

**REPORT TO: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 3<sup>RD</sup> MARCH 2004**

**SUBJECT: PILOT SCHEME FOR THE CONTROL OF SEAGULLS IN LOSSIEMOUTH AND BUCKIE DURING 2003**

**BY: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

**1. Reason for Report**

1.1 To advise the Committee on the Pilot Scheme which took place in Buckie and Lossiemouth on the Control of Seagulls during 2003.

**2. Background**

2.1 Members are reminded of the report to the Environmental Services Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2002 (Item 14) when the problems and control measures with regard to seagulls were highlighted. The Committee agreed that:

1. The Environmental Health Section continues to provide information and advice on the control of gulls
2. That Moray Council makes arrangements to remove nests and proof buildings in their ownership as necessary.
3. Householders be discouraged from feeding seagulls.
4. Wheelie bins continue to be used for the storage of refuse.

2.2 Members will also be aware that over a 6 week period from the middle of March to the end of April 2003 a trial was carried out on the siting of robotic birds of prey in three locations in Lossiemouth.

2.3 A scheme for the Control of Seagulls in Buckie and Lossiemouth was funded from the Quality of Life budget and £5000 was available for the project.

2.4 Mr Bruce Stewart, Builder, Lossiemouth was engaged as the contractor for the removal of seagull nests and eggs from properties in Lossiemouth and Buckie.

2.5 Requests were made by householders/property owners to the Environmental Health Section for the contractor to remove seagulls nests from buildings. The name, address and telephone numbers of the person requesting the service was recorded. The person was asked if a nest had previously been removed by the Council contractor and if they wished a quotation for the erection of anti nesting devices.

2.6 The Environmental Health Section then advised the contractor of the site of the seagulls nest. The contractor was also advised where a price was required for the proofing of the area. This was a matter for the contractor to arrange with the householder/property owner.

- 2.7 If an individual requested the removal of a nest which had been rebuilt following removal by the contractor this was not authorised if no proofing measures had been carried out. The cost of proofing of properties was borne by the householder/property owner and payment was made by them to the contractor.
- 2.8 The pilot scheme commenced on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2003 and finished on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2003. There were 96 properties which had nests removed. 68 in Lossiemouth and 28 in Buckie. The total cost for the scheme was - £3530 (£1,970.00 in Lossiemouth and £1,560.00 in Buckie). Proofing was requested in 83 cases. 57 in Lossiemouth and 26 in Buckie.

### **Conclusions**

- 2.9 The robotic bird of prey which was trialed in Lossiemouth was found to be of limited success. The Robop was effective when it was sited on the tower of a dwellinghouse and it was found that gulls did not come back to nest during the course of the trial. The siting of the Robop on a commercial building and on the flat roof at Lossiemouth High School was not very effective. To cover the roof area of both properties would have required 2 or 3 robotic birds and this would have cost approximately £2,600 per bird. There were considerable implications for staff time in relocating the Robop to different areas on the roofs and to take them down every second day for recharging.
- 2.10 A large proportion of those persons who used the pilot scheme for the control of seagulls were pleased with the service. It has been reported that after nests were removed by the contractor the seagulls returned and re-nested on top of the proofing around chimneys and on flat roofs. The period within which eggs are laid and then hatch is fairly short. There were occasions when the contractor was unable to remove nests as the young had hatched out. Householders require to be reminded not to feed seagulls, as the gulls are being encouraged to remain within towns where food can be easily obtained. A number of persons who responded to the survey felt that more drastic action such as culling should be undertaken. The scheme covered a limited number of people within the towns of Buckie and Lossiemouth and it certainly had an effect in reducing the number of complaints made to the Environmental Health Section during the spring and summer.

### **3. The Proposals**

- 3.1 There is no proposal to continue with the scheme as there is no budget available.
- 3.2 Although the scheme appeared to operate effectively and was well received by the householders who requested the service it would be very costly for the Moray Council to extend the scheme across Moray and to maintain it year on year. Reference is made to the conclusions in 2.9 and 2.10.
- 3.3 The issue with seagulls is a national problem and to tackle it effectively will require input by the Government to produce a national strategy. The Scottish Executive has advised that they have no intention to form a national plan.

### **4. Financial Implications**

4.1 The scheme operated within the budget of £5000 from the Quality of Life fund.

**5. Staffing Implications**

5.1 There are no staffing implications.

**6. Environmental Implications**

6.1 A customer survey has been carried out of the 96 persons who had nests removed and a 50% return has been received.

6.2 Of the survey forms returned 94% were pleased with the service which was provided and 75% thought that the removal of nests and eggs were effective in controlling gull activity.

6.3 44% of those returning the questionnaire thought that the proofing carried out on the building was effective. A number of property owners did not have proofing carried out.

6.4 56% of the respondents thought that there was a noticeable reduction in gull activity around their property after treatment.

6.5 81% of the properties treated were domestic dwellings.

6.6 96% of persons would like to see the scheme continued and 92% considered it good value for money.

6.7 Appendix 1 attached gives further details on the customer survey. Further detailed comments have been placed in the Members Library.

**7. Sustainability Implications**

7.1 It is not sustainable to continue with the Scheme. Although there may be a benefit to the environment and to the community there are no long-term financial mechanisms in place to continue with the scheme.

**8. Corporate Plan**

8.1 The scheme is in accordance with and meets the main aims of the environmental programme which is for the management and improvement of the environment for the benefit of residents, visitors and businesses.

8.2 It also meets the strategic objective of maintaining a safe, clean pleasant and sustainable environment.

**9. Consultations**

9.1 Users of the scheme were consulted as referred to above.

**10. Recommendations**

**10.1 It is recommended that the :**

- i) Environmental Health Section continues to provide information and advice on the control of gulls.**
- ii) Moray Council makes arrangements to remove nests and proof buildings in their ownership as necessary in line with current practice.**
- iii) Householders be discouraged from feeding seagulls.**
- iv) Wheelie bins continue to be used for the storage of refuse.**

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Background Papers:

Ref: SI/KT

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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