survey for you would be around £500+expenses based on what I can see of Liskeard from Google Earth. Better for me (and for you with regard to cost) would be to survey several of the other colonies around you if you can form a group with the councils I spoke about. So, in order to do the job, I would need you to put a 14m cherry picker (and driver) at my disposal. If possible the start time should be as early as possible in the morning: I would arrive the day before. And if someone can give me a bed for the night that would keep expenses costs down.

Surveys

All surveys always provide considerable detail about colonies assessed. This will include:

1. **Mapping** (to show, precisely, where gulls are breeding).
2. **Breeding Density** (to show (with figures) the colony's hotspots).
3. **Species Split** (to determine, precisely, the composition of the colony).
4. **Age Structure of Breeding Birds** (to determine colonial development)
5. **Projections** (to show how the colony is likely to grow).
6. **History of the Colony** (as far as it can be deduced by research).
7. **Colour-rings** (to show origins of breeders)
8. **Colony-specific Information** (all colonies are different).
9. **Comparisons with other Colonies.**

Surveys provide highly accurate base-line information.

Reports

All surveys are accompanied by a comprehensive, illustrated report which will also contain assessments of control methods, the Law in relation to urban

gulls, how to identify the species (if required) as well as the most up to date information on the urban gull issue available at the time of writing.

Hope all of the foregoing is helpful and I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

With all good wishes

Peter Rock