

North Yorkshire Council

Environment Executive Members

01 November 2024

Urban Gull Strategy – North Yorkshire Coast

Report of The Assistant Director – Regulation and Harbours

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek endorsement of the Council's approach to the development of an Urban Gull Strategy for the North Yorkshire Coast.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Gulls are a natural part of coastal ecosystems, and their presence is expected in coastal towns. The Council aims to manage the impacts arising from urban gulls by developing a strategy which takes account of the need for conservation and protection of wildlife. This issue is not unique to North Yorkshire and is part of a broader trend observed in many coastal towns across the country.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 There is a perceived increase in the urban gull population in our coastal towns and the Council has received an increased number of complaints this year:
- 3.2 Aggressive Behaviour: Gulls snatching food from people, causing distress and sometimes injury. Reports of attacks, especially during the breeding season when gulls are more protective, are common.
- 3.3 Noise and Mess: Particularly during the breeding season can be a significant nuisance, affecting the quality of life for residents and the experience for tourists.
- 3.4 Economic Impact: Tourism is a critical component of our local economy. Aggressive gulls can deter visitors, impacting local businesses that rely on tourism. Conversely, they add to the charm, character and appeal of the coast for visitors.

4.0 DETAILED PRESENTATION OF THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE

- 4.1 Several factors contribute to the issue.
- 4.1.1 Urbanisation and Food Availability: As urban areas expand gulls find abundant food sources in human environments. Overflowing bins, discarded food, and deliberate feeding by people provide easy meals, encouraging gulls to flock to towns.
- 4.1.2 Nesting Opportunities: The architecture of urban areas, with ledges and rooftops, offers ideal nesting sites for gulls. These locations are often safer from predators compared to natural nesting sites.

4.2 There are a number of measures that can be taken to mitigate the negative impacts of gulls whilst at the same time protecting them as a natural part of the coastal environment. This could be planned and delivered by way of an agreed Council strategy to include :

4.2.1 Public Education: Educating residents and tourists about the dangers of feeding gulls is crucial. Clear signage and public awareness campaigns can help reduce the availability of food and discourage feeding.

4.2.2 Improved Waste Management: Promoting the impact of dropping litter and leaving rubbish on the beach, as well as working with businesses and commercial waste contractors to ensure waste is securely contained and not placed out early or in sacks that can be ripped open.

4.2.3 Nesting Deterrents: Installing suitable proofing can deter gulls from nesting in urban areas if appropriate, having due regard to conservation and protection of wildlife considerations.

4.3 Strategy aims:

- To promote and sustain a healthy population of all gull species.
- To provide and sustain a clean and safe place for residents of the coastal areas.
- To identify and implement suitable and sustainable measures to enable gulls and the public to successfully co-exist in the coastal areas.

4.4 Objectives:

- Undertake a complete street-scene survey to identify localities of nesting for Herring gulls and Kittiwakes within town centre localities (town centre areas as defined in the local plans). This will take place initially in the main towns of Scarborough, with Whitby and Filey following in 2025/2026. Data will also be obtained from Environment department colleagues and interested groups concerning the localities of nesting birds.
- Undertake a stakeholder consultation to understand the current situational impact and benefit of gull species within the town centres. Stakeholders will include local interest groups, regulatory bodies, local business forums.
- Identify sustainable methods of urban gull management to enable healthy populations of gulls to co-exist alongside that of residents, businesses and visitors. Where this is not readily achievable to investigate if alternative and suitable nesting grounds can be identified and if possible constructed.
- Identify funding sources and the implementation of a promotion and education scheme for the public and businesses in respect to gull activity and our vision for a shared co-existing living space.
- Work with appropriate teams within the Council (cleansing/parks/leisure etc) to identify 'quick wins', such as the provision of gull proof bags and litter bins where funding can be identified
- Undertake networking with internal departments and interested bodies to identify how the urban gull strategy can support and contribute to the growth and development of coastal towns.

