Notice of a public meeting of
Decision Session - Executive Member for Culture, Leisure & Tourism

To: Councillor Ayre (Executive Member)

Date: Friday, 24 June 2016

Time: 3.30 pm

Venue: The Thornton Room - Ground Floor, West Offices (G039)

A G E N D A

Notice to Members – Post Decision Calling In:

Members are reminded that, should they wish to call in any item* on this agenda, notice must be given to Democratic Services by **4:00 pm on Tuesday 28 June 2016.**

*With the exception of matters that have been subject of a previous call in, require Full Council approval or are urgent which are not subject to the call-in provisions. Any called in items will be considered by the Corporate and Scrutiny Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee.

Written representations in respect of items on this agenda should be submitted to Democratic Services by **Wednesday 22 June 2016** at **5.00 pm**

1. Declarations of Interest

At this point in the meeting, the Executive Member is asked to declare:

- any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests
- any prejudicial interests or
- any disclosable pecuniary interests

which they may have in respect of business on this agenda.

2. Minutes (Pages 1 - 2)

To approve and sign the minutes of the Decision Session held on 15 April 2016.

3. Public Participation

At this point in the meeting, members of the public who have registered their wish to speak at the meeting can do so. The deadline for registering is **Thursday 23 June 2016** at **5.00 pm**.

Members of the public may register to speak on :-

- an item on the agenda
- an issue within the Executive Member's remit;

Filming, Recording or Webcasting Meetings

Please note this meeting will be filmed and webcast and that includes any registered public speakers, who have given their permission. This broadcast can be viewed at http://www.york.gov.uk/webcasts.

Residents are welcome to photograph, film or record Councillors and Officers at all meetings open to the press and public. This includes the use of social media reporting, i.e. tweeting. Anyone wishing to film, record or take photos at any public meeting should contact the Democracy Officer (whose contact details are at the foot of this agenda) in advance of the meeting.

The Council's protocol on Webcasting, Filming & Recording of Meetings ensures that these practices are carried out in a manner both respectful to the conduct of the meeting and all those present. It can be viewed at: https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/6453/protocol_for_webcasting_filming_and_recording_council_meetingspdf

4. Review of Arboricultural Management of Council Trees (Pages 3 - 22)

This report sets out a proposed policy for the management of the Council's own "public" tree stock. It also responds to the recommendations made by the Learning & Culture Policy and Scrutiny Committee (Pre Decision Calling in) on 15 June 2016.

5. Goose Management Scrutiny Review Final Report
(Pages 23 - 122)
This report re-presents the final report from the Goose Management Scrutiny Review and asks the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure & Tourism to reconsider the review recommendations, in light of the additional information presented in this report.

6. York Learning Strategic / Service Plan: 2016/17
(Pages 123 - 140)
This report sets out the strategic direction of York Learning and presents a one year service / business plan for the academic year commencing in September 2016.This forms a key part of the governance arrangements for the service.

7. Urgent Business
Any other business which the Executive Member considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972.

Annex of Written Representations

Democracy Officer:

Name- Judith Betts
Telephone No.- 01904 551078
Email-judith.betts@york.gov.uk

For more information about any of the following please contact the Democratic Services Officer responsible for servicing this meeting:

- Registering to speak
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports and
- For receiving reports in other formats

Contact details are set out above.

This information can be provided in your own language.

我們也用您們的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)

এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দেয়া যেতে পারে। **(Bengali)**

Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim własnym języku. **(Polish)**

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. **(Turkish)**

یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان (بولی) میں بھی مہیا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ **(Urdu)**

☎ (01904) 551550

Agenda Item 2

City of York Council	Committee Minutes
Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Culture, Leisure & Tourism
Date	15 April 2016
Present	Councillor Ayre (Executive Member)

31. Declarations of Interest

At this point in the meeting the Executive Member was asked to declare if he had any personal, prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests in the business on the agenda. He declared that he had none.

32. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the Decision Session held on 18 March 2016 be approved and signed by the Executive Member as a correct record.

33. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under Public Participation.

34. Underage Sales Report 2016

The Executive Member considered a report which updated him on the work undertaken by the Council's Public Protection Service to prevent the illegal sales of age-restricted products.

Officers informed the Executive Member that they had seen an increase in the sale of illegal alcohol and that they were about to commence advertising for additional Licensing Enforcement Officers.

The Executive Member questioned why visits in 2014/15 were so low. It was noted that this was as a result of Officers switching their attention to a more advisory approach,

particularly in regards to tobacco and as a result enforcement action had reduced.

Resolved: That the report be noted and that the programme of education and enforcement action for the next 12 months as set out in paragraph 6 in the Officer's report be adopted.

Reason: To minimise the level of illegal underage sales in the city.

Councillor Ayre, Executive Member
[The meeting started at 3.30 pm and finished at 3.35 pm].

Decision Session – Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism 24 June 2016

Report of the Assistant Director (Communities, Culture & Public Realm)

Review of Arboricultural Management of Council Trees

Summary

1. This report sets out a proposed policy for the management of the Council's own "public" tree stock. Much of the information contained within the policy has previously been published on the Council's web site but it has never been brought together into one report before for Member consideration and approval.

2. The report also responds to the recommendations made by the Learning & Culture Policy and Scrutiny Committee (pre Decision Calling in) on 15th June 2016. The Committee supported the policy but did ask for a number of points to be taken into account by the Executive Member. These include:

    a) The need for more wide ranging city wide approach to tree management.

    b) Local Plan to include explicit targets for tree cover.

    c) The need for additional supplementary planning documents relating to trees

    d) Recognition that trees contribute to mitigating climate change and air pollution

    e) The need to work with partner organisations to develop a healthy and diverse tree stock and to plan for long term tree care as part of new developments.

    f) Specific comments on the draft policy statements

3. The statements made by Councillors L Kramm and A D'Agorne to the Committee are provided as Annexes 2 and 3.

Recommendations

4. The Executive Member is asked to agree the attached policy for the management of the Council's public trees.

   Reasons:

   - To ensure that the Council's duty of care toward tree management and protection remains consistent and transparent and that resources are used to the best effect
   - To give a better understanding of tree management practices in York
   - To protect valuable trees from unnecessary damage, inappropriate work or removal

Background

5. The Council has responsibility for an estimated 30,000 public trees within the city. We manage trees adjacent to the highway, in housing estates and open spaces, including parks, gardens, amenity spaces, sports grounds, nature reserves, closed churchyards and woodlands. We also assist schools in the management of their trees.

6. Responsibility for the management of the Council's trees sits with the Arboricultural Manager who is based in the Public Realm Service.

7. A healthy and sustainable tree population plays a major role in creating an attractive and vibrant landscape where people want to live. In addition, trees provide a range of social, economic and environmental benefits including:

   a) Combating climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere
   b) Mitigating the effects of climate change by reducing floodwater run off through interception and absorption and providing shade
   c) Offsetting air pollution by removing particulate matter
   d) Providing a habitat for wildlife
   e) Contributing to a quality of environment that promotes physical, social and psychological wellbeing

8. In financial terms Council owned trees have an estimated replacement value £200 million based on the Capital Asset Values

for Amenity Trees (CAVAT) methodology. York's highway or street trees are valued at approximately £89 million alone.

9. The public can currently look up basic information on the Council website on those Council trees which have been mapped; this includes location, species and "owning" service department. In addition, there is information on private trees with Tree Preservation Orders. Following the adoption of the policy these pages will be refreshed to give a clearer path to the information available.

10. Trees are not always valued by all residents. For example, there is a perception amongst a minority of residents that trees can be dangerous just because they are large. Requests for work and complaints are received daily; the adoption and publication of the proposed policy will help to explain and defend the authority's position.

11. Day to day care of trees is only one aspect of the authority's work. Officers in the Design and Conservation service advice on trees in relation to the planning process, including privately owned trees through some 515 Tree Preservation Orders and 30 conservation areas. Officers also support the work of:

    a) *Treemendous* and other communities groups to develop new planting schemes.

    b) York Tree Warden volunteers who act as the eyes and ears for the community and carry out limited tree maintenance, tree planting and educational activities at summer events and fairs.

12. The management of trees also needs to be seen within a national, regional and local context. At a national level central government, through Trees in Towns II (2008), requested that local authorities adopt tree policies and strategies that link with their council plan. At the regional level, York signed up to the Yorkshire and Humberside regional forestry strategy in 2006 which highlighted the region's low tree density and stressed the health benefits of promoting a tree-rich local environment.

13. As part of the Local Plan preparations the value of trees to the local environment will be addressed in a variety of polices and strategies which underpin the Local Plan. Public Realm officers will be supporting the Local Plan team in this work which is expected to be available in the autumn.

Proposed Policy

14. Under health and safety legislation the Council has a duty to keep its trees as safe as reasonably possible. This is established by:

    a) Having a recognised risk assessment process

    b) Having a suitable recording system

    c) Taking appropriate management action to address safety issues

15. The proposed policy is provided as Annex 1. Key sections to highlight are:

    - Policy Statement 3: Risk Management - this policy provides details on the frequency and methodology used to meet the statutory obligations
    - Policy Statement 4: Recording - this policy provides details with regard to what information is recorded and on what system
    - Policy Statement 5: Tree removal and pruning - this policy sets out the arboricultural reasons for undertaking work to a tree
    - Policy Statement 6: Pruning - this policy sets out the circumstances in which no work to a tree will be carried out
    - Policy Statements 10 to 12: Work near public trees - these polices reaffirm the national and local standards for work by staff and contractors in close proximity to public trees
    - Policy Statement 14: Tree Replacement – this policy sets out the Council's approach to replacing trees which have had to be removed.
    - Policy Statement 15: Community involvement – this policy confirms the Council's commitment to working with both voluntary groups and individual volunteers in caring for the city's tree stock.

Recommendations made by the Learning & Culture Policy and Scrutiny Committee (pre Decision Calling in) 15th June 2016.

16. The table below provides a response to the specific comments made at the Learning & Culture Policy and Scrutiny Committee (pre Decision Calling in) 15th June 2016. Where officers are in agreement with the comments these have been incorporated into the draft policy.

Policy statement (PS)	Comment	Response
1 and 2 (Overall aims)	A city wide strategic approach is taken to tree planting which includes private land, where the council has influence or control through the planning process. The development of further supplementary planning guidance and need to working with other land owners to increase tree cover.	Not accepted as these ambitions are outside the scope of this policy. To progress these issues Officers meet with Cllr D'Agorne to further explore what is sought and then follow this up with the Local Plan team
	Seek to increase tree cover as part of City of York Council work	Accepted - additional text added to PS1.
6 (when pruning and similar work will not be undertaken)	Clarification over when work near buildings will take place (e.g. encroachment)	Accepted - additional text added to PS6
	Clarification sought to include a statement that responds to requests to retain natural light	Accepted - additional text added to PS6

10 and 11 (ground works near trees)	Closer collaboration with utility operators and provision of training	The request for closer collaboration has been passed to the Council's Highways team who manage this area of work
14 (Tree replacement)	Replacement trees to be planted in same or the immediate area	Part accept / part reject PS14 text revised so that it in the first instance planting will take place in the same area. This may not always be possible or desirable – e.g. ground conditions may have contributed to the death of the original tree.
	Publish a list of species	Rejected – as this restricts choice. Species availably varies from year to year and with increasing threat from pests and disease e.g. ash dieback, flexibility is required.
	Requirement to plant larger native / specimen trees where ground conditionals allow	Accepted - additional text added to PS14 As native trees are often not suited to urban locations, the reference to native trees has not been included.

	Requirement to plant more than 1 replacement tree	Rejected as a fixed condition. Site based conditions and the value of the lost tree(s) will dictate the replacement planting. The CAVAT methodology in PS12 is a guide for working out the number of replacement trees required.
16 (Funding by third parties)	Request for assistance to be provided in situations of financial hardship	Accepted - additional text added to PS16

Options and Analysis

17. For the reason set out in preceding paragraphs careful management is required if the Council's tree stock is to be maintained in a safe and sustained manner for future generations. The options open to the Executive Member are :

    Option a) to accept the draft policy as proposed.

    Option b) to add to or amend the policy to include issues raised by the Scrutiny Committee that have not been incorporated into the draft policy.

    Option c) to suggest other amendments.

18. If the Council does not agree a policy it will weaken the Council's position in dealing with unjustified requests for work and its health and safety obligations including defending potential insurance claims.

19. Subject to agreement the policy will be made available on the Council's web site.

Council Plan

20. The Arboricultural management policy contributes to the following Council Plan priorities:

- Delivering frontline services for residents is the priority
- Residents are encouraged and supported to live healthily
- Focus on the delivery of frontline services for residents and the protection of community facilities.
- Focus on cost and efficiency to make the right decisions in a challenging financial environment.

Implications

21. **Financial:** The management of the tree stock is funded through existing service budgets.

22. There are no **Equalities, Crime and Disorder, Human Resources, Legal, Information Technology, Property** or **Other** implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

23. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy the main risks that have been identified associated with the areas of work covered by the policy proposed in this report are those which relate to governance, i.e. stewardship of the Council's tree assets, and legal and regulatory, i.e. relating to health and safety. Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk score has been assessed at 10 which equates to "Low". This is acceptable but means that regular monitoring is required of the operation of the new arrangements.

Annexes

Annex 1 - Draft Arboricultural Policy for the management of City of York Council trees.

Annex 2 - Statement made by Councillor L. Kramm to the Learning & Culture Policy and Scrutiny Committee (pre Decision Calling in) 15th June 2016

Annex 3 - Statement made by Councillor A. D'Agorne to the Learning & Culture Policy and Scrutiny Committee (pre Decision Calling in) 15th June 2016.

Contact Details

<table>
<tr><td>Author:</td><td colspan="4">Chief Officer responsible:</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Dave Meigh
Operations Manager – Public Realm

Harvey Lowson
Arboricultural Manager</td><td colspan="4">Charlie Croft
Assistant Director (Communities, Culture and the Public Realm)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Report Approved</td><td>✓</td><td>Date</td><td>16.6.16.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Specialist Implications Officers: None</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Wards Affected:</td><td>All</td><td>✓</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">For further information please contact the author of the report</td></tr>
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ANNEX 1

Arboricultural Policy for the management of the City of York Council's Public Trees

This document contains information on tree risk management, tree protection, tree replacement, tree maintenance and tree related insurance claims.

The following policy statements constitute the City of York Council's Aboricultural Policy for public trees and aims to give clear statements to aid the Council in meeting its duty of care, legal and health and safety obligations whilst not exposing itself to any undue liability.

Overall Policy

Policy Statement 1 (as amended following Scrutiny)

The Council will sustain, protect and manage its public trees responsibly to ensure that it meets its statutory responsibilities without posing unreasonable risk to people or property. In so doing the Council will aim to increase the number and diversity of the trees it cares for.

(Original draft Policy Statement 1 for comparison

The Council will sustain, protect and manage its public trees responsibly to ensure that it meets its statutory responsibilities without posing unreasonable risk to people or property.)

Policy Statement 2

The Council will protect York's public trees from damage and unjustified removal with the aid of arboricultural protection guidelines and relevant legislation including The Town and Country Planning Act. The Council will enforce protection and seek to prosecute where tree protection related contraventions have occurred.

Risk Management

Policy Statement 3

The Council will carry out Public Tree Risk Assessments under the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999 including the inspection of trees in or near public places to assess whether they represent a foreseeable risk to persons or property, and to take remedial action as appropriate.

The Council currently uses the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA) method to assess tree risks.

ANNEX 1

QTRA quantifies the risk of significant harm from tree failure in a way that balances safety with tree values. QTRA also helps determine lower risk sites may not require detailed tree inspections. For such sites, the city is divided into areas and inspections carried out on a 4 yearly rotation.

Policy Statement 4

The Council will maintain a computer based tree management and mapping system which that records position, species, and maintenance and inspection history. The current system is provided by Ezytree. York's public tree survey is an ongoing process as new trees are planted and other removed. Information such as location, species and service department of public trees will be made available via the Council's web site.

Tree removal and pruning

Policy Statement 5

The Council will only prune or remove trees for sound arboricultural reasons such as:

- Being identified by risk assessment as dangerous and in need of safety related work.
- Proven or likely to be cause damage which is not resolvable.
- Considered by the Arboricultural Manager to be inappropriate species for the location

Or:

- When removal is required as part of an agreed management or thinning programme with mitigation such as replacement agreements.

Policy Statement 6 (as amended following Scrutiny)

The Council will not prune, cut roots or remove trees (where no work has been identified under PS5) for the following reasons:

- Encroachment into or over a neighbouring property (since the property owner already has a common law right to prune back to their boundary)
- To prevent roots entering private drains that are already broken or damaged
- To retain or increase light levels or change the view into or out of a private property

ANNEX 1

- To reduce or remove the perceived nuisance issues caused by birds, insects, falling debris, leafs, blossom and fruit, or pollen
- To make way for new highway cross-overs (drives) or front garden parking
- To address interference with solar collection, satellite dishes, TV reception or telephone cables
- A tree being perceived to be too large or tall
- A perceived risk that a tree could cause damage in the future
- Disturbance to pavements, kerbs, garden paths and walls. (In these cases engineering solutions will be sought in the first instance ensuing that the tree can be maintained)
- Neighbour disputes due to perceived nuisance from a tree

(Original Draft Policy Statement 6 for comparison

The Council will not prune, cut roots or remove trees for the following reasons:

- *Encroachment into or over a neighbouring property (since the property owner already has a common law right to prune back to their boundary)*
- *To prevent roots entering private drains that are already broken or damaged*
- *To increase natural light or change the view into or out of a private property*
- *To reduce or remove the perceived nuisance issues caused by birds, insects, falling debris, leafs, blossom and fruit, or pollen*
- *To make way for new highway cross-overs (drives) or front garden parking*
- *To address interference with solar collection, satellite dishes, TV reception or telephone cables*
- *A tree being perceived to be too large or tall*
- *A perceived risk that a tree could cause damage in the future*
- *Disturbance to pavements, kerbs, garden paths and walls. (In these cases engineering solutions will be sought in the first instance ensuing that the tree can be maintained)*
- *Neighbour disputes due to perceived nuisance from a tree)*

ANNEX 1

Policy Statement 7

The Council's arboricultural staff and contractors' tree work will comply with the "British Standards for Tree Work 3998 2010" except where safety considerations may overrule them. When undertaking any maintenance works near to trees all internal and external contractors and operatives must adhere to the national tree protection guidelines as set out in this document.

Policy Statement 8

Where possible advance notice will be given regarding important trees identified for removal. This will normally be an explanatory notice posted on the tree or near its location.

Trees within the Council's housing land

Policy Statement 9

Communal shared gardens

The Council will manage communal garden trees in accordance with the standard criteria set out in Policy Statements 5 to 8.

Non-communal tenant gardens

Tenants are responsible for maintaining trees within their gardens in accordance with the tenancy agreement. Tenants must not themselves, or arrange for anyone else, to damage, heavily prune or cut down trees and hedges within the boundaries of the property without first getting the approval of their estate manager. The estate manager will seek advice from the Arboricultural Manager before granting permission for such works.

If a Tenant or an estate manager thinks a tree may be dangerous, the Arboricultural Manager will inspect the tree. If the tree is judged to be nuisance or dangerous it will be removed or made safe. The Arboricultural Manager can also offer advice on suitable trees species for gardens. Trees that are very large, fast growing or conifer species will not recommended.

Protection for trees from adjacent works

Policy Statement 10

When undertaking any works near to trees all internal and external contractors and operatives must adhere to the national and local tree protection guidelines as set out in this document.

ANNEX 1

Policy Statement 11

The Council will ensure that all non Arboricultural work taking place near trees must be in accordance with national tree protection guidelines. Utility work must be in accordance NJUG Vol 4 Guidelines for the Planning, Installation and Maintenance of Utility Apparatus in Proximity to Trees: http://www.njug.org.uk/publications/

Highway and development site work must be in accordance with "British Standard 5837 2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction": http://shop.bsigroup.com/en/ProductDetail/?pid=000000000030213642

Highway tree protection information can be found in the CYC Highway Design Guide: http://www.york.gov.uk/info/200274/road_building/409/road_building/2

All agents, partners and contractors of the Council will be required to comply with these policy statements.

Policy Statement 12

The Council will seek compensation from anyone responsible for damage to or removal of any public tree to the tree's monetary value. This value will be calculated using the recognised valuation system called Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees, CAVAT. CAVAT provides a method for managing trees as public assets rather than liabilities.

Claims against the Council

Policy Statement 13

All tree related insurance claims made will be processed by our insurance section. No trees shall be removed or pruned for alleged or potential damage claims until documentary evidence has been presented for investigation by the Council's insurers. Action will be taken to resolve justified claims and retain any trees if deemed possible.

Tree replacement

Policy Statement 14 (as amended following Scrutiny)

The Council will seek to replace all trees lost. Where possible planting will take place in the same location. Species will be based on site specific conditions including available space, with more beneficial larger species preferred.

ANNEX 1

The council will seek to establish a diversity of species to mitigate against pests and diseases that can threaten a single species. Where development results in tree removal; mitigation planting will be requested.

(Original Draft Policy Statement 14 for comparison

The Council will seek to replace trees lost. Species will be based on site specific conditions and available space. It is not always possible or desirable to plant like for like replacement species in the same location. The council will seek to establish a diversity of species to mitigate against pests and disease that can threaten a single species. Where development results in tree removal; mitigation planting will be requested.)

Community Involvement

Policy Statement 15

The Council will encourage and support volunteers and community groups to care for existing trees and plant new trees. Support will be given through officer time and will include training and. support for funding bids. Members of the public may request new trees out side their property. Such requests will be generally be supported, subject to necessary safety checks.

Funding of tree work by third parties

Revised Policy Statement 16 (as amended following Scrutiny)

It is not possible for the City of York Council to fund all requests for tree work. In some cases those requesting work to public trees may wish to fund the work using their own appointed contractor. Work can be carried out by agreeing an approved arboricultural BS 3998 specification with the contractor and Arboricultural Manager. In cases of financial hardship advice will be provided on where assistance may be available.

(Original Draft Policy Statement 16 for comparison

It is not possible for the City of York Council to fund all requests for tree work. In some cases those requesting work to public trees may wish to fund the work using their own appointed contractor. Work can be carried out by agreeing an approved arboricultural BS 3998 specification with the contractor and Arboricultural Manager.)

STATEMENT FROM CLLR KRAMM

ANNEX 2

Tree replacement
Policy Statement 14

The Council will seek to replace trees lost. Species will be based on site specific conditions and available space. It is not always possible or desirable to plant like for like replacement species in the same location. The Council will seek to establish a diversity of species to mitigate against pests and disease that can threaten a single species. Where development results in tree removal; mitigation planting will be requested.

Tree replacement
Policy Statement 14

The Council will seek to replace trees lost. Wherever possible, the replacement trees will be planted in the same location or the immediate area. When identifying locations, the Council considers a number of factors including:

- The width of the pavement or verge
- Presence of cables and other utility pipes
- Location of driveways
- Location of new street lights

Species will be based on site specific conditions and available space.

The Council will ensure that a newly planted tree is able to thrive in its new location and therefore reach maturity is key to maximising environmental benefits such as carbon sequestration and pollution control. To this end, the Council will choose all species with suitability and sustainability in mind and to minimise conflict with both structures and people. The Council will publish an approved list of species. It is not always possible or desirable to plant like for like replacement species in the same location. The Council will seek to establish a diversity of species to mitigate against pests and disease that can threaten a single species. Where suitable grass areas are available adjacent to the highway and there is adequate soil volume for unrestricted root development and space for full crown development, then larger native and specimen species will be considered by the Council.

Where development results in tree removal; mitigation planting will be requested.

Example of an approved list of species[1]:

Primary Species: Narrow Verges and Tree Pits

- Acer campestre 'Elegant'
- Betula ermanii
- Corylus colurna
- Crataegus laevigata 'Paul's Scarlet'
- Ginkgo biloba
- Gleditsia triacanthos 'Sunburst'
- Liquidambar styraciflua 'Worplesdon'
- Malus 'Rudolph'
- Platanus x hispanica
- Prunus hillieri 'Spire'
- Pyrus calleryana 'Chanticleer'
- Sorbus x arnoldiana 'Schouten'
- Tilia cordata 'Rancho'
- Tilia 'Winter Orange'
- Tilia cordata x mongolica 'Harvest Gold'
- Sorbus intermedia 'Brouwers'

Native Species: Wide Grass Verges where Root and Crown Development are not Restricted

- Quercus robur
- Carpinus betulus
- Pinus sylvestris
- Taxus bacatta
- Fagus sylvatica
- Crataegus monogyna
- Betula pendula
- Acer campestre

Arboretum/Specimen Species: As Native Species but in Prominent Position

- Quercus cerris
- Liriodendron tulipifera
- Cedrus atlantica 'Glauca'
- Catalpa bignonoides
- Sequoiadendron giganteum
- Ulmus 'New Horizon'
- Parrotia persica
- Gymnocladus dioica
- Pterocarya fraxinifolia

[1] https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/in-your-area/report_request/trees.html

ANNEX 3

STATEMENT FROM CLLR D'AGORNE

Call- in Arboricultural Policy for the Management of Public Trees and Woodland Jun 15th

This is timely, given the recent media attention to the Clifton Moor tree belt, which clearly hasn't been managed according to good arboricultural practice. Broadly we very much support this first step to bring all CYC practices together in one clear statement, although we feel it should explicitly extend to or cross reference policy for trees on private land where the council has influence or planning control.

(1)

An overarching 'policy statement' should be added, endorsing the objective of increasing overall tree cover and enhancing diversity of species and age profile, with a process for reviewing progress and setting targets in consultation with interested bodies such as Treemendous, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust etc.

