



**Notice of public meeting of  
Communities and Environment Policy and Scrutiny Committee**

**To:** Councillors Gunnell (Chair), Richardson (Vice-Chair),  
Funnell, Kramm, K Myers, Mason and Orrell

**Date:** Tuesday, 15 March 2016

**Time:** 5.30 pm

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

**AGENDA**

**1. Declarations of Interest**

Members are 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 the agenda.

**2. Minutes**

(Pages 1 - 8)

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup>  
January 2016.

### **3. Public Participation**

At this point in the meeting members of the public who have registered their wish to under the Council's Public Participation Scheme may do so. The deadline for registering is **5.00pm on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2016**.

Members of the public may register to speak on:

- An item on the agenda
- An issue within the remit of the Committee

#### **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](https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/6453/protocol_for_webcasting_filming_and_recording_council_meetingspdf)

### **4. City of York Council Third Quarter Finance (Pages 9 - 16) and Performance Monitoring Report (15 Minutes)**

This report provides details of the 2015/16 forecast outturn position for both finance and performance across services within City & Environmental Services and Communities and Neighbourhoods.

### **5. Update on The Community Safety Unit (20 (Pages 17 - 28) Minutes)**

This report provides an update on work that is being delivered by the Community Safety Unit (formerly known as the Anti Social Behaviour Hub).

- 6. Update on Embracing Diversity: A Hate Crime Strategy for York (20 Minutes)** (Pages 29 - 44)  
This report provides an update on delivery of the hate crime strategy for York.
- 7. The Housing and Planning Bill and Changes to Lifetime Tenancies (20 Minutes)** (Pages 45 - 50)  
This report provides an update on the Council's Tenancy Strategy and asks members to consider whether this Committee should participate in its future review.
- 8. Housing Allocations and Choice Based Lettings Update (20 Minutes)** (Pages 51 - 58)  
This report provides the committee with an update on Housing Allocations and Choice Based Lettings.
- 9. Goose Management Scrutiny Review Final Report (20 Minutes)** (Pages 59 - 168)  
This report presents the findings from the Goose Management Task Group review together with draft recommendations for the Committee's endorsement.
- 10. Update Briefing on Flooding Programme (15 Minutes)**  
Members will receive a briefing on the programme of works associated with the recent flooding.
- 11. Workplan (5 Minutes)** (Pages 169 - 170)  
Members are asked to give consideration to the committee's work plan for 2015-2016.
- 12. Urgent Business**  
Any other business which the Chair considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972

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

Democracy Officer: Laura Bootland

Tel 01904 552062

Email [laura.bootland@york.gov.uk](mailto:laura.bootland@york.gov.uk)

- Registering to speak
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports

**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

City of York Council

Committee Minutes

---

Meeting	Communities and Environment Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Date	20 January 2016
Present	Councillors Gunnell (Chair), Cullwick (Substitute), Richardson (Vice-Chair), Funnell, Kramm, K Myers and Orrell
Apologies	Councillor Mason

---

### 36. **Declarations of Interest**

At this point in the meeting, Members were asked to declare any personal, prejudicial or pecuniary interests they may have in the business on the agenda. None were declared.

### 37. **Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the last meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2015 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

#### Matters Arising

Add wording to the resolution at minute item 29 to highlight the issues raised regarding inequality across the city of Green Bin collections and ask that the Executive Member continues to monitor this.

### 38. **Public Participation**

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

**39. Attendance of the Executive Member for Environment**

The Executive Member for Environment and the Leader of the Council attended the meeting to provide a verbal update on the recent floods.

It was confirmed that the Leader was responsible for the emergency planning aspects of the floods and the Executive Member for Environment was responsible for the environmental issues.

The Chair questioned the Executive Member and Leader as to why a report had not been brought to the meeting, despite her request, as flooding fell under the remit of this scrutiny committee. The Leader confirmed that due to time restraints it would not have been possible for the Executive or Officers to provide a written report so soon after the event and that a public inquiry was now in the process of being set up. Group Leaders had not considered a Council scrutiny committee to be the most appropriate forum to look at an incident of this magnitude, although they were supportive of the committee receiving any information it required for future meetings.

It was reported that at present, steps were being taken to select and appoint a Chair of the public inquiry and that a report would be going to the Executive setting out its terms of reference. Whilst the Executive Member and Leader appreciated the support of the scrutiny committee, it was felt that an independent inquiry was the most suitable course of action and the best way of responding to public concerns as well as ensuring participation from agencies such as the Police, British Telecom and the Environment Agency.

The Executive Member and Leader were asked if they had any suggestions as to how the committee could support the work of the public enquiry. It was suggested that initially, the committee should perhaps take a step back to enable the inquiry to get underway and then begin to look at specific areas which the inquiry may not choose to look at in great detail.

Possible areas of focus for the committee could be:

- The Council's use of volunteers
- Flood Wardens
- How the Council identified vulnerable people
- Sandbagging

- Long term flow of water

Members also pointed out that a lot of questions relating to specific geographical areas of the City were yet to be answered and that meetings would be taking place within Wards in the next few weeks to discuss. The Executive Member urged members to contact him with any specific localised concerns whilst the floods were still fresh in peoples minds to ensure nothing is missed.

The Executive Member and Leader were thanked for their attendance at the meeting.

Resolved: That Members noted the verbal updates provided.

Reason: To ensure Members are informed of the priorities and challenges of the Executive Member and Leader following the recent floods.

#### **40. 2015/16 Second Quarter Finance and Performance Monitoring Report**

Members gave consideration to a report that provided details of the 2015/16 Monitor 2 Finance and Performance for services within City and Environmental Services and Communities and Neighbourhoods.

Members noted that the position was similar to at Quarter 1 with a significant overspend on waste.

Discussion took place on the Housing Revenue business plan and officers confirmed they were still awaiting confirmation of the property value thresholds for York from the Department of Communities and Local Government before the business plan could be finalised.

Resolved: That the financial information contained in the report be noted.

Reason: To update the scrutiny committee on the latest finance position.

**41. Safer York Partnership Bi-Annual Performance Report**

Consideration was given to a report which provided an update on the work of the Safer York Partnership.

Members' attention was drawn to the year end data which showed that although overall crime levels were predicted to be lower than they were in 2014/15, some crimes had been increasing in York in 2015 in line with national trends. In relation to the increase in violent crime, this could be explained by the changes to the types of crime which now fall within the Home Office 'violent crime' category.

Members raised concerns about river safety and noted that a dedicated River Safety sub group had been set up, although the risk hadn't diminished with further river incidents occurring in recent months. Members requested a report to a future meeting on River Safety to explore the possibility of a scrutiny review on the subject.

Members queried paragraph 5.9 of the report which stated that hate crime data was currently unavailable. Officers confirmed that this meant that the data had not been provided at the time the report was being compiled rather than it wasn't available at all. A number of agencies were currently working on a hate crime action plan. Members requested an update on this action plan to a future meeting.

Members noted that a renewal of the Community Safety Action Plan was being undertaken and that a further update on this would be provided to members in the new municipal year.

- Resolved:
- (i) That the report be noted.
  - (ii) That a more detailed reports on river safety and the hate crime action plan from the Safer York Partnership be presented to a future meeting.



- Reason:
- (i) To provide the committee with an overview of the data contained within the Safer York Partner Bi-Annual Performance Report.
  - (ii) To update the committee on work being undertaken to tackle river safety and hate crime.

#### **42. Safer York Partnership Report on Domestic Violence**

Members considered a report which provided an update on Domestic Abuse as requested by members at a previous meeting.

In response to questions from members, officers confirmed the following:

- In relation to the use of the words 'standard risk victim' in paragraph 3.1 of the report, it was confirmed that a number of criteria were used to assess victims circumstances and work was ongoing to prevent victims graded as standard risk from increasing to a higher risk level.
- In the case of 'Troubled Families' referred to at paragraph 5.2, it was confirmed that although a number of families are identified by the Police, some are referred by Children's Services to the troubled families programme and a lot of multi agency work is undertaken to ensure services are aligned.

Members commented that the report was helpful and informative and that they would like to keep the domestic violence update reports on the public agendas for this meeting.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

Reason: To provide an update on the work being carried out to tackle domestic Violence.

**43. Consultation report on Review of Neighbourhood Working Arrangements**

Members considered a report which sought input into a review of the Council's neighbourhood working arrangements.

Members made the following comments:

- A member felt that the words 'Ward Committee' made it difficult for some residents to understand what is involved in the meetings. It was suggested that to encourage better engagement, a better explanation about the purpose and format of the meetings could be provided or they could be given a different title.
- Any support work carried out more locally was welcomed as each Ward has unique issues
- Members raised concerns about the work loads of the community officers. The Head of Communities advised that if members found their ward officer unavailable then any queries could be referred to another officer on the team.
- It was felt that some wards did not have sufficient information and knowledge in order to make decisions about their ward budgets.

Resolved: That Members commented on the neighbourhood working arrangements as outlined above.

Reason: To provide feedback for the Executive Member and inform plans for 2016/17.

**44. Report on York Tenancy Strategy and City of York Council Allocations Policy**

It was reported that officers had requested for this item to be deferred to the next meeting. This was due to the report authors being directly involved in the recent emergency response to the floods.

Resolved: That Members noted the reason for deferral and agreed to the report being added to the agenda for the meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> March.

Reason: To keep members informed of changes to the committee's work plan.

**45. Workplan 2015-16**

Consideration was given to the committees work plan for 2015/16.

It was noted that the following items would be added to the agenda for the March 2015 meeting:

- The deferred Tenancy Strategy report
- Update on the Floods Public Enquiry
- Goose Management Scrutiny review final report
- Update on the Hate Crime Action Plan.

A report on the review of the community safety action plan would be brought to a meeting in the next municipal year.

Resolved: That the work plan be noted.

Reason: To ensure the committee has a planned programme of work in place.

Councillor Gunnell, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 8.05 pm].

This page is intentionally left blank



## Communities and Environment Policy and Scrutiny Committee

15<sup>th</sup> March 2016

### Report of the Interim Director of City & Environmental Services and Director for Communities and Neighbourhoods.

#### 2015/16 Finance & Performance Monitor 3 Report

##### Summary

1. This report provides details of the 2015/16 forecast outturn position for both finance and performance across services within City & Environmental Services and Communities and Neighbourhoods.

##### Analysis

##### Finance – General Fund

2. The services that relate to the Communities and Environment Policy and Scrutiny Committee cross two directorates (City and Environmental Services and Communities and Neighbourhoods). Service Plan variations which relate to services within this scrutiny are shown below:

	Budget £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000	Variance £'000
<b>City &amp; Environmental Services</b>			
Waste	8,428	8,635	207
<b>Communities and Neighbourhoods</b>			
Housing General Fund	1,977	2,013	36
Public Protection	-1,014	-1,127	-113
Community Safety	894	894	0
Neighbourhood Working	2,506	2,430	-76
Community Centres	70	70	0
Communities and Equalities – Neighbourhood Management	935	935	0

Note: “+” indicates an increase in expenditure or shortfall in income  
 ‘-’ indicates a reduction in expenditure or increase in income

3. Details of the main variations by service plan are detailed in the following paragraphs.

#### Waste (+£207k)

4. There is a forecast overspend of £153k due to the forecast shortfall in dividend from Yorwaste due to the company facing difficult trading conditions in particular low recycle prices. This position should improve in 2016/17 as new contracts with other Local Authorities commence with new pricing. There are also further pressures across Waste services including £185k due to unachieved income targets from charges at the Household Waste Recycling Centre and a shortfall in income from green waste subscriptions (£59k). In addition there are forecast savings in waste disposal from lower tonnages (£116k) and additional income from landfill gas (£105k).

#### Communities and Neighbourhoods

5. Within Communities and Neighbourhoods there is a small overspend forecast across Housing Services of £36k, however this is offset by additional income across Bereavement Services (£93k) and Registrars (£28k). There is also an underspend of £76k forecast within Neighbourhood working following a management restructure.

