

SEAGULL DRAFT REPORT – INITIAL INVESTIGATIONS AND  
SUGGESTED ACTIONS - LISKEARD TOWN COUNCIL SEAGULL  
WORKING GROUP

Tel: 01579 345407  
D.Ambler@liskeard.gov.uk



Cllr David Ambler  
c/o 3/5 West Street  
Liskeard  
PL14 6BW

Date of Issue  
Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> September  
2017

Prepared By  
Cllr D Ambler

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## Background

Following complaints from a number of Liskeard town residents relating to gulls in 2017, it was agreed at the facilities meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 2017 to form a Liskeard Town Council, (LTC) seagull working group (SWG). The SWG would aim to investigate the cause of the gull problem, identify possible solutions, and attempt to mitigate the nuisance caused by overly aggressive nesting seagulls and the mess caused by gulls attacking rubbish placed out by residents.

As this is a recurring problem for residents, it was decided to look at all options for controlling gulls. This report is aimed at providing the town with the necessary background research should the topic of gulls return to the council's agenda in the future.

## Seagull Working Group Members

Councillors forming the SWG are:

Chair: Cllr D Ambler.

Members: Cllr C. Whitty, Cllr S. Pike, Cllr A. Clarke and Mr. T. Misson, (LTC Facilities Manager)

## Chief Gull Recommendations

Following research, a number of recommendations have been made at limiting gull problems and the nuisance caused. Though any costings will have to be investigated, the main recommendations are:

- 1) Limit waste and litter.
- 2) Create a good education programme with local schools to limit litter and improve the understanding of local wildlife issues.
- 3) Provide information to residents about suitable rubbish management.
- 4) Contact any land fill tip owners to reduce gull food sources.
- 5) Install notices reminding people to 'feed the bins, not the gulls'.
- 6) Provide bins for recycling and, which prevent gulls accessing the contents.
- 7) Encourage residents to have vermin proof bins.
- 8) Identify cost effective solution to reduce gull population, this may include nest clearance, egg oiling, false eggs and raptors.
- 9) Record gull numbers on a local map and reporting sheet so the scale of the problem can be analysed.

## The Gull Nuisance

Following public participation and research, the main problems caused by seagulls are:

- 1) Gulls attacking individuals and household pets. Gulls are particularly aggressive if protecting nesting sites and young.
- 2) Gulls ripping open rubbish bags placed in the street for collection. This problem has led to unsightly scenes around the LTC area.
- 3) Gulls are known to make large amounts of noise, which has had a negative effect on individuals within the LTC area.
- 4) Gull nests may block gas flumes.
- 5) Gulls can carry health risks, especially in their faeces.

## Research Sources

It is widely known that LTC is not the only council to experience problems with gulls, and the SWG has contacted and used the resources of a number of councils, government bodies and charities to learn from their advice and their knowledge. The SWG would like to acknowledge and thank these groups for their support and they include:

- Cornwall Council, CC
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, RSPCB
- Looe Town Council
- Swansea City Council
- Torpoint Town Council
- Padstow Town Council
- Biffa
- Defra

In addition, several contractors have been contacted, but as this may result in a commercial relationship, their names are withheld from this report.

## Gulls – A definition

There are many types of gulls that reside in the UK, and it is important to understand the differences as various breeds can be covered differently by the law. The gulls most likely to be of concern to LTC is the Common Gull and Herring Gull; gull types around LTC have not been confirmed to date, as the SWG are still gathering data on the problem gull sites within the LTC area.

To aid the reader, the various breeds natural to the UK include:

- 1) Black Headed Gull - Not really a black-headed bird, more chocolate-brown - in fact, for much of the year, it has a white head. It is most definitely not a 'seagull' and is found commonly almost

anywhere inland. Black-headed gulls are sociable, quarrelsome, noisy birds, usually seen in small groups or flocks, often gathering into larger parties where there is plenty of food, or when they are roosting.

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/b/blackheadedgull/#jSslsp50lxCLVPUi.99>