(2)

The explicit contribution trees make to mitigating air pollution in urban areas and countering climate change through water retention and summer shade should be taken into account when making decisions that affect tree cover. This would extend to requiring two semi mature replacement trees for each mature tree felled and a supplementary planning document within the Local Plan explicitly spelling out objectives for tree cover as well as a broader Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Strategy.

(3)

All partners of the One Planet York initiative should be encouraged to conduct a clear audit of the trees and biodiversity within their estate and impacted by any contractual arrangements so that they can adopt a strategy for extending tree cover in York wherever the opportunity arises.

The council can also work to promote best practice by utility operators (Policy 10 and 11) not just through highlighting protection guidelines but also through more proactive training, awareness raising and collaborative working to 'design in' tree locations and cable runs at the earliest stage of any road or other development.

(4)

As stated at the outset, this is an excellent statement of the work being done in York to do our best to maintain our tree heritage, But we should be clearer about longer term strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing tree cover and age profile in the city centre, in existing residential and amenity areas and within new developments as they come forward for approval.

Cllr Andy D'Agorne
Calling in member

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Decision Session - Executive Member for Culture, Leisure & Tourism 24 June 2016

Report of the AD Governance & ICT

Goose Management Scrutiny Review - Cover Report

Introduction

1. This cover report re-presents the final report from the Goose Management Scrutiny Review and asks the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure & Tourism to reconsider the review recommendations, in light of the additional information presented in this report.

Review Recommendations

2. In March 2016, the Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee considered the Goose Management Task Group's review findings as presented in the final report at Appendix 1 and endorsed the review draft recommendations as listed below:

   i) Officers to carry out a number of trials to test the effectiveness of various measures i.e.

   - A licensed chemical (if sourced)
   - A droppings collection machine
   - Ultrasound audio
   - Amend the fencing at War Memorial Gardens
   - Expand and refresh signage in public parks and open spaces

   ii) To inform the current annual egg treatment works undertaken by the council and to inform a future integrated goose management strategy for the city, Executive to consider providing funding from the additional ward funding monies allocated for environmental projects, to enable a survey to be undertaken of the city's Canada & Greylag goose population, and to map nesting sites across the whole CYC administrative area.

iii) Officers to draft an integrated goose management strategy for the Executive's consideration (taking account of the findings from the various trials and the survey), which identifies:

- A range of measures suitable for specific public spaces/parks
- The costs and resource requirements associated with those measures
- Appropriate funding options to include ward funding, capital budget etc.
- A monitoring regime to assess the strategy's effectiveness

iv) Permission to be sought from private land owners identified in ii) for access to treat eggs laid on their land

v) The strategy's effectiveness to be monitored over several years, before consideration is given to whether a cull is required in support of the strategy.

Reason: To assist in the development of a suitable long term strategy for the management of geese in York and to conclude this scrutiny review in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols.

3. In April 2016, the review final report was presented to the Executive by Councillor Kramm (Chair of the Task Group) who provided a comprehensive run through of the review work undertaken, which had led to the recommendations above. Cllr Kramm also confirmed the Scrutiny Committee's view that the recommended actions would provide the city with a much needed long-term strategy for the management of geese.

4. The Executive thanked the Task Group for their work but raised concerns regarding the resourcing and officer time required to produce and implement an integrated goose management strategy. The Executive Member for Culture, Leisure & Tourism confirmed that, whilst not fully supportive of the review recommendations, he would be willing to see officers continue to trial various measures in an effort to alleviate the problems detailed in the report.

5. The Executive chose not to approve the recommendations as presented. Instead they referred the review recommendations back to the Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee with a request that they be reconsidered in line with budget constraints, and redrafted for further consideration by the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure & Tourism.

6. In May 2016 the Scrutiny Committee considered the Executive's request but agreed that the original recommendations as presented to the Executive in April 2016 were the most appropriate to properly address the needs of the city in relation to goose management. It was agreed that officers should provide the Executive Member with any appropriate additional information available to support him in his re-consideration of the review recommendations.

Additional Information in support of Review Recommendations

7. Recommendation i) – Officers to carry out a number of trials

   The Public Realm Operations Manager (Strategy & Contracts) has confirmed that it would be possible to carry out all of the proposed trials to test the effectiveness of various measures without the need of additional resources.

8. Recommendation ii) – Carry out a survey of the city's goose population

   Having considered the quotes received the Public Realm Operations Manager (Strategy & Contracts) has confirmed that the cost of carrying out a survey would have been £6k had that work been undertaken this year. However, as the nesting period has now past, there may be a slight increase in that cost should it be agreed that the work be undertaken during next year's nesting period which will fall within the 2017/18 financial year.

9. The Council currently spends £900 a year treating eggs in known nests on council land. It would be possible to increase this programme within the existing budget; however, those wards who wished to participate in the expanded programme would need to fund the initial survey. It is expected that those wards would be Micklegate, Heworth, Guildhall & Fishergate. This would be a legitimate use of their ward environmental budget. The Public Realm Operations Manager (Strategy & Contracts) would commission the work. The purpose of the survey would be to identify more nests than those currently treated, which if included in future annual egg treatment works would have a more positive impact on reducing goose numbers.

10. Recommendation iii) – Drafting an Integrated Goose Management Strategy

    It is accepted that it will not be possible to draft a citywide strategy without impacting on current staffing resources.

However, as a result of the work undertaken on the review, a number of measures have already been identified that would improve the negative impact of geese on a number of specific sites across the city e.g. Rowntree Park, Memorial Gardens etc. It is therefore suggested that the relevant Ward Councillors may wish to consider whether they want to implement any of the measures identified by the review within their wards and use their ward funding to enable the necessary works.

11. In regard to the proposed purchase of a goose droppings collection machine, officers have agreed to proceed with a trial of the machine. They have agreed that, should it prove a success, it may be possible to purchase the equipment using existing budgets for this financial year provided that there is a commitment from wards who wish to use their budgets to operate it in their respective areas.

12. Recommendation iv) – Seeking permission to treat eggs laid on private land

    Officers have confirmed that complaints and requests on how to deal with geese have been received from private landowners and businesses, not only where geese have been nesting but also where they have been grazing. Therefore it is expected that they would be receptive to a request for the Council to treat eggs in nests found on their land.

13. Implementation of this recommendation would only be required as a result of recommendation (ii) being implemented. The survey would identify the number of landowners / businesses to be contacted. This could be done either in writing or, to reduce costs, by email. Alternatively, as the company that undertakes the survey would need to seek permission to access any privately owned land to carry out the survey, they could perhaps at the same time request permission for future treatment of eggs in any nests found, (explaining that this would be a yearly event). At the very least they could record the email contact details of each private landowner to minimise the work required to later seek permission to treat eggs in nests found on their land.

14. Recommendation v) – monitoring the effectiveness of an integrated strategy

    As the proposal now is that wards would implement their own measures in response to specific issues in their ward, it would be up to those wards to monitor the effectiveness of those measures.

Options

15. Having considered the further information provided by officers, the Executive Member may choose to:

    a. Approve some or all of the review recommendations
    b. Instruct officers to carry out alternative works
    c. Reject some or all of the recommendations

Implications

16. The implications associated with each recommendation were originally identified in the review final report (as shown at Appendix 1). The additional information provided by officers in this cover report also seeks to address those implications.

Recommendations

7. Having considered the additional information provided by officers detailed in paragraphs 7-14 above, the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure & Tourism is invited to reconsider the recommendations arising from the Goose Management Scrutiny Review.

Contact Details

Author:	**Chief Officer Responsible for the report:**		
Melanie Carr Scrutiny Officer Scrutiny Services Tel No.01904 552054	Andrew Docherty AD Governance & ICT **Report Approved** ✓	**Date**	31 May 2016

Wards Affected: **All** ✓

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes: Goose Management Scrutiny Review Final Report to Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee: 15 March 2016 http://modgov.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=670&MId=8917&Ver=4

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Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee 15 March 2016

Report of the Goose Management Scrutiny Review Task Group

Goose Management Scrutiny Review – Draft Final Report

Summary

1. This draft final report provides information on Goose Management scrutiny review, and asks the Committee to endorse the Task Group's draft recommendations prior to their presentation to the Executive in late April 2016.

Background to Review

2. At a meeting in September 2015, the Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee agreed to proceed with a scrutiny review of Geese Management across the city following submission of an associated scrutiny topic by Cllr Kramm.

3. A Task Group made up of Cllrs Kramm, Gunnell and Richardson was set up and tasked with identifying a suitable review remit and carrying out the review. The Task Group met for the first time in early December 2015 and the following was agreed:

Aim:

To improve the experience of residents and visitors to public parks, gardens and open spaces by examining the geese (and other water fowl) related problems affecting Rowntree Park, the University and other sites.

(*NB: All references thereafter to Geese, relate to both Geese and other water fowl*).

Objectives:

i. To understand previous examinations of the geese related problems in York, lessons learnt, cost to the city, associated health risks etc.

ii. To examine best practice nationally and elsewhere.

iii. To consider technical options for dropping removal, the associated costs and external funding possibilities.

iv. Consult all interested parties on geese population management and control practices, to understand the requirements for different species and animal protection issues.

v. Identify appropriate solutions and options for funding.

4. Furthermore, the Task Group agreed to co-opt two members on to the Task Group, one a member of the 'Friends of Rowntree Park' group and one a representative from the University of York.

5. The Task Group also identified a number of meetings dates and the following methodology for the review:

Meetings	Tasks
Meeting 1 - Formal Tuesday 26th January 4pm (West Offices)	Objective 1 – To consider information relating to: • The geese population in York • All previous related work undertaken by the Council • The associated cost to the city • Lessons learnt • Any associated health risks
Meeting 2 – Formal Tuesday 2nd February 5.30pm (West Offices)	Objective 2 - To examine best practice nationally and elsewhere. Objective 3 - To consider technical options for dropping removal, the associated costs and external funding possibilities.
Meeting 3 – Informal Tuesday 9th February 5.30pm (West Offices)	Objective 4 – Consultation Meeting
Meeting 4 – Informal Wednesday 17th February 5.30pm (West Offices)	To consider findings and consultation feedback, and identify appropriate review conclusions

Meeting 5 – Formal Thursday 3rd March 5.30pm (West Offices)	To consider draft final report.

6. The remit and methodology above was subsequently agreed by the Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee on 20 January 2016.

Information Gathered

7. In support of objective (i), at their first formal meeting on 26 January 2016, the Task Group received introductory information on the law protecting wild geese in the UK, together with a detailed presentation on goose management from the Councils Public Realm Operations Manager (Strategy & Contracts). The presentation confirmed:

- There has been an issue with geese in the city for 20 years with complaints being received annually
- The history of goose management in York with a summary of the principle areas of the city affected
- The species of Geese found across York (including at the University), and an estimation of their numbers
- The effect of droppings – poor water quality damaging the eco-system of the lakes in Rowntree Park and at the University
- The current programme of actions (in place since 1999) e.g. the treatment of eggs, the use of signage, fines for littering with bread, the daily sweeping of paths in Rowntree Park, and the associated costs
- The Council is currently only treating Canada Geese eggs as a licence is not required for this. Previously the Council were licensed to treat the eggs of Greylag Geese but this has lapsed and needs renewing.
- Egg Treatment entails coating the eggs in paraffin. Treated eggs are left in the nest to allow the female to continue incubating them. If removed the females will relay.
- Other actions considered, outlining the possible use of fences, how to discourage the public from feeding the geese and scaring techniques

8. The presentation also referenced a report on a 'Review of Management Options for Resolving Conflicts with Urban Geese' produced by FERA (Food & Environment Research Agency) in 2010 – see copy of presentation and FERA review at Annex A. Furthermore, the University of York confirmed they were experiencing the same problems with geese as evidenced in the presentation, and outlined the measures they had tried to address those problems.

9. Objective (ii) - To examine best practice nationally and elsewhere.
At a meeting on 2 February 2016, the Task Group received an information pack containing the following best practice guides, examples of good practice, and information on arrangements within the EU – see copy attached at Annex B:

- English heritage Landscape Advice Note on Canada Geese
- Natural England Technical Information Note TIN009: The management of problems caused by Canada geese: a guide to best practice
- Rural Development Service Technical Advice Note 51: The management of problems caused by Canada geese: a guide to best practice
- The Management of Problems caused by Canada Geese - A Guide to Best Practice: Produced by Dr John Allan, *(*Central Science Laboratory) - funded by the Dept of Environment Transport & the Regions (DETR)
- Examples of Good Practice from South West London, the Lake District and Scotland
- Information on the Arrangements for Goose Management from countries within the EU, Scandinavia, Iceland & Greenland

10. The Task Group also considered some examples of public education literature produced and in use by Friends of Rowntree Park, together with information on chemical repellents and electronic sonic devices.

11. Objective (iii) - To consider technical options for dropping removal, the associated costs and external funding possibilities.
At the same meeting in early February 2016 the Task Group considered information on two technical options for the collection of manure and watched a DVD showing those machines in use.

Consultation Meeting

12. Invitations were issued to representatives from the following organisations to attend a consultation meeting held on 9 February 2016:

- York University
- **Friends of Rowntree Park**
- Friends of Chapman's Pond
- **Friends of New Walk**
- **York Environment Forum**
- York Ornithological
- Askham Bryan College
- Parish Councils with ponds/lagoons – Askham Bryan, Askham Richard, Dunnington, Haxby, Holtby & Wigginton
- **York & District Amalgamation of Anglers**
- **York Lakeside Holidays**
- Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
- Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group
- RSPCA
- Public Health
- RSPB
- British Trust for Ornithology
- Yorkshire Water
- Yorkshire Farming & Wildlife Partnership
- Canada Goose Conservation Society
- Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust

13. Those shown in bold in the above list attended the meeting. They received a verbal update on the review work to date, and considered examples of signage used by authorities and organisations across the country to encourage the public not to feed the wildlife. The attendees provided information on the geese at various sites and went on to outline their concerns about their impact and the measures they had previously taken to try to mitigate that impact. They attendees were also provided with images of signage and asked to provide feedback.

Analysis

14. In considering the presentation given by the Operations Manager, (Strategy & Contracts) the Task Group accepted that:

- Canada & Greylag Geese have adopted a residential strategy in York and do not undergo long distance migration.
- They tend to stay on or around the same body of water throughout the year based on the availability of food, the number of nearby breeding sites, and safety from predators.
- There has been no confirmation of any health issues in York associated with Geese.

However, there is evidence to show that avian and human pathogens have been isolated from goose faeces including avian flu virus, Salmonella and E.coli[1]. Geese therefore have the potential to indirectly affect people and other water birds.

- There have been a number of reports of geese attacking members of the public and their dogs.

15. The Task Group recognised that the increasing population of geese in York was being driven by successful breeding as there appear to be ample sites, a ready supply of food and no predators. They therefore agreed that the continuation of egg treatment was necessary, and were pleased to note feedback from the consultation meeting, that others were also treating eggs.

16. Having discovered that Canada Geese are long-lived birds (12-16 year life span) with the average number of eggs laid in a nest being 5 or 6 each time, the Task Group considered whether the treatment of eggs was having the desired affect. They recognised that if some eggs remained untreated a limited number of chicks would be sufficient to replenish the normal annual loss of adults.

17. With this in mind, the Task Group agreed that unless every egg laid was treated, it would be impossible to prevent the number of geese from increasing. They also agreed that whilst the Council were paying a contractor to treat eggs laid on council land, there was no guarantee that all the nests on Council land were being found. Furthermore there was no real understanding of the number of nests elsewhere on adjacent land owned by others.

18. In considering whether the rounding up of a large number of the geese for transportation to a rural area of North Yorkshire was a viable option, they learnt that Canada Geese are now formally recognised as pests and therefore if caught, must be destroyed. Also, it was confirmed that those geese would likely return to their original location where they were already confident there was a food source and suitable and safe breeding sites. The Task Group therefore questioned whether it would be possible to seek permission from other land owners to treat the eggs in nests on their land.

19. In considering whether a cull would be a way forward, the Task Group noted that in 2000 it was agreed that a cull be undertaken in York.

[1] Information taken from FERA's 2010 report on 'A Review of Management Options for Resolving Conflicts with Urban Geese' – see Annex A.

At that time a licence to cull was required so one was subsequently obtained. However a complaint was made to the Ombudsman about the process followed, so a decision was taken not to proceed until the Ombudsman had examined the issue and reported back to the Council. By the time Ombudsman's decision was received the licence has expired. As a result, the cull was never carried out. Whilst sensitive to public opinion, the Task Group noted feedback from the consultation session that suggested those present would not be against a cull if carried out as part of a measured approach to the problem. They also noted there was no co-ordinated national drive towards culling although in various localities, culls had previously been undertaken. The Task Group were also made aware that in rural areas outside of the city, some private land owners had lawfully culled some geese.

20. The Task Group also considered other methods of geese management:

- Chemicals –The Task Group noted there were a number of products in use in other countries that make grass unpalatable to geese, but none which were licensed for use in the UK. It was unclear what effect they would have on other wildfowl, dogs, children and nearby watercourses. It was suggested that this option should be further explored and if a suitable licensed product was found, a sample could be obtained and tested (possibly in War Memorial Gardens).

- Audio Methods – it was agreed that super sonic audio methods would not be suitable for use in public parks but the use of ultra sound methods should be explored further as a solution for specific sites, and perhaps trialled to evaluate its effectiveness.

- Visual Methods – The Task group agreed that the use of visual deterrents could be useful in smaller locations but were probably not suitable for larger public spaces where they could be tampered with by the public. It was confirmed that the Merchant Adventurers Hall had previously trialled the use of a fake fox as a deterrent. Feedback confirmed that initially the geese were wary but soon became comfortable with its presence. Their view is that it may have worked better for longer, if the fox had been repositioned regularly. However, the fox was lost in the floods. The Hall now has netting placed along the river bank which has stopped geese from walking out of the water into the grounds, which they seem to prefer rather than flying into the site. This has resulted in fewer geese using their gardens.

- Education – It was confirmed that both the University and the Council uses signs to discourage feeding of the birds. As a key driver of urban population control, it was agreed that the public needed educating in regard to inappropriate feeding. The Task Group recognised that minimising or banning the feeding of geese would be highly beneficial. They considered the posters produced by the Friends of Rowntree Park and the examples of signage in use nationally (see annexes C & E), and noted the risk of causing malnutrition in birds and wing deformation caused by the feeding of bread. However, they agreed that the more complex signs explaining the effects of feeding the geese may not be suitable for public parks. Officers advised that currently, due to previous budget cuts, the Council does not have any dedicated park rangers or officers available to support an education programme. An Educational Officer from the Canal & River Trust offered to share their educational literature and the Task Group questioned whether information could be distributed to primary schools so they could undertake their own lessons, and some of those who attended the consultation session expressed an interested in being involved. It was also suggested that local media may also assist in promoting any educational messages.

- Collection of Droppings & Disposal – The Task Group watched a brief promotional video for a machine which could be used on grassed areas to collect manure. It was confirmed that the machine would be suitable for the collection of goose droppings and so it was suggested that officers arrange a demonstration. However, the Task Group acknowledged that the cost of a collection machine was not the only consideration; a machine to pull the collector would also need to be purchased as the Council did not currently own anything suitable. The cost for both machines would be approximately £10k. They recognised there would also be a staff cost associated with the work of approximately £15K a year, plus the cost of disposal. They agreed it may be possible to recycle the manure by offering it to the general public but it would need to be stored somewhere where the public could access it. The Task Group therefore questioned whether goose droppings were suitable for use as fertiliser, and it was later confirmed that if dried and added to the level 100 compost made at Harewood Whin, it would be suitable for that use. Finally, they agreed that a machine of the type suggested would not be suitable for use at every site affected by geese, due to the size and/or layout of some sites e.g. Memorial Gardens.

- Fencing – The Task Group learnt that adult geese can fly for all except the moult period and they typically choose to feed close to water. Therefore separating grassed areas from water bodies with a fence may be sufficient to prevent their access under certain circumstances. For example, if there are nearby trees that would prevent them from flying in – geese need an angle greater than 13°. The Task Group noted that fencing designed to prevent breeding had been shown to work but that it was reliant on the adults realising that nesting on the fenced site would prevent their chicks from being able to escape. The Task Group agreed that the high cost of fencing the lake at Rowntree Park (approximately £60k) precluded it from being a viable option for the site. However they questioned whether appropriate fencing around War Memorial Gardens might be a possibility. Officers suggested that fencing the full site would cost approximately £45K. In an effort to reduce that cost the Task Group agreed it may be possible to only fence the rear of the site adjacent to the river and car park which geese use as their walking route into the gardens. It was suggested that a trial could be undertaken using temporary fencing to evaluate the effectiveness of fencing part of the site.

- Alternative Planting – It was suggested that longer grass could provide an effective barrier to goose grazing as geese like to have a suitable view of the surrounding area and want their young to have visible access to a nearby body of water. However, the Task Group acknowledged that in places like Rowntree Park, the grass would never have time to grow as the geese are constantly there feeding. Elsewhere, replanting with unpalatable alternatives may work - one consultee confirmed that he had been advised that removing grass and other food sources and planting Ivy was a good way of ridding a site of geese.

- Other Deterrents – The Task Group considered a number of other possible deterrents e.g. the use of light lasers, trained dogs, distress calls, and falconry. 'Friends of Rowntree Park' confirmed they had tried walking dogs in the past and the geese appeared to be frightened by them, so were considering doing it again. However the Task Group were informed that geese are intelligent birds and over time would become accustomed to most stimuli. Scaring techniques would also influence the behaviour of other species and loud or visual stimuli might also conflict with the public's use of the parks. Also the Task Group noted the use of a metal grid system placed across a body of water had been implemented in some places to prevent geese from accessing the water.

However it was agreed this would not be a suitable option for Rowntree Park, as it would be costly and unsightly. Finally, the use of sprinklers was considered, but it was recognised that none of the council's public parks and open spaces had the necessary infrastructure installed to operate them. The Task Group agreed this might prove a costly measure but agreed the option could be further explored.

21. The Task Group considered further information on the long term results of the London Lakes Project undertaken by Wandsworth Borough Council (see Annex B for further information on that project). An officer visited those parks while on other duty in London and it was found that none were similar to the urban parks found in York. They also noted that a cull had been undertaken at one of the parks but that overall the results were equally good at the other parks therefore suggesting the cull may not have been required.

22. Finally, the Task Group found no evidence to suggest that any single management technique would be fully effective in controlling the problems caused by geese, and where best practice showed evidence of success; this had invariably been as a result of a suite of measures.

Conclusions

23. In considering all of the information the Task Group agreed both Canada Geese and Greylag Geese were a problem for York's parks and open spaces. Whilst at the University the issues were mainly with Greylag Geese. There was also no evidence to suggest that other forms of wild fowl were a problem.

24. Overall, the Task Group agreed that no one measure in isolation could lead to a long term improvement in the experience of residents and visitors to York's public parks, gardens and open spaces. They therefore agreed that a mix of population-based, site-based and impact controls together with a public education approach would be required to reduce York's goose population and manage the adverse effects of geese, which in turn would benefit other waterfowl species. They also agreed that:

    - Measures to encourage Geese to use land not in use by the public would be of benefit
    - Site based solutions would need to be tailored to each sites needs
    - It may be possible to use ward funding for some site-based measures

25. In regards to a cull, the Task Group agreed that whilst there was some support for it and it would have an immediate effect, it would only be of short term benefit. They therefore accepted it would only be effective if carried out in conjunction with other measures, and that a suite of measures were likely to have the same long term effect. They therefore concluded that the city needed an integrated management strategy, recognising that it may take several years before a notable reduction in goose numbers is achieved, and agreed that the strategy should be implemented and the accumulative effect monitored over several years before it would be necessary to consider whether a cull was required.

26. As a first step, in order to fully understand the scope of the problem across York, the Task Group agreed it would be prudent to undertake a survey of York's goose population, preferably during this year's nesting season. It was agreed that the cost of carrying out a survey in York should be investigated further, so a number of quotes are being sourced for appropriate assessment.

Options

27. Prior to this report being presented to the Executive in April 2016, this Committee may choose to:

- Endorse the recommendations listed in paragraph 35 below
- Agree changes to this draft final report
- Revise the recommendations

Council Plan 2015-19

28. This scrutiny review addresses an ongoing issue for residents in a number of wards and will aim to identify a solution for those local communities. The review therefore supports the 'a council that listens to residents' priority of the Council Plan.

Implications

29. **Financial** – It will be possible to complete the trials and measures listed in recommendation (i) using existing public realm budgets. However there is insufficient budget to complete the remaining recommendations. In regard to recommendation (ii) it has been suggested that it may be possible to provide the necessary funding from the additional ward funding monies allocated for environmental projects, subject to Executive agreement.

30. In regard to Recommendation (iii) the costs involved in implementing the Goose Management Strategy will be identified as the suite of measures required are identified. It is suggested that those measures and costs be identified on a site by site basis so that all options for appropriate funding can be explored, including the option to apply for ward funding.

31. **HR** – It will be possible to complete the work associated with Recommendation (i) using existing resources. The resources required to implement the measures contained within the draft Goose Management Strategy will be identified as the strategy is developed for the consideration of the Executive in due course.

32. **Legal** – The legal implications associated with the recommendations endorsed by this Committee, will be identified and included in this report prior to its presentation to the Executive.

