

**EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**  
**CABINET – 22 OCTOBER 2008**  
**SEAGULL CONTROL UPDATE**

**Report by Head of Legal, Procurement and Regulatory Services**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise Cabinet of progress with the Seagull Control programme.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 At the Cabinet meeting of 5<sup>th</sup> March 2008 an enhanced approach to the seagull problem in areas of East Ayrshire was agreed with various control measures also agreed including an education programme; an in depth survey of gull activity to identify problem areas; immediate response utilising birds of prey; possible culling, oiling of eggs and nest removal programme and potential proofing of Council buildings on a prioritised basis.
- 2.2 Cabinet agreed proposed maximum levels of expenditure against each control measure and funding arrangements.

**3. SEAGULL CONTROL ACTIVITY**

- 3.1 The initial utilisation of a local falconer with birds of prey used as a means of deterrent commenced in April 2008 with associated press coverage and has continued through the season.
- 3.2 Various areas of Kilmarnock town centre were covered in the early stages of the control programme with flats and flat roofed premises targeted.
- 3.3 During the months of May and June both removal of eggs and nests were carried out by the falconer in terms of a general licence issued by Scottish Government. Coupled with the use of birds of prey the reduction in numbers of seagulls in areas of the town centre was noticed including Gilmour Street area and the centre of the town.
- 3.4 Over the nesting season the contractor removed in excess of 500 eggs and numerous nests from buildings in the Kilmarnock town centre and surrounding area.
- 3.5 The public response has been positive with the proactive approach being taken by the Council to the gull problem. Problems such as aggressive gulls attacking elderly householders and corteges at funerals in Kilmarnock Cemetery have been addressed during the season.

- 3.6 The continued use of the birds of prey as a deterrent to nesting and roosting has continued. Current activity includes the dispersion of large flocks of seagulls coming into Kilmarnock to roost and over winter. Prevention of this will minimise the number of potentially nesting gulls in the spring of 2009.
- 3.7 Areas of Kilmarnock identified as problem areas during the season by the contractor are :-
- Gilmour Street, Newton Walk, Paxton Place
  - McNab Place, areas of New Farm Loch
  - All flat roof areas in the town centre
  - Bellsland Place, Braehead Place
  - Howard Park Drive
  - Riverbank Place
  - Factory units throughout the town centre
  - Queens Drive premises
  - London Road
- 3.8 Complaints of seagull activity have also been received from Cumnock and birds of prey are being used in the Barshare area.
- 3.9 In terms of carrying out an in depth survey of the gull problem the contractor in his normal duties of using birds of prey and removing nests and eggs has provided full details of problem areas and areas of gull activity thus removing the necessity of utilising a specialist contractor to carrying out a survey at an estimated projected cost of £20,000 and thereafter saving Council expenditure.
- 3.10 The revised approach to the gull control programme has provided a cost effective means of addressing the gull problem while providing a rapid and effective response to gull complaints received from the public.
- 3.11 It is unlikely that the proofing of Council buildings will be required during 2008/09 based on the information provided so far in 2008. The use of the falconer with the birds of prey together with the removal of nests and eggs has provided a degree of success over the season. Continued use of the falconer will enhance any gull control programme.

#### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 A general licence issued by the Scottish Government is required to permit the destruction of eggs, nests and young and adult birds of herring, lesser and great black-backed gull species only subject to conditions. The falconer utilised during the season holds a general licence.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Cabinet previously agreed maximum expenditure levels against each control measure together with funding arrangements.
- 5.2 The revised approach to seagull control which provided both the use of birds of prey together with egg and nest removal provided survey details and has resulted in a reduction in anticipated expenditure. .

## **6. COMMUNITY PLANNING/POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The seagull control strategy is commensurate with the Community Plan themes of Improving the Environment and Improving Health.
- 6.2 The reduction in the seagull population has resulted in a positive response from members of the public in removing the risk of harm and enhancing the safety of our residents, tenants and visitors to East Ayrshire.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 Cabinet is invited to :-
  - (i) Consider the continuation of the enhanced approach to the seagull problem
  - (ii) Note the revised approach to seagull control by incorporating and combining various proposals and removing the necessity for an in depth survey of gull activity
  - (iii) Agree not to proceed with the proofing of council buildings at the present time
  - (iv) To otherwise note the contents of this report.

David Mitchell  
**Head of Legal, Procurement and Regulatory Services**

6 October 2008

DM/PLT/EHG

### **List of Background Papers**

**Nil**

Any person who wishes any further information should contact David Mitchell, Head of Legal, Procurement and Regulatory Services on 01563 576161 or Paul Todd, Principal Officer, Environmental Health (01563) 554021.