- 2) Common Gull - It looks like a small, gentler version of the herring gull, with greenish legs and a yellow bill. Despite its name, it is not at all common in some inland areas, though often abundant on the coast and in some eastern counties. They are now seen more often in towns and on housing estates in winter.  
<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/c/commongull/#o5hXOSf1LPO2vzOc.99>
- 3) Glaucous Gull - A large pale gull with white wing tips. Younger birds are creamy white or more biscuit coloured, depending on age. All have pale wingtips. It is bigger than a herring gull and bulkier, with a fiercer expression, larger beak and squarer head than the smaller but virtually identically-plumaged Iceland gull.  
<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/g/glaucousgull/#hylwPkmBVvpOphHc.99>
- 4) Great Black Backed Gull - A very large, thick-set black-backed gull, with a powerful beak. Adults are blacker than the smaller lesser black-backed gull. It has a heavy flight and can look quite hunched when perched. It will fight off other gulls and chase them to snatch food.  
<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/g/greatblackbackedgull/#wBWWumDZoOTmyG0u.99>
- 5) Herring Gulls - Herring gulls are large, noisy gulls found throughout the year around our coasts and inland around rubbish tips, fields, large reservoirs and lakes, especially during winter. Adults have light grey backs, white under parts, and black wing tips with white 'mirrors'. Their legs are pink, with webbed feet and they have heavy, slightly hooked bills marked with a red spot. Young birds are mottled brown. They have suffered moderate declines over the past 25 years and over half of their UK breeding population is confined to fewer than ten sites.  
<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/h/herringgull/#PeV97d8o4jXihPkG.99>
- 6) Iceland Gull - A medium-size gull, smaller than most herring gulls. It has a rounded head and smallish beak, giving it a dove-like expression. It has very pale plumage and white wing tips, and, like the glaucous gull, it is sometimes referred to as a 'white-winged' gull. It is a winter visitor, with small numbers of birds, usually seen singly. It breeds in the Arctic and winters as far south as New York and Britain.  
<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/i/icelandgull/#qQUHGAs2YapciVsS.99>

- 7) KittyWake - A gentle looking, medium-sized gull with a small yellow bill and a dark eye. It has a grey back and is white underneath. Its legs are short and black. In flight the black wing-tips show no white, unlike other gulls, and look as if they have been 'dipped in ink'. The population is declining in some areas, perhaps due to a shortage of sand eels. After breeding birds move out into the Atlantic where they spend the winter.  
<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/k/kittiwake/#PLzcltsyjG1Z4aQw.99>
- 8) Lesser Black Backed Gull - Slightly smaller than a herring gull, the lesser black-backed gull has a dark grey to black back and wings, yellow bill and yellow legs. Their world population is found entirely in Europe. After declines in the 19th century due to persecution they increased their range and numbers. This expansion has now halted and there is serious concern about declines in many parts of its range. The species is on the Amber List because the UK is home to 40% of the European population and more than half of these are found at fewer than ten sites.  
<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/l/lesserblackbackedgull/#dVf8lrJO3vgXYiTp.99>
- 9) Little Gull - A small, dainty gull. Adults in summer have black heads, while young birds have a black mark on each wing which forms a 'W' pattern. In flight adults show a pale grey upper wing, with no black wingtips, and a very dark grey underwing.  
<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/l/littlegull/#Dd8H4jClS56rjI10.99>
- 10) Mediterranean Gull - Slightly larger than a black-headed gull, with an all-black head in the breeding season. Adults have white wing-tips and underwings, younger birds have more wing markings. It has a large, slightly drooped beak, bright red when adult. A very rare UK bird until the 1950s, it is widespread in winter and breeding in ever increasing numbers. Its present UK breeding population makes it an Amber List species.  
[https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/m/mediterranean\\_gull/#S5hpOTGXycwPyCVH.99](https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/m/mediterranean_gull/#S5hpOTGXycwPyCVH.99)
- 11) Yellow-Legged Gull - The yellow-legged gull has only recently been recognised as a species in its own right, having previously been considered to be a race of herring gull. Adults have darker grey backs and wings than herring gulls, but are paler than lesser black-backed gulls. They have more black in the wing tips than herring gulls and smaller white 'mirrors'. The legs are bright yellow, there is a red ring around the eye and the bill is yellow with a large red spot. In non-breeding plumage, the head is less streaked and whiter than herring gulls. Juvenile yellow-legged gulls are very similar to juvenile lesser black-backed gulls, but tend to be whiter-headed and start to gain a grey 'saddle' on their backs quickly as they moult to first winter plumage. Immature birds gain adult-like characteristics as they mature over the course of five years with the legs turning yellow and dark grey feathers replacing the brown and black immature feathers.  
<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/y/yellowleggedgull>

[/sy29vpxOH879vBjK.99](#)

Illustrations and a full guide to identifying gulls can be found here:

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/browse-bird-families/gulls.aspx>

and <http://www.arkive.org/c/british-seagulls>

## Legal Status of Gulls.

It should be noted a recent debate in the House of Commons: 7<sup>th</sup> February 2017, Seagulls, has suggested altering the legal protection around gulls.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-02-07/debates/AE1CEE4F-5DF9-467C-9F36-657C51315D1C/Seagulls>

All species of gulls are currently protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

This makes it illegal in England, to intentionally injure or kill any gull or damage or destroy an active nest or its contents. In addition, the Mediterranean gull is protected under Schedule 1 of both acts making it illegal to intentionally or recklessly disturb the birds at or close to their nest or to disturb their dependent young.

Under certain circumstances control measures may be necessary and lawful. Simple nuisance or minor damage to property is not legally sanctioned reasons to kill gulls. The UK administrations can issue licenses, permitting nests to be destroyed or even birds to be killed if there is no non-lethal solution and if it is done to prevent serious damage to agriculture, the spread of disease, to preserve public health and safety and air safety, or to conserve other wild birds.