33. There are no other known implications associated with the recommendations arising from this review.

Risk Management

34. There are no known risks associated with the recommendations arising from this scrutiny review.

Recommendations

35. The Committee are recommended to endorse the Task Group's draft recommendations below:

i) Officers to carry out a number of trials to test the effectiveness of various measures i.e.:

- A licensed chemical (if sourced)
- A droppings collection machine
- Ultrasound audio
- Amend the fencing at War Memorial Gardens
- Expand and refresh signage in public parks and open spaces

ii) A survey to be undertaken of the city's Canada & Greylag goose population, to map nesting sites across the whole CYC administrative area.

iii) Officers to draft an integrated goose management strategy for the Executive's consideration (taking account of the findings from the various trials and the survey), which identifies:

- A range of measures suitable for specific public spaces/parks

- The costs and resource requirements associated with those measures
- Appropriate funding options to include ward funding, capital budget etc.
- A monitoring regime to assess the strategy's effectiveness

iv) Permission to be sought from private land owners identified in ii) for access to treat eggs laid on their land

v) The strategy's effectiveness to be monitored over several years, before consideration is given to whether a cull is required in support of the strategy.

Reason: To assist in the development of a suitable long term strategy for the management of geese in York and to conclude this scrutiny review in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols.

Contact Details

Author:
Melanie Carr
Scrutiny Officer
Tel No. 01904 552054
e: melanie.carr@york.gov.uk

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:
Andrew Docherty
AD Governance & ICT

Report Approved ✓ **Date** 24 Feb 2016

Wards Affected: Guildhall, Micklegate & Hull Rd ✓

Background Papers: None

Annexes:

Annex A: Copy of Presentation provided at meeting on 26 January 2016 & copy of FERA Review

Annex B: Information pack containing best practice guides, UK examples of good practice & Information on goose management across the EU.

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Goose Management Scrutiny Review Task Group – 26th January 2016

ANNEX A

Meeting 1 agenda

- Geese population
- Current actions
- Actions considered but not pursued
- Costs
- Lessons learnt
- Health risks

Overview

- Has been an issue for over 15 years
- Problem areas
  - War Memorial Gardens (damage to plants)
  - Esplanade and Kings Staith (droppings)
  - Eye of York (droppings)
  - Tower Gardens (droppings / moult site)
  - Rowntree Park (droppings / water quality)
  - Monkbridge Gardens (feeding / droppings)

War Memorial Gardens - damage

The geese population in York

- No definitive data
- Approx 250 counted on 29th September 2015 between Rowntree Park and War Memorial Gardens
- 500 plus birds in the city
- Rough 50 / 50 split between the two main species
- The geese are comfortable within the urban environment

City Walls - Station Road

Current actions

- Essentially the same actions for the last 15 years. Approach has been
  - Egg treatment
  - Clean up
  - Inform the public not to feed them – signage
- Photo of mark II sign

Actions Considered 1

- Relocation - approval
- Cull – approval, licence, where, seasonal
- Cleaning grass areas – effectiveness, cost (staff time & disposal)
- Scaring – noise, visual (decoys, dogs, birds, lasers)
- Repellents – chemicals (approvals / safety)
- Planting – grass type, boundaries

Actions considered 2 - Fencing

effectiveness, visual impact & design, where, costs

- Photo to add

Costs

- Egg treatment £800- £900 pa - 120 - 180 eggs
- Ad hoc signage
- Cleaning – Rowntree Park, Kings Staith, Esplanade
- Floral displays
- Staff time – complaints

Lessons learnt

- City wide issue with local impact
- Continuing to do what we do now will not resolve the problem one way or another
- Operational
- Political

Health risks

- Perception amongst some members of the public there are health risks. 2010 FERA study *"disease transfer to people may be over played"* p5.

- *"In terms of statistics I can confirm zero cases of suspected or confirmed illness associated with Canada geese in the North Yorkshire area that have been reported to the Health Protection Unit".* Health Protection Agency contact 2013

Rowntree Park – plan to aid any discussion

ANNEX A

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Annex B

Goose Management Scrutiny Review

Review Objective 2 - To Examine Best Practice Nationally & Elsewhere

It is recognised that geese can and do cause major damage to amenity grasslands, pastures and crops through grazing and trampling. Droppings can be a health and safety risk to humans, both through ingestion but also causing slippery conditions. Ecological impact includes damage to other wildlife (such as trampling other bird nests) and destruction of waterside habitat, for example reed beds. The birds also pose an airplane collision risk in many parts of the world. In recognising the issues associated with geese, a number of recognised organisations/bodies have produced best practice guides.

In support of review objective (ii) an information pack has been assembled containing those best practice guides, together with examples of good practice in the UK, and information on arrangements within the EU.

Information Pack

Item 1 - English Heritage Landscape Advice Note on Canada Geese

Item 2 - Natural England Technical Information Note TIN009: The management of problems caused by Canada geese: a guide to best practice

Item 3 - Rural Development Service Technical Advice Note 51: The management of problems caused by Canada geese: a guide to best practice

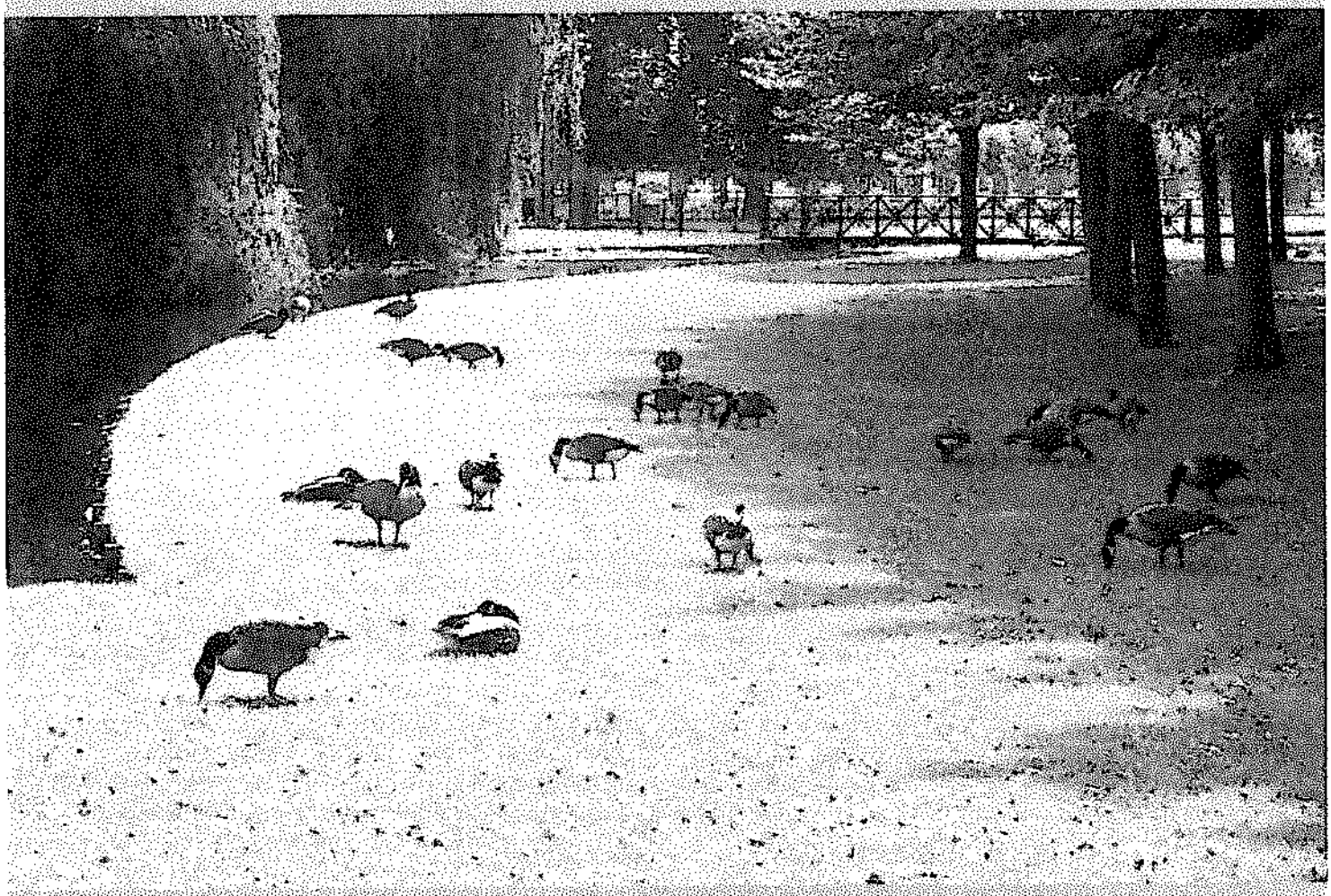
Item 4 - The Management of Problems caused by Canada Geese - A Guide to Best Practice: Produced by Dr John Allan, (Central Science Laboratory) - funded by the Dept of Environment Transport & the Regions (DETR)

Item 5 - Examples of Good Practice from South West London, the Lake District and Scotland

Item 6 - Information on the Arrangements for Goose Management from countries within the EU, Scandinavia, Iceland & Greenland

ENGLISH HERITAGE

Landscape Advice Note: Canada Geese



Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*) frequently use lakes, ponds and grassland in historic landscapes, and may have adverse effects for a variety of reasons. This Landscape Advice Note outlines the damage that can be caused by Canada geese and how this can be managed and mitigated at historic sites.

INTRODUCTION

Waterfowl are an important feature of many lakes and ponds in historic landscapes. It is essential to determine the causes of problems before targetting management of individual species or groups of species. The ecology of individual species and their abundance will have different impacts.

CANADA GEESE

The Canada goose is not a native species. It was introduced from North America, initially by Charles II in 1665 and there have been many further introductions since. Until the 1940s, most geese were resident in parklands and numbers remained fairly low. There has been a rapid increase in population over the past 70 years, partly due to an increase in suitable habitat such as reservoirs and flooded gravel pits. The British population is still increasing.

Canada geese are largely herbivorous and spend a lot of time grazing on grassland or in water. Parks can be ideal habitat for the species. This can lead to problems with feeding damage or trampling of vegetation, and accumulations of droppings.

Canada geese can live up to 30 years. They start breeding at two to three years old. Females lay usually four to nine eggs in March or April, and nest either singly or in small groups. The species has very different requirements at different times of year. In the breeding season, water bodies with islands or other undisturbed areas are selected by the geese as these make secure nesting sites. Following breeding, adults moult for around 35-40 days in June and July. They are flightless and spend most of their time on the water to avoid predators. During the autumn and winter they select sites with good grazing.

Many Canada geese are extremely tame, and will come to be fed consequently they are often very popular with visitors. On some sites, control of this species may well be a contentious issue.

TYPES OF DAMAGE

Canada geese, particularly if present in large numbers, may cause a number of problems:

- Vegetation damage

Grazing geese may damage lawns and other vegetation, particularly on the banks of ponds or lakes. The birds forage on a range of vegetation. As well as grass they will also eat aquatic and emergent plants which can be important for maintaining dissolved oxygen levels in water bodies. Geese may also damage vegetation by trampling, particularly around the edges of water bodies. In large numbers, the geese can also damage grass areas.

- Droppings

On lawns and grassland Canada geese droppings are unsightly, and the droppings may make paths dangerously slippery. Droppings in lakes and ponds add nutrients, particularly nitrate and phosphate, to the water, which can eventually seriously affect the water quality ecosystem. There is some evidence that they pose a hazard to human health if accidentally ingested.

- Physical damage

Large numbers of geese may create extensive areas of bare ground at the water's edge and cause erosion of the banks.

- Aggression

During the breeding season, geese may become more aggressive towards people, dogs and other waterfowl. Dogs may provoke a particularly fierce response from geese during the breeding season.

EXTENT OF DAMAGE

Damage caused by Canada geese must be viewed in context - the impact of any damage depends not just on the numbers of geese present but also the nature and uses of the site. A relatively small number of geese may cause significant problems in a small formal site, while a much larger population may cause no significant problems if the site is large, less formal, or little used by people.

Before any control is considered, it is important to carry out monitoring of the population to determine when in the year Canada geese use the site, and what they use it for. If geese are not present all year round, monitoring should also be carried out in other areas they use as any control measures may need to be

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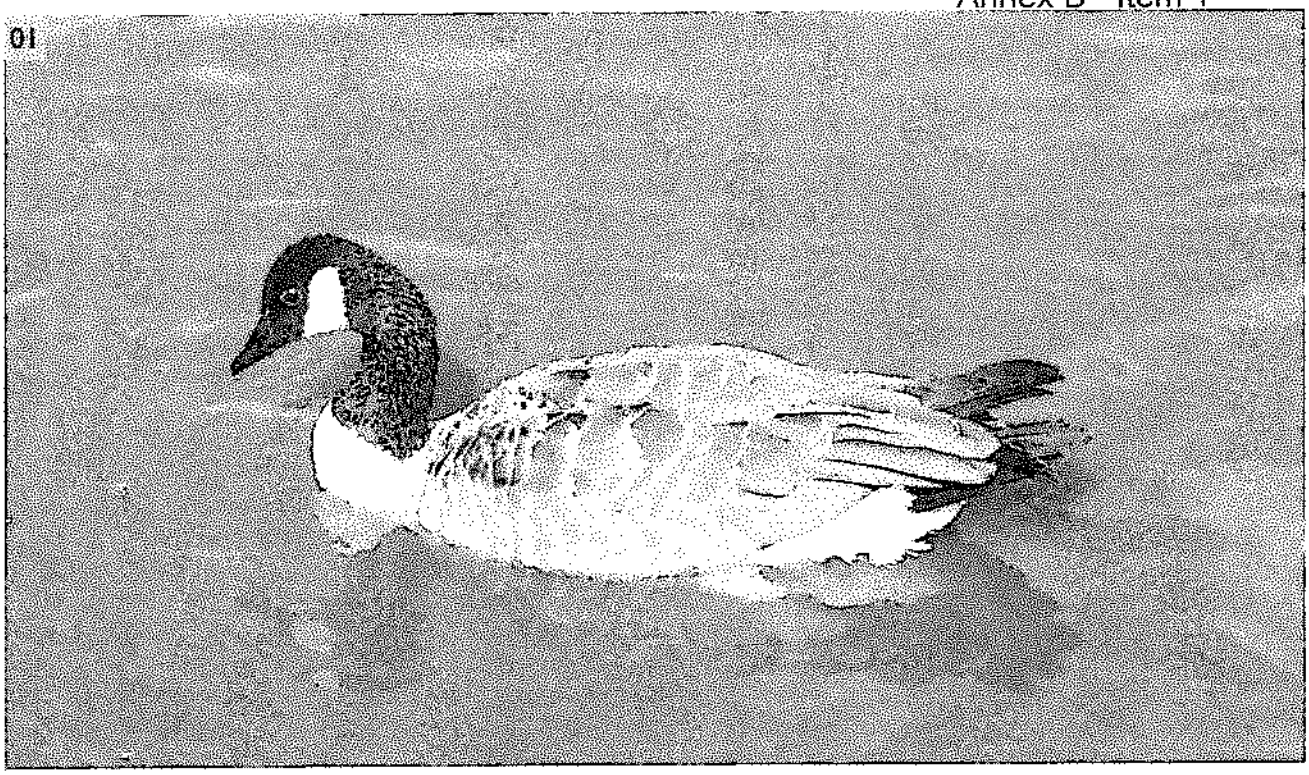

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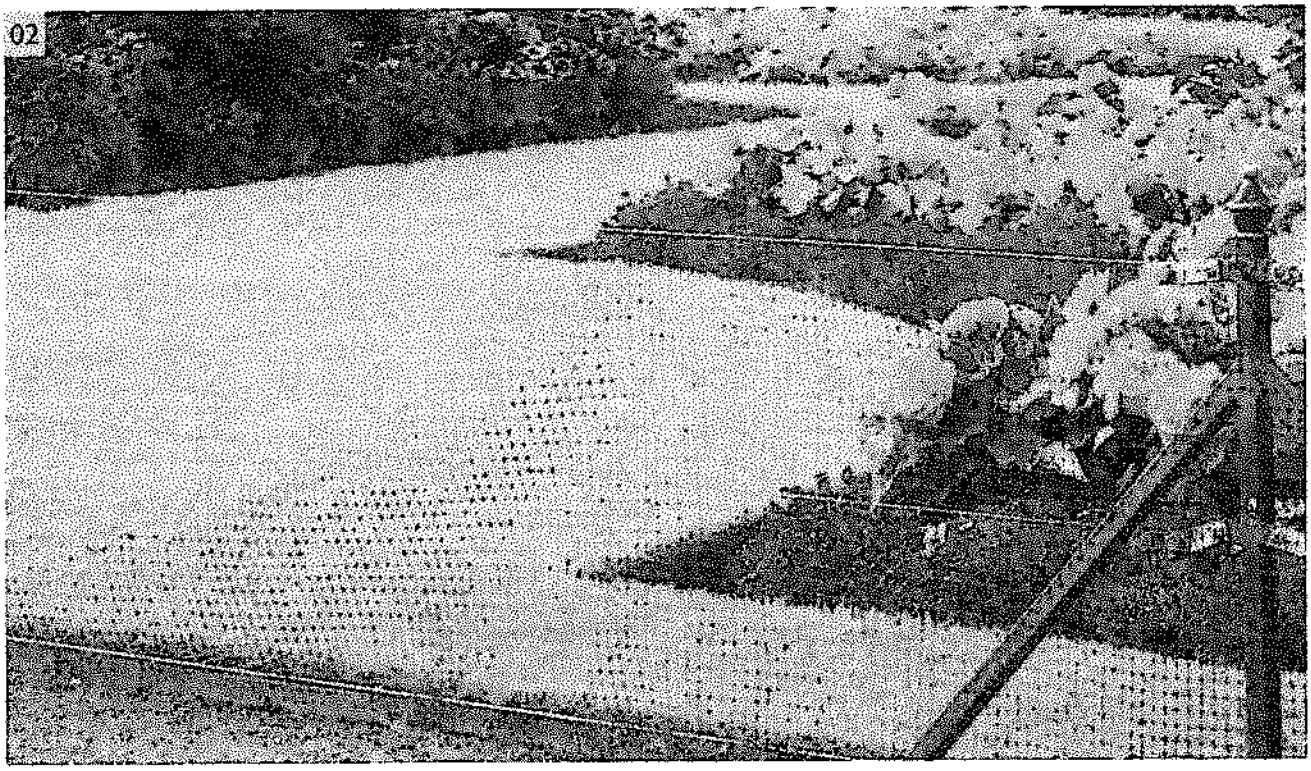

In large numbers, Canada geese can damage vegetation in and out of the water and create a large amount of mess © Alan Cathersides

A Canada goose on water © Alan Cathersides

Important vegetation may require specific protection from being eaten or trampled by Canada geese © Alan Cathersides

coordinated with other landowners to ensure they are effective.

Although geese may be the most visible cause of a problem, they may not be the most significant. For example, water supply and the flow in a water body will have an enormous impact on the water quality.

The presence of other waterfowl species should also be monitored, as these may be affected by control measures.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Research on the control of Canada geese has identified a range of techniques. The research, which included one site with over 300 geese present in summer, suggests that control techniques used in isolation are unlikely to be effective. Control measures will only work if an integrated programme of management techniques is carried out.

In many cases, management options will necessarily be restricted by the need to preserve historic features, planting layouts and so forth. Not all management options will be appropriate for all sites.

All potential control methods are aimed at reducing the numbers of geese, rather than completely excluding geese from a site, as this is usually impossible to achieve. Most control methods may be less effective if the population is relatively small. Control measures can be divided into site-based and population-based techniques.

SITE-BASED MANAGEMENT

Site-based management measures do not require a licence and include:

- Exclusion from islands

Fencing islands in ponds and lakes used for breeding can discourage geese from nesting on the islands. A 1m chicken wire fence with a 10cm gap between the ground and the bottom of the fence will allow other waterfowl to use the island. This technique is most likely to be successful if islands are well vegetated as this discourages geese from flying over the fence.

- Access to grazing areas

Fencing around the margins of a water body can discourage geese from feeding in areas beyond. In this way they can be directed away from sensitive grazing areas. Replanting grassland areas with shrubs decreases the food supply. Fencing these areas will be needed to ensure plants establish without grazing or trampling pressure.

- Reduce visibility of water bodies

Geese prefer to graze close to a water body which provides them with a safe retreat. By obscuring the views between feeding and grazing areas, geese will be discouraged from using them, however, this may be difficult to achieve in historic landscapes.

- Controlling public access

Fencing of water bodies can also be used to influence visitors, by restricting opportunities for feeding geese.

- Interpretation

Many people visiting sites value the waterfowl populations and consequently control measures may be controversial and should not be attempted without interpretation explaining the reasons for, and benefits of, carrying out control. For example, explaining that there are nature conservation benefits in reducing the geese population. Interpretation can also be used to discourage feeding of the birds, and inform people about aquatic ecology.

- Other methods

A number of other techniques can be used but are less well researched. Bird scaring is widely used in some areas on farmland but is less commonly used in aquatic habitats. Many scaring methods are also disturbing to visitors and nearby residents. Chemical repellents are used in North America but with limited effectiveness, and they are not currently approved for use in Britain.

POPULATION-BASED MANAGEMENT

Most population-based management measures require a licence and include:

- Translocation

This method has been used is the past, but is no longer encouraged, as it simply transfers a problem to a different site. It is also an offence to release Canada geese into the wild without a licence. Unless other measures are taken, other geese may colonise a site which has had its previous population removed.

- Egg-pricking, oiling or boiling

These are an effective way of preventing hatching, as birds are very loyal to their nesting sites, but the longevity of geese mean that a long-term programme of this management would be necessary in order to significantly reduce a population. Oiling of eggs kills embryos by depriving them of oxygen. In order to carry out any of these operations, a licence for the work must be obtained (see below). Leaving eggs

in place but preventing them from hatching means adults continues to protect them. Removal of eggs simply induces the female to lay more.

- Culling

Culling also requires a licence if it is to be done during the close season (1 February to 31 August, or 21 February to 31 August below high water mark). Outside the close season Canada geese can be shot by an authorised person, provided that other regulations concerning firearms safety, capture methods and so forth are adhered to. However this has practical difficulties on many sites. It may be more practical to round up geese during the moult, when they are unable to fly, however culling of geese is a very emotive issue.

LICENSING OF CONTROL OPERATIONS

All wild birds, including Canada geese, are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act, 1981. It is an offence to take, damage or destroy their nests or eggs without a licence, and it is also an offence to release them into the wild.

Licences for culling in the close season, egg-pricking or translocation of Canada geese can be issued for a number of reasons:

- To prevent serious damage or disease
- To conserve and protect wild birds
- To conserve flora and fauna
- To preserve public health or safety
- To prevent serious damage to livestock, crops, forestry or fisheries
- For the purposes of air safety

Licences are not issued solely to prevent damage to property.

OTHER BENEFITS OF CONTROL MEASURES

Parks in south-west London developed an integrated management strategy, involving both site-based and population-based control of geese as well as a range of other management techniques, to control populations and it resulted in a number of beneficial side-effects.

The measures taken to reduce numbers of geese were very effective and other waterfowl benefitted greatly from the changes. More species began to regularly use the ponds, and many species also increased in numbers. This is probably partly because the goose population before control measures began had been extremely high.

The reduction in geese numbers also assisted with attempts to improve water quality, mainly through a reduction of nitrate and phosphorus deposited as droppings in the ponds and lakes. The water bodies now support more invertebrate species and are better able to support aquatic plants, and this will gradually further improve the water quality and dissolved oxygen levels.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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ENGLISH HERITAGE OFFICES

North East
Bessie Surtees House
41-44 Sandhill
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE1 3JF
Tel: 01912 691200
e-mail: northeast@
english-heritage.org.uk

North West
Suites 3.3 and 3.4
Canada House
3 Chepstow Street
Manchester
M1 5FW
Tel: 01612 421400
e-mail: northwest@
english-heritage.org.uk

Yorkshire and the
Humber
37 Tanner Row
York
YO1 6WP
Tel: 01904 601901
e-mail: yorkshire@
english-heritage.org.uk

West Midlands
The Axis
10 Holliday Street
Birmingham
B1 1TG
Tel: 01216 256820
e-mail: westmidlands@
english-heritage.org.uk

East Midlands
44 Derngate
Northampton
NN1 1UH
Tel: 01604 735400
e-mail: eastmidlands@
english-heritage.org.uk

East of England
Brooklands
24 Brooklands Avenue
Cambridge
CB2 2BU
Tel: 01223 582700
e-mail: eastofengland@
english-heritage.org.uk

London
1 Waterhouse Square
138-142 Holborn
London
EC1N 2ST
Tel: 02079 733000
e-mail: london@
english-heritage.org.uk

South East
Eastgate Court
195-205 High Street
Guildford
GU1 3EH
Tel: 01483 252000
e-mail: southeast@
english-heritage.org.uk

South West
29 Queen Square
Bristol
BS1 4ND
Tel: 01179 750700
e-mail: southwest@
english-heritage.org.uk

National Office
The Engine House
Firefly Avenue
Swindon
SN2 2EH
Tel: 01793 414700
e-mail: customers@
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English Heritage is the Government's adviser on the historic environment with responsibility for all aspects of protecting and promoting the historic environment in England.

The role of English Heritage's Curatorial Department is to help everyone to be inspired and engaged by the Story of England through sites, artefacts and archives.

This guidance has been originally written by David Wells and has been revised and updated by Alan Cathersides and Emily Parker.

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ENGLISH HERITAGE

Natural England Technical Information Note TIN008

The management of problems caused by Canada geese: a guide to best practice

The Canada goose population in southern Britain numbers over 80,000 birds and is still increasing. However, in recent years the overall rate of growth has slowed and in some areas numbers have stabilised or declined. The geese live in local populations, usually of up to a few hundred birds, which remain around one or two water bodies that offer suitable habitats for breeding, roosting etc. Because the geese have relatively few predators, and can produce four or five young per year, numbers at particular sites can grow very rapidly and significant problems may occur.

Any management techniques used to control the problems caused by Canada geese must be legal and should take account of the fact that Canada geese are a popular species with many members of the public.