#### Finance - Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

6. The latest forecast following a review of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budgets is that there are projected to be a number of under and overspends which will in total deliver an overall under spend of £480k. The forecast over spends include £424k on repairs and maintenance due to the continued increase in works to address damp issues within our homes and the associated use of subcontractors. The forecast under spends include a lower than budgeted level of arrears (£270k), reduced expenditure on utilities and repairs in supported housing (£128k), a small variance on dwelling and non-dwelling rents (£139k) and a reduction of the level of revenue funding required to support the capital programme due to the IT infrastructure works and water mains improvements being re-profiled into future years (£344k).
7. The HRA business plan has been updated following the recent government announcements to require councils to sell their high

value properties when they become vacant and to reduce social housing rents by 1% per year for the next four years. While the full extent of the impact of these changes is not yet known, the HRA will be required to make significant efficiencies in order to mitigate the reduction in income without reducing the HRA balance below prudent and sustainable levels.

8. To give some idea of the scale of these changes and their impact on the HRA, the requirement to reduce housing rents by 1% could potentially reduce income by up to £12m over a 4 year period. This is because the business plan assumed annual rent increases of approximately 3% pa. The requirement for a 1% reduction therefore results in a swing of some 4%.

### **Performance**

9. 586 missed bins were reported between October and December with 71% put right by the end of the next working day. The number of reported missed bins has increased by 10% on the same period in 2014/15. Performance on rectifying missed collections in the timescale has decreased from 85% in Q3 last year. Year to date figures show that the number of reported cases has reduced by 40% compared to the same period last year, although again the number put right in the timescale is disappointing 65% (73% 2014/15).
10. The number of households being accepted as homeless has increased by 2 to 27 but the number of households with children has remained the same (18). The number of children in temporary accommodation has decreased to 77 (from 82), and the number of families in temporary accommodation has decreased to 40 (from 47).
11. The average void period for Council houses has reduced from 3.3 weeks in Q2 to 2.9 weeks in Q3 (3.7 weeks in Q3 2014/15) with the number of void Council house properties increasing from 160 in Q2 to 174 in Q3 (161 in Q3 2014/15). The number of mutual exchanges of Council houses has decreased from 40 in Q2 to 34 in Q3 (39 in Q3 2014/15).
12. The rent arrears at the end of Q3 for current tenants (D1) were £639,537. This figure has fallen by 24.2% from £843,433 at the end of Q2. In 2014/15 there was a 20.2% decrease from £755,176 in Q2 to £602,360 in Q3. For former tenants (D1) the rent arrears at the end of Q3 were £276,283. This figure has increased by 3.7% from

£266,466 at the end of Q2. This compares to 3.9% decrease from £279,913 in Q2 to £269,056 in Q3 in 2014/15.

13. A scorecard is attached as an annex which presents a detailed update of the key performance indicators for services within this scrutiny committee. Work is currently ongoing to look at the performance management reporting arrangements in line with scrutiny arrangements and the council plan, considering presentation styles within other councils in order to establish future best practice.

### **Implications**

14. There are no financial, human resources, equalities, legal, crime & disorder, information technology, property or other implications associated with this report.

### **Risk Management**

15. The report provides Members with updates on finance and service performance and therefore there are no significant risks in the content of the report.

### **Recommendations**

16. As this report is for information only, there are no recommendations.

Reason: To update the scrutiny committee of the latest finance and performance position.

#### **Author:**

Patrick Looker  
Finance Manager  
Tel: 551633

Ian Cunningham  
Group Manager – Shared  
Intelligence Bureau  
Tel: 555749

#### **Chief Officers responsible for the report:**

Neil Ferris  
Interim Director of City and Environmental  
Services

Sally Burns  
Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods

**Report  
Approved**



**Date** 4<sup>th</sup> March 2016





# Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny 2015/2016

No of Indicators = 54 | Direction of Travel (DoT) shows the trend of how an indicator is performing against its Polarity over time.

Produced by the Strategic Business Intelligence Hub March 2016

			Previous Years			2015/2016					Polarity	DoT	
		Collection Frequency	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Target			
Building Works	<u>BW05</u>	Gas safety – % of properties having valid Gas Safe registered gas certificates - (Snapshot)	Monthly	99.70%	98.79%	99.71%	99.43%	99.51%	99.83%	-	-	Up is Good	Neutral
	<u>BW19</u>	% of Urgent Repairs completed within Government Timescales	Monthly	98.82%	97.70%	94.73%	98.71%	94.65%	95.35%	-	-	Up is Good	Neutral
	<u>BW20</u>	% of Urgent Gas Repairs completed within Government Timescales	Monthly	99.10%	96.17%	89.71%	98.66%	92.13%	94.79%	-	-	Up is Good	Neutral
Crime	<u>CSP01</u>	All Crime	Monthly	11928	11380	10807	2986	3082	3030	-	-	Up is Bad	Bad
	<u>CSP03</u>	Domestic burglary (incl. attempts)	Monthly	572	560	446	122	112	100	-	-	Up is Bad	Good
		IQUANTA Family Grouping (Rank out of 15)	Quarterly	7	7	7	7	7	6	-	-		
	<u>CSP11</u>	Theft or unauthorised taking of a cycle	Monthly	731	1010	782	228	302	278	-	-	Up is Bad	Neutral
		IQUANTA Family Grouping (Rank out of 15)	Quarterly	15	15	15	15	15	15	-	-		
	<u>CSP12</u>	Criminal damage (excl. 59)	Monthly	1830	1632	1389	394	412	409	-	-	Up is Bad	Neutral
		IQUANTA Family Grouping (Rank out of 15)	Quarterly	12	9	6	7	9	8	-	-		
<u>CSP15</u>	Overall Violence (Violence Against Person Def.)	Monthly	2254	1938	2130	631	676	610	-	-	Up is Bad	Bad	
	IQUANTA Family Grouping (Rank out of 15)	Quarterly	10	6	6	6	6	5	-	-			
Crime - Anti	<u>CSP24</u>	Number of Alcohol related ASB incidents	Quarterly	NC	2347	1852	435	465	403	-	-	Up is Bad	Good
	<u>CSP28</u>	Number of Incidents of ASB within the city centre ARZ	Quarterly	2428	2301	2576	586	717	535	-	-	Up is Bad	Neutral
Crime - Domestic Violence	<u>CSP51</u>	Number of Reports of Domestic Abuse Incidents reported to NYP	Monthly	2819	2823	2745	751	740	691	-	-	Up is Bad	Neutral
Crime - Hate	<u>CSP23</u>	Hate Crimes or Incidents as Recorded by NYP	Monthly	95	98	108	41	41	34	-	-	Up is Bad	Bad
		IQUANTA Family Grouping (Rank out of 15)	Quarterly	5	4	3	4	6	7	-	-		
Earnings	<u>CJGE170</u>	Housing affordability (house prices to earnings ratio)	Quarterly	6.78	6.80	7.66	8.25	8.44	8.25	-	-	Up is Bad	Bad
		Benchmark - National Data	Quarterly	5.97	6.20	6.51	6.8	6.99	7.09	-	-		
		Benchmark - Regional Data	Quarterly	4.12	4.22	4.26	5.14	5.25	5.3	-	-		
		Regional Rank (Rank out of 15)	Quarterly	15	15	15	15	15	15	-	-		

			Previous Years			2015/2016					Polarity	DoT	
			2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Target			
		Collection Frequency											
Homelessness	HOU259	Households accepted as being homeless and in priority need - Relationship Breakdown Violent - (YTD)	Quarterly	19	16	17	3	9	16	-	-	Up is Bad	Neutral
		Benchmark - National Data	Quarterly	6,530	6,130	6,530	1600	3330	-	-	-		
	HOU268	Households accepted as being homeless and in priority need - Relationship Breakdown Violent	Quarterly	19	16	17	3	6	7	-	-	Up is Bad	Neutral
		Households accepted as being homeless and in priority need - % Relationship Breakdown Violent - (YTD)	Quarterly	13.00%	14.70%	16.50%	13.00%	18.80%	21.33%	-	-	Neutral	Neutral
	HOU281	Benchmark - National Data	Quarterly	12.14%	11.73%	12.27%	12.00%	11.7%	-	-	-		
		Households accepted as being homeless and in priority need - % Relationship Breakdown Violent	Quarterly	13.00%	14.70%	16.50%	13.00%	24.00%	25.93%	-	-	Neutral	Neutral
	HOU281	Households accepted as being homeless and in priority need - % Domestic Violence - (YTD)	Quarterly	4.80%	3.70%	9.40%	0.00%	4.00%	3.70%	-	-	Neutral	Neutral
		Benchmark - National Data	Quarterly	2.90%	2.83%	2.82%	2%	2.4%	-	-	-		
		Households accepted as being homeless and in priority need - Domestic Violence	Quarterly	7	4	3	0	1	0	-	-	Neutral	Neutral
Housing	HOU107	Number of active applicants on North Yorkshire Home Choice who are registered with CYC (Waiting List) - (Snapshot)	Quarterly	4692	2306	1545	-	-	-	-	-	Up is Bad	Good
	CAN061	Number of new affordable homes delivered in York	Quarterly	127	50	136	14	23	-	-	-	Up is Good	Good
	CAN200	Number of council homes let by direct exchange - (YTD)	Monthly	216	247	153	30	70	104	-	-	Up is Good	Good
	CJGE178	Private rents (Average) - All (£)	Annual	740	738	841	-	-	-	-	-	Up is Bad	Bad
		Benchmark - National Data	Annual	728	720	788	-	-	-	-	-		
		Benchmark - Regional Data	Annual	534	535	557	-	-	-	-	-		
		Regional Rank (Rank out of 15)	Annual	14	14	15	-	-	-	-	-		
HOU210	Bring empty private sector properties back into use	Annual	35	103	106	-	-	-	-	-	Up is Good	Good	
Housing Debt and	HOU108	Current council tenant arrears as % of annual rent due - (Snapshot)	Quarterly	1.63%	1.32%	1.62%	2.29%	2.54%	1.93%	-	-	Up is Bad	Neutral
	HOU109	% of rent collected (including current arrears brought forward) - (Snapshot)	Quarterly	97.90%	98.04%	97.84%	90.42%	94.64%	96.66%	-	-	Up is Good	Neutral
Housing Voids	HOU215	Rent lost through voids - (Snapshot)	Quarterly	0.64%	0.69%	0.75%	0.21%	0.42%	0.58%	-	-	Up is Bad	Bad
	HOU245	Average number of days to re-let empty properties (overall) - (YTD)	Monthly	21.66	21.49	25.62	24.3	23.71	22.55	-	-	Up is Bad	Good
PP01	% of businesses reporting that contact with officers was helpful	Annual	93%	97.27%	97.28%	-	-	-	-	-	Up is Good	Good	
	PP02	% of businesses reporting that they were treated fairly	Annual	93%	99.09%	98.56%	-	-	-	-	-	Up is Good	Neutral



# Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny 2015/2016

No of Indicators = 54 | Direction of Travel (DoT) shows the trend of how an indicator is performing against its Polarity over time.

