

Report Seagulls in Hereford City 2009



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1 History

Hereford City has had a growing colony of seagulls, estimated to be 400-500 pairs and thought to be increasing at about 10% per year. The first pair of breeding gulls in Hereford City was recorded in 1992 when the landfill site at Stretton Sugwas was in operation . The site has since closed but the gull population has settled around the industrial buildings North of the River Wye.

The gulls return from their migration overseas in early spring each year, usually to the place where they where reared themselves. However, recent warmer winters have led to a significant residual population of gulls remaining in Hereford.

The growing colony of gulls in Hereford has resulted in a growing number of complaints received by the Council each year, to the point where the sheer numbers are now "*leading to potential public health issues*" from the nests and the droppings together with the growing aggression of some birds.

Although the original colony was based in the industrial area of the city, with the expanding population, the gulls have started to populate industrial units South of the River (Rotherwas Industrial Estate) and even into the city centre.

.Appendix :1 Seagull colonies found in 2005

2 Present

As a result of the concerns regarding the potential spread of possible nesting sites in the city centre a survey was undertaken in May by visiting the roof of Hereford Cathedral, the high point on the Steeple of St. Peters Church, the roof of Maylords Orchard and the top floor of the Multi storey car park. Several sites were observed and recorded, however some did not appear readily accessible

Appendix 2: Survey of City centre nest sites 2008

The problems associated with a growing gull population in the City are many: -

- Pollution from excreta, on buildings, windows, washing, footpaths vehicles, and even resident population.
- Noise pollution from calling.
- Dive bombing assaults on adults, children and pets in the breeding season.
- Roof damage from nests blocking gully's gutters and down-pipes, also leading to potential insect and mite infestations if not cleared.

To acknowledge the growing concern of residents and commercial enterprises the Urban Gull Steering Group comprising of representatives from Bulmers', Sun Valley, Special Metals, Cynthia Spall (Town Centre Manager) Residents Group and Council Officers had it's inaugural meeting on the 8TH February 2008

Appendix 3: Minutes

At the meeting on the 8th February offers of financial support from Commercial enterprises were sought and contributions were received from Sun Valley and Special Metals as well as an agreement that all parties would continue with carrying out their ongoing regular action on their own premises to reduce the gull population by the removal of eggs and the continued flying of Hawks to discourage Seagulls from nesting on their sites.

3 Contract

In recognition of the growing problem Herefordshire Council therefore appointed an approved specialist contractor to manage the seagull problem in Hereford City. for 2008. The chosen contractor, Falconry Services Pest Control Ltd., also privately undertakes work for both Special Metals Wiggins and Bulmers', which would give an integrated approach to the management of gulls in the City

The Council has, following advice from all interested parties, undertaken a policy of not shooting or killing the gulls or their chicks. Instead we are humanely removing their nests and eggs, as this will discourage future nesting in the city and will ultimately lead to a reduction in the population. We are doing this in accordance with a 'Defra licence' and guidelines from the RSPB. The contractor commenced the service on the 10th April and continued until the 28th August during the period a total of 517 nests were removed along with 1045 eggs.

Appendix 4: Seagull Nest and Egg Removal

Breeding cycle

Breeding Starts	Number of Clutches	Number of Eggs	Incubation (days)	Fledge (days)
April-May	1	1-3	24-27	35-40

4 Commercial Premise Egg and Nest Removal

Over the same period companies in the city also removed the following

Maylord Orchard	148 eggs	14 nests
Sun Valley	80 eggs	20 nests
B&Q Stores	50+eggs	25 nests
Tom Head Ltd	35 eggs	20 nests

Maylord Orchard carried out removal of eggs and nests by utilising their own maintenance staff over the breeding period.

B&Q Stores also carried out egg and nest removal using their own staff. We did offer to carry out the procedure for them but they refused our contractors access to their roof spaces due to their Health and Safety policy.

The contractors did start removing eggs and nests from Tom Head Ltd. premise but they decided to continue utilising their own staff

5 **Conclusion**

The joint working between Herefordshire Council and Commercial Enterprises has allowed for an overall collection of nest and eggs potentially reducing the number of viable young gulls by 350 for 2009.

Reducing gulls in the City will also help increase garden bird species that compete with or are even being attacked by gulls.

A meeting of the Urban Gull Steering Group will need to be convened to discuss the way forward to include the following topics for discussion

- Has the action taken by the Council been beneficial in reducing the number of Seagulls in Herefordshire?