Read more at

<https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/gardening-for-wildlife/animal-deterrents/gulls/urban-gulls-and-the-law/#T8ylaWefZbqVbLCm.99>

<https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/our-work/our-positions-and-casework/our-positions/wild-birds-and-the-law/wildlife-law/wildlife-and-countryside-act/>

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-02-07/debates/AE1CEE4F-5DF9-467C-9F36-657C51315D1C/Seagulls>

<http://stivestowncouncil-cornwall.gov.uk/seagull-advice/>

## Gull Map

To fully understand the gull problem within the LTC area it was important to get some statistics on the number of gulls.

The SWG have established a map and reporting sheet at the LTC office, and publicized this through the local press and social media.

It is expected that as the 2017 nesting season has nearly finished that not all nesting sites have been recorded, and it is likely more data will be made available in 2018.



It is hoped the map and recording sheet will be continued, so the success of any programme to reduce gull numbers can be studied.

A copy of the 2017 map is attached.

It should be noted that LTC responded to a roofing/nesting urban gull investigation carried out by the RSPCB in 2015; it is believed no numerical data was provided. The RSPCB provided a copy of their report with a list of possible solutions, for reference these included:

- Don't put rubbish out until the day of collection.
- Put waste, especially all food-related waste, out in gull-proof containers.
- Don't litter and ensure any litter, especially edible litter from fast food outlets, is promptly removed.
- Reduce the amount of food waste sent to landfill.
- Reduce the amount of 'edible litter' ending up on streets, particularly arising from fast food outlets.
- Provide 'gull-proof' public litter bins.
- Discourage people from feeding gulls – either intentionally or accidentally (gulls in urban areas come to associate people with food and they can't distinguish between that offered to them and that which some birds try to snatch from people). Some town councils have imposed the ability to fine people who disregard notices against deliberately feeding gulls in some areas.

## Cause of LTC Gull Problems

Following research and information from various sources it would appear that gulls have found Liskeard an ideal nesting site due to the availability of food and the abundance of good nesting sites on flat roofs, or locations where nesting is easy and safe for the birds.

### Food Sources

Gulls can travel long distances in the search of food sources, however the main food sources attracting the gulls to the LTC area are likely to be:

- Litter dropped by individuals in the LTC area.
- Rubbish that has been placed out for collection and not correctly sealed, covered or placed in suitable protective containers such as a metal/wheelie bins.
- Landfill tips situated close to the town.
- Food naturally found by gulls, such as worms and prey.

### Nesting Sites

Gulls within the LTC area have found suitable nesting sites on flat and sloping roofs that provide enough support for a nest.

Old and new buildings appear to be suitable for nesting sites.

It should be noted that young gulls will leave the nest and return after five years, when they have reached maturity. They will generally return to the same nesting site.

Some LTC residents who have tried to protect their roof with devices such as spikes, have found the gulls simply, 'walk next door' to nest.

## Options To Consider For The Control Gulls.

Reading the various references and the debate in the House of Commons, it would appear that no one solution exists to deal with problem gulls. For example, some advice about the use of Raptors would appear to be negative, yet according to Patricia Gibson, (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP) Anglesey has experienced success with the use of hawks.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-02-07/debates/AE1CEE4F-5DF9-467C-9F36-657C51315D1C/Seagulls>

The SWG has identified the following methods of gull control.

### Dealing with Food Sources

#### Litter

Litter is a prime source of food for gulls and other vermin. Reducing litter will have a positive effect on a community, social behaviour and reduce pest problems.

#### Rubbish

Animals, (cats, gulls) will investigate rubbish that they believe has food within it. Rubbish put out in bags or containers not designed to prevent ripping will encourage vermin to feed on these sites.

Encouraging residents and businesses to place rubbish out at appropriate times and in suitable containers will reduce the problem caused by gulls and improve the appearance of neighbourhoods.

#### Bins

Having bins that prevent gulls and other vermin from getting to the contents will reduce the availability of food and improve the appearance of the town.

Bins that allow items to be recycled will also have a positive effect on the town and reduce landfill/disposal requirements.

#### Tips

Open landfill tips provide a ready source of foods. Encouraging tips to implement anti gull measures can reduce the availability of food for various vermin. This requires support from third parties.

#### Strong Smells To Protect Rubbish

Some residents and websites have suggested the use of strong smells to protect rubbish from vermin. No direct evidence of the success of this tactic has been located to date.

## Nesting

Please note that any decision to interfere with nesting gulls will have to be carried out within current legal frameworks.

It should be noted that some individuals may protest at any attempt to stop gulls from breeding.

### Spikes and Netting

Spikes and netting can prevent gulls from establishing a population on roof tops. For success all possible nesting sites will have to be spiked or covered.

A negative impact can be the appearance of the town, with spikes cluttering up windows and roof tops.

The cost of spikes and netting can be high to individual house owners, and landlords may be unwilling to implement such measures.