Produced by the Strategic Business Intelligence Hub March 2016

			Previous Years			2015/2016					Polarity	DoT		
		Collection Frequency	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Target				
Public Protection	<u>PP03</u>	% of businesses reporting that the information provided was useful	Annual	99%	97.27%	98.14%	-	-	-	-	-	Up is Good	Neutral	
	<u>PP04</u>	% of customers who were satisfied with the action taken to resolve their complaint	Quarterly	74%	97.27%	95.57%	-	-	-	-	-	Up is Good	Neutral	
	<u>PP05</u>	Number of website users who found the information about air quality easily available	Discontinued	1061	849	NC	-	-	-	-	-	Up is Good	Neutral	
	<u>PP06</u>	% of food premises that are classified as broadly compliant	Quarterly	95%	93%	93%	94%	94%	94%	-	-	Up is Good	Neutral	
	<u>PP07</u>	% of businesses that were compliant with legislation concerning the illegal use and sale of alcohol and tobacco	Quarterly	98%	75%	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	-	-	Up is Good	Good	
	<u>PP08</u>	% of births registered within 42 days	Quarterly	99%	99%	98%	98%	99%	-	-	-	Up is Good	Neutral	
	<u>PP09</u>	% of still births registered within 42 days	Quarterly	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%	-	-	-	Up is Good	Neutral	
	<u>PP10</u>	% of deaths registered within 5 days	Quarterly	97%	93%	93%	91%	92%	-	-	-	Up is Good	Neutral	
	<u>PP11</u>	% certificate applications dealt with within 5 days of receipt	Quarterly	100%	100%	100%	-	-	-	-	-	Up is Good	Neutral	
	Public Realm	<u>CSPEC1</u>	Calls for Service - Flytipping - Rubbish	Monthly	1683	1841	1358	289	421	408	-	-	Up is Bad	Neutral
		<u>CSPEC2</u>	Calls for Service - Litter	Discontinued	675	NC	NC	-	-	-	-	-	Up is Bad	Neutral
<u>CSPEC4</u>		Calls for Service - Vegetation (includes weeds and overgrown hedges)	Monthly	1095	1126	931	254	467	234	-	-	Up is Bad	Neutral	
<u>CSPEC5</u>		Calls for Service - Cleansing (includes dog fouling, litter and all other cleansing cases)	Monthly	2558	2225	1729	335	399	516	-	-	Up is Bad	Neutral	
<u>CSPEC6</u>		Calls for Service - Graffiti	Monthly	395	178	158	61	68	78	-	-	Up is Bad	Bad	
<u>CSPMA7</u>		CYC Mobile App - Grand Total	Monthly	432	428	373	97	81	55	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	
	<u>CES35</u>	Residual household waste (kg per HH) - (YTD)	Quarterly	541kg	559kg	598.3kg	142kg	278.65kg	-	-	-	Up is Bad	Bad	
		Benchmark - National Data	Annual	551kg	555kg	558kg	-	-	-	-	-			
		Benchmark - Regional Data	Annual	543kg	534kg	543kg	-	-	-	-	-			
		Regional Rank (Rank out of 15)	Annual	7	9	10	-	-	-	-	-			
	<u>CES36</u>	Household waste recycled / composted- (YTD)	Quarterly	45.96%	43.63%	42.50%	49.39%	49.63%	-	-	-	Up is Good	Neutral	
		Benchmark - National Data	Annual	43.22%	43.45%	43.70%	-	-	-	-	-			
		Benchmark - Regional Data	Annual	43.31%	43.85%	43.60%	-	-	-	-	-			
		Regional Rank (Rank out of 15)	Annual	6	9	7	-	-	-	-	-			
		Municipal waste landfilled - (YTD)	Quarterly	53.76%	55.83%	57.40%	50.07%	50.46%	-	-	-	-	Up is Bad	Neutral

			Previous Years			2015/2016					Polarity	DoT	
			2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Target			
Waste	<u>CES37</u>	Benchmark - National Data	Annual	33.89%	30.93%	24.50%	-	-	-	-	-		
		Benchmark - Regional Data	Annual	38.17%	34.71%	30.00%	-	-	-	-	-		
		Regional Rank (Rank out of 15)	Annual	12	13	14	-	-	-	-	-		
	<u>CES38</u>	Total tonnes of municipal waste collected (household, commercial, prescribed and inert waste) - (YTD)	Quarterly	97,000	93,830	93,430	26,957	52,647	-	-	-	Neutral	Neutral
	<u>CES39</u>	Tonnes of Landfilled waste - Household (excluding liquid waste) - (YTD)	Quarterly	45,930	46,850	46,740	12,124	23,864	-	-	-	Up is Bad	Neutral
	<u>CES40</u>	Tonnes of Landfilled waste - Commercial collection rounds - (YTD)	Quarterly	6,220	5,620	5,630	1,191	2,411	-	-	-	Up is Bad	Neutral
	<u>CES41</u>	Tonnes of Landfilled waste - Combined (excluding liquid waste)	Quarterly	52,150	52,470	52,370	13,512	26,589	-	-	-	Up is Bad	Neutral
	<u>CES42</u>	Cost of landfill tax - Household (excluding liquid waste) - (YTD)	Quarterly	£2,939,520	£3,373,200	£3,739,200	£1,001,938	£2,144,367	-	-	-	Up is Bad	Bad
	<u>CES43</u>	Cost of landfill tax - Commercial collection rounds - (YTD)	Quarterly	£398,080	£404,640	£450,400	£98,294	£199,182	-	-	-	Up is Bad	Bad
<u>CES44</u>	Cost of landfill tax - Combined (excluding liquid waste) - (YTD)	Quarterly	£3,337,600	£3,777,840	£4,189,600	£1,100,232	£2,343,549	-	-	-	Up is Bad	Bad	
<u>CES45</u>	% of properties offered 2 kerbside recycle collections - (YTD)	Quarterly	98.70%	98.80%	99%	99%	-	-	-	-	Up is Good	Good	
Youth Offending	<u>PHOF23</u>	First time entrants to the youth justice system (per 100,000 population aged 10-17)	Annual	498.01	432.43	413.64	-	-	-	-	-	Up is Bad	Good
		Benchmark - National Data	Annual	556.41	447.81	409.06	-	-	-	-	-		
		Benchmark - Regional Data	Annual	537.33	465.26	473.02	-	-	-	-	-		
		Regional Rank (Rank out of 15)	Annual	7	7	7	-	-	-	-	-		



---

**Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny  
Committee****15 March 2016**

Report of the Assistant Director, Housing and Community Safety

**UPDATE ON THE COMMUNITY SAFETY UNIT****Summary**

1. This report provides an update on work that is being delivered by the Community Safety Unit (formerly known as the ASB Hub).

**Background**

2. In 2013 an Anti-social Behaviour Project Board was established between North Yorkshire Police (NYP) and City of York Council (CYC) to look at the development of a joint operating model for delivery of services to tackle anti-social behaviour across both organisations in York.
3. The drivers for this work were to improve the way we collectively responded to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), improve community outcomes as a result of addressing ASB alongside the general context of austerity within the public sector and specifically a ten percent reduction in core police funding over the previous five years with expected cuts to the police funding formula in the future. In order to deliver against the above and maintain the quality of policing, in its widest sense and deliver local authority savings through the implementation of a new model of working it was agreed that there was a need for 'up stream' thinking and an innovative model to be based on collaborative working.

**Consultation**

4. York is an attractive tourist city, one of the most desirable places in the country to live, however in 2013-14 there were 7,550 recorded (North Yorkshire Police) incidents of anti-social behaviour. Many of these were repeat caller victims creating high demand on services and were characterised by multiple factors including health, housing and social care.

5. Consideration was also given to the risk to both City of York Council and North Yorkshire Police of a reduction in resources allowing vulnerable victims to be missed. The Independent Police Complaints Commission are particularly focused on this in the light of national high profile incidents such as Fiona Pilkington (33 incidents reported in 10 years with no calls linked) and David Aiskew (73 incidents in 3 years with confusion between agencies).

### **A Sustainable Concept**

6. The aims of a joint City of York Council and North Yorkshire Police 'hub' were better co-ordination and access to key partners, reduction in duplication across agencies and the development of an approach based on early intervention that would reduce future demand for intensive and costly services.
7. Although the hub was primarily funded from mainstreamed resource within City of York Council and North Yorkshire Police, additional 'one-off' funding was secured from both the Police Innovation Fund (Home Office) and City of York Council Delivery and Innovation fund to ensure that the model was adequately resourced and enhanced with the necessary technology to maximise efficiencies through sharing information electronically and providing initial funding for equipment and training.
8. A robust financial model was agreed by both organisations that demonstrated long term commitment to the vision over several years and beyond and redirected existing resources to minimise the additional funding requirements for the set up of the hub. This resulted in two consecutive successful bids to the Police Innovation Fund, providing the necessary funding to create a more enhanced and sophisticated model than that which was originally envisaged.
9. In addition to the equipment and training costs, the additional Home Office funding has enabled the hub to be independently evaluated by University of York. An initial evaluation was completed in December 2014 and considered by Cabinet in March 2015<sup>1</sup> which resulted in some operational tweaks to the delivery model and a more comprehensive evaluation is due by the end of March 2016. To reflect the links between other types of crime and anti-social behaviour and the broad remit of the

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MId=8334&Ver=4>

team in terms of the wider Community Safety Agenda it was decided to change the name of the unit to Community Safety Hub.

### **The Delivery Model**

10. The Hub is led by the Head of Community Safety who has the strategic remit for all aspects of Community Safety. Operational delivery is split into two key service areas: Tackling ASB and Neighbourhood Enforcement.
11. The team covers all aspects of anti-social behaviour as defined by Home Office Crime Recording:
  - **Nuisance:** ASB causing suffering, trouble or annoyance to the community at large rather than a specific individual or group;
  - **Personal:** ASB targeted at an individual or group
  - **Environmental:** ASB targeting the wider environment e.g. Buildings or public spaces.
12. The ASB team within the unit includes 6 Operational Police Constables and CYC officers (formerly Tenancy Enforcement Officers). Their role is to risk assess and drive action in respect of the most serious ASB cases. They may keep a watch on potentially escalating issues but their actions should be last resort once multi-agency problem solving has tried other interventions and support.
13. Risk assessment takes place on a daily basis and all cases are managed using an electronic case management system (E-CINS). This gives access on each case to all agencies who are involved without the need for meetings or face to face discussions. It also provides a robust audit trail of actions taken and outcomes in relation to that case. A weekly meeting takes place to discuss the highest level cases and determine where enforcement action is required. The team is supported by a senior solicitor where enforcement action is taken.
14. Access to the E-CINS case management system is available to officers within CYC Housing, the Mental Health NHS team and Police Safer Neighbourhood teams. This gives them the ability to monitor partner actions and update their own actions on cases, creating a real time audit trail of all multi-agency actions taken in relation to every case. The inclusion of mental health provision within the unit has enabled the team to work with both perpetrators and victims of ASB.

15. The Neighbourhood Enforcement Team deal predominantly with environmental crime and complaints of domestic noise nuisance. They also respond to complaints of commercial noise nuisance whilst undertaking their weekend domestic noise patrols which are then passed to colleagues within the Public Protection Team for investigation. Their workload is derived from a mixture of direct calls for service made through the CYC Customer Contact Centre and planned proactive operations.
16. The enforcement officers are geographically aligned to the police Safer Neighbourhood Teams and work very closely with these teams to develop proactive operations. These operations are developed as a response to emerging issues of concern derived from analysis of local intelligence and information. The Neighbourhood Enforcement team carry out joint patrols with PCSOs in hotspot areas and carry police radios so that they can be tasked directly from the Force Control Room. This provides a much more responsive service to the community as complaints can be directed to the most appropriate agency to respond.
17. In January 2016, the Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers were granted Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) powers by the Chief Constable of North Yorkshire Police. These powers increase the range of issues that can be dealt with by the team, strengthening their links with the police and enabling them to provide support to proactive operations. Powers include the ability to deal with alcohol related anti-social behaviour, cycling on pavements and taking names and addresses of those associated with ASB.
18. Tactical tasking meetings are held monthly and involve the Community Safety managers who line manage the ASB and Neighbourhood Enforcement teams, the Safer Neighbourhood Inspectors and Sergeants. These meetings provide updates on the cases that are being dealt with by the respective teams, their priorities for the coming month and allow for requests to be made where support is required for a particular operation or campaign.
19. Examples of work undertaken within the unit  
The establishment of the unit has facilitated a more effective and efficient way to tackle anti-social behaviour through a multi-agency problem solving approach. The unit has successfully achieved one Public Space Protection Order and is currently consulting on a second with two more being considered. It has driven multi-agency work to address hotspot issues in Chapelfields and Clifton. Previously issues would have taken



much longer to address, taking into consideration the timescales for setting up meetings with partners. Having access to electronically shared information and the location of the Unit within West Offices alongside key partners has substantially increased the speed at which issues can be dealt with. The Neighbourhood Enforcement and ASB teams are well engaged with police Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

20. Examples of work in practice:

Neighbourhood Enforcement Officer Cases

- Operation Erase has brought together the neighbourhood enforcement team with the City Centre Police Safer Neighbourhood Team, British Transport Police, rail providers and the universities to tackle weekend ASB associated with alcohol. Joint patrols took place at peak times throughout the summer, which resulted in a significant reduction in complaints to both the Council and the Police. The Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers (NEOs) have now been granted their CSAS powers which will further enhance their enforcement capability for the next phase of Operation Erase which will take place from March.
- The Neighbourhood Enforcement team visited a property whilst on domestic noise nuisance patrol. Information checks showed that the perpetrator had a child, and had previously been sent a warning letter and was at risk of potentially losing their tenancy due to ongoing complaints. A neighbourhood enforcement officer attended with relevant information and the child's mother disclosed that she is a victim of domestic abuse and that this is responsible for some of the reported noise complaints. She agreed to a referral to the Children's Advice Team (CAT) who was able to broker a Family Early Help Assessment. Independent Domestic Abuse Service (IDAS) were informed and undertook safety planning with the mother. The school were notified and extra work was carried out with the child to ensure smooth transition to primary school. Advice was given regarding contact with father and child and arrangements established for contact to take place at a contact centre to reduce the likelihood of further issues at the property. No further incidents have been reported at this property.
- The neighbourhood enforcement team have periodically received reports of a seriously overgrown garden which is owned by an elderly gentleman. Rather than serve a Community Protection Notice given

the perpetrator's circumstances, the NEO contacted York Neighbours', a charity which does odd jobs for the elderly and they have agreed to clear out his garden in the next few weeks.