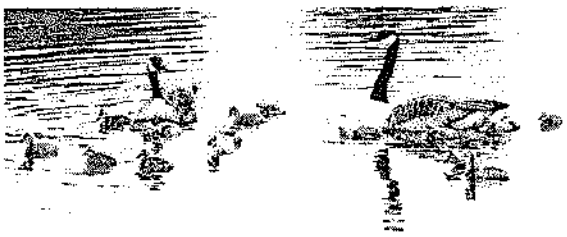
This guidance note aims to provide land managers with the information that they need to manage difficulties caused by Canada geese in a way that is effective, legal and sensitive to public opinion.

The protected status of wild Canada geese

The Canada goose, like all wild birds in Britain, is protected under the EC Wild Birds Directive implemented in Great Britain through the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended1. This Act makes it an offence to capture, kill or injure Canada geese, or to damage or take their nests or eggs. There are exceptions, the most important of which relate to the open season and to actions licensed under Section 16 of the Act.

Open season

Canada geese can be legally shot by authorised persons (that is, persons acting with the authority of the landowners, occupiers and the owners of the shooting rights to the land involved) or trapped by approved methods during the open season (between 1 September and 31 January, or 20 February inclusive on the foreshore) except on Sundays. Care must be taken to ensure that other regulations concerning firearms safety, capture methods etc are adhered to.



Licensed action

Defra issues a series of general licences under section 16 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. These allow Canada geese to be killed or taken, and their eggs and nests to be taken, damaged or destroyed for the following purposes (the reference number of the relevant licence is given in brackets):

- preserving public health or safety (GL07);
- preserving air safety (GL06);
- conserving flora and fauna (GL08); and

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- preventing the spread of disease and preventing serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables, fruit, growing timber, fisheries or inland waters (GL05).

Action can be taken under these licences at any time by authorised persons (for example, persons acting with the authority of the owners or occupier - see the general licences for a full definition).

Action under the authority of a general licence is only permitted if the person contemplating such action is satisfied that appropriate non-lethal methods of control are either ineffective or impracticable. Each general licence specifies a number of conditions that must be complied with. It is therefore essential that anyone considering taking action under a general licence reads the relevant licence before acting.

General licences are available via Natural England's Wildlife Management & Licensing website, and advice on their application is available from staff in the Wildlife Management & Licensing Service. The website address and contact details are given at the end of this leaflet.

Care must be taken to ensure that other regulations concerning firearms safety, capture methods, etc are adhered to.

Prohibited methods

Certain methods of killing and taking birds are prohibited. These include the use of nets, automatic and semi-automatic weapons, and poisoned or stupefying substances. For full details see Section 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Anyone seeking to use a prohibited method must apply for a licence from Natural England.

The biology and behaviour of Canada geese

In order to develop an effective management strategy for any nuisance wildlife, it is necessary to understand enough about the biology of the species and the local population involved to be able to predict the outcome of whichever management techniques are chosen. This section gives a brief point by point overview of the biology of Canada geese in Britain insofar as it affects the management of the species.

Breeding

A single clutch of around six eggs is laid in early April each year. Incubation, solely by the female, takes 28-30 days.

Nests are usually close to water bodies, often on islands which provide some protection from predators such as foxes and dogs.

The adult goose defends a small territory around the nest, but is willing to tolerate other pairs nesting nearby, so large colonies can build up on sites with enough nesting territories and adequate food supplies.

The geese are aggressive in defence of their nests and will attack other Canada geese, other waterfowl, and even humans who approach too closely.

Fledging and the moult

The hatched young are flightless for 10 weeks and are protected by the adults on the water at the breeding site.

Mortality rates are highest for very young fledglings, but become little different from adults once the bird is more than a few weeks old.

The adult birds moult around the end of June and are unable to fly for a 3-4 week period.

During the moult both adult and juvenile birds must feed from the water or walk to find food.

The amount of suitable food available at a site during the moult period may be important in governing the number of birds that it can support.

Some birds, which have either not attempted to breed or which have failed to raise a brood, undertake longer journeys to find the best sites to moult.

Canada geese tend to moult on larger sites with easy access between open water and suitable feeding areas of short grass.

Dispersal

The geese normally remain close to the site where they hatched, and once young birds mature they may wait several years for a breeding territory to become available.

Large flocks of non-breeding adults may thus build up at certain sites.

Some Canada geese remain faithful to their home area for life, even if apparently suitable water bodies with no Canada geese present are available nearby. Others may be resident at many sites, with certain sites used just for breeding, moulting or wintering.

Small numbers abandon their home area either to join other groups or to establish new colonies.

Wintering

Unlike their North American ancestors, Canada geese in Britain are mostly non-migratory, moving only short distances between breeding and wintering sites within their local area.

Birds may fly out from the water bodies where they roost to regular winter feeding sites such as waterside grazing pasture, amenity grassland, etc. They may also move around their home range taking advantage of feeding opportunities such as sprouting winter cereals or root crops as they become available

Causes of mortality

Adult Canada geese have few natural predators in Britain, and most of the known causes of recorded mortality are associated with man's activities. Annual mortality is estimated at between 10% and 20% of the whole population. Juvenile birds have the same level of mortality as adults once they reach their first moult.

The causes of death are:

- 67% shooting
- 4% hitting power lines
- 6% predation
- 23% unknown.

There is little evidence that natural factors (such as limited food availability), which could become more severe as numbers of birds increase, act to control Canada goose numbers.

Low annual mortality, high reproductive rates and the availability of suitable habitat gives the population scope to increase in the absence of management measures.

Problems caused by Canada geese

Grazing and trampling

Canada geese are herbivores, grazing on both land and water plants. Damage to amenity grassland in public parks, where the geese may occupy regular feeding and roosting sites all year round, can be severe.

Unsightly and unhygienic areas of mud and droppings which are expensive to re-seed frequently occur. The geese may trample as well as graze pasture and crops.

Fouling with droppings

Because of their inefficient digestive system and the low nutrient value of plant material, Canada geese may need to eat large quantities of vegetation.

When grazing they may produce droppings at a rate of one every six minutes. The droppings contain bacteria that may be harmful if faecal matter is inadvertently swallowed and they also make grassed areas unattractive and paths slippery.

If the droppings are passed into water bodies they may cause increased nutrient loadings leading to possible toxic algal blooms and low oxygen levels in the water.

Damage to wildlife habitat

Canada geese can damage the habitat of other wildlife, for example by grazing or trampling nesting sites of other bird species.

Destruction of waterside habitat, such as reed beds, by Canada geese can be a significant

problem, leading to erosion of river banks in some cases.

Excluding other wildlife

There is little hard evidence that Canada geese cause significant problems by competing directly with other wildlife.

Aggressive confrontations do occur, and there is some evidence of other large waterfowl being excluded by, or excluding, Canada geese from a preferred breeding site.

Such interactions are rare, however, and are thought to have little effect on the overall populations of other native waterfowl.

Birdstrike hazards to aircraft

The large size of Canada geese makes a collision with an aircraft a particularly hazardous event.

Although no fatal incidents have occurred in the United Kingdom, serious collisions have occurred elsewhere. For example, following a collision with a flock of Canada geese, a United States Air Force AWACS aircraft (a large four-engined jet) crashed killing all on board.

The aviation industry continues to express concern about the increasing numbers of Canada geese on water bodies near aerodromes.

Planning applications involving the creation of water bodies suitable for Canada geese close to aerodromes may be refused on the grounds of flight safety.

Management techniques

Integrated Management Strategies (IMS) for Canada geese

Experience has shown that it is unlikely that a single management technique will be fully effective in controlling a problem caused by Canada geese. For example:

- Fencing an area to keep birds off may cause them to move to an alternative site close by where they could also cause damage. This may be a suitable option if damage is acceptable on other areas of the site.
- Preventing reproduction by treating eggs to stop hatching will not immediately reduce the population of adults (and hence the levels of damage or nuisance).
- Culling the adult population at a site may simply allow non-breeding adults from nearby waters to move in to vacated breeding territories.

In those cases where effective management of the problem has been achieved, integrated management strategies which combine a number of techniques have invariably been employed. One of the most effective Canada goose management programmes to date involved the development of an IMS that combined reduction of adult numbers, reproductive control and fencing to exclude birds, carried out by Wandsworth Borough Council as part of a larger programme to improve the quality of its urban park lakes.

The scale of management required for a successful IMS

Although the damage or nuisance caused by a group of Canada geese may be occurring at only one site, it is important to remember that the population of geese to which the birds belong may be spread over a number of nearby waters.

When developing an IMS for a particular situation, it will often be necessary to manage birds away from the site where the problem actually occurs. This is especially important if population reduction is to be included in the IMS. For example, if scaring or habitat management proved insufficient to control a problem at a wintering site, and population reduction by egg control or culling became necessary, the breeding and moulting sites used by the wintering birds would need to be identified and the co-operation of the relevant landowners obtained before this strategy could be implemented.

Available techniques for the control of problems caused by Canada geese

The choice of which techniques to combine into an IMS will depend upon the type of damage

occurring, the type of control needed to reduce the damage to acceptable levels, the biology and distribution of the birds involved and the cost of management relative to the seriousness of the problem. A series of examples are given in the 'Examples of possible Integrated Management Strategies for problems caused by Canada Geese' section of this leaflet.

The techniques available fall into two broad categories; the control of behaviour, by scaring or excluding the birds from the site in question, and the control of numbers, by manipulating the breeding rate or rate of mortality of adult birds. Some of these techniques, especially those involving the manipulation of bird numbers, are permitted by a general licence, and hence can only be carried out for certain purposes. It should be remembered that complete elimination of Canada geese may not be feasible, so consideration should be given to whether the presence of these geese can be tolerated on parts of the site. Where an action is only permitted by a general licence, this is indicated below.

Behaviour modification (scaring, exclusion, repellent chemicals)

Visual scarers

Ground based scarers. Most visual scarers rely on a wild animal's natural fear of the unfamiliar. Scarecrows of various designs, flags and flapping tapes have all been employed to deter geese from areas such as sprouting crops.

However, even migratory goose species learn to ignore these deterrents and Canada geese, which often live close to man, are used to man-made items. Scarecrows, whether human or animal effigies, windmills, rotating mirrors etc, should be placed in the centre of the area where problems are occurring and should be moved every 2 or 3 days to maximise their effect.

Flags or flutter tape should be attached to upright poles at regular intervals across the affected area. In general, the closer the spacing of the flags the greater the deterrent effect is likely to be.

Visual scarers may be effective for short term deterrence of Canada geese from sensitive areas, especially if alternative sites are available nearby.

Kites and balloons. Other visual scaring techniques include kites and balloons, often painted with large eyes or made in the shape of predatory birds. A threat from above may be more intimidating for birds which naturally fear being attacked by birds of prey, and a single balloon may deter birds from a larger area than a ground based scarer.

The devices should be set to fly above the problem area during normal wind conditions. They may need to be re-set if wind direction changes and may not fly well in heavy rain or very strong winds. As with ground based scarers, birds will eventually learn to ignore them and they are best used as short term deterrents when alternative sites are available for the birds to move to.

Kites and balloons are covered by specific aviation legislation. If you wish to use either of these methods as visual scarers you are advised to consult with the Civil Aviation Authority as certain restrictions may be applicable. Their address is given at the end of this leaflet.

Problems with visual scarers. Although effective in the short term, visual scarers have some drawbacks, particularly in situations such as public parks. The scarers may be unattractive and interfere with recreational use of areas and could be subject to theft. They also require maintenance and some need to be moved on a regular basis to maximise their effect. Visual scarers are particularly appropriate for use to protect agricultural crops where the geese need to be excluded for a limited period of time such as during sowing or harvesting.

Acoustic scarers

Acoustic scarers, from the commonly used gas cannon through recorded bird calls to complex solar powered artificial sound generators, are all marketed as being effective in deterring Canada geese.

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Most will deter the birds from relatively small areas provided that there are alternative areas for them to use for roosting or feeding nearby. Like visual scarers, the birds will eventually learn that they offer no threat, although their effectiveness can be prolonged by moving the scarers every two or three days.

Acoustic scarers are often hidden (by deploying them at the edge of a field or behind hay bales or other screens) so that the birds cannot see where the sound is coming from. This is thought to prolong the time before the birds realise that the sound represents no threat, but there is little scientific evidence to support this assertion.

You are advised to you consult your Local Authority if you choose to use acoustic scarers because of their powers under the Environment Protection Act 1990 Part III in respect of noise nuisance which embraces the use of gas bangers and electronic sound generating scaring devices.

Problems with acoustic scarers. As with visual scarers, acoustic scarers may be unsuitable for use in areas frequented by the public due to the sudden loud noises involved, and the relatively expensive equipment may be subject to theft or vandalism. These systems are more likely to be of use to protect agricultural crops or to deter birds from islands or similar remote areas.

Combined visual/acoustic

Some scaring systems combine visual and acoustic stimuli in order to enhance the deterrent effect. Such systems vary from gas cannons which shoot a projectile up a pole when the cannon goes off (in order to simulate a shot bird falling to the ground) to an inflatable rubber man which emerges from a box accompanied by a loud klaxon.

The combination of visual and acoustic stimuli may lengthen the time before the birds habituate to the scarers, and they will benefit from being moved every 2 or 3 days. All of these systems have the same drawbacks as visual or acoustic scarers alone and are suitable for use in similar situations.

Human operated bird control

For many bird species the most effective bird scarer is a human being, armed either with a harmless scaring device such as a flag or firework, or with a shotgun. Where Canada geese are regularly shot, the simple presence of a human may be sufficient to deter birds from an area. In most situations, however, Canada geese show little fear of man, particularly where they are used to being fed by the public.

Even if the geese can be trained to fear humans, the deterrent will only be effective if it is continuously deployed whenever the geese are present. The resulting high cost of human operated scaring of Canada geese, by whatever method, means that it is usually only an effective option when the damage caused is extremely expensive, or where the risks to health and safety are extreme (for example, in preventing birdstrikes to aircraft)

Shooting to support scaring

It is widely believed that periodic shooting of a small number of birds helps to make them more wary, thus making acoustic and visual scarers more effective. While non-lethal shooting to scare can be carried out throughout the year, lethal shooting during the close season or on a Sunday is only permitted under the authority of a licence (see 'Protected Status' section for guidance on licences). Any shooting, whether in the open or close season, must comply with the requirements of the Firearms Act 1968 (as amended).

Chemical repellents

A number of products are currently under development which, when sprayed on vegetation, harmlessly repel wildlife from areas where they are not wanted. Some of these products are currently on sale in the USA and have met with mixed success. At present, there is no repellent chemical available in the UK that is approved for use and is effective against Canada geese. Further field testing will be required before a proper evaluation of available repellent chemicals can be made in the future.

Habitat management

It may be possible to permanently alter an area where Canada geese are causing problems to make the site permanently unattractive to them. Whilst the features that make a water suitable for Canada geese are not fully understood, enough is known about the biology of the birds to allow a number of suggestions for habitat modifications to be made.

Landscaping: bank steepening and island removal

As with fencing (see below), making it more difficult for Canada geese to walk out of water bodies onto feeding areas by steepening banks may encourage the birds to move elsewhere.

Avoiding shallow marginal areas which support water plants will also restrict the food supply for the geese, but this may adversely affect other waterfowl and/or damage the rest of the aquatic habitat. Safety concerns arising from deep water and steep banks in public areas would also need to be considered.

Because Canada geese prefer to breed on islands, the complete removal of an island could be considered if fencing proved ineffective in discouraging the birds. Low lying islands could be effectively removed by raising water levels in some circumstances. As with all other exclusion or habitat modification techniques, the effect on other wildlife would need to be considered before embarking on such a project.

Barrier planting, marginal vegetation, trees

Establishing areas of dense vegetation along the shores of water bodies (possibly concealing a cheaper fence structure) or breaking up large grass areas with planting which restricts the bird's view of the water (and hence reduces its feeling of safety) have all proved effective in certain circumstances.

If Canada geese do fly out to feed in small areas flanked by hedges and trees, they prefer a shallow climb out angle to aid their escape. Thus, the taller the surrounding vegetation relative to the size of the field or other grazed area the less likely the geese are to use it.

Reducing available foraging areas adjacent to water bodies by changing ground cover

It may be possible to reduce or eliminate Canada goose damage to amenity areas by changing the ground cover planting to species that are not palatable to the geese. Ground cover plants with tough leaves, such as ivy, and many shrub species are not readily eaten by Canada geese and planting the fringes of lakes with a combination of barrier planting and unpalatable ground cover may reduce the feeding opportunities to the point where the geese move elsewhere. Also, allowing short grass to grow long/or mowing alternative feeding areas can also be successful in moving geese within a site and may even reduce geese numbers. However, it should be noted that a change in planting may also affect other waterfowl.

Exclusion

Where scaring of Canada geese is not desirable, it may be possible to exclude the birds from sensitive areas by physically preventing them from gaining access. As with scaring techniques, exclusion is likely to be most effective if alternative sites are available for the birds to move to. However these techniques may create some difficulties as they affect other waterfowl species as well as Canada geese. The erection of fences along a lakeside may also have implications for public safety if someone were to fall into the water and be unable to get out easily.

Fencing

Perhaps the most obvious way to exclude Canada geese is to fence sensitive areas to prevent them gaining access. Despite the fact that the geese can fly, even low fences of between 30 cm to 1 m high can be effective in excluding them from some areas as they prefer to walk to their feeding and roosting sites if possible, often landing and taking off from water.

Thus, fencing the edge of a lake may be sufficient to cause the geese to move elsewhere if they are unable to walk easily out of the water. Canada geese dislike enclosed areas where they cannot easily escape from predators.

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Barriers that divide an area into smaller units may therefore help to discourage the birds from using the site concerned.

Fences have also been successfully used to exclude Canada geese from breeding and roosting sites, especially where alternative sites were available nearby. Fencing the perimeter of park lakes is not necessarily an expensive option because a simple post and chicken wire fence will suffice if properly erected, but a more decorative and permanent structure may involve a significant cost.

Fencing may be a particularly effective option at sites used by moulting Canada geese because if they are prevented from walking out of the water whilst they cannot fly they will not be able to access the protected areas.

Care should be taken, however, to ensure that moulting birds and newly hatch young have access to sufficient suitable grazing areas so they do not starve. A gap at the bottom of the fence of about 8cm will allow smaller waterfowl access to the land. However, any fencing will also deter other geese and mute swans.

Changing cropping patterns

Where agricultural damage is occurring, it may be possible to change the crops being grown to those less susceptible to damage by Canada geese, or to move to crops which are most vulnerable when the geese are elsewhere. This would obviously require a balance to be struck between the economics of moving to a different crop compared to the cost of either tolerating or controlling the damage being suffered.

Population management

In situations where serious problems are being encountered and where habitat management, scaring or exclusion techniques are inappropriate or have been tried and have failed, it may be necessary to reduce the scale of the problem by reducing the size of the goose population at a particular site.

There are a number of techniques that can be used for population management. A range of techniques are permitted under general licence. Trapping and shooting are also permitted during the open season. No method prohibited under Section 5 Wildlife of the Countryside Act 1981 may be used.

Relocation

Section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 prohibits the release of Canada geese into the wild without a licence. This offence carries a penalty of a custodial sentence and/or a fine.

The initial response to the first problems caused by Canada geese in the 1950's and 60's was to capture the birds during the flightless period of the moult and to move them to other waters where there were no Canada geese at the time.

Many of the relocated birds simply returned to their original home, whilst those that did remain on the new site began to reproduce rapidly in the new habitat and problems soon began to occur at the new sites as well.

It is thought that these translocations played a significant part in the sudden rapid expansion of the Canada goose population which is continuing today. Because further translocations are likely to accelerate the geographic spread of the species, and may also speed up population growth in newly colonised areas, there is a presumption against issuing licences to relocate Canada geese in the foreseeable future.

For advice on licensing the release of Canada geese contact the Wildlife Management & Licensing Service (see 'Further information' for details).

Shooting (during open season or under a general licence)

Canada geese may be legally shot during the open season (1 September to 31 January, or 20 February inclusive on the foreshore), or under a general licence, by authorised persons (see 'The protected status of wild Canada geese' section of this leaflet). Intensive shooting to reduce population size has additional drawbacks in that it can disturb other waterfowl, and may not be possible in public parks etc for safety and public relations reasons.

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Shooting (under specific licences) has been shown to be effective in scaring Brent Geese, and a sustained programme of shooting during the open season and under a general licence during the close season is likely to be effective against Canada geese.

It should be noted that the sale of dead Canada geese is prohibited under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, therefore arrangements for disposal must be made if birds are shot in large numbers. Carcasses should not be left in places which will be visible to the public. However providing they are not sold, they may be eaten.

Any shooting must be in compliance with the Firearms Act 1968 (as amended).

Egg control (under a general licence)

Treating the eggs of Canada geese to prevent hatching is one of the most commonly used population control techniques during the close season. It is easily carried out and requires effort annually over a limited period. It is also generally regarded by the public as an acceptable means of population control.

Eggs could be removed from nests once the clutch is complete (acting under a general licence), but there is a possibility that the bird will simply lay a second clutch. To avoid this, eggs may be treated to prevent hatching or replaced with dummy eggs so that the goose incubates the eggs as normal and then abandons the clutch when they fail to hatch. There are a variety of treatment methods that are permitted under the general licences:

Egg oiling. Eggs may be coated with mineral oil by rolling them in a small quantity of the oil carried in a polythene bag. The mineral oil sold as liquid paraffin (BP) in chemists is harmless to the birds - note this is not paraffin fuel as used in stoves etc. The oil blocks the pores in the eggshell and starves the embryo of oxygen. This technique is easy to carry out, 100% effective in preventing hatching and does not adversely affect the sitting bird.

Egg pricking. This involves piercing the egg with a pin or small nail and moving this rapidly around inside the egg to kill the embryo before returning the egg to the nest. Egg pricking must be done carefully as if the bird detects that the eggs are damaged she may desert the nest and lay another clutch.

Boiling. Eggs may be boiled to kill the embryo and returned to the nest. Providing that the treatment is applied early in the incubation cycle, ideally immediately after the clutch is complete, all of these techniques are humane and effective in preventing additional young birds being recruited to the population.

However, because of the low mortality rate of the adults, it may need 80% of all of the eggs on a site to be treated for a number of years before egg control alone will begin to show a reduction in population size. If nests are hard to find or manpower resources limited, egg control alone is likely only to hold the problem at its present level rather than to reduce it significantly.

Round-up and cull of adults during the moult (under a general licence)

The quickest way to achieve a large scale reduction in the number of Canada geese at a site is by the culling of fully grown birds. The effect is immediate and, if the birds can be captured during the moult, most, or all, of a population can be removed. The principal disadvantage of this technique is that it often meets with a strong adverse reaction from the public. The techniques also require some specialist knowledge and considerable manpower if a large scale cull is to be carried out effectively and humanely.

The most common way of removing birds is by capture during the moult. Canada geese moult all of their flight feathers simultaneously, and, for a period of four to six weeks around the end of June and beginning of July, are unable to fly.

The birds form moulting flocks, remaining on the water for most of the time to reduce the risk of predation during this vulnerable period. A number of small boats or canoes can be used to herd the birds towards the bank where a funnel shaped enclosure made of chicken wire supported by fencing stakes is erected. The funnel leads into a catching pen with a

removable door. The birds are forced up onto the bank and into the mouth of the funnel. The catching party then drive the birds into the funnel and, eventually, into the pen and the door is closed.

This technique requires some experience if it is to be carried out successfully, and expert advice should be sought. Smaller numbers of birds may be captured using nets or similar devices, provided that the method used does not contravene Section 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It should also be noted that when held in a pen, a net or in the hand, the goose is protected under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 so making it an offence to cause unnecessary suffering. Expert assistance in all of these techniques should be employed.

Once captured, it is necessary to humanely despatch the birds. A number of techniques are allowed by law, but it is best to seek professional advice if a large number of birds needs to be despatched. Employing a veterinary surgeon to despatch the birds by lethal injection or to oversee the whole operation may be advisable to allay the concerns of the general public. Note that, once captured, the birds cannot be released except under licence (see 'Further information'). Therefore, if there is a possibility that not all captured birds will be despatched, a licence to release Canada geese should be sought before the operation is carried out.

Before embarking on the large scale destruction of geese it is important to be sure that the birds that you are removing are actually the ones that are causing the problem. For example, birds causing agricultural damage at a wintering site may moult at a site a considerable distance away. It should also be noted that at long established breeding sites there may be a surplus of birds waiting to occupy breeding territories, but which moult elsewhere.

Thus, a cull of breeding birds may simply create vacant territories for other birds to move into and repeat culls may be necessary for a number of years before the problem is finally brought under control.

It should also be borne in mind that control of adults in urban areas may attract an adverse public reaction, especially in public areas such as parks.

The issue of disposal of carcasses must also be considered, particularly for large numbers of carcasses. Incineration or burial may be considered but there are restrictions and limitations on the use of either method. Three suitable methods may be:

- incineration;
- sending to a rendering plant; or
- landfill.

However, it is recommended that you check for any restrictions or requirements in your particular area and situation.

Examples of possible Integrated Management Strategies for problems caused by Canada geese

The choice of which techniques to use in an IMS will depend on a number of factors specific to the site in question; these include the biology and movement patterns of the birds involved, the severity of the problem, the timescale in which the problem needs to be resolved, possible adverse public reaction, cost and manpower constraints, and whether the purpose of control falls under a relevant general licence. Examples of IMS that might be developed for typical situations are set out below. If in doubt, the landowner or manager should take expert advice on the development of an IMS suitable for his or her particular circumstances.