Gulls and Pigeons using spikes as supports for their nests have been observed.

Spikes on lampposts reduce the number of landing spots for gulls.

### Nest Clearance

The legal ins and outs of gull nest removal are complex. The law is different for the two regular roof nesting species, the herring and lesser black-backed gull, whose chicks look practically identical. It is important that the species of gull is correctly identified before any nest removal action.

Those clauses in the Wildlife and Countryside Act that allow gull nests to be removed to protect public health stipulate that such methods can only be used if non-lethal methods have been tried and failed, and that the threat to public health is great enough to warrant such extreme action

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/community/wildlife/f/3070/p/29130/208328.aspx>

[http://stivestowncouncil-cornwall.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/St Ives seagull advice leaflet Jan2011.pdf](http://stivestowncouncil-cornwall.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/St_Ives_seagull_advice_leaflet_Jan2011.pdf)

### Raptors

Raptors are used to scare nesting gulls and intimidate their natural breeding habits.

The cost and success of raptors should be considered. It is important that the times and months the raptors are flown are suitable and do not create a pattern to the gulls.

Raptors may provide a useful tool in any gull education programme to encourage engagement.

### Noise Deterrents

Noise deterrents have been used in the town before, but complaints were received from residents living nearby.

<http://www.gullstop.co.uk>

### Flags and Streamers

Flags or similar objects can be mounted to prevent or intimidate gulls from establishing nests. This may be a more attractive option than spikes.

<http://stivestowncouncil-cornwall.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Env.ctteemins260112.pdf>

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/06/140610-birds-seagulls-deterrent-pollution-disease-sheepdog-raptor-beach/>

### Dogs

It has been observed that dogs can upset gulls from feeding, and the frequent barking of dogs can upset colonies.

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/06/140610-birds-seagulls-deterrent-pollution-disease-sheepdog-raptor-beach/>

### Mechanical "Spiders" and Rotating Blades

Things that spin or bounce in the wind can deter birds from settling down; spiderlike mechanical devices that rotate or have bouncing "leg" wires can be effective. Spinning propellers are similarly uninviting.

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/06/140610-birds-seagulls-deterrent-pollution-disease-sheepdog-raptor-beach/>

### Colour Red

Gulls avoiding red objects have been observed, but this evidence is anecdotal.

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/06/140610-birds-seagulls-deterrent-pollution-disease-sheepdog-raptor-beach/>

### Egg Spiking and Oiling

The spiking or oiling of eggs is intended to reduce future populations of gulls. Once young gulls mature, (5 years) they will return to their original breeding sites. By preventing eggs from hatching you will limit the protective behaviour of parent gulls and reduce returning populations.

The law does, however, recognize that particular species of common birds, such as herring and lesser black-backed gulls, can cause nuisance and allows measures to be taken against such birds in limited circumstances.

Action can only be taken under general licenses made under the 1981 Act for the purpose of preserving public health or public or air safety, preventing the spread of disease or for preventing serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops etc. An offence would be committed if action could not be justified or defended for any of these purposes.

Only the owner or occupier can take action against gulls nesting on their buildings, or they can give someone else permission to act on their behalf.

<http://www.pestokill.co.uk/images/eggoiling.pdf>

<https://urbanseagullcontrol.co.uk/shop/>

## False Eggs

Recent scientific studies have proven that urban gulls will accept plastic imitation/fake eggs in place of their own in the nest. Whilst incubating the imitation eggs, the gulls are quiet and less aggressive. The imitation eggs are easy to deploy and are reusable the following year.

In the long-term nuisance seagull populations will naturally decline whilst the issue has been managed in an environmentally friendly and humane way.

Eggs may have to be provided, and any use of the eggs will have to be carried out within the current legal frameworks.

There is also the difficulty of gaining access to some nesting sites due to the heights involved and the need to get permission from third parties.

A Cornwall town council currently precepts £2,500 to £3,000 pound to provide a false egg service.

<https://urbanseagullcontrol.co.uk/>

## Environmental Officer – long term option.

An environmental officer to support the town implement policies on gull control, litter, dog fouling and pursue other environmental aims may prove to be more cost effective than one off gull control schemes.

## Educational Programmes

The link between food and vermin problems is not always understood. Posters, social media, leaflets and press releases can keep the problems of gulls in resident's minds and help to reduce the dropping of litter and encourage the correct disposal of rubbish.

## Local Schools

It is a good idea to engage schools to reduce litter dropping and increase the understanding of youngsters with their local environment.

## Social Media

Social media is a successful tool in promoting messages to the town. Releasing regular messages to promote the correct disposal of rubbish, litter control, and gull reporting is recommended.

## Bylaws and Enforcement.

The use of bylaws to prevent residents dropping litter or leaving rubbish out in a manner that can create a vermin problem can be considered.

The cost and difficulty of enforcing the bylaws has to be reviewed, however the publicity surrounding bylaws may prove beneficial.