- NEOs working together with PCSO colleagues has been really useful for intelligence sharing. When working together they discuss cases and share information and local knowledge that is useful to both parties, such as dangerous dog ownership, history on ASB problems, and finding joint solutions. Having access to Safer York Partnership target hardening funding, has enabled the purchase of anti climb paint to help prevent youths from climbing onto buildings that side West Bank park, which has been a cause of concern to local residents and property owners.
- Having dedicated ASB Police Officers within the Hub has improved the speed that information can be obtained from NYP. Having access to their advice and input on cases is also great, even if its just finding out who to speak to within NYP or getting a second opinion on a case. There have also been times when they've joined up on visits where NEOs or ASB Officers have felt that police presence was necessary.
- Two NEOs attended a fly tip on Moor Lane at the end of October – the operative clearing it, had identified there was some evidence in it. Following analysis 14 students were interviewed under caution who confirmed the waste was theirs. Their information led the NEOs to a company that is believed responsible for the fly tip. This is currently being pursued. Due to the seriousness of the offence the students were very concerned and sought advice from the Student Union, who in turn contacted the Neighbourhood Enforcement Team regarding 'rogue waste collectors'. They have been provided with information about householders responsibilities with regards to waste and are assisting in getting this information circulated.
- The City and East Neighbourhood Enforcement Team have been working with police and staff of York Library Art Gallery and Museum Gardens to tackle reports of persistent antisocial behaviour. As a result of multi-agency problem solving work there has been a significant reduction of reported incidents in these locations. In addition, the team have identified rough sleepers in Castlegate spoken to them and directed them to Salvation Army, Peasholme and other charitable organisations. Reports of anti-social behaviour associated with this group of individuals have reduced significantly.

- Regular patrols of Piccadilly Multi Storey car park by NEOs have addressed issues of young people using the top floor as a skate park. The NEOs have been speaking to the young people concerned and have been able to deter them from their activity. As a result, no further complaints have been received.
- The Neighbourhood Enforcement Team played an active role in visiting victims of the floods. As the only uniformed highly visible team from CYC, their presence in the area was welcomed and they have now been delegated as Team Leaders in the event of any future floods.
- An operation is planned for late March led by the Neighbourhood Enforcement team and aimed at tackling illegal transportation and deposit of commercial waste. This operation will involve the NEOs working alongside officers from North Yorkshire Police and the Driving and Vehicle Standards Agency (formerly VOSA).

20. Anti-Social Behaviour Officers Cases

The ASB team deals with those cases of ASB which are deemed high risk through a vulnerability risk assessment process. These are the most complex cases and often involve a range of issues including domestic abuse, criminality, substance misuse and mental health. However, since the establishment of the Unit, repeat calls for service to North Yorkshire Police have significantly reduced.

- Over a twelve month period Caller A reduced repeat calls from 102 to 31. Caller B reduced repeat calls from 106 to 22, Caller C reduced repeat calls from 41 to 9 and Caller D from 42 calls to 0. These are all cases which have been dealt with by both City of York Council and North Yorkshire Police for a number of years, involving considerable time and resource from both organisations.
- A case came to the ASB Team due to criminal activity at and in the vicinity of a property. The occupier had served three months of a six month sentence for fraudulently using a card belonging to a vulnerable person in her care to pay £3100.00 to her rent account. During investigation the ASB Officer contacted neighbours whom it turned out were being threatened and harassed by this tenant. Police issued her with a harassment information notice and the ASB team served her with a Civil Injunction. They also referred the case to Children's Social Care in relation to a child living in the property. One

of the Police ASB Officers has worked to gather evidence in relation to the criminal aspects of the case, he has liaised with Police Officers in the Safer Neighbourhood team dealing with particular incidents and maintained contact with a witness who was extremely stressed about criminal activity at this location. The case was brought before court on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2015 both CYC and NYP members of the ASB team gave evidence along with the neighbour. CYC were granted possession of the property and able to evict the tenant on 16<sup>th</sup> February.

- A tenant moved into a property in March 2015.. The tenant was meant to be living in the house with his 17 year old son. Complaints were received within the first couple of weeks about noise. Allegations were made that the father had not moved in, and that the son was living in the property with his friend. There were issues in obtaining evidence from the neighbours due to concerns about reprisals, and a joint meeting was called between, Housing, Community Safety Unit, City of York Council Legal and North Yorkshire Police's Safer Neighbourhood Team. At the meeting a joint action plan was agreed to try to resolve the problem. However, the problems continued to increase and more of the neighbours started to complain about noise and associated anti social behaviour. At the following joint meeting it was agreed that Housing would serve an Introductory Tenancy Notice of Seeking Possession and the Community Safety Unit would look to obtain a Premises Closure Order. On Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July 15, the Premises Closure Order was served on the tenant, both at the address of his ex-partner and the current tenancy. He agreed to terminate the tenancy immediately to ensure that additional court costs were not charged. During a two month period there had been 26 separate phone calls to NYP to advise about the problems.
- A case was referred to the ASB Team following the execution of police drug warrants at a property. Criminal proceedings were ongoing but there were also reports of noise nuisance which were being addressed by the Neighbourhood Enforcement Team. The neighbour was being disturbed by the sound of DIY from within the property, during the day and night and despite warnings and early attempts to address the issue it continued. The neighbour also reported that a high volume of people would visit the property, believed to be related to drug activity and this was reported to the police SNT via the Community Safety Hub.

Attempts were made by the tenant to reduce the impact of the noise on the neighbour following suggestions from the ASB team. He moved his DIY hobby to a nearby garage and laid carpet over his laminate floor to reduce the noise transference but complaints continued. The nuisance was having a detrimental affect on the neighbour's health and well being.

Despite no outcome from the drug charges the matter was entered in to court for civil action - a possession claim. A noise abatement notice was served on the tenant shortly before the case was due at County Court and at the trial for possession of the property the court granted an outright order for possession due to the ASB and noise. The criminal matters in relation to drug charges are still under investigation.

- An elderly male living in a one bedroom single flat, was targeted for many years due to his age and vulnerability. Prostitutes took over his house forcing him to sleep on the sofa in the living room and taking control of his benefits. The property became a drugs den and was raided on several occasions by the police.

For years he would accept no assistance despite many calls for help made on his behalf by concerned friends. An ASB Officer paid him numerous visits with the Adult safeguarding team to build up a rapport. The Community Safety Unit then took over and worked with various agencies to provide support for him to change his life. Meetings took place away from his property involving police and council officers until eventually, he recognised the scale of the problem, and asked for help to get a fresh start.

A management transfer move took place and he was moved to sheltered accommodation. This was intended to be temporary but he enjoyed it so much that he did not want to move. As a result the solution was made permanent and there have been no further calls to either the council or police

### **Ongoing Development**

21. The University of York is due to complete their full evaluation of the unit by the end of March 2016. This together with regular reviews of working practices will drive the future development of the team. Based on the success of the model in York, North Yorkshire Police are planning to extend the model to other parts of the force through the development of

integrated neighbourhood management, recognising that collaborative work between the police and local authorities is an effective and efficient way of problem solving. The team is currently providing support to other local authorities who are in the planning stages of setting up a similar approach.

22. The success of the team has been largely due to the fact that it has been driven from the bottom up, with staff heavily involved in the development and shaping of service delivery to meet the strategic objectives. This approach continues with the regular team meeting structure being used to continue to improve quality of service and explore further opportunities for collaborative working both across services within CYC and also with partners.

### **Options**

23. Having considered the update information provided, Members may choose to:
  - Request further detailed information on the work of the Community Safety Unit.
  - Receive further updates bi-annually, in line with the bi-annual SYP updates.
  - Request a future update at a time appropriate for the committee.
  - Receive no further updates.

### **Council Plan**

24. The work of the community safety unit relates to the following priorities within the Council Plan:
  - A focus on frontline services
  - A council that listens to residents

### **Implications**

25. **Equalities** – the work of the community safety unit complies with the Council's equalities framework.
26. **Legal** – much of the work carried out within the unit involves support from the Council's legal team

27. **Crime and Disorder** – The unit sits within the delivery structure of Safer York Partnership and delivers outcomes against priorities within the Community Safety Plan 2014-17.
28. There are no financial, HR, IT, Property or other implications associated with the recommendation in this report.

### **Risk Management**

29. The only risk relating to the work of the Community Safety Unit is the possible impact of future reductions in budgets or the withdrawal of one or more organisations commitment to a collaborative working approach.

### **Recommendations**

30. Members are asked to note the changes which have been introduced to the way in which crime and community safety is tackled in York through an innovative and collaborative relationship between City of York Council and North Yorkshire Police.

### **Contact Details**

**Author:**

Jane Mowat  
Head of Community Safety  
CANS  
Tel No. 01904 555742

**Chief Officer responsible for the report:**

Steve Waddington  
Assistant Director Housing & Community  
Safety

**Report Approved**  **Date** 3 March 2016

### **Specialist Implications Officer(s)**

**Wards Affected:**

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

### **Glossary**

ASB – Anti Social Behaviour  
CAT – Children’s Advice Team  
CSAS – Community Safety Accreditation Scheme  
CYC – City of York Council  
E-CINS – Electronic Case Management System  
IDAS – Independent Domestic Abuse Service

NEOs – neighbourhood Enforcement Officers  
NYP – North Yorkshire Police  
PCSOs – Police Community Support Officers





---

**Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny  
Committee**

15 March 2016

Report of the Assistant Director, Housing &amp; Community Safety

**Update on Embracing Diversity: A Hate Crime Strategy for York****Summary**

1. This report provides an update on delivery of the hate crime strategy for York.

**Background**

2. Embracing Diversity: A Hate Crime Strategy for York<sup>1</sup> was approved by the Safer York Partnership Board in 2013 and is due for a refresh in 2016. The strategy sets out the evidence on which our strategic aims and priorities have been based and provides a plan for how Safer York Partnership and its partners can make a meaningful contribution toward building safer and stronger communities.
3. At the time of writing the strategy, the community safety team included a full time fixed term funded post of Hate Crime and Prevent Coordinator. Following the end of the fixed term funding from the Home Office and in conjunction with a review of the service in 2014, which included the establishment of a collaborative approach to tackling anti-social behaviour and crime in partnership with North Yorkshire Police the post was deleted from the structure. Work to tackle hate crime has been absorbed within the mainstream responsibilities of the Community Safety Unit.
4. This report sets out the work that has been undertaken to address the strategic aims and objectives contained within the strategy

**Consultation**

5. Tackling hate crime requires the input and often expertise of a range of statutory and voluntary sector organisations. Therefore consultation is

---

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/5928/embracing\\_diversity\\_-\\_a\\_hate\\_crime\\_strategy\\_2013\\_to\\_2016](https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/5928/embracing_diversity_-_a_hate_crime_strategy_2013_to_2016)

continuous in ensuring that the strategy remains fit for purpose, that specialist expertise is sought in multi agency problem solving and that models of delivery reflect organisational changes.