Example 1

A public park with an ornamental lake and lawns. A resident and growing population of 200 Canada geese with 15 pairs breeding on an island on the lake. Birds range widely over the park, damaging lawns and bankside vegetation and leaving large quantities of droppings which are fouling grassed areas and paths. If the fouling is considered to pose a risk to human health and safety, action against Canada geese and their nests and eggs could be taken all year round under the relevant general licence.

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Suggested IMS. The lake shore and island should be fenced to prevent the birds walking out to feed. If other waterfowl are present, a small gap, of about 8 cm, at the bottom of the fence will allow them to move in and out of the water whilst restricting the movement of the geese.

Consideration should be given to establishing bankside vegetation that is resistant to damage by the geese (the presence of the fence will aid establishment or reinstatement of damaged areas).

Flutter tape or other scarers may be deployed to keep the geese off badly damaged areas. In order to prevent further population increase, the eggs of any birds that breed on the island (despite the fencing) should be treated under the relevant general licence (for the purpose of preserving public health and safety) if droppings in public areas pose a hazard to the general public using the park.

These techniques should be monitored for at least two years in order to assess their effectiveness. If problems persist, a cull of birds may be necessary, with sufficient birds being captured during the moult to reduce the population to the desired level, followed by ongoing egg control to keep the population under control.

Example 2

A keepered country estate with a large lake which is used as a fishery and a waterfowl shoot in winter. A summer population of 200 Canada geese with 40 breeding pairs along the lake shore. Non-breeding birds moult at a large reservoir nearby and additional birds from other breeding sites frequent the water in winter, swelling the population to 400 birds. The geese are damaging grazing pasture and destroying bankside vegetation which is used as nesting habitat by other waterfowl. Canada goose droppings are thought to be polluting the water.

Suggested IMS. Increasing the in-season shooting pressure on the geese may be sufficient to encourage the wintering population to move to the other waters nearby.

The estate could consider organised goose shoots which may help to bring in income. Visual or acoustic scarers should be deployed to protect grazing pasture from damage during the summer months. Out of season shooting to augment this scaring could be carried out under the general licence for the purpose of preventing damage to the grazing pasture and possibly the fishery.

The summering population could be further managed by fencing the lake edge and planting unpalatable barrier vegetation (which would double as nesting cover for other waterfowl species). If this was insufficient to reduce numbers of breeding birds, the landowner could (under a relevant general licence) treat eggs to prevent hatching.

Culling is unlikely to be immediately effective in this case unless the exercise can be carried out both on the estate lake and the nearby reservoir. A cull on the estate lake would simply make breeding territories available to non-breeding birds which would rapidly move in, necessitating repeat culls over a number of years.

Example 3

A farm adjacent to a large reservoir, part of which is a designated nature reserve. A resident population of 600 Canada geese with 30 breeding pairs occupy the reservoir all year round. The birds fly out from the reservoir to feed, damaging newly sprouted winter cereals and other crops.

Suggested IMS. In these circumstances, the attitude of the reservoir managers and others with interests in managing the nature reserve (eg local wildlife trusts etc) are crucial. If the owners of the reservoir are opposed to any control action designed to reduce the population, then the farmer is limited to shooting in season and under a general licence (to prevent damage to crops), scaring, or changing his cropping patterns to minimise damage.

Considerable effort and expense may be required to sustain the scaring effort needed over the period necessary to protect his crop.

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Acoustic and visual scarers should be deployed and moved at regular intervals to maximise their effect.

Regular shooting of the Canada geese should aid the effectiveness of the scaring, and may encourage the birds to feed elsewhere, especially if there are alternative feeding sites nearby. Population management (under the general licence for the purpose of preventing serious damage to crops), either in the form of egg control, or a flightless cull, would only be possible with the co-operation of the owners of the reservoir.

Further information

In England, further advice on dealing with Canada goose problems, as well as problems caused by other birds and mammals can be obtained by contacting Wildlife Management and Licensing at:

Natural England, Wildlife Licensing Unit, First Floor, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Bristol, BS1 6EB

Telephone: 0845 601 4523 (local rate)
Fax: 0845 601 3438 (local rate)E-mail: **wildlife@naturalengland.org.uk**

The general licences and a range of leaflets on wildlife topics, are available online at: **www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/wildlife/default.aspx**

Natural England Technical Information Notes are available to download from the Natural England website: **www.naturalengland.org.uk**. In particular see:

- Technical Information Note TIN046: *Control of Canada geese: round-up and cull during the moult (flightless period)*

For information on other Natural England publications contact the Natural England Enquiry Service on 0845 600 3078 or e-mail **enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk**

Advice on biology and management

- Natural England's Wildlife Licensing Unit (address above).
- Food and Environment Research Agency (formerly Central Science Laboratory), Sand Hutton, York, YO41 1LZ.
- The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, GL2 7BT.

Advice on scaring techniques

- Natural England's Wildlife Licensing Unit (address above)
- National Farmers Union, Agriculture House, 164 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, WC2H 8HL. Tel: 0171 331 7200
- Civil Aviation Authority, CAA House, 45-59 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6TE. Tel. 020 7379 7311
- The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC), Marford Mill, Rossett, Wrexham, LL12 0HL. Tel: 01244 573000. E-mail: **enq@basc.demon.co.uk**
- BASC's fact sheet Canada geese: a guide to legal control measures is available from the BASC website:**www.basc.org.uk/**

Advice on shooting and connected issues

- The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (address above).

Advice on carcase disposal and acoustic scarers

- Local Authority - (your Local Authorities address can be found in the telephone directory).

Further reading

Allan J.R. Kirby J.S. & Feare C.J. (1995) The biology of Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*) in relation to the management of feral populations. *Wildlife Biology Vol. 1* p 129-143.

Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions (1998*) Population Dynamics of Canada Geese in Great Britain and Implications for Future Management.* Report by Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and British Trust for Ornithology.

Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions (1998) *Canada Goose Research*

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Project: Control Measures and Study of Related Canada Goose Problems.

Wandsworth Borough Council (undated) *London Lakes Project Overview Document.* Obtainable from Wandsworth BC price £15

National Farmers Union: *Leaflet; code of practice on bird scaring*

This leaflet was produced by Natural England and the Central Science Laboratory, now known as the Food and Environmental Research Agency (FERA).

Photograph courtesy of Anthony O'Connor, Natural England.

Footnote : Amended in England and Wales through the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the Wildlife and Countryside (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2004, and in Scotland through the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.

Annex B - Item 3

Rural Development Service Technical Advice Note 51

The management of problems caused by Canada geese: a guide to best practice

The Canada goose population in southern Britain numbers over 80,000 birds and is still increasing. However, in recent years the overall rate of growth has slowed and in some areas numbers have stabilised or declined. The geese live in local populations, usually of up to a few hundred birds, which remain around one or two water bodies that offer suitable habitats for breeding, roosting etc. Because the geese have relatively few predators, and can produce four or five young per year, numbers at particular sites can grow very rapidly and significant problems may occur.

Any management techniques used to control the problems caused by Canada geese must be legal and should take account of the fact that Canada geese are a popular species with many members of the general public.

This guidance note aims to provide land managers with the information that they need to manage difficulties caused by Canada geese in a way that is effective, legal and sensitive to public opinion.

First Edition
Published July 2005

Rural Development Service

The Protected Status of Wild Canada Geese

The Canada goose, like all wild birds in Britain, is protected under the EC Wild Birds Directive implemented in Great Britain through the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended[1]. This Act makes it an offence to capture, kill or injure Canada geese , or to damage or take their nests or eggs. There are exceptions, the most important of which relate to the open season and to actions **licensed under Section 16 of the Act**.

Open season

Canada geese can be legally shot by authorised persons (i.e. persons acting with the authority of the landowners, occupiers and the owners of the shooting rights to the land involved) or trapped by approved methods during the open season (between September 1st and January 31st, or February 20th inclusive on the foreshore) except on Sundays. Care must be taken to ensure that other regulations concerning firearms safety, capture methods etc. are adhered to.

Licensed action

Defra issues a series of general licences under section 16 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. These allow Canada geese to be killed or taken, and their eggs and nests to be taken, damaged or destroyed for the following purposes (the reference number of the relevant licence is given in brackets):

- preserving public health or safety (WLF100088);
- preserving air safety (WLF100085);
- preventing the spread of disease and preventing serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables, fruit, growing timber, fisheries or inland waters (WLF18).

Action can be taken under these licences at any time by authorised persons (e.g. persons acting with the authority of the owners or occupier – see the general licences for a full definition).

Action under the authority of a general licence is only permitted if the person contemplating such action is satisfied that appropriate non-lethal methods of control are either ineffective or impracticable. Each general licence specifies a number of conditions that must be complied with. It is therefore essential that anyone considering taking action under a general licence reads the relevant licence before acting.

General licences are published on Defra's Wildlife Management website, and advice on their application is available from staff in the National Wildlife Management Team. The website address and contact details are given at the end of this leaflet.

Care must be taken to ensure that other regulations concerning firearms safety, capture methods, etc. are adhered to.

Prohibited methods

Certain methods of killing and taking birds are prohibited. These include the use of nets, automatic and semi-automatic weapons, and poisoned or stupefying substances. For full details see section 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Anyone seeking to use a prohibited method must apply for a licence from either the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) or English Nature. English Nature issue licences for the control of Canada geese for conservation purposes (see Further Information section below).

The Biology and Behaviour of Canada Geese

In order to develop an effective management strategy for any nuisance wildlife, it is necessary to understand enough about the biology of the species and the local population involved to be able to predict the outcome of whichever management techniques are chosen. This section gives a brief point by point overview of the biology of Canada geese in Britain insofar as it affects the management of the species.

Breeding

- A single clutch of around 6 eggs is laid in early April each year.
- Incubation, solely by the female, takes 28-30 days.
- Nests are usually close to water bodies, often on islands which provide some protection from predators such as foxes and dogs.
- The adult goose defends a small territory around the nest, but is willing to tolerate other pairs nesting nearby, so large colonies can build up on sites with enough nesting territories and adequate food supplies.
- The geese are aggressive in defence of their nests and will attack other Canada geese, other waterfowl, and even humans who approach too closely.

Fledging and the moult

- The hatched young are flightless for 10 weeks and are protected by the adults on the water at the breeding site.
- Mortality rates are highest for very young fledglings, but become little different from adults once the bird is more than a few weeks old.
- The adult birds moult around the end of June and are unable to fly for a 3-4 week period.

- During the moult both adult and juvenile birds must feed from the water or walk to find food.
- The amount of suitable food available at a site during the moult period may be important in governing the number of birds that it can support.
- Some birds, which have either not attempted to breed or which have failed to raise a brood, undertake longer journeys to find the best sites to moult.
- Canada geese tend to moult on larger sites with easy access between open water and suitable feeding areas of short grass.

Dispersal

- The geese normally remain close to the site where they hatched, and once young birds mature they may wait several years for a breeding territory to become available.
- Large flocks of non-breeding adults may thus build up at certain sites.
- Some Canada geese remain faithful to their home area for life, even if apparently suitable water bodies with no Canada geese present are available nearby. Others may be resident at many sites, with certain sites used just for breeding, moulting or wintering.
- Small numbers abandon their home area either to join other groups or to establish new colonies.

Wintering

- Unlike their North American ancestors, Canada geese in Britain are mostly non-migratory, moving only short distances between breeding and wintering sites within their local area.
- Birds may fly out from the water bodies where they roost to regular winter feeding sites such as waterside grazing pasture, amenity grassland, etc. They may also move around their home range taking advantage of feeding opportunities such as sprouting winter cereals or root crops as they become available

Causes of mortality

- Adult Canada geese have few natural predators in Britain, and most of the known causes of recorded mortality are associated with man's activities. Annual mortality is estimated at between 10 and 20% of the whole population. Juvenile birds have the same level of mortality as adults once they reach their first moult.
- The causes of death are:
  - 67% shooting
  - 4% hitting power lines
  - 6% predation
  - 23% unknown.
- There is little evidence that natural factors (such as limited food availability), which could become more severe as numbers of birds increase, act to control Canada goose numbers.
- Low annual mortality, high reproductive rates and the availability of suitable habitat gives the population scope to increase in the absence of management measures.

Problems Caused by Canada Geese

Grazing and trampling

- Canada geese are herbivores, grazing on both land and water plants.
- Damage to amenity grassland in public parks, where the geese may occupy regular feeding and roosting sites all year round, can be severe.
- Unsightly and unhygienic areas of mud and droppings which are expensive to re-seed frequently occur.
- The geese may trample as well as graze pasture and crops.

Fouling with droppings

- Because of their inefficient digestive system and the low nutrient value of plant material, Canada geese may need to eat large quantities of vegetation.
- When grazing they may produce droppings at a rate of one every 6 minutes.
- The droppings contain bacteria that may be harmful if faecal matter is inadvertently swallowed and they also make grassed areas unattractive and paths slippery.
- If the droppings are passed into water bodies they may cause increased nutrient loadings leading to possible toxic algal blooms and low oxygen levels in the water.

Damage to wildlife habitat

- Canada geese can damage the habitat of other wildlife, for example by grazing or trampling nesting sites of other bird species.
- Destruction of waterside habitat, such as reed beds, by Canada geese can be a significant problem, leading to erosion of river banks in some cases.

Excluding other wildlife

- There is little hard evidence that Canada geese cause significant problems by competing directly with other wildlife.

- Aggressive confrontations do occur, and there is some evidence of other large waterfowl being excluded by, or excluding, Canada geese from a preferred breeding site.

Such interactions are rare, however, and are thought to have little effect on the overall populations of other native waterfowl.

Birdstrike hazards to aircraft

- The large size of Canada geese makes a collision with an aircraft a particularly hazardous event.
- Although no fatal incidents have occurred in the United Kingdom, serious collisions have occurred elsewhere. For example, following a collision with a flock of Canada geese, a United States Air Force AWACS aircraft (a large four-engined jet) crashed killing all on board.
- The aviation industry continues to express concern about the increasing numbers of Canada geese on water bodies near aerodromes.
- Planning applications involving the creation of water bodies suitable for Canada geese close to aerodromes may be refused on the grounds of flight safety.

Management Techniques

Integrated Management Strategies (IMS) for Canada Geese

Experience has shown that it is unlikely that a single management technique will be fully effective in controlling a problem caused by Canada geese. For example:

- Fencing an area to keep birds off may cause them to move to an alternative site close by where they could also cause damage. This may be a suitable option if damage is acceptable on other areas of the site.
- Preventing reproduction by treating eggs to stop hatching will not immediately reduce the population of adults (and hence the levels of damage or nuisance).
- Culling the adult population at a site may simply allow non-breeding adults from nearby waters to move in to vacated breeding territories.

In those cases where effective management of the problem has been achieved, integrated management strategies which combine a number of techniques have invariably been employed. One of the most effective Canada goose management programmes to date involved the development of an IMS that combined reduction of adult numbers, reproductive control and fencing to exclude birds, carried out by Wandsworth Borough Council as part of a larger programme to improve the quality of its urban park lakes.

The scale of management required for a successful IMS

Although the damage or nuisance caused by a group of Canada geese may be occurring at only one site, it is important to remember that the population of geese to which the birds belong may be spread over a number of nearby waters. When developing an IMS for a particular situation, it will often be necessary to manage birds away from the site where the problem actually occurs. This is especially important if population reduction is to be included in the IMS. For example, if scaring or habitat management proved insufficient to control a problem at a wintering site, and population reduction by egg control or culling became necessary, the breeding and moulting sites used by the wintering birds would need to be identified and the co-operation of the relevant landowners obtained before this strategy could be implemented.

Available techniques for the control of problems caused by Canada Geese

The choice of which techniques to combine into an IMS will depend upon the type of damage occurring, the type of control needed to reduce the damage to acceptable levels, the biology and distribution of the birds involved and the cost of management relative to the seriousness of the problem. A series of examples are given in the 'Examples of possible Integrated Management Strategies for problems caused by Canada Geese section of this leaflet.

The techniques available fall into two broad categories; the control of behaviour, by scaring or excluding the birds from the site in question, and the control of numbers, by manipulating the breeding rate or rate of mortality of adult birds. Some of these techniques, especially those involving the manipulation of bird numbers, are permitted by a general licence, and hence can only be carried out for certain purposes. It should be remembered that complete elimination of Canada geese may not be feasible, so consideration should be given to whether the presence of these geese can be tolerated on parts of the site. Where an action is only permitted by a general licence, this is indicated below.

Behaviour modification (scaring, exclusion, repellent chemicals)

Visual scarers

Ground based scarers

Most visual scarers rely on a wild animal's natural fear of the unfamiliar. Scarecrows of various designs, flags

and flapping tapes have all been employed to deter geese from areas such as sprouting crops. However, even migratory goose species learn to ignore these deterrents and Canada geese, which often live close to man, are used to man-made items. Scarecrows, whether human or animal effigies, windmills, rotating mirrors etc., should be placed in the centre of the area where problems are occurring and should be moved every 2 or 3 days to maximise their effect. Flags or flutter tape should be attached to upright poles at regular intervals across the affected area. In general, the closer the spacing of the flags the greater the deterrent effect is likely to be. Visual scarers may be effective for short term deterrence of Canada geese from sensitive areas, especially if alternative sites are available nearby.

Kites and balloons

Other visual scaring techniques include kites and balloons, often painted with large eyes or made in the shape of predatory birds. A threat from above may be more intimidating for birds which naturally fear being attacked by birds of prey, and a single balloon may deter birds from a larger area than a ground based scarer. The devices should be set to fly above the problem area during normal wind conditions. They may need to be re-set if wind direction changes and may not fly well in heavy rain or very strong winds. As with ground based scarers, birds will eventually learn to ignore them and they are best used as short term deterrents when alternative sites are available for the birds to move to.

Kites and balloons are covered by specific aviation legislation. If you wish to use either of these methods as visual scarers you are advised to consult with the Civil Aviation Authority as certain restrictions may be applicable. Their address is given at the end of this leaflet.

Problems with visual scarers

Although effective in the short term, visual scarers have some drawbacks, particularly in situations such as public parks. The scarers may be unattractive and interfere with recreational use of areas and could be subject to theft. They also require maintenance and some need to be moved on a regular basis to maximise their effect. Visual scarers are particularly appropriate for use to protect agricultural crops where the geese need to be excluded for a limited period of time such as during sowing or harvesting.

Acoustic scarers

Acoustic scarers, from the commonly used gas cannon through recorded bird calls to complex solar powered artificial sound generators, are all marketed as being effective in deterring Canada geese. Most will deter the birds from relatively small areas provided that there are alternative areas for them to use for roosting or feeding nearby. Like visual scarers, the birds will eventually learn that they offer no threat, although their effectiveness can be prolonged by moving the scarers every two or three days. Acoustic scarers are often hidden (by deploying them at the edge of a field or behind hay bales or other screens) so that the birds cannot see where the sound is coming from. This is thought to prolong the time before the birds realise that the sound represents no threat, but there is little scientific evidence to support this assertion. It is advised that you consult your Local Authority if you choose to use acoustic scarers because of their powers under the Environment Protection Act 1990 Part III in respect of noise nuisance which embraces the use of gas bangers and electronic sound generating scaring devices.

Problems with acoustic scarers

As with visual scarers, acoustic scarers may be unsuitable for use in areas frequented by the public due to the sudden loud noises involved, and the relatively expensive equipment may be subject to theft or vandalism. These systems are more likely to be of use to protect agricultural crops or to deter birds from islands or similar remote areas.

Combined visual/acoustic

Some scaring systems combine visual and acoustic stimuli in order to enhance the deterrent effect. Such systems vary from gas cannons which shoot a projectile up a pole when the cannon goes off (in order to simulate a shot bird falling to the ground) to an inflatable rubber man which emerges from a box accompanied by a loud klaxon. The combination of visual and acoustic stimuli may lengthen the time before the birds habituate to the scarers, and they will benefit from being moved every 2 or 3 days. All of these systems have the same drawbacks as visual or acoustic scarers alone and are suitable for use in similar situations.

Human operated bird control

For many bird species the most effective bird scarer is a human being, armed either with a harmless scaring device such as a flag or firework, or with a shotgun. Where Canada geese are regularly shot, the simple presence of a human may be sufficient to deter birds from an area. In most situations, however, Canada geese show little fear of man, particularly where they are used to being fed by the public. Even if the geese can be trained to fear humans, the deterrent will only

be effective if it is continuously deployed whenever the geese are present. The resulting high cost of human operated scaring of Canada geese, by whatever method, means that it is usually only an effective option when the damage caused is extremely expensive, or where the risks to health and safety are extreme (e.g. in preventing birdstrikes to aircraft)

Shooting to support scaring

It is widely believed that periodic shooting of a small number of birds helps to make them more wary, thus making acoustic and visual scarers more effective. While non-lethal shooting to scare can be carried out throughout the year, lethal shooting during the close season or on a Sunday is only permitted under the authority of a licence (see "Protected Status" section for guidance on licences). Any shooting, whether in the open or close season, must comply with the requirements of the Firearms Act 1968 (as amended).

Chemical repellents

A number of products are currently under development which, when sprayed on vegetation, harmlessly repel wildlife from areas where they are not wanted. Some of these products are currently on sale in the USA and have met with mixed success. At present, there is no repellent chemical available in the UK that is approved for use and is effective against Canada geese. Further field testing will be required before a proper evaluation of available repellent chemicals can be made in the future

Habitat management

It may be possible to permanently alter an area where Canada geese are causing problems to make the site permanently unattractive to them. Whilst the features that make a water suitable for Canada geese are not fully understood, enough is known about the biology of the birds to allow a number of suggestions for habitat modifications to be made.

Landscaping: bank steepening and island removal

As with fencing (see below), making it more difficult for Canada geese to walk out of water bodies onto feeding areas by steepening banks may encourage the birds to move elsewhere. Avoiding shallow marginal areas which support water plants will also restrict the food supply for the geese, but this may adversely affect other waterfowl and/or damage the rest of the aquatic habitat. Safety concerns arising from deep water and steep banks in public areas would also need to be considered. Because Canada geese prefer to breed on islands, the complete removal of an island could be considered if fencing proved ineffective in discouraging the birds. Low lying islands could be effectively removed by raising water levels in some circumstances. As with all other exclusion or habitat modification techniques, the effect on other wildlife would need to be considered before embarking on such a project.

Barrier planting, marginal vegetation, trees

Establishing areas of dense vegetation along the shores of water bodies (possibly concealing a cheaper fence structure) or breaking up large grass areas with planting which restricts the bird's view of the water (and hence reduces its feeling of safety) have all proved effective in certain circumstances. If Canada geese do fly out to feed in small areas flanked by hedges and trees, they prefer a shallow climb out angle to aid their escape. Thus, the taller the surrounding vegetation relative to the size of the field or other grazed area the less likely the geese are to use it.

Reducing available foraging areas adjacent to water bodies by changing ground cover

It may be possible to reduce or eliminate Canada goose damage to amenity areas by changing the ground cover planting to species that are not palatable to the geese. Ground cover plants with tough leaves, such as Ivy, and many shrub species are not readily eaten by Canada geese and planting the fringes of lakes with a combination of barrier planting and unpalatable ground cover may reduce the feeding opportunities to the point where the geese move elsewhere. Also, allowing short grass to grow long/or mowing alternative feeding areas can also be successful in moving geese within a site and may even reduce geese numbers. However, it should be noted that a change in planting may also affect other waterfowl.

Exclusion

Where scaring of Canada geese is not desirable, it may be possible to exclude the birds from sensitive areas by physically preventing them from gaining access. As with scaring techniques, exclusion is likely to be most effective if alternative sites are available for the birds to move to. However these techniques may create some difficulties as they affect other waterfowl species as well as Canada geese. The erection of fences along a lakeside may also have implications for public safety if someone were to fall into the water and be unable to get out easily.

Fencing

Perhaps the most obvious way to exclude Canada geese is to fence sensitive areas to prevent them gaining access. Despite the fact that the geese can fly,

even low fences of between 0.3 - 1m high can be effective in excluding them from some areas as they prefer to walk to their feeding and roosting sites if possible, often landing and taking off from water. Thus, fencing the edge of a lake may be sufficient to cause the geese to move elsewhere if they are unable to walk easily out of the water. Canada geese dislike enclosed areas where they cannot easily escape from predators. Barriers that divide an area into smaller units may therefore help to discourage the birds from using the site concerned.

Fences have also been successfully used to exclude Canada geese from breeding and roosting sites, especially where alternative sites were available nearby. Fencing the perimeter of park lakes is not necessarily an expensive option because a simple post and chicken wire fence will suffice if properly erected, but a more decorative and permanent structure may involve a significant cost. Fencing may be a particularly effective option at sites used by moulting Canada geese because if they are prevented from walking out of the water whilst they cannot fly they will not be able to access the protected areas. Care should be taken, however, to ensure that moulting birds and newly hatch young have access to sufficient suitable grazing areas so they do not starve. A gap at the bottom of the fence of about 8cm will allow smaller waterfowl access to the land. However, any fencing will also deter other geese and mute swans.

Changing cropping patterns

Where agricultural damage is occurring, it may be possible to change the crops being grown to those less susceptible to damage by Canada geese, or to move to crops which are most vulnerable when the geese are elsewhere. This would obviously require a balance to be struck between the economics of moving to a different crop compared to the cost of either tolerating or controlling the damage being suffered.

Population management

In situations where serious problems are being encountered and where habitat management, scaring or exclusion techniques are inappropriate or have been tried and have failed, it may be necessary to reduce the scale of the problem by reducing the size of the goose population at a particular site. There are a number of techniques that can be used for population management. A range of techniques are permitted under general licence. Trapping and shooting are also permitted during the open season. No method prohibited under section 5 Wildlife of the Countryside Act 1981 may be used.

Relocation

Section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 prohibits the release of Canada geese into the wild without a licence. This offence carries a penalty of a custodial sentence and/or a fine.