Outside contractors to enforce bylaws can be costly and have a negative impact on the relationship between the council and the town.

The cost of outside contractors will probably require support from a larger authority.

## Gull Conclusion

This report has identified the types of problems being caused by gulls in the LTC area and the reasons the gulls are attracted to Liskeard.

Various remedies have been identified, though the cost and impact of these must be assessed as required.

There would appear to be no solution that fits all towns and cities such that LTC can draw on a definite answer to the best population control option.

It is recommended that education on rubbish management, enforcement of litter and the reduction in the food exposed at local tips is sought.

To reduce the gull population a number of options may be considered, either individually or in combination. This may include nest clearance, roof spikes, egg spiking and the use of raptors.

It should be noted that it is likely LTC will experience an increase in reported gull problems following any publicity, and the continued use and promotion of the gull maps and reporting sheet is recommended.

## References

- 1) <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-2887>
- 2) <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-02-07/debates/AE1CEE4F-5DF9-467C-9F36-657C51315D1C/Seagulls>
- 3) <http://www.arkive.org/c/british-seagulls>
- 4) <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/browse-bird-families/gulls.aspx>
- 5) <https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/our-work/our-positions-and-casework/our-positions/wild-birds-and-the-law/wildlife-law/wildlife-and-countryside-act/>
- 6) [http://stivestowncouncil-cornwall.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/St\\_Ives\\_seagull\\_advice\\_leaflet.Jan2011.pdf](http://stivestowncouncil-cornwall.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/St_Ives_seagull_advice_leaflet.Jan2011.pdf)
- 7) <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/06/140610-birds-seagulls-deterrent-pollution-disease-sheepdog-raptor-beach/>
- 8) <http://www.gullstop.co.uk>

## Responses From External Sources

The following is a history of email conversation between third parties. They are laid out in conversation thread.

RSPCB Emails.

Hello David

I don't think manipulating or introducing habitat to encourage other birds to nest in towns will alter the presence of gulls and am unaware of any evidence that such a proposal would deter gulls. Buzzards are birds of open countryside habitats, feeding on rabbits, worms, various other invertebrates and carrion and so could not live in towns. Peregrine falcons do breed now in some towns and cities where there are suitable nesting sites – eg, high ledges on churches, and peregrines feed mostly on other birds caught in the air – they take a range of different sized birds, including woodpigeons but am not aware they predate gulls. Here in Exeter peregrines have bred for over a decade on a church and after fledging, the birds perch on the spire of another church that we can see from our office windows. Gulls are frequently present around these peregrines and nest on nearby roofs but show no sign that they are disturbed or driven away by the peregrines. Some councils use falconers who walk around certain areas with a legally held captive bird of prey or fly such a bird with the aim of deterring gulls from nesting or just being present in specific areas. However, I am not aware of any evidence that this does actually deter gulls long term. The gulls will be temporarily perturbed and will fly around and call but then become used to the presence of the falconer's bird and ignore it.

Creating nature reserves in towns is a great idea, not just for a range of wildlife but for the benefit of people's mental and physical health as all ages benefit from being outside in green and wildlife-rich places. There is some information on the links below that may be of interest.

<https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/give-nature-a-home-in-your-garden/>

<https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/conservation--sustainability/help-swifts/local-authority-advice-pack.pdf>

<https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/our-work/our-positions-and-casework/our-positions/wildlife-and-the-economy/economic-case-for-nature/urban-environment-development/>

However, improving and providing green spaces and encouraging other species of birds that can live and nest in those habitats will not discourage gulls. It can provide additional feeding sites – herring gulls spend a lot of time 'charming' worms out of short turf areas (they paddle with their feet to bring worms to the surface) but increasing the extent of grassed areas in a town will not stop gulls looking for food in streets if 'edible litter' is still present. Gulls are expert scavengers, have a varied diet and will feed on almost anything – including of course human-produced rubbish. If the factors that attract gulls (lots of accessible food on the streets, safe nesting sites on roofs) are still available, gulls will still be present. As you might expect, the RSPB is keen that people find ways of co-existing with these birds. The solution to gulls taking advantage of food in rubbish bags, bins and on pavements etc. seems



to me to be one of changing the way that human society approaches its waste management, on an individual and corporate basis.

So in conclusion, providing nature reserves in town is a great idea but I don't think it is the answer you are seeking re gulls.

By all means contact me in future if you have further queries.

Helene

Helene Jessop, Assistant Conservation Officer

Tel: 01392 453763

RSPB South West England Regional Office

4th Floor (North Block), Broadwalk House, Southernhay West, Exeter, Devon, EX1 1TS

[rspb.org.uk](http://rspb.org.uk)

## Let's give nature a home



The RSPB is the country's largest nature conservation charity, inspiring everyone to give nature a home. Together with our partners, we protect threatened birds and wildlife so our towns, coast and countryside will teem with life once again. We play a leading role in BirdLife International, a worldwide partnership of nature conservation organisations.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654

**From:** Liskeard Town Council [<mailto:itsupport@liskeard.gov.uk>]

**Sent:** 20 July 2017 10:51

**To:** Jessop, Helene

**Cc:** 'Liskeard Town Clerk'; 'Tony Misson'; 'Christina Whitty'; 'susan.s.pike'

**Subject:** RE: Gulls in Liskeard

Hi Helene,

Just to say thank you for spending your time in preparing that very detailed reply.