## Strategic Aims

### 6. Strategic Aim 1: Raise awareness of hate crimes to aid prevention

Objective	Action	Progress
To improve prevention of hate crime through education and awareness raising programmes within key stakeholder organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Work with key agencies to develop multi-agency awareness training and roll out to all agencies</li> <li>ii) Develop multi-agency strategic delivery group with statutory and voluntary partners engaged in tackling Hate Crime</li> <li>iii) Develop operational links with the anti-bullying steering group</li> </ul>	<p>Training was developed and rolled out in 2014 after launch of strategy</p> <p>Following Community Safety Restructure, strategic responsibility for hate crime has been held by the SYP Board. SYP is also represented on the police Independent Advisory Group</p> <p>Links established and work in relation to hate crime related bullying has been driven through the MAPs (Multi-agency Problem Solving) group aligned to the Community Safety Unit delivery structure</p>
To increase public awareness and ensure that information on hate crime is widely available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Develop web portal for information and awareness to facilitate sharing of information relating to Hate Crime</li> <li>ii) Ensure publications / are available in all public access buildings</li> </ul>	<p>Information on how hate crime, including how to report is available on the SYP website <a href="http://www.saferyorkpartnership.co.uk">www.saferyorkpartnership.co.uk</a></p> <p>Hate crime leaflets and posters were distributed after the launch of the strategy. Social media is widely used to promote hate crime reporting</p>
To work closely with and strengthen the links between the statutory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Undertake an audit of voluntary groups and develop a directory of</li> </ul>	<p>This was undertaken immediately after the launch of the strategy.</p>

and voluntary sector agencies engaged in hate crime	contacts ii) Ensure publications / posters are available across all public buildings	The directory of contacts now sits within the Equalities team Was undertaken after the launch of the strategy.
---	---	---

7. Use of social media as a mechanism to engage with the community has increased significantly since the publication of the strategy. Twitter is widely used within the city to share information between agencies and to help to promote local awareness campaigns, national campaigns and changes which are being implemented in relation to how hate crime is tackled. Training aligned to the Prevent agenda also includes discussion on hate crime due to the links relating particularly to right wing extremism.
8. Strategic Aim 2: Make it easier for people to report hate crime

Objective	Action	Progress
Work with relevant agencies to improve the reporting of hate crime incidents	<p>i) Consult with communities of interest and key agencies to ensure processes are accessible and meet the needs of the user, signed off by EAG</p> <p>ii) Map and publish a simple flowchart detailing the appropriate channels for reporting hate crime</p>	<p>This was undertaken after the launch of the strategy and signed off by EAG in 2013. Changes were then made in 2014 to include children's centres and community centres rather than libraries as more appropriate 3<sup>rd</sup> party reporting centres</p> <p>This was undertaken in 2013/14 in conjunction with North Yorkshire Police and North Yorkshire County Council and circulated widely to partners within the statutory and voluntary sector</p>
Develop alternative ways to report crimes that meet the specific needs of particular groups	i) Work with key media groups to develop media publicity awareness raising campaigns to increase media awareness and reporting relating to	This was undertaken initially after the launch of the strategy. SYP now uses the website and social media and links in awareness raising to national campaigns and

	<p>hate crime prevention work</p> <p>ii) Work with all statutory and voluntary sector organisations to develop appropriate mechanisms for reporting hate crime</p> <p>iii) Increase awareness amongst all agencies and signposting of hate crime</p>	<p>or to promote awareness by partners</p> <p>This was undertaken initially and has periodically been reviewed in alignment with changes to reporting centres. Discussions took place in 2015 in relation to reporting through CAB.</p> <p>This is ongoing as agencies respective reporting processes change.</p>
<p>Develop a campaign to raise public awareness on how to report hate crime</p>	<p>i) Establish a network of 3<sup>rd</sup> party reporting centres</p> <p>ii) Develop a 'Hate Crime Pack' for all media agencies to raise their awareness of the role that they have in ensuring hate crime is prevented.</p>	<p>This was developed when the strategy was launched and has subsequently been amended as processes have changed. e.g. North Yorkshire Police are now using Stop Hate and children's/community centres were added as reporting centres</p> <p>Developed in conjunction with North Yorkshire Police and North Yorkshire County Council and promoted when the strategy was launched in 2013</p>

9. North Yorkshire Police have recently undertaken a review of 3<sup>rd</sup> party reporting centres that confirms that vulnerable groups are not always aware of these centres. Also due to high levels of staff turnover and organisations failing to update their promotional materials it is clear that some centres are no longer fit for purpose. In considering the way forward in light of these difficulties, it has been decided to review the use of the centres, keep some as specific 'signposting centres'. In their place, locations will be identified where vulnerable individuals and those at risk with protected characteristics are more likely to naturally migrate to and ensure that staff/volunteers are supported and trained to enable people to report hate crime in locations

where they feel safe. In addition North Yorkshire Police will continue to promote reporting via Stop Hate UK, True Vision and direct reporting online via the NYP website.

10. Strategic Aim 3: Improve the support available to victims of hate crime

Objective	Action	Progress
Ensure that information relating to support groups is made widely available to the public and key partners engaged in tackling hate crime	i) Work with relevant support groups to ensure that information on their services is widely available to victims of hate crime  ii) Ensure that a complete network of support information is incorporated into multi-agency training	Good links were established through the consultation carried out prior to publication of the strategy. All groups promote their own literature. Work has been undertaken with CAB to establish their role as a reporting centre  Training was held immediately after publication of the strategy and included circulation of the list of voluntary and statutory organisations able to offer victim support
Develop multi-agency training that will result in a measurable improvement in services to victims and an increase in victim confidence	i) Involve support groups and victims in the development of multi-agency training ii) Ensure training is tailored to meet the specific requirements of the recipients	Support groups were engaged in the training delivered after the launch of the strategy Due to the fact that hate crime encompasses a range of issues, all training is delivered to suit the target audience
Ensure a victim centred approach to multi-agency problem solving	i) Work with wider neighbourhood safety and ASB task group to develop a victim centred approach to multi-agency problem solving	Problem solving takes place through the MAPS groups and is based entirely on a victim centred approach

11. 'Track my crime' is being considered by North Yorkshire Police. A number of forces now use this online service for victims which allows them to access the progress of the investigation of their crime. Focus on supporting victims based on a user led approach will be a primary focus

and will include the identification of champions within partner organisations. This mirrors the approach used for victims of domestic abuse.

12. Strategic Aim 4: Improve data capture and develop a more accurate reflection of the extent and breakdown of hate crimes and incidents

Objective	Action	Progress
<p>Work with statutory and voluntary sector agencies to improve the capture and analysis of data relating to hate crimes and incidents</p>	<p>i) Establish comprehensive understanding of all data currently captured by agencies and how it is used.</p> <p>ii) Develop links with educational establishments to ensure data and information is shared to ensure early interventions and prevention approach is developed</p> <p>iii) Map reported hate crime incidents with all crime data to support multi-agency problem solving</p>	<p>An audit of data was undertaken as part of the development of the strategy. There is little robust data within the voluntary sector with much reliance on anecdotal information rather than quantifiable figures</p> <p>Safer York Partnership has good links with the universities and engages with them on a range of crime and safety issues including hate crime. Where issues have been identified, they have been addressed through multi-agency problem solving and close links with the police safer neighbourhood teams</p> <p>At the time the strategy was written, SYP had a dedicated analyst. This function has been absorbed within the Intelligence Hub. Maps are produced when requested but are not routinely produced</p>
<p>Ensure that mechanisms are in place to identify repeat and/or vulnerable victims and flag these to the relevant agencies and support groups</p>	<p>i) Work with NYP to ensure that repeat/vulnerable victims of hate crime are included in ongoing work to identify</p>	<p>This has been developed and is embedded in the tactical process aligned to delivery of the Community Safety Plan objective to reduce</p>

	vulnerable victims of ASB  i) Identify the role NYP Independent Advisory Group (IAG) can play in this forum	victims of ASB  SYP has a representative on the IAG and is well engaged with their work
Create opportunities for agencies to share information and experiences	i) Work with key agencies to develop an annual forum for all agencies to share information and experiences related to tackling hate crime	This was delivered through workshops held as part of the Annual Crime Summit.

13. The availability of hate crime data to Safer York Partnership has at times been difficult to obtain. This is now being addressed through the development of a revised Information Sharing Agreement between the police and the partnership. Data is attached as an appendix to this report. Anecdotal evidence of hate crime suggests that incidents of hate crime are higher than actual reported crime. This has been explored with partners, particularly the universities and suggests that victims who are the subject of verbal abuse when out in the city often tolerate it as they do not wish to detract from their visit waiting for the police and/or providing a statement.
14. The current Independent Advisory Group structure within North Yorkshire Police is about to change with the creation of a single IAG covering both York and Selby. This is a reversion to the original IAG model. All IAGs will be reviewed to ensure corporacy across the NYP force area.

### **Role of the Community Safety Unit**

15. The review of community safety in 2014 saw the deletion of a Hate Crime/Prevent Co-ordinator post and the establishment of a joint Community Safety Unit staffed by City of York Council and North Yorkshire Police Officers. In relation to hate crime, this provides a much more robust delivery model as responsibility is shared across the whole community safety team and no longer rests with one individual. The focus of the Unit is on risk and vulnerability and is very much a victim centred approach to problem solving.
16. Hate crime incidents are dealt with as part of the vulnerable risk assessment process with daily analysis of incidents reported to both City

of York Council and North Yorkshire Police. This ensures that those incidents are either dealt with by the Safer Neighbourhood Police teams or where risk and vulnerability is high, can be managed through the Community Safety Unit. Cases are logged on the E-CINS case management system to ensure that partner actions are tracked and reviewed and information shared in relation to each case. A number of hate crime incidents have been brought to the Multi-agency Problem Solving (MAPS) meetings with actions assigned to a range of partners including schools, social care teams as well as the police.

17. Examples of cases dealt with through the Community Safety Unit

- Ms A reported disability discrimination in relation to her daughter who has learning difficulties. This was taking place at a youth club. This case is being reviewed through the weekly meetings with support to the victim being delivered through the police safer neighbourhood team
- It was reported that inflammatory comments had been posted on right wing social media sites involving a school in York. This was dealt with through a combination of requesting Facebook to remove the comments and a package of support to the head teacher, staff and parents of pupils. Additional reassurance patrols were provided by the police safer neighbourhood team at start and end of school day.
- A report was received by the unit relating to a homophobic incident involving residents in a privately rented and a council property. Support has been provided to the victim through the Community Safety Unit and a criminal trial is to take place.
- A report of disability discrimination was received by the unit in relation to the victim's mental health. Following discussion at MAPS, Together Pathways (Mental health provision working within the community safety unit) are working with the victim to prepare for some mediation with the perpetrator.

## **Conclusion**

18. The Hate Crime Strategy covers the period 2013 to 2016. The original actions contained within the strategy have all been delivered and the strategy will be reviewed in 2016, taking into account recommendations made in the North Yorkshire Police Hate Crime Problem Profile Refresh



2015<sup>2</sup> and incorporating the structural changes which have taken place within North Yorkshire Police and City of York Council. This coincides with the refresh of the Community Safety Plan and consideration will be given to incorporating the Hate Crime Strategy within that document, to reflect the links between hate crime and other areas of the community safety agenda rather than as a separate strategy.

19. The establishment of the Community Safety Unit within West Offices has ensured that a better quality of service to those who report hate crimes can be delivered as the processes available through partnership working, vulnerable risk assessment, the provision of a case management / information sharing system and weekly multi-agency problem solving meeting are more robust.

### **Options**

20. Members may choose to receive further updates on progress to deliver the strategy, or agree no future updates are required.

### **Council Plan**

21. The Hate Crime Strategy relates to the following priorities within the Council Plan:
  - A focus on frontline services
  - A council that listens to residents

### **Implications**

22. **Crime and Disorder** - The Hate Crime Strategy fits within the remit of the Community Safety Team and is a priority within the Community Safety Plan 2014-17.
23. **Equalities** – The Hate Crime Strategy fits within the Council’s equalities framework
24. There are no Financial, HR, Legal, IT, Property or other implications associated with the recommendation in this report.

### **Risk Management**

25. There are no known risks with the content of this report.

---

<sup>2</sup> A protected document not for circulation

**Recommendations**

26. Members are asked to:

- i. Consider and comment on the content of this report
- ii. Note that the recommendations made within the North Yorkshire Police Hate Crime Problem Profile will be incorporated within the refresh of the Community Safety Plan.

