

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 19 March 2013

The 2012 Merchiston Gulls De-nesting Pilot Project

Item number	7.7
Report number	
Wards	9 & 10

Links

Coalition pledges	N.A.
Council outcomes	CO26
Single Outcome Agreement	SO4

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Executive summary

The 2012 Merchiston Gulls De-nesting Pilot Project

Summary

- To inform the Transport and Environment Committee of the outcome of the 2012 Merchiston Gulls De-nesting Pilot Project
- To advise the Transport and Environment Committee that updated information and advice on dealing with nesting gulls has been made available in both printed format and via the Council's website.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- a) notes the report;
- b) notes that no funding is available in the budget for continuation of the project and further de-nesting activities should be offered to residents on a commercial basis;
- c) notes that this report discharges the instruction from the Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee of 21 February 2012 to undertake an initial one year de-nesting project in Merchiston and to receive a report on the effectiveness of the pilot, to include information on any displacement to adjacent areas;
- d) notes that this report also fulfils the instruction from the Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee of 21 February 2012 to provide further reports on the Dumfries Project, along with information on any relevant initiatives to Committee on an annual basis.

Measures of success

- The total number of gulls' nests removed during the five visit cycles was 107 and 165 eggs were destroyed.
- No complaints about gulls' nuisance were received from residents within the pilot area over the duration of the project.

Financial impact

- The cost of undertaking five visits between 26 April and 12 July 2012 to each property in the streets identified by Merchiston Community Council was £9,000.
- The cost of continuing to provide the service for a further 4 years would be £36,000 (£9000 per annum), for which there is no budget provision.

Equalities impact

- This report proposes no change to current policies or procedures and as such a full impact assessment is not required. The contents have no relevance to the public sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2010.

Sustainability impact

- There are no sustainability impacts associated with this report as defined by the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

Consultation and engagement

- Prior to the Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee approving the project, officials met with representatives of Merchiston Community Council to define the scope and objectives of the project. Further discussions took place with representatives of the Community Council following the Committee's decision to proceed with the project.
- Prior to commencing the project, all properties within the pilot area were leafleted to explain what was being proposed. Feedback received as a result of the leafleting was almost universally supportive, with only one person dissenting and requesting that the Council did not access their roof in order to remove nesting material.
- The outcome of the pilot project has been discussed with representatives of Merchiston Community Council.
- The contents of this report have been discussed with local ward members, who are satisfied with the report.

Background reading / external references

Report to TIE Committee, dated 27 July 2010, [Gull nests in Tenemental Areas](#).

Report to TIE Committee, dated 29 November 2011 [Gulls Nests in Tenemental Areas](#)

Report to TIE Committee, dated 21 February 2012, [Control of Gulls and Feral Pigeons in the City](#)

The 2012 Merchiston Gulls De-nesting Pilot Project

1. Background

- 1.1 Following representations by Merchiston Community Council, supported by former Councillor Buchan, and consideration of a report on the control of Gulls and Feral Pigeons in the City, the Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee on 21 February 2012 decided:

“to note that although it was likely that displacement to adjacent neighbourhoods would result from any pilot project, to agree to an initial one year project in Merchiston and to receive a report on the effectiveness of the pilot to include information on any displacement to adjacent areas”.

- 1.2 The pilot project was carried out in the following locations within the Merchiston area, as suggested by Merchiston Community Council: Bruntsfield Place, Dundee Terrace, Bryson Road, Watson Crescent, Fowler Terrace, Yeaman Place and Temple Park Crescent.
- 1.3 There were initially estimated to be approximately 165 tenemental properties in the pilot area, to which some 1,500 leaflets were hand delivered in advance of the project commencing.
- 1.4 Dumfries and Galloway Council have been undertaking a de-nesting project in Dumfries city centre since 2009 and reports on the outcome of the project have been presented to the Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee on an annual basis.

2. Main report

- 2.1 Prior to undertaking nest removal work within the pilot area, detailed surveys of all roofs were undertaken to identify equipment requirements and areas which might not be conducive to safe access. The roof survey established that specialist access equipment was not required and nest removal could be achieved by operatives obtaining safe access to the roofs of the tenements.

2.2 The first of five rounds of visits took place on 26 April 2012, when 12 nests were removed. The next two rounds took place on 17 May and 31 May, with a total of 56 nests and 106 eggs removed. On 26 June a further 21 nests and 40 eggs were dealt with and during the final round of visits on 12 July, 18 nests and 19 eggs were removed. Each of the visits was scheduled to minimise the likelihood of finding live gull chicks in the nests to be removed and was successful as no hatched chicks were found.

2.3 No complaints about gulls' behaviour were received from residents living in the pilot area.

It is difficult to assess the impact of the project on the surrounding neighbourhoods, in particular whether gulls were re-locating to other areas, due to the low number of complaints received from local residents. The numbers of complaints about gulls received from areas adjoining Merchiston were 7 in 2011 and 5 in 2012. During the 2011 and 2012 gull nesting seasons, a total of 79 complaints or enquiries regarding gull issues were received in each year from across the City.

The low number of complaints may indicate that displacement of nesting gulls in Year 1 was not a significant issue. The small size of the pilot project area may also be a factor. Experience from the much larger Dumfries project suggests that displacement of gulls to surrounding areas may become an issue in future years.

2.4 The cost of carrying out the pilot project was £9000. This cost was substantially lower than the cost of £25,000 per year estimated for the project, reported to the Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee on 21 February 2012. The reasons for the lower actual cost were that access was achieved to all roof areas without the need to hire mechanical elevators, and access to the roofs of blocks of tenements could be done from one point, allowing movement across the roofs of all properties in the block.

2.5 As gulls only return to their fledging site after 4 -5 years to breed, evaluation of the impact of the pilot project on future gull numbers in the area will not be possible until the project has continued for this time period.

2.6 Based on the actual cost of the project in 2012, the cost for continuing the pilot project for a further 4 years would be £36,000 (£9000 per annum). This service can also be provided by the Council's Pest Control Service to individual residents on a commercial basis. The cost per visit to a resident for removal of nests from their property is £70.50; it is likely that at least three visits will be required during the nesting season to ensure a property remains nest-free. It should also be noted that residents can purchase a gulls de-nesting service from commercial pest control organisations.

2.7 As instructed by the Committee on 21 February 2012, a review of advice on gulls provided by the Council was carried out. This resulted in the production of

a new colour leaflet to assist those affected by the activities of gulls in protecting their property. The Council's web based information on gulls was also updated.

- 2.8 Following discussions with officials of Dumfries and Galloway Council, it is understood that further funding will be sought from the Council to continue with the gull de-nesting project in the centre of Dumfries in 2013/14. The general opinion is that the city centre has seen a further reduction in gull numbers, nuisance and complaints, but there is some evidence of displacement of gulls to areas outside the project area. To date, no report on the outcome of the 2012 programme has been presented to the Council. There has also not been a detailed evaluation of the overall impact on gull populations of this project since it commenced in 2009.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- a) notes the report;
 - b) notes that no funding is available in the budget for continuation of the project and further de-nesting activities should be offered to residents on a commercial basis;
 - c) notes that this report discharges the instruction from the Transport, Infrastructure and Environment Committee of 21 February 2012 to undertake an initial one year de-nesting project in Merchiston and to receive a report on the effectiveness of the pilot, to include information on any displacement to adjacent areas;
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Director of Services for Communities

Links

Coalition pledges	N.A.
Council outcomes	CO26 - The Council engages with stakeholders and works in partnership to improve services and deliver on agreed objectives
Single Outcome Agreement	SO4 – Edinburgh's communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric.
Appendices	None