Liskeard Town Council have set up a working group to try and develop some solutions and your information will be of great help; I note that you have previously sent information to us about seagull behaviour following research. Liskeard is indeed looking at the options you suggest and will be investigating others.

Including the changing of human behaviour, I am particularly interested in finding a natural solution to this problem, for example one thought is to examine if other bird populations alter seagull nesting behaviour. I have watched smaller birds drive off larger birds and been passed an anecdotal report of a breeding pair of buzzards driving away seagulls. I would be really interested in the RSPB's thoughts on these types of ideas to see if they warrant further research, (for example improving nature reserves within the town)?

I haven't had chance to thoroughly read through all of your attached documents yet, but would you be happy for us to contact you further in the future if required?

Many thanks again.

Regards,

David.

**From:** Jessop, Helene [<mailto:helene.jessop@rspb.org.uk>]

**Sent:** 20 July 2017 10:20

**To:** 'itsupport@liskeard.gov.uk' <[itsupport@liskeard.gov.uk](mailto:itsupport@liskeard.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** Gulls in Liskeard

Dear Councillor Ambler

Thanks for contacting the RSPB (your e-mail was passed to me yesterday). I've attached some information/advice that you may not have seen on our website and hope this is helpful.

As a nature conservation charity, our focus is on ensuring that populations of wild bird species are healthy. While herring gulls are increasingly found nesting on roofs and in urban areas, that does not mean the overall population is increasing. In fact herring gulls are a bird of conservation concern – red listed as a priority for conservation action because of overall population declines and it may be that urban nesting gulls now make up a significant proportion of the population. There is more information on the link below. A new national seabird survey, including gulls (and including the urban population) is needed. More information on herring gull population declines is on the link below.

<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-2887>

Recognising the conflicts that sometimes occur between gulls and people in some locations, we try to give practical advice on non-lethal measures to resolve problems. Conflicts in urban areas relate to gulls feeding very locally (eg, tearing open rubbish bags, stealing food from people) and/or gulls nesting on roofs in close proximity to people (adult gulls will vigorously defend chicks, especially those on the ground, from what they interpret as threats to their young from people).

In autumn 2015 the RSPB contacted 1,080 councils in SW England (unitary, district/borough, town and parish) with a survey on roof-nesting/urban gulls and actions being taken to reduce any reported problems between gulls and people. 41 councils responded including Liskeard

Town Council. We sent the analysis of results to all the responding councils who had provided contact details (which included Liskeard Town Council. In its survey response, Liskeard Town Council said it had not to date used any of the following deterrent measures:

- gull-proofing public litter bins
- reducing littering of streets, eg via increased street cleaning
- reducing littering of streets from fast-food outlets by working with businesses and customers
- reducing the amount of edible waste put out in domestic and business waste bins

Perhaps these are among measures that the Council is now exploring? If not, there are ones that RSPB recommends.

Gulls will forage over wide areas to feed on land and at sea; they are not restricted to foraging close to their nest sites. Gulls can though easily find food in urban areas (eg, in our streets) because of human activity, and so changes in human behaviour are key to resolving these food/gull issues – all the actions below will help (as well as improve the quality of the urban environment for local residents, businesses and visitors):

- Don't put rubbish out until the day of collection.
- Put waste, especially all food-related waste, out in gull-proof containers.
- Don't litter and ensure any litter, especially edible litter from fast food outlets, is promptly removed.
- Reduce the amount of food waste sent to landfill.
- Reduce the amount of 'edible litter' ending up on streets, particularly arising from fast food outlets.
- Provide 'gull-proof' public litter bins.
- Discourage people from feeding gulls – either intentionally or accidentally (gulls in urban areas come to associate people with food and they can't distinguish between that offered to them and that which some birds try to snatch from people). Some town councils have imposed the ability to fine people who disregard notices against deliberately feeding gulls in some areas.

There is some advice in our attached media releases on living with roof-nesting gulls. Gull parents are especially vigilant between May and July. If they think that someone is getting too close to their chicks (often when a chick has fallen to the ground or a newly fledged youngster has landed in a confined space such as a small garden or yard), they will fly close to anyone near the chick as an initial warning then, if the person does not move away, they will fly even closer and sometimes may make contact. We advise that if people are living close to nesting gulls and gull chicks, they use an umbrella as a handy shield between themselves and the birds. Sometimes it may be possible simply to avoid the area that the gull parents are defending until the chicks are fledged.