- Have the comments from the public been favourable?

- Could the oiling of eggs over the breeding season be an alternative option?

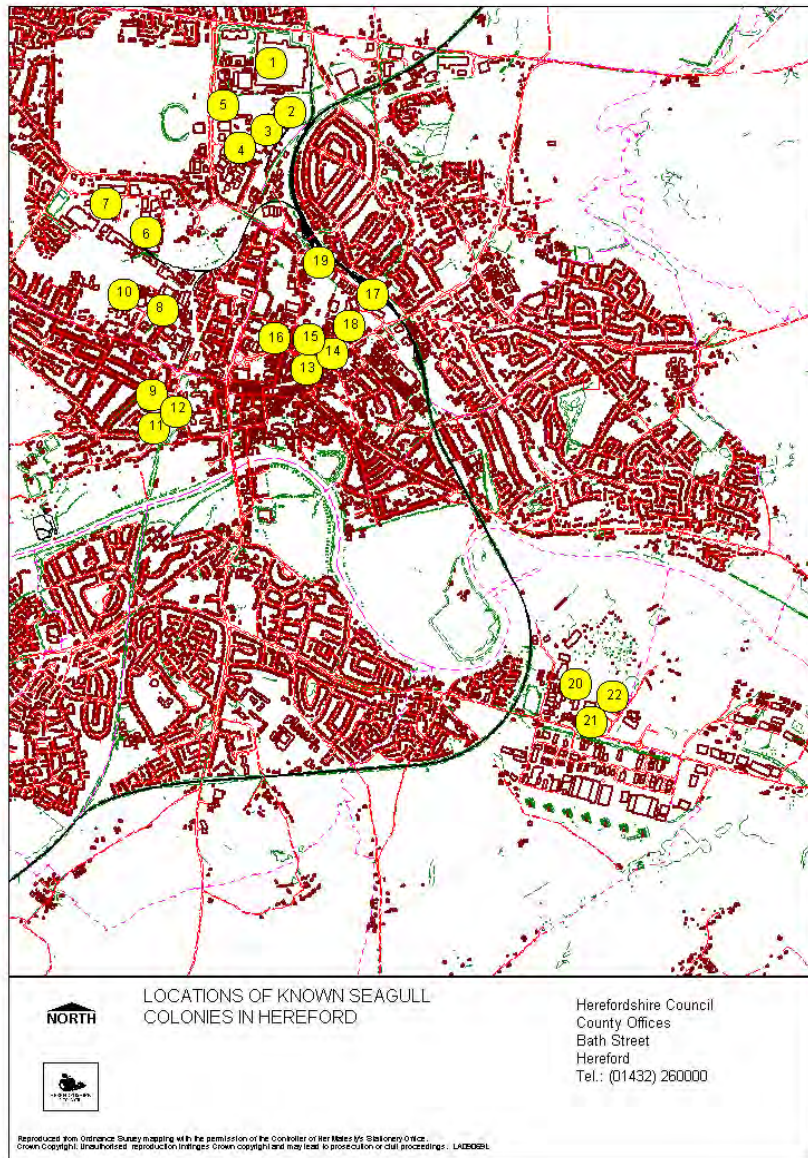
- Could the replacement of viable eggs with dummy eggs be another alternative option?

- Is there funding available to provide any service?

- How could we deal with the potential increase of nesting birds in High Town ?

SEAGULLS IN HEREFORD CITY 2009

APPENDIX 1



 **KEY = Seagull colonies found Sept 2005**

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Special Metal Wiggins | 12 Sainsbury's |
| 2 Painter Brothers | 13 Maylords Orchard |
| 3 Mortimer House | 14 Franklin House |
| 4 Joseph Ash | 15 Blue School House |
| 5 Denco | 16 Multi Storey Car Park |
| 6 Sun Valley | 17 Railway Station |
| 7 Hereford Galvanizers | 18 Post Office |
| 8 Bulmers | 19 Station Approach Units |
| 9 Bulmers Museum | 20 Thorn Buildings |
| 10 Sweetmans Yard | 21 LUK |
| 11 BT Building / Police | 22 Firemen's Quarters |