The initial response to the first problems caused by Canada geese in the 1950's and 60's was to capture the birds during the flightless period of the moult and to move them to other waters where there were no Canada geese at the time. Many of the relocated birds simply returned to their original home, whilst those that did remain on the new site began to reproduce rapidly in the new habitat and problems soon began to occur at the new sites as well. It is thought that these translocations played a significant part in the sudden rapid expansion of the Canada goose population which is continuing today. Because further translocations are likely to accelerate the geographic spread of the species, and may also speed up population growth in newly colonised areas, it is unlikely that licences will be granted to relocate Canada geese in the foreseeable future.

For advice on licensing the release of Canada geese contact the Non-native Regulation Team (see "Further Information" for details).

Shooting (during open season or under a general licence)

Canada geese may be legally shot during the open season (1st September to 31st January, or 20th February inclusive on the foreshore), or under a general licence, by authorised persons (see 'The Protected Status of Wild Canada Geese' section of this leaflet). Intensive shooting to reduce population size has additional drawbacks in that it can disturb other waterfowl, and may not be possible in public parks etc. for safety and public relations reasons.

Shooting (under specific licences) has been shown to be effective in scaring Brent Geese, and a sustained programme of shooting during the open season and under a general licence during the close season is likely to be effective against Canada geese.

It should be noted that the sale of dead Canada geese is prohibited under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, therefore arrangements for disposal must be made if birds are shot in large numbers. Carcasses should not be left in places which will be visible to the public. However providing they are not sold, they may be eaten.

Any shooting must be in compliance with the Firearms Act 1968 (as amended).

Egg control (under a general licence)

Treating the eggs of Canada geese to prevent hatching is one of the most commonly used population control techniques during the close season. It is easily carried out and requires effort annually over a limited period. It is also generally regarded by the public as an acceptable means of population control. Eggs could be removed from nests once the clutch is complete (acting under a general licence), but there is a possibility that the bird will simply lay a second clutch. To avoid this, eggs may be treated to prevent hatching or replaced with dummy eggs so that the goose incubates the eggs as normal and then abandons the clutch when they fail to hatch. There are a variety of treatment methods that are permitted under the general licences:

- Egg oiling. Eggs may be coated with mineral oil by rolling them in a small quantity of the oil carried in a polythene bag. The mineral oil sold as liquid paraffin (BP) in chemists is harmless to the birds - note this is not paraffin fuel as used in stoves etc. The oil blocks the pores in the eggshell and starves the embryo of oxygen. This technique is easy to carry out, 100% effective in preventing hatching and does not adversely affect the sitting bird.
- Egg pricking. This involves piercing the egg with a pin or small nail and moving this rapidly around inside the egg to kill the embryo before returning the egg to the nest. Egg pricking must be done carefully as if the bird detects that the eggs are damaged she may desert the nest and lay another clutch.
- Boiling. Eggs may be boiled to kill the embryo and returned to the nest.

Providing that the treatment is applied early in the incubation cycle, ideally immediately after the clutch is complete, all of these techniques are humane and effective in preventing additional young birds being recruited to the population. However, because of the low mortality rate of the adults, it may need 80% of all of the eggs on a site to be treated for a number of years before egg control alone will begin to show a reduction in population size. If nests are hard to find or manpower resources limited, egg control alone is likely only to hold the problem at its present level rather than to reduce it significantly.

Round-up and cull of adults during the moult (under a general licence)

The quickest way to achieve a large scale reduction in the number of Canada geese at a site is by the culling of fully grown birds. The effect is immediate and, if the birds can be captured during the moult, most, or all, of a population can be removed. The principal disadvantage of this technique is that it often meets with a strong adverse reaction from the public. The techniques also require some specialist knowledge and considerable manpower if a large scale cull is to be carried out effectively and humanely.

The most common way of removing birds is by capture during the moult. Canada geese moult all of their flight feathers simultaneously, and, for a period of four to six weeks around the end of June and beginning of July, are unable to fly. The birds form moulting flocks, remaining on the water for most of the time to reduce the risk of predation during this vulnerable period. A number of small boats or canoes can be used to herd the birds towards the bank where a funnel shaped enclosure made of chicken wire supported by fencing stakes is erected. The funnel leads into a catching pen with a removable door. The birds are forced up onto the bank and into the mouth of the funnel. The catching party then drive the birds into the funnel and, eventually, into the pen and the door is closed. This technique requires some experience if it is to be carried out successfully, and expert advice should be sought. Smaller numbers of birds may be captured using nets or similar devices, provided that the method used does not contravene Section 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Again, expert assistance should be employed.

Once captured, it is necessary to humanely despatch the birds. A number of techniques are allowed by law, but it is best to seek professional advice if a large number of birds needs to be despatched. Employing a veterinary surgeon to despatch the birds by lethal injection or to oversee the whole operation may be advisable to allay the concerns of the general public. Note that, once captured, the birds cannot be released except under licence (see Further Information). Therefore, if there is a possibility that not all captured birds will be despatched, a licence to release Canada geese should be sought before the operation is carried out.

Before embarking on the large scale destruction of geese it is important to be sure that the birds that you are removing are actually the ones that are causing the problem. For example, birds causing agricultural damage at a wintering site may moult at a site a considerable distance away. It should also be noted that at long established breeding sites there may be a surplus of birds waiting to occupy breeding territories, but which moult elsewhere. Thus, a cull of breeding birds may simply create vacant territories for other birds to move into and repeat culls may be necessary for a number of years before the problem is finally

brought under control. It should also be borne in mind that control of adults in urban areas may attract an adverse public reaction, especially in public areas such as parks.

The issue of disposal of carcasses must also be considered, particularly for large numbers of carcasses. Incineration or burial may be considered but there are restrictions and limitations on the use of either method. Three suitable methods may be:

- incineration;
- sending to a rendering plant; or
- landfill

However, you should consult your local authority in the first instance about suitable methods for your particular situation.

Examples of possible Integrated Management Strategies for problems caused by Canada Geese

The choice of which techniques to use in an IMS will depend on a number of factors specific to the site in question; these include the biology and movement patterns of the birds involved, the severity of the problem, the timescale in which the problem needs to be resolved, possible adverse public reaction, cost and manpower constraints, and whether the purpose of control falls under a relevant general licence. Examples of IMS that might be developed for typical situations are set out below. If in doubt, the landowner or manager should take expert advice on the development of an IMS suitable for his or her particular circumstances.

Example 1

A public park with an ornamental lake and lawns. A resident and growing population of 200 Canada geese with 15 pairs breeding on an island on the lake. Birds range widely over the park, damaging lawns and bankside vegetation and leaving large quantities of droppings which are fouling grassed areas and paths. If the fouling is considered to pose a risk to human health and safety, action against Canada geese and their nests and eggs could be taken all year round under the relevant general licence.

Suggested IMS:

The lake shore and island should be fenced to prevent the birds walking out to feed. If other waterfowl are present, a small gap, of about 8 cm, at the bottom of the fence will allow them to move in and out of the water whilst restricting the movement of the geese. Consideration should be given to establishing bankside vegetation that is resistant to damage by the geese (the presence of the fence will aid establishment or reinstatement of damaged areas). Flutter tape or other scarers may be deployed to keep the geese off badly damaged areas. In order to prevent further population increase, the eggs of any birds that breed on the island (despite the fencing) should be treated under the relevant general licence (for the purpose of preserving public health and safety) if droppings in public areas pose a hazard to the general public using the park. These techniques should be monitored for at least two years in order to assess their effectiveness. If problems persist, a cull of birds may be necessary, with sufficient birds being captured during the moult to reduce the population to the desired level, followed by ongoing egg control to keep the population under control.

Example 2

A keepered country estate with a large lake which is used as a fishery and a waterfowl shoot in winter. A summer population of 200 Canada geese with 40 breeding pairs along the lake shore. Non-breeding birds moult at a large reservoir nearby and additional birds from other breeding sites frequent the water in winter, swelling the population to 400 birds. The geese are damaging grazing pasture and destroying bankside vegetation which is used as nesting habitat by other waterfowl. Canada goose droppings are thought to be polluting the water.

Suggested IMS:

Increasing the in-season shooting pressure on the geese may be sufficient to encourage the wintering population to move to the other waters nearby. The estate could consider organised goose shoots which may help to bring in income. Visual or acoustic scarers should be deployed to protect grazing pasture from damage during the summer months. Out of season shooting to augment this scaring could be carried out under the general licence for the purpose of preventing damage to the grazing pasture and possibly the fishery. The summering population could be further managed by fencing the lake edge and planting unpalatable barrier vegetation (which would double as nesting cover for other waterfowl species). If this was insufficient to reduce numbers of breeding birds, the landowner could (under a relevant general licence) treat eggs to prevent hatching. Culling is unlikely to be immediately effective in this case unless the exercise can be carried out both on the estate lake and the nearby reservoir. A cull on the estate lake would simply make breeding territories available to non-breeding birds which would rapidly move in, necessitating repeat culls over a number of years.

Example 3

A farm adjacent to a large reservoir, part of which is a designated nature reserve. A resident population of 600 Canada geese with 30 breeding pairs occupy the reservoir all year round. The birds fly out from the reservoir to feed, damaging newly sprouted winter cereals and other crops.

Suggested IMS:

In these circumstances, the attitude of the reservoir managers and others with interests in managing the nature reserve (e.g. local wildlife trusts etc.) are crucial. If the owners of the reservoir are opposed to any control action designed to reduce the population, then the farmer is limited to shooting in season and under a general licence (to prevent damage to crops), scaring, or changing his cropping patterns to minimise damage. Considerable effort and expense may be required to sustain the scaring effort needed over the period necessary to protect his crop. Acoustic and visual scarers should be deployed and moved at regular intervals to maximise their effect. Regular shooting of the Canada geese should aid the effectiveness of the scaring, and may encourage the birds to feed elsewhere, especially if there are alternative feeding sites nearby. Population management (under the general licence for the purpose of preventing serious damage to crops), either in the form of egg control, or a flightless cull, would only be possible with the co-operation of the owners of the reservoir.

Further Information

In England, further advice on dealing with Canada goose problems, as well as problems caused by other birds and mammals can be obtained by contacting the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Wildlife Management Team at:

Address: Wildlife Administration Unit, Defra, Burghill Road, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol, BS10 6NJ

Telephone: 0845 601 4523 (local rate)

Fax: 0845 601 3438 (local rate)

E-mail: enquiries.southwest@defra.gsi.gov.uk

The general licences and a range of leaflets on wildlife topics, are available online at:
http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/vertebrates

Licences for the control of Canada geese for conservation purposes are issued by English Nature. Further details can be obtained from English Nature local offices, details of which can be found in the telephone directory, or from their Headquarters:

Address: English Nature Licensing Section, Northminster House, Peterborough, PE1 1UA

Telephone: 01733 455000

Fax: 01733 568834

E-mail: enquiries@english-nature.org.uk

Licences allowing the release of Canada geese into the wild are issued by Defra's Non-native Regulation Team. Further details can be obtained:

Address: Non-native Licensing Team, Ashdown House, 123 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6DE.

Telephone: 0207 082 8122

Fax: 0207 082 8123

Website:
http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/gm/nonnav/index.htm

Advice on Biology and Management

Defra RDS National Wildlife Management Team (address above).

Central Science Laboratory, Sand Hutton, York, YO41 1LZ.

The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, GL2 7BT.

Advice on Control Techniques

Scaring techniques

Defra RDS National Wildlife Management Team (address above)

National Farmers Union, Agriculture House, 164 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, WC2H 8HL. Tel: 0171 331 7200

Civil Aviation Authority, CAA House, 45 – 59 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6TE. Tel. 020 7379 7311

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC), Marford Mill, Rossett, Wrexham, LL12 0HL. Tel: 01244 573000. E-mail: enq@basc.demon.co.uk

BASC's fact sheet 'Canada geese: A guide to legal control measures' is available from the BASC website: http://www.basc.org.uk/

Advice on Shooting and Connected Issues

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (address above).

Advice on carcase disposal and acoustic scarers

Local Authority - (your Local Authorities address can be found in the telephone directory).

Further reading

- Allan J.R. Kirby J.S. & Feare C.J. (1995) The biology of canada geese (Branta canadensis) in relation to the management of feral populations. Wildlife Biology Vol. 1 p 129-143.

- Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions (1998) **Population Dynamics of Canada Geese in Great Britain and Implications for Future Management**. Report by Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and British Trust for Ornithology.
- Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions (1998) **Canada Goose Research Project: Control Measures and Study of Related Canada Goose Problems.**
- Wandsworth Borough Council (undated) **London Lakes Project Overview Document**. Obtainable from Wandsworth BC price £15
- National Farmers Union: **Leaflet; code of practice on bird scaring**

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Photograph courtesy of Anthony O'Connor, Defra RDS.

A full list of Rural Development Service publications can be viewed and downloaded from http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/rds/publications/default.htm.

Footnote[†]: Amended in England and Wales through the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the Wildlife and Countryside (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2004, and in Scotland through the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.

The Management of Problems caused by Canada Geese - A Guide to Best Practice

Author: ***Dr John Allan,*** *Central Science Laboratory*

The production of this paper was funded by the Department of Environment Transport and the Regions. It forms the basis of national guidelines for the management of Canada Geese which are due to be published shortly after this conference. I am most grateful to the DETR for permission to reproduce this paper in the conference proceedings.

Introduction

The Canada Goose population in Britain numbers over 63,000 birds and is still increasing. The geese live in local populations, usually of up to a few hundred birds, which remain around one or two water bodies that offer suitable habitats for breeding, roosting etc. Because the geese have relatively few predators, and can produce four or five young per year, numbers at particular sites can grow very rapidly and significant problems may occur.

Any management techniques used to control the problems caused by Canada Geese must be legal (Canada Geese are protected under both British and European legislation) and should take account of the fact that Canada Geese are a popular species with many members of the general public.

This paper aims to provide land managers with the information that they need to manage difficulties caused by Canada Geese in a way that is effective, legal and sensitive to public opinion.

The Biology and Behaviour of Canada Geese

In order to develop an effective management strategy for any nuisance wildlife, it is necessary to understand enough about the biology of the species and the local population involved to be able to predict the outcome of whichever management techniques are chosen. This section gives a brief point by point overview of the biology of Canada Geese in Britain insofar as it affects the management of the species.

1.1 Breeding

A single clutch of around 6 eggs is laid in early April each year.

Incubation, solely by the female, takes 28-30 days.

Nests are usually close to water bodies, often on islands which provide some protection from predators such as foxes, dogs or mink.

The adult geese defend a small territory around the nest, but are willing to tolerate other pairs nesting nearby, so large colonies can build up on sites with enough nesting territories and adequate food supplies.

The geese are aggressive in defence of their nests and will attack Canada Geese, other waterfowl, and even humans who approach too closely.

1.2 Fledging and the moult

The hatched young are flightless for 10 weeks and are protected by the adults on the water at the breeding site.

Mortality rates are highest for very young fledglings, but become little different from adults once the young are more than a few weeks old.

The adult birds moult around the end of June and are unable to fly for a 3-4 week period.

During the moult, both adult and juvenile birds must feed from the water or walk to find food.

The amount of suitable food available at a site during this period may be important in governing the number of breeding pairs that it can support.

Some birds, which have either not attempted to breed or which have failed to raise a brood, undertake longer journeys to find the best sites to moult. Some birds from Yorkshire and the West Midlands fly as far as Scotland to find suitable moulting sites.

1.3 Dispersal

The geese normally remain close to the site where they hatched, and once young birds mature they may wait several years for a breeding territory to become available.

Large flocks of non breeding adults may thus build up at certain sites.

Most Canada Geese remain faithful to their home area for life, even if apparently suitable water bodies with no Canada Geese present are available nearby. Females are generally more site faithful than males

Small numbers (usually of young birds) abandon their home area either to join other groups or to establish new colonies.

2.2 Fouling with droppings

Because of the low nutrient value of their food, Canada Geese need to eat large quantities of vegetation.

When feeding they may produce droppings at a rate of one every 6 minutes.

The droppings contain bacteria that may be harmful if swallowed and they also make grassed areas unattractive and paths slippery.

If the droppings are passed into water bodies they may cause increased nutrient loadings leading to possible toxic algal blooms and low oxygen levels in the water.

2.3 Damage to wildlife habitat

Canada Geese can damage the habitat of other wildlife, for example by grazing or trampling nesting sites of other bird species.

Destruction of waterside habitat, such as reed beds, by Canada Geese can be a significant problem, leading to erosion of river banks in some cases.

2.4 Excluding other wildlife

There is little hard evidence that Canada Geese cause significant problems by competing directly with other wildlife.

Aggressive confrontations do occur, and there is some evidence of other large waterfowl being excluded by, or excluding, Canada Geese from a preferred breeding site.

Such interactions are rare, however, and are thought to have little effect on the overall populations of other native waterfowl.

2.5 Birdstrike hazards to aircraft

The large size of Canada Geese makes a collision with an aircraft a particularly hazardous event.

Recently, a United States Air Force AWACS aircraft (a large four-engined jet) crashed following a collision with a flock of Canada Geese, killing all on board.

The aviation industry continues to express concern about the increasing numbers of Canada Geese on water bodies near aerodromes.

1.4 Wintering

Unlike their North American ancestors, Canada Geese in Britain are mostly non-migratory, moving only short distances between breeding and wintering sites within their local area.

Birds may fly out from the water bodies where they roost to regular winter feeding sites such as waterside grazing pasture, amenity grassland etc. They may also move around their home range taking advantage of feeding opportunities such as sprouting winter cereals or root crops as they become available.

1.5 Causes of mortality

Adult Canada Geese have few natural predators in Britain, and most of the known causes of recorded mortality are associated with man's activities. Annual mortality is estimated at between 10 and 20% of the whole population. Juvenile birds have the same level of mortality as adults once they reach their first moult.

The causes of death are:

- 67.2% shooting
- 4.3% hit power lines
- 5.5% redation
- 23% unknown.

There is little evidence that natural factors, which become more severe as numbers of birds increase, such as limited food availability, act to control Canada Goose numbers.

Low annual mortality and high reproductive rates give the national population the scope to increase in size for the foreseeable future.

2. Problems Caused By Canada Geese

2.1 Grazing and trampling

Canada Geese are vegetarians, grazing on both land and water plants.

Damage to amenity grassland in public parks, where the geese may occupy regular feeding and roosting sites all year round can be severe.

Unsightly and un-hygenic areas of mud and droppings which are expensive to reinstate frequently occur.

The geese may trample as well as graze pasture and crops.

Planning applications involving the creation of water bodies suitable for Canada Geese close to aerodromes may be refused on the grounds of flight safety.

3. Management Techniques

3.1 The protected status of Canada Geese.

The Canada Goose, like all other birds in Britain, is protected under the EC Wild Birds Directive implemented in the United Kingdom through the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). This makes it an offence to capture, kill or injure Canada Geese, to damage their nests or eggs, or to disturb them on a breeding site. Any control technique which involves breaking the protected status of the Geese requires a licence from the appropriate government authority (see appendix 1).

Canada Geese can be legally shot by authorised persons or trapped by approved methods in the open season (between September 1st and January 31st, or February 20th on the foreshore). The use of shooting or trapping by approved methods to control Canada Geese during the open season does not, therefore, require a licence, but care should be taken to ensure that other regulations concerning firearms safety, capture methods etc. are adhered to. If in doubt, advice can be sought from the organisations listed in appendix 1.

3.2 Integrated Management Strategies (IMS) For Canada Geese

Experience has shown that it is unlikely that a single management technique will be fully effective in controlling a problem caused by Canada Geese. For example:

- Fencing an area to keep birds off will simply cause them to move to an alternative site close by and continue to cause damage.
- Preventing reproduction by treating eggs to stop hatching will not reduce the population of adults (and hence the levels of damage or nuisance) for many years.
- Culling the adult population at a site may simply allow non breeding adults from nearby waters to move in to vacated breeding territories.

In those cases where effective management of the problem has been achieved, Integrated Management Strategies (IMS) which combine a suite of techniques have invariably been employed. One of the most effective Canada Goose management programmes to date involved the development of an IMS that combined reduction of adult numbers, reproductive control and fencing to exclude birds in an IMS carried out by Wandsworth Borough Council as part of a larger programme to improve the quality of its urban park lakes.

3.3 The Scale Of Management Required For A Successful IMS

Although the damage or nuisance caused by a group of Canada Geese may be occurring at only one site, it is important to remember that the population of geese to which the birds belong may be spread over a number of nearby waters. When developing an IMS for a particular situation, it will often be necessary to manage birds away from the site where the problem actually occurs. This is especially important if population reduction is to be included in the IMS. For example, if scaring or habitat management proved insufficient to control a problem at a wintering site, and population reduction by egg control or culling became necessary, the breeding and moulting sites used by the wintering birds would need to be identified and the co-operation of the landowners obtained before this strategy could be implemented.

3.4 Available techniques for the control of problems caused by Canada Geese

The choice of which techniques to combine into an IMS will depend upon the type of damage that is occurring, the type of control that is needed to reduce the damage to acceptable levels, and the biology and distribution of the birds involved. A series of examples are given at the end of this section.

The techniques available fall into two broad categories; the control of behaviour, by scaring or excluding the birds from the site in question, and the control of numbers, by manipulating the breeding rate or rate of mortality of adult birds. Some of these techniques, especially those involving the manipulation of bird numbers, will require a licence (see appendix 1). Where a licence is needed this is indicated below.

3.4.1 Behaviour modification (scaring, exclusion, repellent chemicals)

Scaring techniques

a) Visual.

Ground based scarers

Most visual scarers rely on the natural fear of the unfamiliar of wild animals. Scarecrows of various designs, flags and flapping tapes have all been employed to deter geese from areas such as sprouting crops. However, even migratory goose species learn to ignore these deterrents and Canada Geese, which often live close to man, are used to man made items. Scarecrows, whether human or animal effigies, windmills, rotating mirrors etc., should be placed in the centre of the area where problems are occurring and should be moved every 2 or 3 days to maximise their effect. Flags or flutter tape should be attached to upright poles at regular intervals across the affected area. In

general, the closer the spacing of the flags the greater the deterrent effect is likely to be. Visual scarers may be effective for short term deterrence of Canada Geese from sensitive areas, especially if alternative sites are available nearby.

Kites and balloons

Other visual scaring techniques include kites and balloons, often painted with large eyes or made in the shape of predatory birds. A threat from above may be more intimidating for birds which may naturally be attacked by birds of prey, and a single balloon may deter birds from a larger area than a ground based scarer. The devices should be set to fly above the problem area during normal wind conditions. They may need to be re-set if wind direction changes and may not fly well in heavy rain or very strong winds. As with ground based scarers, birds will eventually learn to ignore them and they are best used as short term deterrents when alternative sites are available for the birds to move to.

Problems with visual scarers

Although effective in the short term, visual scarers have some drawbacks, particularly in situations such as public parks. The scarers may be unattractive and interfere with recreational use of areas and could be subject to theft. They also require maintenance and some need to be moved on a regular basis to maximise their effect. Visual scarers are particularly appropriate for use to protect agricultural crops where the geese need to be excluded for a limited period of time such as during sowing or prior to harvest.

b) Acoustic

Acoustic scarers, from the commonly used gas cannon through recorded bird calls to complex solar powered artificial sound generators, are all marketed as being effective in deterring Canada Geese. Most will deter the birds from relatively small areas providing that there are alternative areas for them to use for roosting or feeding nearby. Like visual scarers, the birds will eventually learn that they offer no threat, although their effectiveness can be prolonged by moving the scarers every two or three days. Acoustic scarers are often hidden (by deploying them at the edge of a field or behind hay bales or other screens) so that the birds cannot see where the sound is coming from. This is thought to prolong the time before the birds realise that the sound represents no threat, but there is little scientific evidence to support this assertion.

Problems with acoustic scarers

As with visual scarers, acoustic scarers may be unsuitable for use in areas frequented by the public due to the sudden loud noises involved, and the relatively expensive equipment may be subject to theft or vandalism. These systems are more likely to be of use to protect agricultural crops or to deter birds from islands or similar remote areas.

c) Combined visual/acoustic

Some scaring systems combine visual and acoustic stimuli in order to enhance the deterrent effect. Such systems vary from gas cannons which shoot a projectile up a pole when the cannon goes off (in order to simulate a shot bird falling to the ground) to an inflatable rubber man which emerges from a box accompanied by a loud klaxon. The combination of visual and acoustic stimuli may lengthen the time before the birds habituate to the scarers, and they will be more effective if moved every 2 or 3 days. All of these systems have the same drawbacks as visual or acoustic scarers alone and are suitable for use in similar situations.

d) Human operated bird control

For many bird species the most effective bird scarer is a human being, armed either with a harmless scaring device such as a flag or firework, or with a shotgun. Where Canada Geese are regularly shot, the simple presence of a human may be sufficient to deter birds from an area. In most situations, however, Canada Geese show little fear of man, particularly where they are used to being fed by the public. Even if the geese can be trained to fear humans, the deterrent will only be effective if it is continuously deployed whenever the geese are present. The resulting high cost of human operated scaring of Canada Geese, by whatever method, means that it is usually only an effective option when the damage caused is extremely expensive, or where the risks to health and safety are extreme (e.g. in preventing birdstrikes to aircraft).

Shooting to support scaring

It is widely believed that periodic shooting of a small number of birds helps to make them more wary and thus makes acoustic and visual scarers more effective. Whilst there is little scientific evidence to support this theory, this may well be the case, and licences to shoot limited numbers of birds to support scaring outside the open season may be issued in certain circumstances.

