

Control of Seagulls



July 2021

The Law

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 is the principle legislation dealing with the control and protection of birds. An owner/occupier can take action against gulls nesting on their buildings, or give someone permission to do so, however it is an offence to kill or injure any birds, their nests or eggs unless acting under a licence and only in compliance with the conditions of that licence. Licences are issued in limited circumstances and usually after other methods of deterrent have been tried and failed. The circumstances for granting a licence include:

1. Preserving public health or public/air safety
2. Preventing the spread of disease
3. Preventing serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables, fruit, growing timber, fisheries or inland waters.

Allerdale Borough Council does not have a statutory duty to take action against gulls; however we recognise there are commonly cited problems associated with them. We therefore can provide advice to property owners/occupiers on controlling them.

Unfortunately there is nothing that can specifically be done by the Council about noise from birds, damage to property or their fouling. You may wish to consider bird proofing work as described below or if the gulls are on someone else's property you may wish to speak to the owner or occupier of that property and ask them to consider proofing their property.

Proofing of Buildings

There are limited public health grounds for gull control and experience from other local authorities indicates that culling is mainly unsuccessful as the numbers after a cull will shortly increase back up to the optimum number with younger birds taking up territories previously occupied by adults. At the end of every season all nests and nesting material can be removed and deterrents for next season can be put in place by the property owner.

Please note it is illegal to disturb or remove nests or eggs during the breeding season (April - July depending on species and location). All owners/occupiers of buildings which have or may attract nesting gulls are advised to install gull deterrent measures suitable to the building; just removing nests will not solve the problems on its own as they may return year after year. In order to discourage the gulls from coming back, plastic spikes can be fitted in the nesting and roosting areas of the roof. Wires or netting can also be effective but may be unsightly if used on prominent parts of the roof. It is important to make sure that all possible nesting and roosting sites on the roof are protected, including chimneys.

Proofing can be difficult and dangerous, therefore it is recommended that advice and guidance on appropriate measures should be sought from a specialist contractor in each individual case. There are several companies listed in the Pest and Vermin Control Section of Yellow Pages.

Useful Contacts

Injured birds

- It is common for chicks to fall from the nest. If the chick is not injured, it must be left where it is as the parents will continue to look after it. If it is injured, contact the RSPCA on 0300 1234 999.

Aggressive gulls

- Contact Natural England on 0845 601 4523 for advice on steps to tackle this issue.

Gull proofing

- See Pest and Vermin Control
- Check local press for specialist companies
- Reputable builders or roofers

Specialist contractors

- For advice please contact British Pest Control Association online. Or British Pest Control Association, 4A Mallard Way, Pride Park, Derby, DE24 8GX (01332 294288). If a contractor is employed it should be noted that the responsibility under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 rests with the person who employs the contractor.

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