Reason:

**Contact Details**

**Author:**

Jane Mowat  
Head of Community Safety  
CANS  
Tel No. 01904 555742

**Chief Officer responsible for the report:**

Steve Waddington  
Assistant Director Housing & Community  
Safety

**Report Approved**  **Date** 3 March 2016

**Specialist Implications Officer(s)**

**Wards Affected:**

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

**Background Papers:** N/A

**Annexes:**

**Annex 1** – Hate Crime Data

## Definitions

### Hate Incident

The police and Crown Prosecution Service have agreed a common definition of hate incidents.

They say something is a hate incident if the victim or anyone else think it was motivated by hostility or prejudice based on one of the following things:

- disability
- race
- religion
- transgender identity
- sexual orientation.

This means that if you believe something is a hate incident it should be recorded as such by the person you are reporting it to. All police forces record hate incidents based on these five personal characteristics.

### Hate Crime

When hate incidents become criminal offences they are known as hate crimes. A criminal offence is something which breaks the law of the land.

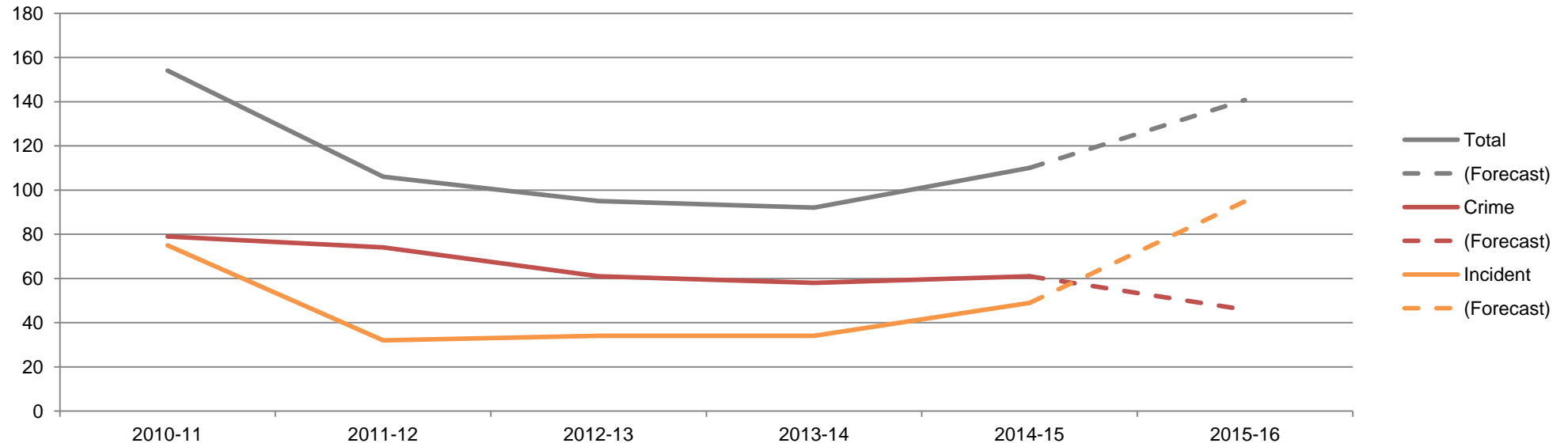
Any criminal offence can be a hate crime if it was carried out because of hostility or prejudice based on disability, race, religion, transgender identity or sexual orientation.

When something is classed as a hate crime, the judge can impose a tougher sentence on the offender under the Criminal Justice Act 2003.

[Source: Citizens Advice](#)

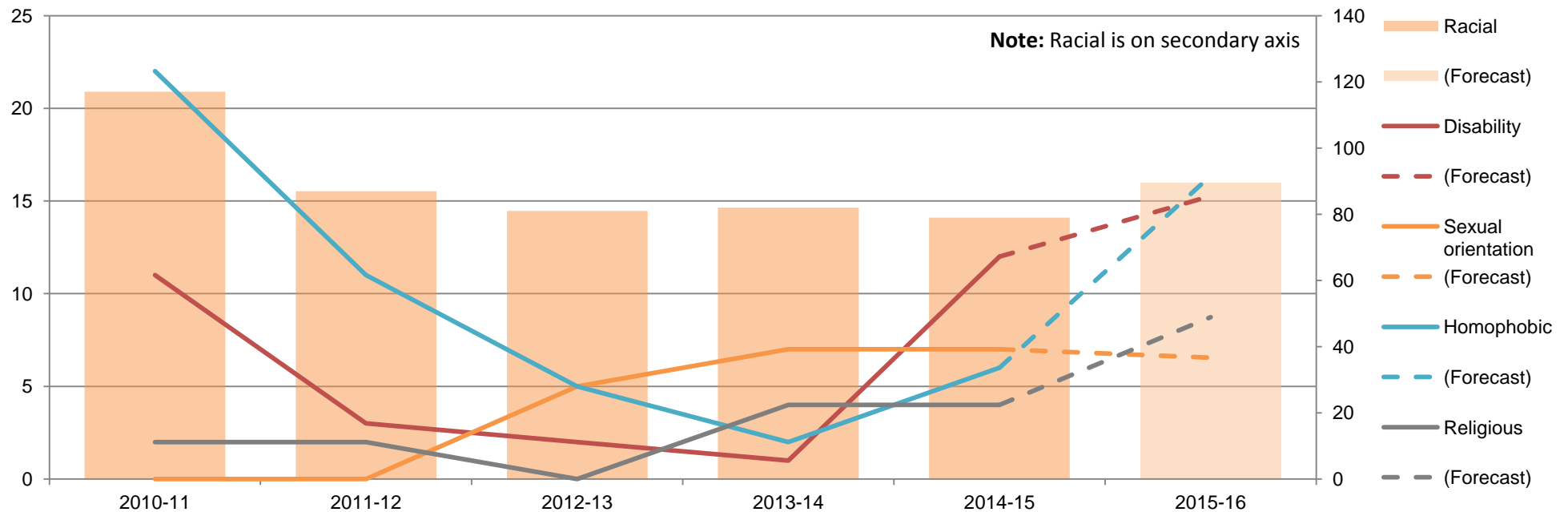
Number of Hate Crime Incidents

	Past Years					Forecast
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Crime	79	74	61	58	61	46
Incidents	75	32	34	34	49	95
<b>Row total</b>	154	106	95	92	110	141



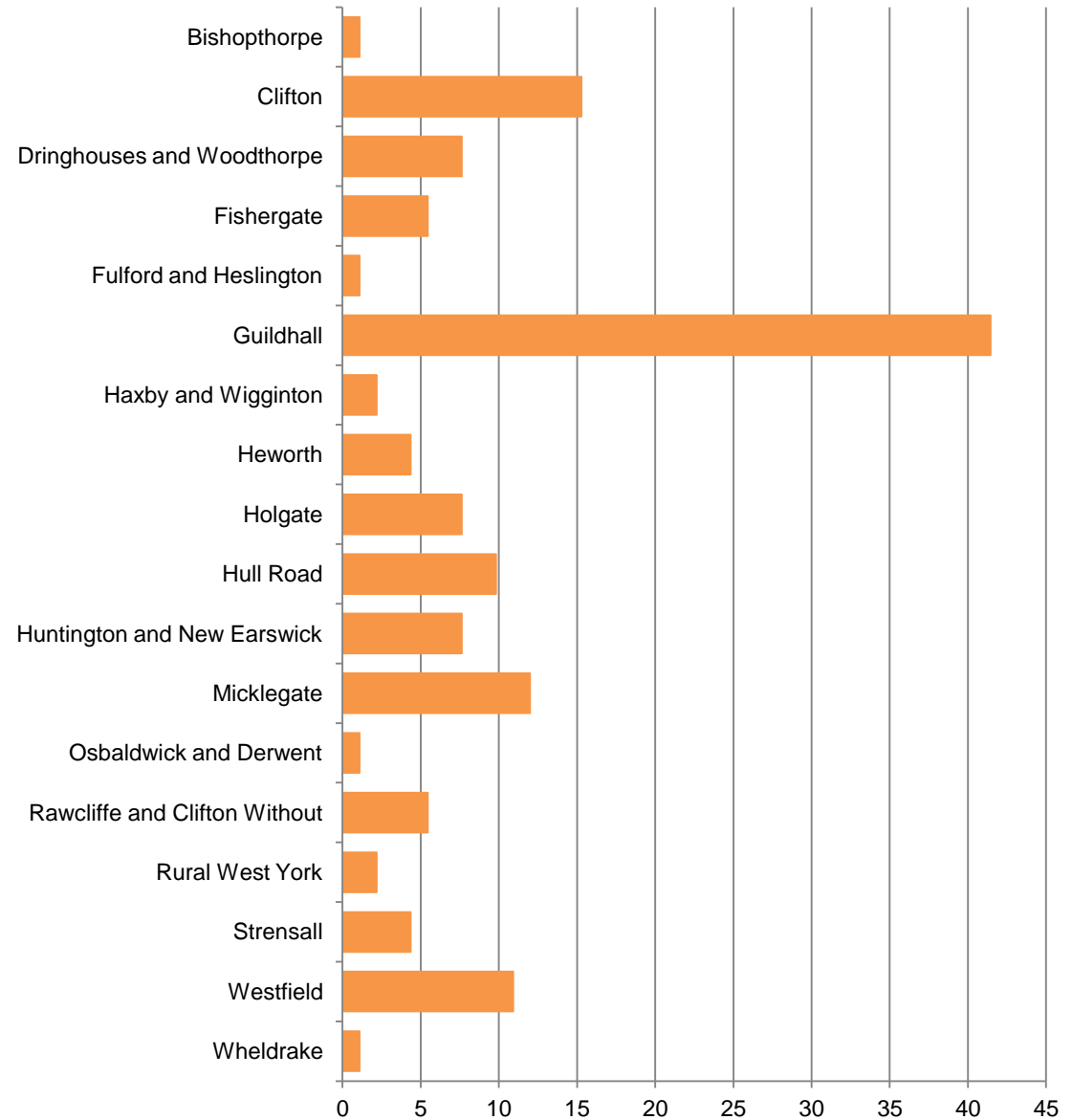
Number of Hate Crimes/Incidents by Type

	Past Years					Forecast
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Age related	0	1	1	0	0	1
Disability	11	3	2	1	12	15
Gender	1	0	1	0	0	0
Homophobic	22	11	5	2	6	16
Racial	117	87	81	82	79	89
Religious	2	2	0	4	4	9
Sexual orientation	0	0	5	7	7	7
Transgender	0	0	0	2	1	0
Transphobic	1	1	0	0	1	3
Vulnerable Adult	0	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Row total</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>141</b>