Exclusion

Where scaring of Canada Geese is not desirable, it may be possible to exclude the birds from sensitive areas by physically preventing them from

gaining access. As with scaring techniques, exclusion is likely to be most effective if alternative sites are available for the birds to move to. These techniques may create some difficulties as they affect other waterfowl species as well as Canada Geese. The erection of fences along a lakeside may also have implications for public safety if someone were to fall into the water and be unable to get out easily.

Fencing

Perhaps the most obvious way to exclude Canada Geese is to fence sensitive areas to prevent them gaining access. Despite the fact that the geese can fly, even low fences of around 1m high can be effective in excluding them from some areas as they prefer to walk to their feeding and roosting sites if possible, often landing and taking off from water. Thus, fencing the edge of a lake may be sufficient to cause the geese to move elsewhere if they are unable to walk easily out of the water. Canada Geese dislike enclosed areas where they cannot easily escape from predators. Barriers that divide fields into smaller units may therefore help to discourage the birds from using the site concerned.

Fences have also been successfully used to exclude Canada Geese from breeding and roosting sites, especially where alternative sites were available nearby. Fencing the perimeter of park lakes is not necessarily an expensive option because a simple post and chicken wire fence will suffice if properly erected, but a more decorative and permanent structure may involve a significant cost. Fencing may be a particularly effective option at sites used by moulting Canada Geese because if they are prevented from walking out of the water whilst they cannot fly they will not be able to access the feeding areas nearby. Care should be taken, however, to ensure that if moulting adults or newly hatched young are found at a fenced site, they do not starve through lack of access to grazing areas.

Barrier planting, marginal vegetation, trees

An alternative to fencing lake edges, or placing barrier fencing around grazed areas, is to modify the vegetation in the areas suffering damage by Canada Geese. Establishing areas of dense vegetation along the shores of water bodies (possibly concealing a cheaper fence structure) or breaking up large grass areas with planting which restricts the bird's view of the water (and hence reduces its feeling of safety) have all proved effective in certain circumstances. If Canada Geese do move out to feed in small areas flanked by hedges and trees, they prefer a shallow climb out angle to aid their escape. Thus, the taller the surrounding vegetation relative to the size of the field or other grazed area the less likely the geese are to use it.

Chemical repellents

A number of products are currently under development which are designed to harmlessly repel wildlife from areas where they are not wanted. Some of these products are currently on sale in the USA and have met with mixed success. At present there is no repellent chemical available in the UK that is approved for use and is effective against Canada Geese. Further field testing will be required before a proper evaluation of available repellent chemicals can be made in the future.

Habitat management

It may be possible to permanently alter an area where Canada Geese are causing problems to make the site unattractive to them. Whilst the features that make a water suitable for Canada Geese are not fully understood, enough is known about the biology of the birds to allow a number of suggestions for habitat modifications to be made.

Landscaping: bank steepening and island removal

As with fencing, making it more difficult for Canada Geese to walk out of water bodies onto feeding areas by steepening banks may encourage the birds to move elsewhere. Avoiding shallow marginal areas which support water plants will also restrict the food supply for the geese, but this may adversely affect other waterfowl and/or damage the rest of the aquatic habitat. Safety concerns about having deep water and steep banks in public areas would also need to be considered. Because Canada Geese prefer to breed on islands, the complete removal of an island could be considered if fencing proved ineffective in discouraging the birds. Low lying islands could be effectively removed by raising water levels in some circumstances. As with all other exclusion or habitat modification techniques, the effect on other wildlife would need to be considered before embarking on such a project.

Reducing available foraging areas adjacent to water bodies by changing ground cover.

It may be possible to reduce or eliminate Canada Goose damage to amenity areas by changing the ground cover planting to species that are not palatable to the geese. Ground cover plants with tough leaves, such as Ivy, and many shrub species are not readily eaten by Canada Geese and planting the fringes of lakes with a combination of barrier planting and unpalatable ground cover may reduce the feeding opportunities to the point where the geese move elsewhere.

Changing cropping patterns

Where agricultural damage is occurring, it may be possible to change the crops being grown to those less susceptible to damage by Canada Geese, or

to move to crops which are most vulnerable when the geese are elsewhere. This would obviously require a balance to be struck between the economics of moving to a different crop compared to the cost of either tolerating or controlling the damage being suffered. Further advice can be obtained from the local office of the Farming and Rural Conservation Agency.

3.4.2 Population management

In situations where serious problems are being encountered and where habitat management, scaring or exclusion techniques are inappropriate or have been tried and have failed, it may be necessary to reduce the scale of the problem by reducing the size of the goose population at a particular site. There are a number of techniques that can be used for population management but all require a licence from the appropriate authority, except for shooting in season.

Relocation

The initial response to the first problems caused by Canada Geese in the 1950's and 60's was to capture the birds during the flightless period of the moult and to move them to other waters where there were no Canada Geese at the time. Many of the relocated birds simply returned to their original home, whilst those that did remain on the new site began to reproduce rapidly in the new habitat and problems soon began to occur at these sites as well. It is thought that these reintroductions played a significant part in the sudden rapid expansion of the Canada Goose population which is continuing today. Because further relocations are likely to speed the geographic spread of the species, and may also speed up population growth in newly colonised areas, it is unlikely that licences will be granted to relocate Canada Geese in the foreseeable future. It is illegal, under schedule 9 of the Wildlife and countryside Act 1981, to release Canada Geese into the wild without a licence.

Shooting in season

Canada geese may be legally shot during the open season (1st. September to 31st. January, or 20th. February on the foreshore) by authorised persons (i.e. persons acting with the authority of the landowners and the owners of the shooting rights to the land involved). Because they are frequently quite tame, Canada Geese are not regarded as a very 'sporting shot' by many wildfowlers and the numbers shot each year are relatively small. If the hunting pressure on Canada Geese were to be increased they may become more wary and hence offer a greater challenge to the hunter. However, it is unlikely that winter shooting alone could reduce a large population of, for example, 500 birds by a significant amount in a single season as the increasing wariness of the birds would make the shooting of large numbers in a single session

increasingly difficult, and the birds might simply desert the site during the winter open season, returning to breed, and hence cause more damage, in the spring. Intensive shooting to reduce population size has additional drawbacks in that it will disturb other waterfowl, and may not be possible in public parks etc. for safety and public relations reasons.

Egg control (requires a licence)

Treating the eggs of Canada Geese to prevent hatching is one of the most commonly used licensed population control techniques. It is easily carried out and requires effort annually over a limited period. It is also generally regarded by the public as an acceptable means of population control. Eggs may be removed from nests once the clutch is complete, but there is a possibility that the bird will lay a second clutch. To avoid this, eggs may be treated to prevent hatching or replaced with dummy eggs so that the goose incubates the eggs as normal and then abandons the clutch when they fail to hatch. There are a variety of treatment methods that may by licensed:

- **Egg pricking**. This involves piercing the egg with a pin or small nail and moving this rapidly around inside the egg to kill the embryo before returning the egg to the nest. Egg pricking must be done carefully as if the bird detects that the eggs are damaged she may desert the nest and lay another clutch.
- **Boiling.** Eggs may be boiled to kill the embryo and returned to the nest.
- **Egg oiling.** Eggs may be coated with mineral oil by rolling them in a small quantity of mineral oil carried in a polythene bag. The mineral oil sold as liquid paraffin (BP) in chemists is harmless to the birds - **note this is not paraffin fuel as used in stoves etc**. The oil blocks the pores in the eggshell and starves the embryo of oxygen. This technique is easy to carry out, 100% effective in preventing hatching and does not adversely affect the sitting bird.

Providing that the treatment is applied early in the incubation cycle, ideally immediately after the clutch is complete, all of these techniques are humane and effective in preventing additional young birds being recruited to the population. However, because of the low mortality rate of the adults, it may need 80% of all of the eggs on a site to be treated for in excess of 8 years before egg control alone will begin to show a reduction in population size. If nests are hard to find or manpower resources limited, egg control alone is likely only to hold the problem at its present level rather than to reduce it significantly.

Control of adults (requires a licence)

The quickest way to achieve a large scale reduction in the number of Canada Geese at a site is by the culling of fully grown birds. The effect is immediate

and, if the birds can be captured during the moult, most, or all, of a population can be removed. The principal disadvantage of this technique is that it often meets with a strong adverse reaction from the public. The techniques require some specialist knowledge to be used effectively and considerable manpower is needed if a large scale cull is to be carried out effectively and humanely.

The most common way of removing birds is by capture during the moult. Canada Geese moult all of their flight feathers simultaneously, and, for a period of four to six weeks around the beginning of July, are unable to fly. The birds form moulting flocks, remaining on the water for most of the time to reduce the risk of predation during this vulnerable period. A number of small boats or canoes can be used to herd the birds towards the bank where a funnel shaped enclosure made of chicken wire supported by fencing stakes is erected. The funnel leads into a catching pen with a removable door. The birds are forced up onto the bank and into the mouth of the funnel. The catching party then drive the birds into the funnel and, eventually, into the pen and the door is closed. This technique requires some experience if it is to be carried out successfully, and expert advice should be sought. Smaller numbers of birds may be captured using nets or similar devices, providing any method used does not contravene Section 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, again expert assistance should be employed.

Once captured, it is necessary to humanely despatch the birds. A number of techniques are allowed by law, but it is best to seek professional advice if a large number of birds need to be despatched. Employing a veterinary surgeon to despatch the birds by lethal injection or to oversee the whole operation may be advisable to allay the concerns of the general public.

Before embarking on the large scale destruction of geese it is important to be sure that the birds that you are removing are actually the ones that are causing the problem. For example, birds causing agricultural damage at a wintering site may moult at a site a considerable distance away. It should also be noted that at long established breeding sites there may be a surplus of birds waiting to occupy breeding territories, but which moult elsewhere. Thus, a cull of breeding birds may simply create vacant territories for other birds to move into and repeat culls may be necessary for a number of years before the problem is finally brought under control.

3.5 Examples Of Possible Integrated Management Strategies For Problems Caused By Canada Geese

The choice of which techniques to use in an IMS will depend on a number of factors specific to the site in question; these include the biology and movement patterns of the birds involved, the severity of the problem, the

timescale in which the problem needs to be resolved, possible adverse public reaction, cost and manpower constraints, and the need to obtain licences for some techniques. Examples of IMS that might be developed for typical situations follow, if in doubt, the landowner or manager should take expert advice on the development of an IMS suitable for his or her particular circumstances.

Example 1

A public park with an ornamental lake and lawns. A resident and growing population of 200 Canada Geese with 15 pairs breeding on an island in the lake. Birds range widely over the park, damaging lawns and bankside vegetation and leaving large quantities of droppings which are fouling grassed areas and paths.

Suggested IMS:

The lake shore and island should be fenced to prevent the birds walking out to feed. If other waterfowl are present, a small gap at the bottom of the fence will allow them to move in and out of the water whilst restricting the movement of the geese. Consideration should be given to establishing bankside vegetation that is resistant to damage by the geese (the presence of the fence will aid establishment or reinstatement of damaged areas). Flutter tape or other scarers may be deployed to keep the geese off badly damaged areas. In order to prevent further population increase, a licence should be sought from the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions to treat the eggs of any birds that breed on the island despite the fencing. The licence could be issued on the grounds of public health and safety due to the hazards posed by the droppings in public areas. These techniques should be monitored for at least two years in order to assess their effectiveness. If problems persist, a licensed cull of birds may be necessary, with sufficient birds being captured during the moult to reduce the population to the desired level, followed by on going egg control to keep the population under control.

Example 2.

A keepered country estate with a large lake which is used as a fishery and a waterfowl shoot in winter. A summer population of 200 Canada Geese with 40 breeding pairs along the lake shore. Non breeding birds moult at a large reservoir nearby and additional birds from other breeding sites frequent the water in winter, swelling the population to 400 birds. The geese are damaging grazing pasture and destroying bankside vegetation which is used as nesting habitat by other waterfowl, their droppings are thought to be polluting the water and killing the fish.

Suggested IMS:

Increasing the in-season shooting pressure on the geese may be sufficient to encourage the wintering population to move to the other waters nearby. The estate could consider organised goose shoots which may help to bring in income. This would need to be balanced against the disturbance caused to more 'desirable' waterfowl species. Visual or acoustic scarers should be deployed to protect grazing pasture from damage during the summer months and a licence to allow out of season shooting to augment this scaring could be applied for from the local Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food office on the grounds that the birds are damaging grazing pasture, wildlife habitat and possibly fisheries. The summering population could be further managed by fencing the lake edge and planting unpalatable barrier vegetation (which would double as nesting cover for other waterfowl species). If this was insufficient to reduce numbers of breeding birds the landowner could apply for a licence from MAFF to treat eggs to prevent hatching. Culling is unlikely to be immediately effective in this case unless the exercise can be carried out both on the estate lake and the nearby reservoir. A cull on the estate lake would simply make breeding territories available to non breeding birds which would rapidly move in, necessitating repeat culls over a number of years.

Example 3.

A farm adjacent to a large reservoir, part of which is a designated nature reserve. A resident population of 600 Canada Geese with 30 breeding pairs occupy the reservoir all year round. The birds fly out from the reservoir to feed, damaging newly sprouted winter cereals and other crops.

Suggested IMS:

The farmer has relatively few options other than shooting in season, scaring (possibly with out of season shooting in support) or changing his cropping patterns to minimise damage. In these circumstances, the attitude of the reservoir managers and others with interests in managing the nature reserve (e.g. local naturalists trusts etc.) are crucial. If the owners of the reservoir are opposed to any control action designed to reduce the population, then the farmer is limited to the techniques described above and may need to go to considerable effort and expense to sustain the scaring effort needed over the period necessary to protect his crop. Acoustic and visual scarers should be deployed and moved at regular intervals to maximise their effect. Regular shooting during the open season may encourage the birds to feed elsewhere, especially if there are alternative feeding sites nearby. Population management, either in the form of egg control or culling of adult birds would only be possible with the co-operation of the owners of the reservoir.

5 Further Reading

ADAS 1987: **Bird Scaring - Leaflet P9003** MAFF Publications

Allan J.R. Kirby J.S. & Feare C.J. (1995) **The biology of canada geese (Branta canadensis) in relation to the management of feral populations.** Wildlife Biology Vol. 1 p 129-143.

Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions (1998) **Population Dynamics of Canada Geese in great Britain and Implications for Future Management**. Report by wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and British Trust for Ornithology.

Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions (1998) **Canada Goose Research Project: Control Measures and Study of Related Canada Goose Problems.**

Department Of The Environment (1994) **Canada Geese - A Guide To Legal Control Methods.** National Canada Goose Working Group.

Wandsworth Borough Council (undated) **London Lakes Project Overview Document**. Obtainable from Wandsworth BC price £15

Appendix 1

How to apply for a licence to control Canada Geese

All management of Canada Goose problems must be undertaken within the law. Some techniques, such as scaring birds away (but not from a nesting area) can be undertaken freely, others, such as shooting birds out of season or preventing eggs from hatching are illegal unless a special licence is obtained from the government (usually MAFF or DETR). The law requires that the licensing authority is satisfied that there is a significant problem and that there is no other satisfactory solution before it can issue a licence. Licences can be issued only for the following situations:

- To prevent serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables, fruit, growing timber or fisheries.
- To preserve public health or public or air safety
- To conserve wild birds or to protect any collection of wild birds.

Applications for a licence to control agricultural problems should be addressed to the nearest MAFF office (address in the telephone directory).

Applications for all other purposes should be directed to:

In England:

Department of Environment Transport and the Regions
Rm. 902c

Tollgate House
Houlton St.
Bristol
BS2 9DJ

Tel: 0117 9878903

In Scotland:

Scottish Office, Agriculture, Environment & Fisheries Department (SOAFED)
Pentland House
47 Robb's Loan
Edinburgh
EH14 1TY

Tel: 0131 2446548

In Wales:

Welsh Office
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF1 3NQ
Tel: 01222 825203

Applicants should expect to complete a pro forma application form or send a letter detailing the type of damage being suffered and what measures have already been tried to control the problem. For applications to MAFF, a site visit by a MAFF representative may also be required to assess the nature and severity of the difficulties being encountered. Licences are normally restricted to killing a small number of birds to aid scaring or for treating a limited number of eggs to prevent hatching. Licences for larger scale culls of birds are issued only in exceptional cases and after very serious consideration. All applicants are encouraged to use the licensing scheme as part of a wider management plan to control the number of geese present.

CONTACT DETAILS

Central Science Laboratory
Sand Hutton
YORK YO4 1LZ

Examples of Good Practice in the UK

Goose Management in South West London

Wandsworth Borough Council (WBC) was awarded funding by the European Commission to restore (improve the water quality, landscaping and decrease bankside erosion) three urban park lakes in Wandsworth (Battersea Park Lake, King George's Park Lake and Tooting Common Lake): The London Lakes Project. The project was divided into six distinct Phases with phase 3 focussing on Waterbird Monitoring and Management. Earlier studies of the use of the sites by waterfowl had confirmed the council's view that Canada Geese potentially contributed to the problem of eutrophication by depositing relative large amounts of phosphorous rich faeces into the lakes. The same studies indicated that Canada Geese spend more time on the lake banks and on the amenity grassland beside the lake, relative to other native wildfowl species, thereby contributing to the problem of bankside erosion. Similarly, other feral and exotic wildfowl, in particular domestic X Greylag Geese and Muscovy, were seen to be in conflict with the projects objectives. These domestic crosses were largely sedentary at Battersea Park and so, although not as numerous as Canada Geese, the grazing and trampling pressure exerted on the banks was continuous throughout the year. In order to meet the water quality and landscaping objectives of the project it was considered necessary by the project partners to reduce the number of Canada Geese and other feral and exotic waterfowl using Battersea Park Lake.

Initially, a survey was undertaken of Canada Geese by the commercial arm of the Wildlife & Wetlands Trust and their movements were mapped. WBC went on to develop an integrated management strategy for their parks. Their strategy involved both site-based and population-based control measures (eggs were treated once a fortnight throughout the breeding season, every year), as well as a range of other management techniques

The measures taken were very effective and other waterfowl benefitted greatly from the changes. More species began to regularly use the ponds, and many species also increased in numbers. This is probably partly because the goose population before control measures began had been high.

Venue	Number of Canada Geese in 1995	Numbers after cull	Numbers in 2015
Battersea Park	124	68	8
Tooting Common	32	N/A	2
Wandsworth Common	62	N/A	12

Wandsworth confirmed there had been a steady decline in numbers year on year from 1995 to 2005 as a result of the suite of measures they put in place, and that the numbers had remained stable since 2005.

The reduction in geese numbers also assisted with improving the water quality. Those water bodies now support more invertebrate species and are better able to support aquatic plants, which over time will further improve the water quality and dissolved oxygen levels.

Goose Management in the Lake District

Management of Canada Geese has been carried out on Windermere in some form or other for nearly 20 years. In 2007 a group of science and conservation organisations and major landowners from around the lake formed the Windermere Geese Management Group. It was set up to tackle the problems resulting from the large increase in numbers.

The number of geese in the Lake District National Park varies depending on the time of year. There is a population of resident birds and their numbers are added to in winter and summer by additional birds looking to avoid hard winter conditions elsewhere or find summer grazing. In summer 2011 over 1100 birds were counted on Lake Windermere.

The group have tried temporary fencing, permanent fencing, mechanical scarers and egg oiling to prevent eggs hatching. Despite all of this there are still large numbers of Canada geese causing problems.

As an invasive non-native species, it is recognised that Canadian Geese have a detrimental impact on the area including:

- Damage to shoreline habitats
- Displacement of native species
- Damage to farm grazing and crop land
- Pollution of public and private recreational land
- Public health concerns from pathogens, bacteria and parasites
- Contribute phosphorus to the lake, and their grazing may contribute to the damage and loss of reed beds.

As a result, In March 2012 the Windermere Geese Management Group considered a cull of Canada Geese on Windermere. However the group faced growing opposition to the planned cull from members of the public and organisations including the RSPCA, and decided to defer the proposed cull in order to meet with those organisations and individuals to discuss alternative

approaches to management, and to gather more evidence on the adverse impact of geese on land management, wildlife and visitor enjoyment. To date no cull has taken place and non-lethal control measures continue to be used.

Goose Management in Scotland

Historically, wild geese have formed an important part of Scotland's natural heritage. Following a period of decline in the 1950s-70s, goose numbers have increased in Scotland and in recent decades the recovery of certain goose populations has caused agricultural damage to crops in some areas. As a result many farmers and crofters affected by large numbers of grazing geese regard them as agricultural pests.

A national policy framework for goose management has been in place in Scotland since 2000 to help balance agricultural and conservation interests, and a national co-ordinating body, the National Goose Management Review Group (NGMRG) has been in place since May 2000 to implement the national policy framework and to advise Scottish Ministers on goose management in Scotland.

The NGMRG is guided in its deliberations by three fundamental objectives which are at the heart of the national policy framework. These core objectives are to:

- Meet the UK's nature conservation obligations for geese, within the context of wider biodiversity objectives
- Minimise economic losses experienced by farmers and crofters as a result of the presence of geese
- Maximise the value for money of public expenditure

In general terms, the national policy framework has delivered what it set out to do, and perhaps more. Its approach to national and local partnership, the integration of the needs of conservation and agriculture, an evidence base of sound science and the growing recognition of the wider public benefits all contribute to the delivery of the objectives and are all direct consequences of the policy framework.

There are seven Local Goose Management Groups (LGMG) set up across Scotland. Each has adopted the national objectives agreed as a result of the previous NGMRG Review in 2005; together with a number of locally defined objectives designed to address the impact of geese in their locality. Further information on those seven Local Goose Management Schemes is available at: http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2011/02/03083950/20

As part of its function the NGMRG is required to conduct a multi-disciplinary review of the national policy framework every five years, and to report its findings to ministers. The last review was conducted in 2010 and the review findings were published in February 2011 – see 2010 Review of Goose Management Policy in Scotland .

The Scottish Government response to the 2010 review is also available at: http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2011/02/17112253/2

International Practice

As part of the 2010 review, the NGMRG considered arrangements for goose management in the EU, Scandinavia, Iceland and Greenland – see **Annex ?**

Damage caused by Canada geese must be viewed in context - the impact of any damage depends not just on the numbers of geese present but also the nature and uses of the site. A relatively small number of geese may cause significant problems in a small formal site, while a much larger population may cause no significant problems if the site is large, less formal, or little used by people.

Before any control is considered, it is important to carry out monitoring of the population to determine when in the year Canada geese use the site, and what they use it for. If geese are not present all year round, monitoring should also be carried out in other areas they use as any control measures may need to be coordinated with other landowners to ensure they are effective.

Although geese may be the most visible cause of a problem, they may not be the most significant. For example, water supply and the flow in a water body will have an enormous impact on the water quality.

The presence of other waterfowl species should also be monitored, as these may be affected by control measures.

Types of Damage

Canada geese, particularly if present in large numbers, may cause a number of problems:

- *Vegetation damage* - Grazing geese may damage lawns and other vegetation, particularly on the banks of ponds or lakes. The birds forage on a range of vegetation. As well as grass they will also eat aquatic and emergent plants which can be important for maintaining dissolved oxygen levels in water bodies. Geese may also damage vegetation by trampling, particularly around the edges of water bodies. In large numbers, the geese can also damage grass areas.

- *Droppings* - On lawns and grassland Canada geese droppings are unsightly, and the droppings may make paths dangerously slippery. Droppings in lakes and ponds add nutrients, particularly nitrate and phosphate, to the water, which can eventually seriously affect the water quality ecosystem. There is some evidence that they pose a hazard to human health if accidentally ingested.

- *Physical damage* - Large numbers of geese may create extensive areas of bare ground at the water's edge and cause erosion of the banks.

- *Aggression* - During the breeding season, geese may become more aggressive towards people, dogs and other waterfowl. Dogs may provoke a particularly fierce response from geese during the breeding season.

Management Options

Research on the control of Canada geese has identified a range of techniques. The research, which included one site with over 300 geese present in summer, suggests that control techniques used in isolation are unlikely to be effective. Control measures will only work if an integrated programme of management techniques is carried out.

In many cases, management options will necessarily be restricted by the need to preserve historic features, planting layouts and so forth. Not all management options will be appropriate for all sites.

All potential control methods are aimed at reducing the numbers of geese, rather than completely excluding geese from a site, as this is usually impossible to achieve. Most control methods may be less effective if the population is relatively small. Control measures can be divided into site-based and population-based techniques.

<u>Site-based Management Measures</u>

These do not require a licence and include:

- *Exclusion from islands* - Fencing islands in ponds and lakes used for breeding can discourage geese from nesting on the islands. A 1m chicken wire fence with a 10cm gap between the ground and the bottom of the fence will allow other waterfowl to use the island. This technique is most likely to be successful if islands are well vegetated as this discourages geese from flying over the fence.

- *Access to grazing areas* - Fencing around the margins of a water body can discourage geese from feeding in areas beyond. In this way they can be directed away from sensitive grazing areas. Replanting grassland areas

with shrubs decreases the food supply. Fencing these areas will be needed to ensure plants establish without grazing or trampling pressure.

- *Reduce visibility of water bodies* - Geese prefer to graze close to a water body which provides them with a safe retreat. By obscuring the views between feeding and grazing areas, geese will be discouraged from using them, however, this may be difficult to achieve in historic landscapes.

- *Controlling public access* - Fencing of water bodies can also be used to influence visitors, by restricting opportunities for feeding geese.

- *Interpretation* - Many people visiting sites value the waterfowl populations and consequently control measures may be controversial and should not be attempted without interpretation explaining the reasons for, and benefits of, carrying out control. For example, explaining that there are nature conservation benefits in reducing the geese population. Interpretation can also be used to discourage feeding of the birds, and inform people about aquatic ecology.

- *Other methods* - A number of other techniques can be used but are less well researched. Bird scaring is widely used in some areas on farmland but is less commonly used in aquatic habitats. Many scaring methods are also disturbing to visitors and nearby residents. Chemical repellents are used in North America but with limited effectiveness, and they are not currently approved for use in Britain.