If people do not want gulls nesting on roofs, it may be possible to 'gull proof' roofs with netting before the birds start to nest but it is important that nets are well maintained, as any gaps or holes or sagging areas can trap, injure or kill gulls and other birds. The RSPB cannot advise on

specific measures. Herring gulls are long-lived birds, usually pair for life and the birds will use the same nesting site in subsequent years. Gulls displaced from one roof will look for another suitable nearby site.

Where there are proven health and safety issues, the law allows for certain types of lethal control (this includes removal or oiling of eggs) under the terms of a relevant general licence. Anyone taking such action has to comply with the requirements of the licence (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wild-birds-licence-to-take-or-kill-for-health-or-safety-purposes>) to stay within the law and action can only be taken by relevant 'authorised persons', and of course lethal means can only be used when non-lethal measures have been used and found not to be effective.

I don't have any information about the use of dogs and smells to reduce gull nesting. Gulls find food by sight, and determine if something is edible or not (eg, a piece of litter) by trial and error (so, for example, once a gull has found that some plastic rubbish bags contain some edible items, they will look for and tear open other such bags). The presence of one feeding gull or a gull carrying food will quickly attract others – they have keen eyesight and can spot a potential meal from some distance.

Regards

Helene

Helene Jessop, Assistant Conservation Officer

Tel: 01392 453763

RSPB South West England Regional Office

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SC037654

**From:** It Support [<mailto:itsupport@liskeard.gov.uk>]  
**Sent:** 13 July 2017 12:07  
**To:** Wildlife  
**Cc:** Liskeard Town Clerk; Facilities Liskeard Town Council  
**Subject:** Contact us: Wildlife advice

Hi,

I am writing as a councillor on Liskeard Town council. Like so many towns we have a seagull problem.

I have read your advice pages and colleagues are investigating other tried and tested methods of gull control used by other Cornish towns.

It is clear humans are the main cause of gull problems and this is also being investigated/addressed.

However I was wondering if there was any research, new ideas being investigated beyond what you describe on your pages, which we could look at?

I notice a National Geographic article that refers to dogs and smells being used to reduce gull nesting. So far I have not found out how successful these techniques are, and if you have any new information that would be appreciated?

Many thanks for your time in answering these, (what are no doubt regular) questions.

Regards,

Councillor D Ambler.

Swansea City Council Email.

**From:** Cllr Ambler - Liskeard Town Council [<mailto:itsupport@liskeard.gov.uk>]

**Sent:** 30 August 2017 10:04

**To:** Whettleton, Ian

**Cc:** 'Christina'; 'Tony Misson'; 'Liskeard Town Clerk'; Anna Clarke; [s.pike@liskeard.gov.uk](mailto:s.pike@liskeard.gov.uk)

**Subject:** RE: Rubbish Dropping question on behalf of Liskeard Town Council

Dear Ian ,

Many thanks for taking your time in responding to our email, I will forward your answer onto the 'Seagull' working group, which is due to meet next week.

I did notice that you have tried using Hawks at Swansea market, and I was wondering if you had seen any improvement in the gull problem with this programme, as this is one option being discussed? <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-west-wales-35603725>

Many thanks again for your advice and experience.

Regards,

Councillor D Ambler.

**From:** Whettleton, Ian [<mailto:ian.Whettleton@swansea.gov.uk>]

**Sent:** 30 August 2017 09:52

**To:** 'itsupport@liskeard.gov.uk' <[itsupport@liskeard.gov.uk](mailto:itsupport@liskeard.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** FW: Rubbish Dropping question on behalf of Liskeard Town Council

Dear Councillor Ambler,

A simple thing that we have done that you don't mention is put 'Feed the Bin not the Seagulls' stickers on our City Centre bins.

We have a private company (3GS) who issue fixed penalty notices for littering across the City. The vast majority of these are for cigarettes and litter and has been very successful in improving the visual cleanliness of the City. However we did issue one FPN for throwing chips on the pavement which made the national press. The young lady said that she was feeding the pigeons and we eventually had to drop the case due to a technicality. Whilst you could view this as a negative I am sure that the publicity made some people think twice about feeding the birds in future.

With regards to enforcing we have a very high success rate following the issuing of FPN's.

Let me know if you need any further information.

**Ian Whettleton**

**Waste Management - Rheoli Gwastraff**

City & County of Swansea - *Dinas A Sir Abertawe*

Baling Plant - Ffatri Byrnu

Ferryboat Close - Clos Ferryboat

Swansea - Abertawe

SA6 8QN

Tel - *Ffôn* 01792 796886

**From:** Cllr Ambler - Liskeard Town Council [<mailto:itsupport@liskeard.gov.uk>]

**Sent:** 18 August 2017 08:42

**To:** Environmental Health

**Cc:** 'Facilities Liskeard Town Council'; 'Sue Pike'; 'Christina'; Anna Clarke

**Subject:** Rubbish Dropping question on behalf of Liskeard Town Council

To whom it may concern,

I am writing as a town councillor at Liskeard Town Council, in South East Cornwall.