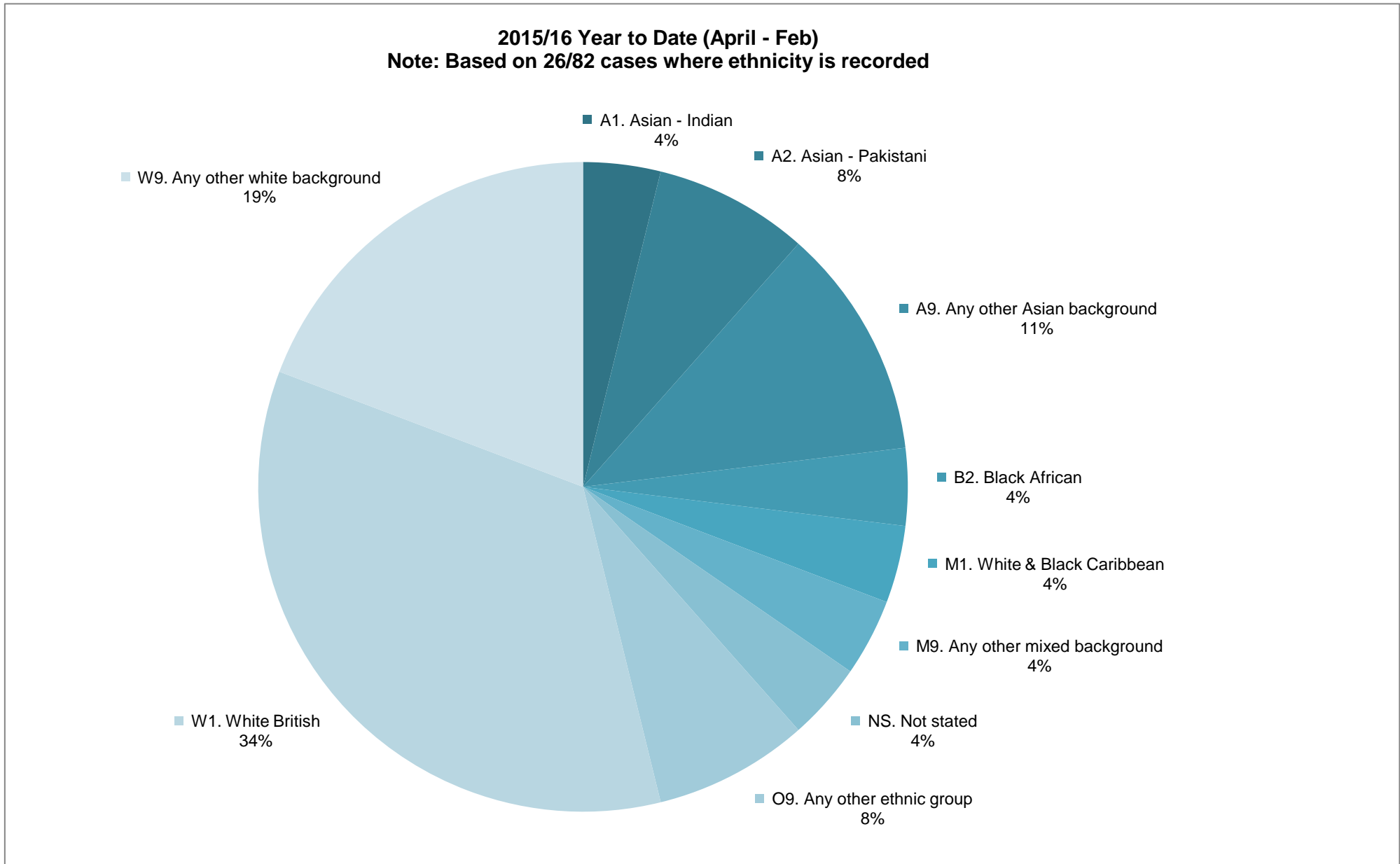


Number of Hate Crimes/Incidents by Ward

	Forecast
	2015-16
Bishopthorpe	1
Clifton	11
Dringhouses and Woodthorpe	4
Fishergate	2
Fulford and Heslington	5
Guildhall	1
Haxby and Wigginton	12
Heworth	8
Holgate	10
Hull Road	8
Huntington and New Earswick	4
Micklegate	2
Osbaldwick and Derwent	41
Rawcliffe and Clifton Without	1
Rural West York	5
Strensall	8
Westfield	15
Wheldrake	1
<b>Row total</b>	<b>141</b>



Racial Hate Crimes/Incidents by Ethnicity of Victim



This page is intentionally left blank





---

**Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny  
Committee**

15 March 2016

Report of the Assistant Director – Housing &amp; Community Safety

**Report on the Housing & Planning Bill & Changes to Lifetime Tenancies****Summary**

1. This report provides an update on the Council's Tenancy Strategy and asks members to consider whether this Committee should participate in its future review.

**Background**

2. As part of the Localism Act 2011, freedoms and flexibilities were introduced that allowed for councils and housing associations to move away from the traditional 'lifetime tenancy' and introduce fixed term tenancies. There was also the responsibility on Local Authorities to consult on and develop a Tenancy Strategy for the city which set out how it felt the freedoms and flexibilities linked to the changes around lifetime tenancies should be used within its local area.

**Consultation**

3. In the summer of 2012 the council consulted a wide range of people and organisations on what they thought this tenancy strategy should contain. Consultees included:
  - Members of the general public
  - Private Registered Providers (Housing associations)
  - Local councillors
  - Charities and non-statutory agencies involved in the provision of housing or housing related support
  - Resident and tenants' groups
  - Households currently awaiting accommodation from the housing register
  - Private sector landlords

## The Tenancy Strategy

4. In January 2013 the then Cabinet<sup>1</sup> considered and approved the council's current tenancy strategy. The strategy sets out the principals for the management of social and affordable rented homes. It also gives guidance to social housing providers in York as to how the local authority thought they might best use this important resource to meet housing needs in the City. The tenancy strategy covers five specific topic areas
  - Tenancies
  - The affordable housing register and the allocation of homes
  - Homelessness and use of the private rented sector
  - Enabling greater mobility within the social rented sector
  - Affordable rents
5. The focus of this report is on the first topic area 'Tenancies' and the changes that the Housing & Planning Bill is introducing.
6. The Localism Act 2011 introduced the voluntary option for local authorities and housing association to introduce fixed term tenancies. At the time the council adopted a cautious approach to fixed term tenancies stating that we felt they should only be used in limited circumstances and clearly states where it would be inappropriate.
7. The strategy states that:
  - Any fixed term tenancy should be for a minimum of five years.
  - The authority would also expect that where fixed term tenancies are used there is a presumption that they will be reissued unless the household falls outside clearly defined and published criteria.
  - The council does not see a role for fixed term tenancies to address rent arrears or anti social behaviour.
  - Where Registered Providers chose to use fixed term tenancies, we would not wish to see them used for vulnerable households where the intention is to provide a secure long term home or for households who's situation is unlikely to change, such as those containing someone over 60 years of age.
  - Providers using fixed term tenancies must clearly set out in their respective Tenancy Policy the procedure for appeal and/or complaint against a tenancy review decision.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MIId=6880&Ver=4>

- Households refused a re-issue of the tenancy must be provided with reasonable advice and assistance in finding alternative accommodation so they are able to make informed and suitable choices in relation to their housing options.

8. The council itself chose not to introduce any fixed term tenancies.
9. The Housing & Planning Bill currently working its way through parliament is proposing changes to the law which would remove the right to a 'lifetime tenancy' and make it compulsory for all new tenants to be signed up on 'fixed term' tenancies. The statement linked to the amendment says:

*“A secure tenant can currently live in a property for life. This amendment phases out lifetime tenancies. In future secure tenancies will generally have to be for a fixed term of 2 to 5 years and will not automatically be renewed. Towards the end of the term, the landlord will have to do a review to decide whether to grant a new tenancy or recover possession.”*

### **Impact on Existing Tenants**

10. The Housing & Planning Bill is still working its way through parliament and as such the final detail has not yet been set. When the Bill was debated at 'report stage' in January, the Housing Minister, Brandon Lewis confirmed that there would be some level of protection for existing tenants, saying that:

*“Tenants who are asked to move by their council will be able to take their security of tenure with them. Tenants who apply to their council landlord for a transfer will also be able to have a new secure tenancy when they move in some cases.”*

11. *However, the* circumstances in which councils can allow tenants who choose to move home to take their security of tenure with them is not yet available, and will be outlined in future regulations by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

### **Conclusion**

12. In the coming months the council will need to review the Tenancy Strategy for the city as a whole in light of the changes in the Housing Bill. We will also need to consider the council's individual approach to the

implementation of fixed term tenancies should the Bill progress and receive Royal Assent.

### **Options**

13. The Committee may choose to participate in a future review of the Council's Tenancy strategy or consider and comment on the draft revised strategy prepared by officers ahead of its future consideration by the Executive.

### **Council Plan 2015-19**

14. A review of the Council's Tenancy Strategy would support the Council's priorities to focus on frontline services and listen to residents.

### **Implications & Risk Management**

15. There are no implications or risks associated with the recommendation in this report. If the Committee were to decide to participate in the review of the council's Tenancy Strategy, all associated implications and risks would be identified in the review final report.

### **Recommendations**

16. Members are asked to:
  - i. Consider whether to participate in the review of the Council's Tenancy Strategy
  - iii. If participation is agreed, programme the work into the committee's workplan.

Reason: To proceed with the work of scrutiny in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols

### **Contact Details**

**Author:**  
Steve Waddington  
AD Housing &  
Community Safety

**Chief Officer Responsible for the report:**

**Report Approved**



**Date** 15 March 2016

**Specialist Implications Officer(s)** N/A

**Wards Affected:**

**All**



For further information please contact the author of the report

**Background Papers:** N/A

**Annexes** - None

**Abbreviations:**

NYHC - North Yorkshire Homes Choice

This page is intentionally left blank



---

**Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny  
Committee**

15 March 2016

Report of the Assistant Director – Housing &amp; Community Safety

**Housing Allocations & Choice Based Lettings Update****Background**

1. The current housing allocations process is a 'Choice Based Lettings' system whereby properties are advertised and applicants can 'bid' for a property, the successful bidder is the one with the highest priority based on banding (Emergency, Gold, Silver & Bronze) and the length of time someone has had the priority banding.
2. The criteria that places an applicant into a specific band is determined by the North Yorkshire Homes Choice (NYHC) allocations policy. The current policy is a joint one with the majority of other local authorities and housing associations in North Yorkshire. It was introduced a number of years ago and creates a common policy which is easier for applicants to understand, i.e. if you are eligible for a 3 bedroom house in one local authority area you are eligible for the same in another. The policy also has a common application form which significantly reduces paperwork and subsequent administration. Applicants can move homes between local authority areas, however to ensure no one area is disproportionately affected by cross boundary movement there is cap on net inward migration.
3. However, despite the efficiencies that this system has delivered, over time it has become clear that customer satisfaction has reduced, and increased demand and 'bidding' for properties can and has led to poor customer outcomes. The 'process' does not effectively enable staff to take account of the often complex needs of applicants and as a result a significant proportion of the demand on staff time is failure demand.

## The Current Position

4. NYHC is a process driven system and therefore generates a lot of work associated with checking, chasing up, validating, and updating to keep accurate records. Work is split into functions for greater efficiency though this can at times lead to a fragmented service response and impediment to work flow.
5. The system can generate significant failure demand. Dealing with failure demand pulls resources away from delivering customer value. Key sources of failure demand include customer's requesting an update on their application (28%), misdirected calls (27%) and people having problems logging into the online system (26%).
6. Almost a quarter (24%) of households on the register have never made a bid for housing despite significant resources employed to check, chase up and verify all applications.
7. In 2015 the Housing Service started a review of the existing process as part of its ongoing commitment to service improvement and to see if the current process was meeting the needs of its customers. Key sources of evidence included customer and staff feedback, system inputs and outputs, process mapping and an analysis of customer demand. The purpose of the system from a customer perspective was defined as *'Help me find a suitable home when I need it'*.
8. Analysis shows the housing register has a tendency to grow over time, there are currently 1,500 York households on the register and over 220 new applications each month. On average around 500-600 properties become available in York each year.
9. Only 33% of customer demand is being met. Over 30% of registered households have little or no housing need and are in Bronze band. Only 6% of properties are let to Bronze band households each year.
10. The 555 properties available in 2014-15 generated over 32,000 bids, averaging 58 bids per property. Popular properties can generate in excess of 115 bids.



## The review

11. The review has three key aims:
  - Ensure the best possible outcomes for customers;
  - Improve job satisfaction;
  - Ensure the most efficient processes.
  
12. Options for improvement include changes within the existing system or complete system change. Many areas for improvement within the current system have already been identified and further opportunities for improvement will be also considered as the review progresses. Opportunities for system change also need to be explored, drawing on learning from other areas that have already moved away from a choice based lettings approach.
  
13. A common feature of these alternative approaches is the significant resource placed at the front end of their system to better mediate customer demand. There is often a strong focus on understanding the customer's underlying needs at an early stage, receiving complete and correct information on first contact and being relentlessly clear with applicants about their chances of being offered a home.
  
14. Proposals for a redesigned system have emerged out of several workshops. Key features include a 'talk to the customer' step within a strengthened yet more flexible customer interface, tighter criteria to reduce system waste and a move away from bidding to direct matching. Key benefits of this redesigned system include:
  - Improved customer outcomes via a better balance between the number and type of households going onto the register and the number and type of properties available;
  - More efficient and flexible processes;
  - More empowered staff.