<u>Population-based Management</u>
Most population-based management measures require a licence and include:

- *Translocation* - This method has been used is the past, but is no longer encouraged, as it simply transfers a problem to a different site. It is also an offence to release Canada geese into the wild without a licence. Unless other measures are taken, other geese may colonise a site which has had its previous population removed.

- *Egg-pricking, oiling or boiling* - These are an effective way of preventing hatching, as birds are very loyal to their nesting sites, but the longevity of geese mean that a long-term programme of this management would be necessary in order to significantly reduce a population. Oiling of eggs kills embryos by depriving them of oxygen. In order to carry out any of these operations, a licence for the work must be obtained (see below). Leaving eggs in place but preventing them from hatching means adults continues to protect them. Removal of eggs simply induces the female to lay more.

- *Culling* - This also requires a licence if it is to be done during the close season (1 February to 31 August, or 21 February to 31 August below high water mark). Outside the close season Canada geese can be shot by an authorised person, provided that other regulations concerning firearms safety, capture methods and so forth are adhered to. However this has practical difficulties on many sites. It may be more practical to round up geese during the moult, when they are unable to fly, however culling of geese is a very emotive issue.

Licensing of Control Operations

All wild birds, including Canada geese, are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act, 1981. It is an offence to take, damage or destroy their nests or eggs without a licence, and it is also an offence to release them into the wild.

Licences for culling in the close season, egg-pricking or translocation of Canada geese can be issued for a number of reasons:

- To prevent serious damage or disease
- To conserve and protect wild birds
- To conserve flora and fauna
- To preserve public health or safety
- To prevent serious damage to livestock, crops, forestry or fisheries
- For the purposes of air safety

Licences are not issued solely to prevent damage to property.

Arrangements for Goose Management for Countries within the EU, Scandinavia, Iceland & Greenland

In the 2010 review, contacts for countries within the EU, Greenland and Iceland were provided through the editor in Chief of the Goose Bulletin published by the International Goose Specialist Group. If no responses were obtained from the nominated persons, then additional requests for contacts were made through the country representatives of Birdlife International.

Representatives were asked to provide information on their country's goose policy framework, the species which cause conflicts, the goose management options, funding arrangements and expenditure, and hunting regulations. Additional supporting information was taken where necessary from web pages of the Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU (www.face-europe.org) but this was only possible for countries that had submitted hunting guidance in English.

Responses were received from:

- Iceland (Icelandic Institute of Natural History & Environmental Agency of Iceland);
- Flanders, Belgium (Research Institute for Nature and Forest);
- Greenland (Greenland Government);
- Germany (Kreis Wesel Biology Station);
- England (Natural England);
- Italy (Trieste University);
- France (Ministry of Environment);
- Bulgaria (Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds);
- Estonia (Institute of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and Environment Ministry);
- Denmark (National Environmental Research Institute);
- Netherlands (SOVON);
- Sweden (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences);
- Norway (Institute for Nature Research (NINA) and Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management).

Policy, Funding Arrangements & Overall Approach to Goose Management

Country	National policy for goose management	Regional management/policy	Annual expenditure[1]
Sweden	No	Yes (county)	Not available (combined costs are only available for meeting compensation for damage caused by cranes, swans and geese)
Norway	Yes, developed in 1996 (in Norwegian but with English abstract)	Yes (county) (in Norwegian only eg. Forvaltingsplan for gjess i Hordaland and Forvaltningsplan for Gjess I Oslo og Akershus)	310,000 E
Iceland	No	No	Not applicable
Bulgaria	No	No	Not available
Denmark	Circa mid 1990s (in Danish only)	No	100,000 E for bait only (estimate)
France	No	No	Not applicable
Germany	No	Yes (Federal state)	2-3,000,000 E (estimate)
Greenland	No	No	Not applicable
Netherlands	Yes (in Dutch only)	No	12,300,000-13,900,000 E (agri-environment schemes /compensation only over years 2005/2006 to 2007/2008)
Estonia	No	No	200,000 E (based on 2003 figures)

[1] It was not possible to derive comparative costs for goose management between countries due to lack of information available on annual expenditure (national or regional) for all countries. For the few countries where some relevant information was available, it was often an estimate rather derived from government databases or for only partial costs of meeting goose management costs.

Italy	No	Yes (Province)	3,000 E (Province of Goriza only 2008, 2009)
England	No	No	2,600,000 (based on mean of 10 years)
Belgium	No	Yes (regions)	?

Goose Management Options (for goose species considered to cause damage)

Country	**Payment schemes (rate)**	**Non lethal scaring**		**Lethal scaring/hunting**		**Network of specific goose reserves (excluding SPAs etc)**	**Other**
		Use of	**Funding provided**	**'Quarry species'**	**Out of season licences**		
Sweden	Compensation (assessment of damage carried out by inspectors employed by county administration boards)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Sacrificial crops
Norway	Compensation: (i) crop type (pasture *versus* cereals) and; (ii) goose densities (based on independent counts made)	Yes	Equipment only	Yes	Yes	No	-
Iceland	-	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	-
Bulgaria	Agri-environment scheme (per ha) Compensation (per ha)	No (Illegal)	No	Yes		No	-
Denmark	No	Yes	Equipment only	Yes	Yes	No	Bait fields with grain
France	No	-	-	Yes	No	No	-
Germany	Compensation (assessment of damage by an independent	Yes		Yes	Yes	No	-

	appraiser from agricultural administration. Damage is based on estimating actual loss of crop by comparison of height of grazed and non-grazed areas) Flat rate (per ha)						
Greenland	No	-	-	Yes		No	
Netherlands	Agri-environment scheme (per ha) Compensation outwith reserves (assessment of damage carried out by independent appraiser who must also confirm that scaring techniques have been deployed. Damage is based on estimating actual loss of crop by comparison of height of grazed and non-grazed areas)	Outwith goose reserves only		Outwith goose reserves only	Yes	Yes linked to agri-environment schemes	Egg pricking/nest destruction Cull by gassing Habitat manipulation to reduce feeding opportunities Fencing off breeding sites
Estonia	Compensation (Assessment of damage by a commission of at least three people who must also confirm scaring techniques have been deployed. Damage is determined according to crop type: by level of goose droppings or visual assessments of % damage in test plots)	Yes	No	Yes	No (as yet)	No	-

Italy	Compensation (Assessment of damage, which is carried out by the farmers and information is submitted to the Provincial administration). The amount is 'financial aid' and does not meet the full cost of losses incurred	No	No	No	No	No	-
England	Agri-environment schemes (per ha)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Addition to general open licence
Belgium	Compensation (assessment of damage by an independent appraiser from the Nature Conservancy Department. Damage is determined by estimating actual damage by calculating the difference in yield between grazed and ungrazed areas of the field)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Nest destructio n

Hunting Arrangements for Goose Species

Country	**Bag limit for 'quarry goose species'**	**Bag reporting scheme for 'quarry goose species'**	**Sale of goose carcasses permitted**	**Hunting licence renewal**	**Hunting Proficiency exam**	**Regional variation in protected status of species**
Sweden	No	Voluntary	Yes	Annual	Yes	Yes

Norway	No	Mandatory	Yes (approved by the Food Safety Authority)	Annual	Yes	Yes
Iceland	No	Mandatory	Yes	Annual	Yes	Yes
Bulgaria	Yes (daily quota for individual farmers)	Voluntary	No	Annual	Yes	No
Denmark	Yes (set to individual land owners)	Mandatory	Yes (but origin of carcass traceable)	Annual	Yes	No
France	No	Voluntary (mandatory for night time shooting)	No	Annual	Yes	No
Germany	No	Mandatory	Yes	1-3 years	Yes	Yes
Greenland	No	Mandatory	Yes (professional hunter only)	Annual	No	Yes
Netherlands	No	Mandatory	Yes	Annual	Yes	No
Estonia	No	Mandatory	Yes	Annual	Yes	Yes
Italy	NA (geese fully protected)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Belgium	No	Mandatory	Yes (but seasonal restrictions)	?	?	?

Decision Session - Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism 24 June 2016
Report of the Assistant Director
(Communities, Culture and Public Realm)

York Learning Strategic / Service Plan: 2016/17

Summary

1. This report sets out the strategic direction of York Learning and presents a one year service / business plan for the academic year commencing in September 2016. This forms a key part of the governance arrangements for the service.

Recommendations

2. The Executive Member is asked to consider the attached Strategic / Service plan and approve it subject to any suggested changes.

   Reason: To provide a sound governance arrangement for York Learning Services.

Background

3. York Learning is a council service which delivers a range of learning programmes to support people into employment, to improve their skills, and to support their personal development. The service is funded almost exclusively from external contract funding. For the academic year 2016/17 funding for the service will be £2.4m.

4. This report gives an overview of the service and sets out some of the opportunities and challenges that the service faces over the next 12 months and beyond. It includes a detailed action plan to achieve service ambitions for the next 12 months. Following this report a detailed scorecard will be developed to support the outcomes in this report and to allow reporting against projected numbers and targets. This will follow a similar pattern to the 2015/16 plan.

Consultation

5. The plan is presented for consultation and approval. It has gone through some internal service consultation with senior managers

and is in part as a result of a rigorous self-assessment process which is ongoing.

Options

6. The attached plan is presented for comment and amendment by the Executive Member prior to approval.

Analysis

7. This will be a dynamic document with actions added as appropriate. Any major changes to the plan will be approved by the Executive Member.

Monitoring and Review

8. Performance against the action plan is reported to Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee twice yearly in the form of an update report.

9. In December, the Executive Member receives the service's self-assessment report which draws on performance in the previous academic year and helps to shape the strategic plan for the following academic year.

Council Plan

10. The format of the plan highlights where the service contributes to wider council objectives as part of the new council plan and to the city's Skills Strategy. The latter is currently under review: the previous strategy covered the period 2013-16 and if there are significant changes then these will be reflected in subsequent versions of the plan.

Implications

11. **Financial:** This service plan is designed to be implemented at zero base cost to the Council. Variations in expenditure and income will be reported through the usual management financial reporting arrangements.

12. **Equalities:** The report has no equalities implications that arise directly from the attached Strategic/service plan, although some of actions will be subject to equalities impact assessments.

    Service managers are fully aware of duties under the equalities legislation and implement equalities actions as part of a regular cycle of quality improvements and actions.

13. **Crime and Disorder:** Whilst there are no direct crime and disorder implications contained within the plan, the service has a strategy to support the "Prevent" strand of the Governments Anti-Terrorism strategy, and this is part of clear contractual and legal requirements.

14. **Property:** There are no immediate property implications; however, one of the service actions is to reduce costs associated with its 16-18 programmes and this may have property implications in the future.

15. There are no additional Human Resources, Legal, Information Technology, or Other implications arising from the report.

Risk Management

16. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy the main risks that have been identified associated with the proposals contained in this report are those which could lead to the inability to meet business objectives and to deliver services, leading to damage to the Council's reputation and failure to meet stakeholders' expectations. The level of risk is assessed as "Low". This is acceptable but means that regular monitoring is required of the operation of the new arrangements.

Contact Details

Author:	**Chief Officer Responsible for the report:**
Alistair Gourlay Head of York Learning Tel No: 554294	Charlie Croft Assistant Director (Communities, Culture & Public Realm

Report Approved ✓ **Date:** 13 June 2016

Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

Wards Affected: **All** ✓

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes: York Learning Strategic Plan 2016/17

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ANNEX A

York Learning Strategic Plan 2016/17

Service:	**Communities, Culture and Public Realm** **York Learning**
Directorate:	**Communities and Neighbourhoods**
Director:	**Sally Burns**
Cabinet Member:	**Cllr Nigel Ayre**

Section 1: The Service

York Learning is a CYC business unit that focuses on improving people's skills for work, contributing to their health and well being and providing a range of leisure based learning opportunities. Provision is secured exclusively by external funding and contracts and the service has a zero base budget.

Turnover for 2016/17 is expected to be £2.4 m, (an increase of 100k on 15/16, mainly as a result of increases in funding for 16-18 work, fee income and loans funded provision), with all of the funding secured from external contracts and fee income. The service is expecting a reduction in funding for Apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds, partly as a result of fewer companies within the sectors the service operates in taking on apprentices in this age group.

The service employs 180 staff, with some 60 full and part-time contracted staff and 120 sessional tutors and support staff. The service had just over 6000 student enrolments in 2015/16 which was just over 4000 students. Currently the service operates from 40 community venues with substantial provision at York and Acomb Explore, Huntington, Fulford and York High secondary schools and Huntington Community centre, as well as in local primary schools and children's centres. The service operates its 16-18 full-time programme from Rougier House on Rougier Street, where there are dedicated learning rooms and a fully equipped ICT suite. The service management headquarters are in West Offices, with the main service reception located within CYC customer centre.

The service was subject to an Ofsted Short Inspection in February 2016 which resulted in the service being judged as Good, thus maintaining its status from the previous inspection. Success rates in the majority of areas of provision are above the national average (judged as the % of those people successfully achieving the qualification compared with those who started the course), as reported in the service self-assessment report. Success rates for Childcare and ICT (Information and Communications Technology) are outstanding. Success rates for functional English, maths and ICT are good with a three year improvement trend and significant improvement for 16-18 provision.

The service has maintained a highly successful leisure learning programme at a time when other local authority providers have substantially reduced this type of provision. This has not only enabled the service to continue to offer local residents highly valued and popular courses, but enabled some cross subsidy of other programmes where fee income is impossible to collect.

The service offers a range of programmes including but not restricted to the following:

- English and maths functional skills and GCSE programmes
- ICT programmes to support Digital inclusion
- Full-time 16-18 programmes including personalised learning programmes
- A range of health and well being programmes
- Family Learning Programmes as part of a first steps back into learning and work
- Employability and work preparation programmes
- 16-18 and 19+ Apprenticeships
- Essential workplace qualifications to improve skills
- A range of leisure programmes to support health and well being and personal development
- A range of loan-funded programmes at level 3,4 and 5, to support the improvement of skills for work

Section 2: Mission and Vision

The service mission and vision are drawn from the CYC Council Plan. The service will seek to support and implement clear council policies relating to Skills and Employment focussing on supporting Adults to improve their life chances, but also on improving Adult Skills to support young people, particularly through Family Learning. Where appropriate the service will work with local employers to improve the workforce skills and support new developments as appropriate. The service mission and vision are included below:

Our Vision

All our clients have the skill and motivation to maximise their life chances

Our Mission

Support people to achieve the best they possibly can, by delivering learning, skills and employability programmes to suit their needs

Section 3: Operating Context

The service primarily provides learning to adults, in partnership and with links to a number of other learning providers. It has a unique place in the city providing community based learning in a variety of community venues throughout York. The service offers a non-campus based programme in local communities; a feature often sighted by learners as significant to them. There are close partnership links with Explore York, who provide three significant community spaces for delivery, York Explore, Acomb Explore and Clifton. These high quality spaces are vital to the delivery of York Learning programmes.

There are strong partnership arrangements through York Community Learning Partnership and Higher York for the planning and promotion of learning. York WEA, (Workers' Educational Association) York College, York Explore, York Museum Trust and York University are significant and active partners who collaborate to produce joint publicity, celebration events and other promotional activity. Joint planning of programmes is developing although there is still significant work to do in this area. The Family Learning team liaise with children's centres, local primary schools and education advisers to ensure programmes support local early years and primary school priorities and initiatives. In the area of 16-18 programmes and personalised learning for 19-25 there is a very strong and productive relationship with Blueberry Academy. This secures provision for the most vulnerable learners in the city and provides a highly cost effective programme.

In common with most public sector organisations, core funding for provision is reducing year on year and the service is continually seeking new funding streams to diversify its offer, in order to be able to continue to support some of the most vulnerable adults and young people in the city. This includes developing more "full-cost" provision (with a view to investing more in targeting learning) and competing in the market place for new business. The service is well placed to take forward opportunities for ESIF (European Structural Infrastructure Funding) mainly in supporting individuals who are unemployed or those returning to the workplace.

Core work for the service over the past couple of years has focussed to a large extent on getting people ready for work and improving their skills so that they can improve their work and life chances. Whilst this work will continue, the current relatively low levels of unemployment mean that the focus will shift to support some of those who are most vulnerable and perhaps some way from the job market. This work involves intensive one to one support for individuals.

The service will be seeking to secure external funding for this work through both Leeds City Region LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) and York and North Yorkshire LEP. This may involve work beyond the city boundaries, either in direct delivery or in partnership work as part of a larger contract.

Section 4: Priority Focus

Key priorities for the service remain on developing skills for employment and to support health and well being. The service continues to focus on core skills of English, maths and ICT as these are the building blocks for the development of other skills and are key to the development of further learning. There continues to be a focus in all provision on improving core skills of English, maths and ICT alongside a general focus on supporting people skills to gain employment. In brief priority areas include:

- Full time 16-18 programmes, including personalised learning programmes for some of the city's most vulnerable young people
- 16-18 and 19+ Apprenticeships, supporting national and local priorities
- Developing and improving skills in English, maths and ICT
- Programmes designed to support parents and individuals to support children's learning
- Programmes designed to support and improve peoples' mental health and well being
- Programmes to support people's personal development and leisure learning

- Programmes designed to support people back into work or to improve in work skills to enable them to progress

Section 5: Challenges

Funding for programmes remains the single key challenge for the service. This is both in securing new funding to develop the offer and respond to local needs. During 2015 the service underwent a major reorganisation shedding some 10 FTE roles amounting to savings close to £300k. Whilst this process was managed efficiently and effectively, reductions of this magnitude do affect staff morale and expertise within the service. This will continue to be a challenge going forward.

There are also some risks associated with contract compliance and reaching maximum contract values. Whilst the service is aware of those risks and takes the appropriate action to monitor and mitigate those risks, there remain some challenges in ensuring that the resources dedicated to fulfilling the contracts do not exceed the value of the contracts themselves. This is particularly a risk in the early “capacity building" phase of a new contract, where initial investment is needed to secure the model, but where the funding is insufficient in the early stages to cover this. Ensuring a model is developed to cope with this is important.

One very specific contract risk that was identified in the previous strategic plan related to the 16-18 full time learning programme. Whilst the risks identified previously still remain, increases in funding into this area, due to the increase in student numbers and effective management to maximise funding are now mitigating this risk. The service will need to remain vigilant as this area supports some of the most vulnerable young people in the city.

Reductions in funding have resulted in significant cuts to provision of sessional childcare which is having an adverse effect on the number of parents, in particular lone parents, accessing Family Learning courses. Whilst the increase in two and three/four year old funded places will provide some support, the lack of funding for sessional childcare for younger children and at appropriate venues to enable parents to attend first step courses remains a significant challenge.

Apprenticeship reform at a national level continues at a pace. Whilst this is a complex area, in essence the risks to the service come from the switch in control of funding to employers and the fact that for the first time many employers will have to make a “cash” contribution for apprenticeship programmes. The detail of Apprenticeship reform is still not clear but the opening up of the market place clearly poses some risks to this aspect of the service’s provision.

Finally, the role of the Local Enterprise Partnerships (both Leeds and York and North Yorkshire) and the potential affects of Devolution are sure to have a significant impact on funding for the service. Whilst the switching of control of funding from a national to a regional level is a positive development, competing for funding with other areas where levels of deprivation and unemployment might be greater, does pose some risks. Whilst direct impacts are not likely to be felt in 2016/17, impacts are likely to be significant in subsequent years.

Section 6: Actions 2016/17 Academic Year

Ref	Council Plan/Local Priority	Activity	Lead officer	Milestones	Indicators by which performance will be measured & Frequency
1	Residents have the opportunity to get good quality and well paid jobs YSS – 2 - Skills for Employment – More opportunities for the city's most vulnerable adults and excluded groups.	*Rolled forward action from 2015/16 plan* Secure an ESIF (European Structural and Investment Fund) contract for working with some of the most vulnerable adults in the city to help them secure skills for employment and to support their mental well-being	CC/AG	• Delivery contract agreed with Lead provider - 07/16 • Contract deliver commences - 10/16 • First cohort of learners recruited to programme– 10/16 • First job outcomes achieved 03/17	• Total Number of people recruited and supported in programme (TBA) • Total number of new starters each month (TBA) • Total number of job outcomes achieved and sustained (TBA)
2	Everyone has access to opportunities regardless of their background	Continue to secure provision for High needs support students as part of a "Personalised Learning" for 16-19 year olds and for 19-24 with learning difficulties	CG	• New funding arrangements are modelled and agreed and the impact on provision is understood • Work with a range of new providers to secure appropriate places for students	• 40 learners secure education provision with appropriate levels of High Needs Support funding.

3	Residents have the opportunity to get good quality and well paid jobs YSS – 2 - Skills for Employment – More opportunities for the city's most vulnerable adults and excluded groups.	Deliver NEET ESF contract as part of a strategy to support young people into employment	CG	• Contract volumes are agreed 05/16 • Strategy to engage young people agreed and implemented 06/16 • Staffing levels agreed and contract management arrangements confirmed 06/16	**Danesgate Outcomes** 30 starts • 30 completers of unaccredited activity • 15 education • 5 employment • 3 Traineeships 2 Apprenticeships **FE dropout/ other NEET or other** 25 starts • 10 employment • 3 Apprenticeships • 15 voluntary placements

4	Residents have the opportunity to get good quality and well paid jobs York Skills Strategy (YSS) – 2 - Skills for Employment – More opportunities for the city's most vulnerable adults and excluded groups.	Review the current Jobs Fair offer and agree a plan for future events and activities	LD/DR /JL	• Decision about future jobs fair is agreed and implemented. • Future funding is sought and secured	• Outcomes are dependent on whether future funding can be secured.
5	Everyone has access to opportunities regardless of their background YSS – 2 - Skills for Employment – More opportunities for the city's most vulnerable adults and excluded groups.	Continue to develop provision for digital inclusion targeting skills development on the final 25% by developing new programmes with a range of partners	AP	• New "Get Digital" skills programme is launched working with targeted groups including ex-offenders and family learning - 06/16 • Bid for new resources to support work with those with visual impairment, developed with York Blind and Partially Sighted Society -09/16 • SLA with Tang Hall Online is agreed. 05/16	• Outputs as agreed with Digital skills contract funding are achieved • Outputs as agreed on the SLA for Tang Hall online. are reached each month • New funding stream is secured in partnership with YBPSS and any outputs are reached

				❖ Clear targets and a joint delivery plan is developed - 06/16 ❖ Delivery of the programme commences – 06/16	

6	Residents have the opportunity to get good quality and well paid jobs	Maximise funding for 24+ loans by expanding and developing new programmes for those seeking to improve their skills.	CC/AG	• New qualifications are developed and implemented 09/16 • 2nd cohort of level 4 counselling students are recruited and commence programme 09/16 • Decision on whether to develop level 5 therapeutic counselling programme is taken	• £120k of funding for loans secured with clear pipeline for continued provision • 14 more students are enrolled on level 4 counselling programme • 2 new qualifications are offered and taken up by learners
7	Be entrepreneurial, making the most of commercial opportunities.	Increase full cost programme to ensure a diverse and varied offer and develop a robust fee income stream	SB/AG	• Increase fee income each quarter by 5% - 12/16 • A clear and transparent full cost offer is developed with subsidy clearly identified 12/16	• Total fee income for the year increases from £380k to £400k • Total courses full cost is increased by 10%
8	Everyone has access to opportunities regardless of their background	Submit a bid for Financial inclusion, "Making the most of your money" working specifically with local food banks to support people with budgeting and other skills	CG	• *Bid is submitted with support from 4 food banks in York – 05/16* • *If successful project specification and delivery plan is implemented -06/16* • *(NB – this bid has now been secured)*	• 100 Food bank clients- initial IAG • 50 Foodbank clients - in depth learning packages • 15 staff members trained in IAG

9	Residents are encouraged and supported to live healthily	Through a range of courses with Family Learning programmes young families are supported to eat healthily	FH	• Deliver a range of healthy eating on a budget courses as part of the Family Learning Offer 09/16 • Produce a Family Learning healthy eating cookbook - 01/17	• 4 courses are delivered attracting 30 learners

10	Help local businesses to achieve their potential including through Make it York.	Work with local businesses to support them to access apprenticeship and other work related programmes through new national arrangements	CG/TG	• A clear and transparent fee policy for apprenticeships is developed -03/17 • Businesses are supported to understand the new national apprenticeship arrangements 07/17 • The service develops apprenticeships with 4 new businesses – 01/17	• Fee policy is published and shared with partners • A number of forums for partners is delivered explaining new arrangements for apprenticeships • 8 new apprentices start programme with new businesses.
11	Residents have the opportunity to get good quality and well paid jobs	Building on recent research to develop explicit actions and approaches to employability skills	FH	• All FL courses will have identified transferable skills within the timeframe of the course- 08/17 • FL participants will have access to one to one IAG support – 06/17 • All maths courses will have clear budgeting skills elements built into programmes – 10/16	• Learners will have basic CVs • Clear progression paths mapped • 20% of learners gain employment/volunteering within year of their first family learning course

Executive Member Decision Session Culture, Leisure and Tourism

24 June 2016

Written Comments Annex

Agenda Item	Received From	Comments
Aboricultural Policy	Steve Galloway  Overgrown Trees-Burgess Walk Security Risk as Streetlight Blocked (above)	I think it is true to say that – at least on the west of the City – there is an increasing sense of frustration about the apparent inflexibility shown by some Council officials when asked to address problems with overgrown trees (and bushes). There needs to be more proactive management of the resource coupled with a route for those who are dissatisfied to follow.

Tree on 248 Hamilton West Drive damaging footpath (above)

Tree on Cedarwood Close blocking highway for high sided vehicles