SEAGULLS IN HEREFORD CITY 2009

APPENDIX 2 Survey of City Centre

NESTS SEEN IN CITY 13/05/08	
Maylord Orchard	14
Be sure Commercial St	1
Franklin House	1
Family Furnishers	2
Blue school offices	1
Multi Storey C/P	1
Sheds Livestock Market	2
Kemble House	1
Tourist Office	1
Shire Hall	1
Butter Market	2
Littlewoods	1
Imperial Hotel	1
Phillip Morris	1
Tanners Wine	1
HSBC	1
F. Hinds	1
Abbey National	1

APPENDIX 3

HEREFORD URBAN GULL MANAGEMENT

STAKEHOLDER MEETING

**Meeting at 2pm on Thursday 6th March
at**

Sun Valley, Grandstand Road, Hereford

1. Present

Andy Baker	Wiggins
Roy Powell	Resident
Jim Baskerville	Resident
Adrian Penning	Sun Valley
Larry Butterworth	Sun Valley
Robin Peers	Bulmers / Scottish & Newcastle
Richard Ford	Bulmers / Scottish & Newcastle
Cynthia Spaul	City Centre Manager, Hfd Partnership
Marc Willimont	Herefordshire Council
Pete Holmes	Herefordshire Council

2. History

It is believed that Hereford has a gull population of between 200-300 breeding pairs (Peter Rock Survey 2005), which is expected to increase annually by about 5% if no prevention is undertaken. A map of hotspot areas was circulated, together with a 2005 report for the Council.

Pest control companies predict that urban gull populations are expected to expand by 20 - 40% per annum.

The activities of the gulls together with their nests in the city have led to complaints from residents and businesses alike, particularly in the Holmer area.

Possible increase in the city since the Stretton Sugwas landfill site was closed.

Historically, the Council has not undertaken control work, but this policy was likely to reverse. Gloucester, Worcester, Bristol and Cardiff already undertaking works.

3. Gull control already deployed by business and city centre retail

BULMERS

Contracted to 'Falconry Services Ltd' to fly a hawk over their site up to 5 days per week and to remove nests from roof spaces (Year to Year contract). Some problems with access to roof spaces due to presence of asbestos (H&S). New roof to be built, but not to be completed until later in the year (Nov.).

Previously tried scarers, alarms and static Hawks / Owls - not successful.

WIGGINS

Contracted to 'Falconry Services Ltd' to fly a hawk over their site up to 5 days per week - same contractor as Bulmers'. Previously tried scarers, alarms and static Hawks / Owls and shooting - not successful. Removal of nests and nesting materials has reduced the number of breeding pairs

Site has an area of 47 acres - flat roof area space 70,000 sq,mts.

Refurbishment of roof to be undertaken this year.

Signed up for a three-year contract with Falconry Services Ltd'.

SUN VALLEY

Carries out nest and egg removal by own staff, most areas being reachable due to construction of roof and boarding.

Food sources identified and now contained or removed. Meat Hygiene Service regulates the manner in which waste food is kept.

May trial shooting this year, but previously unsuccessful.

New gantry on Yazor road site roof to give better access to the Yazor Road end.

CITY CENTRE

Large number of potential nest sites on numerous rooftops.

Maylords Orchard had previously used a pest control company, but unknown as yet if anything proposed by new owners.

Complaints from the public re activities of gulls also received. Problems with the amount of litter and waste food in the city centre attracting birds discussed.

Due to the activities in the city at night, the birds are still active most nights after dark and even till early morning.

Probable nest sites on smaller buildings in the centre, which have not been identified. (Also College needs investigating).

Cynthia to talk to new owners of Maylords Orchard and to other City traders to try to persuade they continue their individual contract.

Cynthia had asked CCTV for information and confirmed that gulls were feeding in the centre, taking food from the public and even disrupting traffic.

4. Residents viewpoint

Roy and Jim had a long history of working with Sun Valley and the Council through a Sun Valley Liaison Group. They believed that through their existing group, they could represent other residents in the area.

They agreed that numbers appeared to be increasing, particularly on Holmer's industrial/retail sites.

They thought there was a noticeable problem with litter and food waste in the city and surrounding areas, potentially encouraging increase in bird population.

They were very much in support of the Council taking the initiative to set up some form of urban gull management control.

5. Legal context

The Council has no Legal duty or responsibility to tackle the problem of gulls, as they are wild birds and therefore not covered by statutory nuisance legislation.