I recently visited Swansea and couldn't help, but notice your signs on the roadside regarding the dropping of litter and the fines associated with it.

Liskeard town council is currently investigating similar options as part of a working group to tackle seagull problems.

I was wondering if someone from your team could say if the introduction of fines for poor litter management had had a beneficial, (either evidence based or anecdotally) effect on vermin problems, such as seagulls, pigeons and rats?

In addition, we would be interested in what issues you have experienced in the enforcing of fines?

I thank you in advance for your time and look forward to your reply.

Regards,

Councillor D Ambler.

Response From Local Town Councils.

*Cornwall Council.*

Dear Cllr Ambler

I apologise for the last minute response to your email. Unfortunately the area officer Andrew Pittaway is on annual leave for the next two weeks and is unable to attend. I would have like to have come in his stead, but unfortunately have another commitment for that night.

The following is standard advice that we provide to residents

*The responsibility for undertaking pest control lies with the owner/occupier of the land or building upon which the seagulls are nesting. Since Herring Gulls are a protected species, this may only be undertaken by an authorised person under a general or personal licence issued by Natural England where there are issues of public health and safety (but not for nuisance or damage).*

*Local Authorities have no legislative duty to undertake seagull control or authority to require owners/occupiers of property to do so. Nevertheless, where there are issues in respect of public health and safety we do offer advice to landowners on how to deter herring gulls from nesting on their property. Free advice on the use of these licences can also be obtained from Natural England's wildlife licensing unit 020 802 61089.*

Further advice is found on the Cornwall Council website at the following link:

<http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/environmental-protection/environmental-protection-pests/gulls/>

Regarding waste control, we would always advice residents not to put waste out for collection until the morning of collection, and to place in a bin, or cover, to prevent access by birds and animals. The council offers seagull-proof waste sacks for sale at one-stop shops. We also have powers, by means of a notice, to instruct residents on the type of receptacle that should be used. However where residents fail to comply the enforcement process is complex and protracted.

I understand that Looe Town Trust operates pro-active seagull control regime, and they may be able to provide further information.

We would be happy to attend any future meetings/workshops.

Kind regards

Karen

Karen Worthington BSc (Hons) MIOA  
**Senior Officer (Community Protection)**

Neighbourhoods and Public Protection, Cornwall Council  
Dolcoath Avenue, Camborne, Cornwall, TR14 8SX  
Tel: 01579 341386 - Internal: 441386 - E-mail: [kworthington@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:kworthington@cornwall.gov.uk)  
Visit us at [www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)

For business regulatory support [www.businessregulatorysupport.gov.uk](http://www.businessregulatorysupport.gov.uk)

*Liskeard Town Clerk Notes*

Hello David – The Truro City Council Town Clerk was a former Environmental Health Officer with Carrick District Council. He noted that a town had tried a raptor but the



seagulls mobbed it and drove it off. It was apparently one of the smaller types of raptor. He did note that when a breeding pair of buzzards nested near the United Downs tip at St Day, they did scare the seagulls away....

I have not heard of smells being used. Do you know how they cope with damp and wet conditions?

The advice that we received in 2015 was that the availability of food that attracts the seagulls who then nest and become aggressive when they have chicks.

I have owned a house in the town since 1991 and never had any problems with seagulls, because I bought a rubbish bin with a clipable lid for about £5.50.

Steve Vinson  
Town Clerk  
Liskeard Town Council

*Looe Town Council.*

**From:** Laura Kellaway [<mailto:laura.kellaway@btconnect.com>]  
**Sent:** 11 July 2017 13:24  
**To:** 'Liskeard Town Clerk' <[townclerk@liskeard.gov.uk](mailto:townclerk@liskeard.gov.uk)>  
**Cc:** 'Looe Town council' <[looetowncouncil@ymail.com](mailto:looetowncouncil@ymail.com)>  
**Subject:** RE: Seagull licence

Dear Steve

We use LGA 1972 s137 as it is a service required to ensure the safety of residents and the general public. When we offer this service we ask everyone that registers why they are applying so that we are certain that it is because of seagulls attacking rather than just a nuisance factor. If we receive a request with that reason we do not include it, so we are able to prove the H&S aspect.

We hope that this helps.

Kindest regards

Laura

**For and on behalf of**

**Mrs Anne Frith**

## Clerk to Looe Town Council

### Looe Town Council

**From:** Liskeard Town Clerk [<mailto:townclerk@liskeard.gov.uk>]

**Sent:** 11 July 2017 11:31

**To:** 'Laura Kellaway'

**Subject:** RE: Seagull licence

Hello Anne – thanks – We are going to report the item raised by a member of the public about seagulls at our next meeting.

I know that Town Council's don't have a duty to deal with seagulls, but would you know which act would give us the power to do so if we wanted?

Best Wishes

Steve.

Steve Vinson

Town Clerk

Liskeard Town Council