4.5 Timescales

Action	Commencement target	Completion target
Undertake street-scene survey of Scarborough Town Centre	August 2024	August 2024 (completed)
Consultation with stakeholders	January 2025	March 2025
Identification of the methods of suitable gull management	April 2025	TBC
Funding and implementation of education scheme	January 2025	TBC
Implementation of quick wins should funding be identified	January 2025	March 2025
Networking within internal departments and interested bodies to identify how the urban gull strategy can support and contribute to the economic growth	September 2024	TBC

4.6 An officer working group has been convened, led by environmental health, recognising that engagement of a variety of Council services and external partners is required to make best use of their resources and expertise.

4.7 Management and officer representation will continue at the existing multi-agency project group of North Yorkshire Council, Environment Agency, Yorkshire Water, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, RSPB, East Riding of Yorkshire Council and Hull University to ensure a collaborative approach, building upon partners' expertise and their experience of the legacy Scarborough project regarding gulls.

5.0 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN AND RESPONSES

5.1 The officer working group will develop a draft strategy by January 2025. Consultation will take place January to March 2025 with stakeholders identified above (4.8) and all relevant coastal town Members.

6.0 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES

6.1 The strategy supports the Council priorities of place, environment, and economy.

7.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 There are no alternative options.

8.0 IMPACT ON OTHER SERVICES/ORGANISATIONS

8.1 It is recognised that a range of measures and significant cross-service resources continue to be implemented including a legacy grants scheme for building proofing (which runs until January 2025), ongoing cleansing of the public realm by waste services and management of enquiries and service requests by Regulatory Services.

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Regulatory Services hold a budget of £36,000 (in 25/26) to support this work. Officer costs must be met from existing service budget.

9.2 Waste Services hold budget for cleansing public realm and £14k is available specifically for gull waste cleansing. As part of the working group for the development of an urban gull strategy, the escalating costs of cleansing gull waste are being reviewed. Currently the resource dedicated to the removal of gull waste is more than the budget and contributing to the service overspend position. Continuing with this overspend is not sustainable and the strategy will seek to provide a more effective removal service. It is expected that this will have an impact on budgets and any investment or increased additional annual cost will be detailed in the strategy report.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Wild birds are protected in England by the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, certain species of gull, such as the herring gull and lesser black-backed gull are in decline and are the subject of protection. The Council must comply with the above and the 'enhanced Biodiversity Duty' placed on public bodies through the Environment Act 2021.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 An equalities impact assessment screening has been completed and concludes that there is no adverse impacted upon protected characteristics. Please see appendix A.

12.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

12.1 A climate change assessment screening has been completed and concludes that there are detrimental impacts. Please see appendix B.

13.0 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The key risks are:

- Failure to effectively manage urban gulls in our coastal towns and the associated consequences for residents, businesses, and visitors.
- Failure you comply with legal requirements.
- Escalating costs to the Council arising from impacts upon the public realm and buildings.

13.2 Active management of these risks is required through the work of the officer working group in collaboration with partners.

14.0 CONCLUSIONS

14.1 The Council requires an Urban Gull Strategy for the North Yorkshire Coast to achieve the aims above.

15.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 The Council requires an Urban Gull Strategy for the North Yorkshire Coast that is effective and proportionate balanced with the need for conservation and protection of wildlife.

16.0 RECOMMENDATION

16.1 It is recommended that the Executive Member for Highways and Transport endorses work to develop an Urban Gull Strategy for the North Yorkshire Coast.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix B – Climate Change Assessment

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: There are no background documents.

Callum McKeon
Assistant Director of Regulation and Harbours
County Hall
Northallerton
01 November 2024

Report Author – Dean Richardson Head of Regulatory Services
Presenter of Report – Callum McKeon and Dean Richardson