However, the Council has discretionary powers to control gulls, or use a contractor to do so, provided the contractor has a Defra licence

6. Options for gull management

The Council proposed to contract a company to remove eggs and nests during the breeding season for (initially) 11 days from identified properties in the city and surrounding areas (i.e. 1 day per fortnight), from April to August. The chosen company would be provided a list of properties to attend by the Council and would undertake the work on

their behalf. The Council would therefore set up, manage and maintain the contract for the benefit of the entire community, both domestic and business.

The company would take responsibility for health and safety and would be given clear guidelines in what was expected.

Five companies had been tendered, one national, two regional and two local. Four had given quotes.

Action plan had been devised by the Council and was discussed. See attached.

7. Way forward

- Herefordshire Council likely to proceed in appointing a company to undertake nest and egg clearances throughout the April to August period.
- Herefordshire Council will undertake a count of gulls in early May and repeat this annually to review situation.
- Sun Valley, Bulmers and Wiggins would remain with their present contracts / in-house work.
- Herefordshire Council would be publicising the gull preventative works and plan to mail shot all businesses to ask them to report nesting gulls to them.
- Although Herefordshire Council will be appointing a contractor independently of the stakeholder group, to do the works effectively it was recognised that further funding would be required. The Council therefore suggested that Sun Valley, Bulmers and Wiggins consider donating £2,000 each to a 'FIGHTING FUND'. In return, publicity would be given for this joint working, which would improve the control measures to be taken and increase the number of visits that could be paid for.
- Marc undertook to write to all parties concerned to confirm.
- Likely that companies requesting nest clearances would be asked to contribute a fixed sum per nest for clearance, which would also add to the fund. Exact policy on this to be finalised.
- Hopefully a contractor would be appointed in March and that the contract would be reviewed annually.

8 Need to meet again?

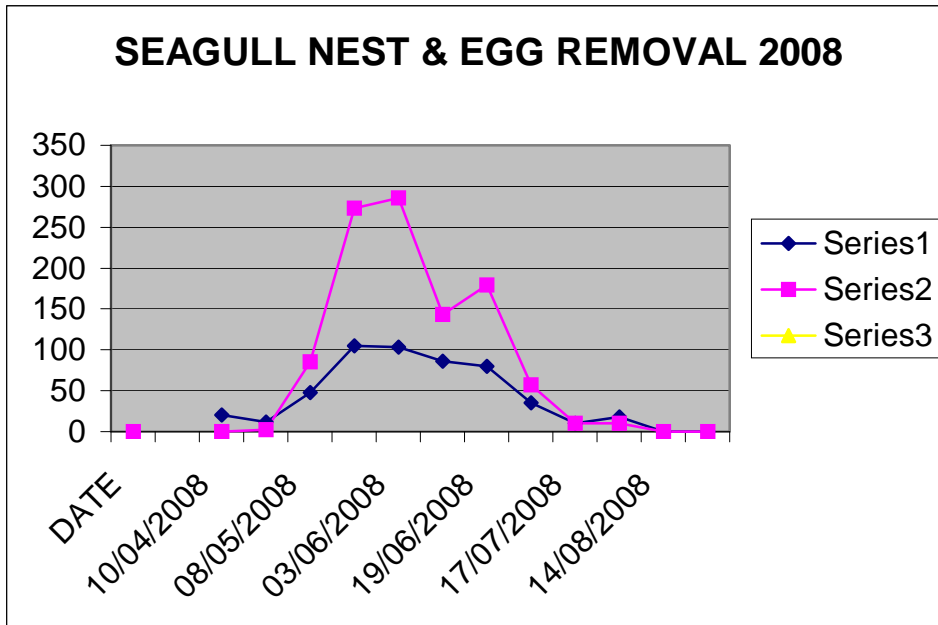
General consensus that group should meet to review progress next February at least and to keep in touch via e-mail in between. There might be a need to meet again in September at the end of the season

Meeting closed at 4pm.

SEAGULLS IN HEREFORD CITY 2009

APPENDIX 4

	SEAGULLS	
DATE	NESTS	EGGS
10/04/2008	20	0
28/04/2008	12	2
08/05/2008	48	85
22/05/2008	105	273
03/06/2008	103	286
05/06/2008	86	143
19/06/2008	80	179
03/07/2008	35	57
17/07/2008	10	10
31/07/2008	18	10
14/08/2008	0	0
28/08/2008	0	0
TOTAL	517	1045



SEAGULLS IN HEREFORD CITY 2009

