**News Release**

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**Aberdeenshire Council to launch immediate measures to tackle urban gulls in north-east communities**

Aberdeenshire Council has agreed an immediate course of action to tackle the issue of urban gulls across the region.

The move comes in response to continuing complaints relating to gulls from both coastal and inland communities including noise, aggressive behavior, fouling and the feeding of gulls.

Currently, the council undertakes a range of measures including the use of birds of prey, treatment of buildings to prevent nesting and landing, a programme of egg and nest removal and increased waste and litter collections.

But under the new proposals agreed by members of its Infrastructure Services Committee yesterday (Thurs, March 10) a 5-year action plan will be implemented supported by a budget of £250,000.

During discussion, committee heard that a review undertaken by a regional Urban Gull Stakeholder Group had established that there was no instant solution to alleviating the impact of gulls on Aberdeenshire communities, but rather a longer-term strategic approach was required to ensure any significant sustainable impact. Committee were also advised that for any such strategy to be successful there required to be a joint approach between Council Officers and local communities. Key elements of the action plan are as follows:

* **Profiling those areas significantly affected by gulls to identify and mitigate issues such as food sources, nesting sites, waste storage, littering and litter bin provision which are encouraging gulls to those areas**
* **Accelerating the roll out of gull deterrent bins**
* **Engaging with local businesses to encourage good waste storage and prevent gulls access to food**
* **Provision of financial support to local communities to encourage and support local strategies such as egg and nest removal, use of birds of prey**
* **Providing Information and Guidance to Local Communities on how to manage/minimise the impact of gulls**

Across the UK gull populations are generally declining with certain species such as herring gulls considered under threat. In the northeast however, a number of species are doing particularly well in many towns and villages. One of the reasons for this is because people continue to provide food for them. This is permitting them to thrive in an artificial environment with an artificial food supply which is neither healthy for the birds nor our communities and encourages closer interaction between the gulls and people.

However, the council’s Protective Services currently have no statutory powers to take action against gulls and can only give advice to members of the public as to how they can help deal with the problem.

Gulls are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which means it is illegal to capture, injure or destroy any wild bird, or interfere with its nest or eggs, unless you have a licence. The most common complaints with gulls are around the noise of calling gulls and mess from their droppings. But they also pose more serious problems - they often dive and swoop on people which can cause injury and they can also cause significant damage to property when nesting.

Welcoming the new programme of measures, Cllr Peter Argyle, chair of Aberdeenshire Council’s Infrastructure Services Committee, said: “The issue of urban gulls is extremely complex and having reviewed best practice across the UK and consulted experts including the University of Aberdeen, British Trust for Ornithology, RSPB and Nature Scotland there is no simple fix.

“However, we continue to listen to our communities and are committed to work with them to try to mitigate the impacts of the gulls. The introduction of the 5–year action plan and commitment of resources to deliver the plan is a key step in mitigating the concerns of our communities.”

Vice-chair Cllr John Cox added: “The development of these strategies and pilot projects will rely on our communities and businesses working together to help us identify key problem areas so we can develop effective, achievable schemes to address the gulls issue.

“Meantime, we must all do everything in our power to persuade gulls that their natural environment is preferable to our town centres and that means not feeding the gulls, taking steps to gull-proof properties and being mindful of how litter and food waste is disposed.”

Our advice is simple:

* **Do not feed gulls in streets, gardens or parks and don’t drop food scraps - gulls are scavengers and discarded food encourages the gulls to stay within close proximity to the food source**
* **Dispose of food waste in a responsible manner - ensure litter and other food waste is properly stored or disposed of using bins provided**
* **Whenever possible, put your household waste bins - particularly food waste - out for collection on the day of collection itself and not the night before**
* **Property owners can discourage gulls from nesting by erecting deterrent devices on chimney heads and flat roof areas such as spikes and nets**
* **You can arrange for an appropriately licensed pest control company to oil or pierce eggs to prevent hatching or have the nest and eggs removed**
* **Businesses with netting on their roofs to discourage birds should be aware the netting should be checked daily for any gaps or entangled birds. They should have a way of releasing the birds, without calling the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service**

You can download our Survivor’s Guide to living with Urban Gulls here: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/environment/environmental-health/pests/#gulls>

**ENDS**

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