Initial equality impact assessment screening form			
This form records an equality screening process to determine the relevance of equality to a proposal, and a decision whether or not a full EIA would be appropriate or proportionate.			
Directorate	Environment		
Service area	Regulatory Services		
Proposal being screened	Gull Strategy		
Officer(s) carrying out screening	Dean Richardson		
What are you proposing to do?	To seek endorsement of the Council's strategy for the mitigation of public nuisance arising from gulls in our coastal towns.		
Why are you proposing this? What are the desired outcomes?	There is a perceived increase in the gull population in our coastal towns and the Council has received an increased number of complaints this year and demand has increased for cleansing and disinfection of the public realm.		
Does the proposal involve a significant commitment or removal of resources? Please give details.	No		
Impact on people with any of the following protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, or NYC's additional agreed characteristics.			
As part of this assessment, please consider the following questions:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is this service used by particular groups of people with protected characteristics? Does the proposal relate to functions that previous consultation has identified as important? Do different groups have different needs or experiences in the area the proposal relates to? 			
If for any characteristic it is considered that there is likely to be an adverse impact or you have ticked 'Don't know/no info available', then a full EIA should be carried out where this is proportionate. You are advised to speak to your directorate representative for advice if you are in any doubt.			
Protected characteristic	Potential for adverse impact		Don't know/No info available
	Yes	No	
Age		No	
Disability		No	
Sex		No	
Race		No	
Sexual orientation		No	
Gender reassignment		No	
Religion or belief		No	
Pregnancy or maternity		No	
Marriage or civil partnership		No	
People in rural areas		No	
People on a low income		No	
Carer (unpaid family or friend)		No	
Are from the Armed Forces Community		No	
Does the proposal relate to an area where there are known inequalities/probable impacts (for	No		

example, disabled people's access to public transport)? Please give details.				
Will the proposal have a significant effect on how other organisations operate? (for example, partners, funding criteria, etc.). Do any of these organisations support people with protected characteristics? Please explain why you have reached this conclusion.	No			
Decision (Please tick one option)	EIA not relevant or proportionate:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Continue to full EIA:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Reason for decision	No detrimental impact on equalities.			
Signed (Assistant Director or equivalent)	Callum McKeon			
Date	21/10/2024			

Initial Climate Change Impact Assessment

The intention of this document is to help the council to gain an initial understanding of the impact of a project or decision on the environment. This document should be completed in consultation with the supporting guidance. Dependent on this initial assessment you may need to go on to complete a full Climate Change Impact Assessment. The final document will be published as part of the decision-making process.

If you have any additional queries, which are not covered by the guidance please email climatechange@northyorks.gov.uk

Title of proposal	To seek endorsement of the Council's strategy for the mitigation of public nuisance arising from gulls in our coastal towns.
Brief description of proposal	There is a perceived increase in the gull population in our coastal towns and the Council has received an increased number of complaints this year and demand has increased for cleansing and disinfection of the public realm.
Directorate	Environment
Service area	Regulatory Services
Lead officer	Dean Richardson
Names and roles of other people involved in carrying out the impact assessment	NA

APPENDIX B

The chart below contains the main environmental factors to consider in your initial assessment – choose the appropriate option from the drop-down list for each one.

Remember to think about the following;

- Travel
- Construction
- Data storage
- Use of buildings
- Change of land use
- Opportunities for recycling and reuse

Environmental factor to consider	For the council	For the county	Overall
Greenhouse gas emissions	No effect on emissions	No Effect on emissions	No effect on emissions
Waste	No effect on waste	No effect on waste	No effect on waste
Water use	No effect on water usage	No effect on water usage	No effect on water usage
Pollution (air, land, water, noise, light)	No effect on pollution	No effect on pollution	No effect on pollution
Resilience to adverse weather/climate events (flooding, drought etc)	No effect on resilience	No effect on resilience	No effect on resilience
Ecological effects (biodiversity, loss of habitat etc)	No effect on ecology	No effect on ecology	No effect on ecology
Heritage and landscape	No effect on heritage and landscape	No effect on heritage and landscape	No effect on heritage and landscape

If any of these factors are likely to result in a negative or positive environmental impact then a full climate change impact assessment will be required. It is important that we capture information about both positive and negative impacts to aid the council in calculating its carbon footprint and environmental impact.

Decision (Please tick one option)	Full CCIA not relevant or proportionate: <input type="checkbox"/>	Continue to full CCIA:	X
Reason for decision	The strategy does not affect any of the above environmental factors.		
Signed (Assistant Director or equivalent)	Callum McKeon		
Date	21/10/2024		