## Key system inputs and outputs

Fig. 1 Number of households on housing register

<b>Date</b>	<b>York</b>	<b>Sub region</b>
04/07/2013*	4777	14661
02/10/2013**	1269	11850

01/07/2014***	1207	5791
01/10/2014	1348	6327
02/04/2015	1546	7086

\* Pre policy update following Localism Act

\*\* Post policy go live and initial closures of non qualifying

\*\*\* Post policy closure of all non responding applicants

Fig. 2. Number of households applying

2014/15	York	Sub region
Average per month	226	845
Total for year	2711	10134

Fig.3. Rate of vacant properties (York)

2014/15	York	Turnover rate
Average per month	40	
Total for year	480	6%

Fig. 4. Proportion of households in each priority band – York 2014-15

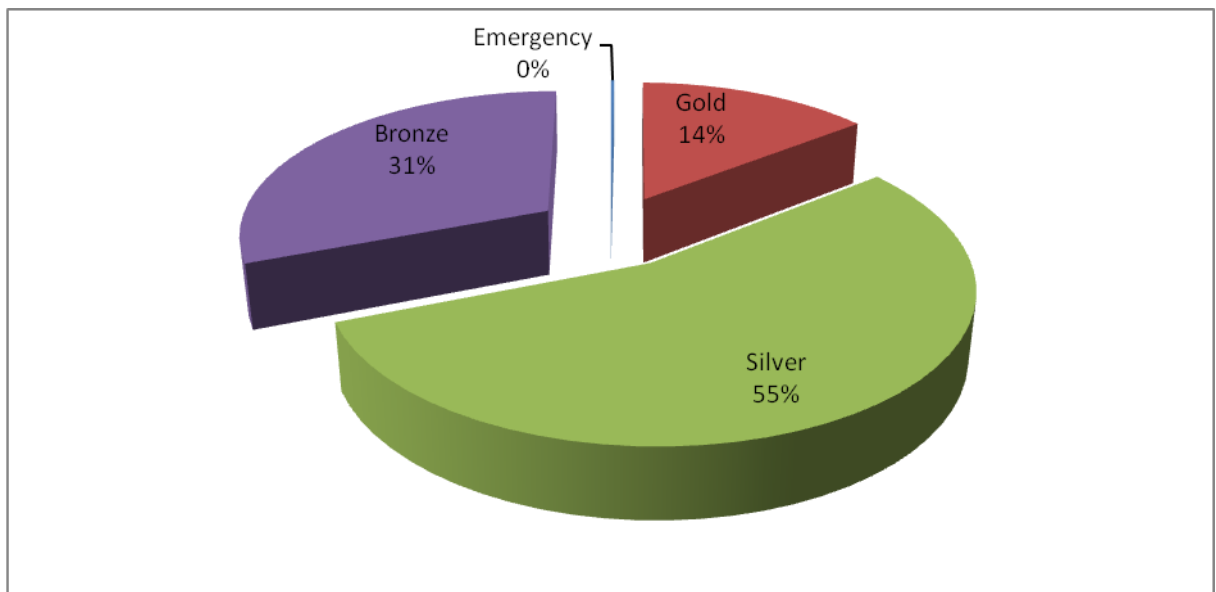


Fig. 5. Who did the 480 available properties go to in 2014/15?

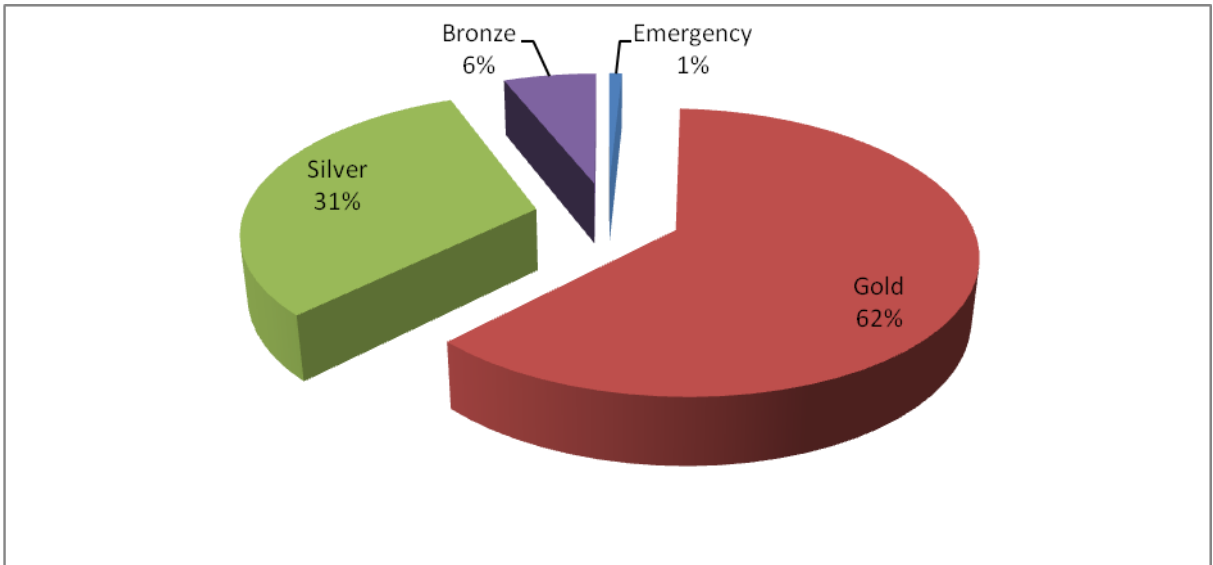
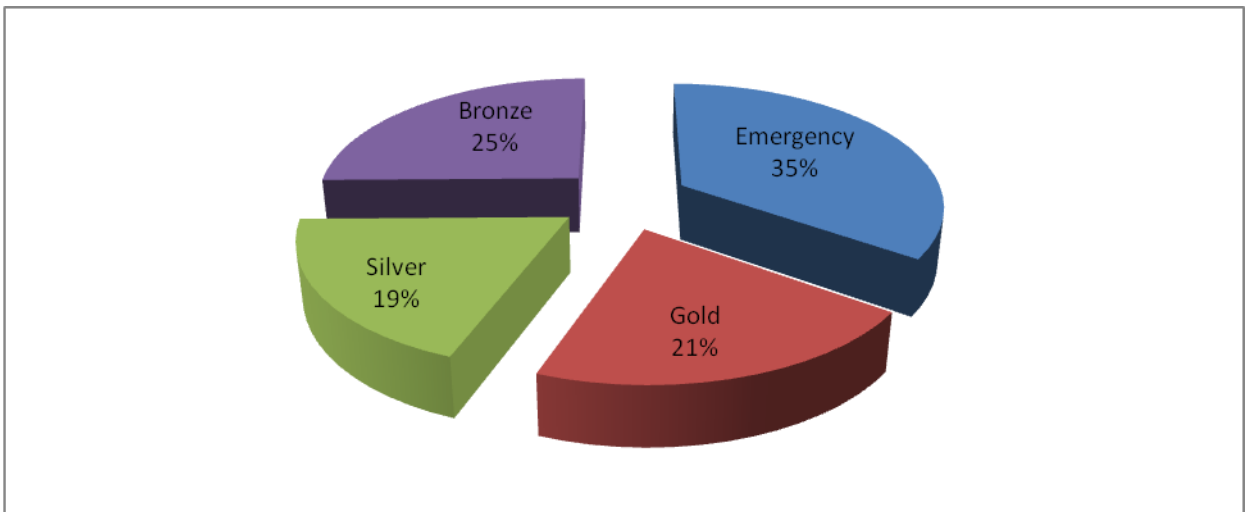


Fig 6. Proportion of non bidders by band



### **Customer & Staff Feedback**

15. Customer insight has shown that applicants welcome the increased choice offered by the current scheme and that many, especially those who were successfully housed found the allocations system easy to understand and thought it was fair. However, a significant proportion find the notion of choice is only meaningful when it results in an outcome. For many, being on the housing register means many months/years of repeat bidding with little hope of success.

16. For some, making a housing application is a form of 'insurance policy' for a rainy day. The current system is complicit in this and does not sufficiently deflect service demands of this type. In its current form it could be argued that the NYHC raises expectations unrealistically and leads to an even longer housing waiting list.
17. Staff insight revealed concerns about rising workloads linked to a growing housing register and the need to keep the records of around 1500 applicants up to date, even though the majority of those processed will never receive a housing offer.
18. Staff expressed great satisfaction at helping those in genuine need and clearly some system for assessing housing needs and ensuring eligibility is unavoidable. Staff have a detailed knowledge of the systems strengths and weakness and have contributed to suggested improvements.

## **Conclusion**

19. The review has so far considered the two essential first steps towards delivering the objectives set out in Para 12, to define the purpose of the system from a customer perspective and to develop a detailed understanding of how the current system works and what it delivers. Only then can staff know what aspects of the system to work on to best deliver customer value.
20. To ensure the best possible outcomes for customers via the most efficient processes with improved staff satisfaction the service is developing options to improve the processes employed based on the following operating principles:
  - Seek to fully understand the customer's needs at the beginning of the process;
  - Resolve the customers needs at the earliest opportunity;
  - Receive complete and correct information at first contact with the customer;
  - Be clear to customers about what the system can and can't deliver;
  - Be clear to customers about the likelihood of being offered a home;
  - Have up to date and detailed information about our properties

21. Members of the Policy & Scrutiny Committee could, if they wish, be part of the next phase of the review to help inform and shape any new policy / process.

### **Options**

22. The Committee may choose to participate in the next phase of the review to help inform and shape any new policy/process.

### **Council Plan 2015-19**

23. A review of the Council's Housing Allocations process would support the Council's priorities to focus on frontline services and listen to residents.

### **Implications & Risk Management**

24. There are no implications or risks associated with the recommendation in this report. If the Committee were to decide to proceed with Housing allocations policy development scrutiny review, all associated implications and risks would be identified in the review final report.

### **Recommendations**

25. Members are asked to:
  - i. Note the findings from the officer review to date
  - ii. Consider whether to participate in the next phase of the review to help inform and shape any new policy/process.
  - iii. If participation in the next phase is agreed, programme the review into the committee workplan.

Reason: To proceed with the work of scrutiny in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols

**Contact Details**

**Author:**

Steve Waddington  
AD Housing &  
Community Safety

**Chief Officer Responsible for the report:**

**Report Approved**



**Date**

15 March 2016

**Specialist Implications Officer(s)** N/A

**Wards Affected:**

**All**



For further information please contact the author of the report

**Background Papers:** N/A

**Annexes** - None

**Abbreviations:**

NYHC - North Yorkshire Homes Choice



---

**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 26 <sup>th</sup> January 4pm (West Offices)	Objective 1 – To consider information relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The geese population in York</li> <li>• All previous related work undertaken by the Council</li> <li>• The associated cost to the city</li> <li>• Lessons learnt</li> <li>• Any associated health risks</li> </ul>
Meeting 2 – Formal Tuesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> 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 9 <sup>th</sup> February 5.30pm (West Offices)	Objective 4 – Consultation Meeting
Meeting 4 – Informal Wednesday 17 <sup>th</sup> February 5.30pm (West Offices)	To consider findings and consultation feedback, and identify appropriate review conclusions



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

6. The remit and methodology above was subsequently agreed by the Community & 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 ecosystem 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<sup>1</sup>. 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. 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

---

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

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 interest 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](mailto:melanie.carr@york.gov.uk)

### Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Andrew Docherty  
AD ITT & Governance

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.

This page is intentionally left blank

# Goose Management Scrutiny Review Task Group – 26<sup>th</sup> January 2016



# 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 29<sup>th</sup> 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



This page is intentionally left blank



**Bird Management Unit**

---

**A Review of Management Options for Resolving Conflicts with Urban Geese.**

15/02/2010

Andy Baxter, Justin Hart.

Bird Management Unit  
Food and Environment Research Agency  
Sand Hutton,  
YORK  
YO41 1LZ

Email: [andy.baxter@fera.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:andy.baxter@fera.gsi.gov.uk)

Tel: 01904462071

Fax: 01904462111





## Bird Management Unit

---

### Contents

1	Background .....	2
1.1	Population sizes .....	2
1.2	Concerns caused by increasing local populations.....	5
1.3	Disease transmission.....	5
2	Potential Management Options.....	6
2.1	Behavioural modification.....	6
2.1.1	Acoustic stimuli .....	6
2.1.2	Visual stimuli .....	7
2.1.3	Lethal control as deterrent reinforcement .....	8
2.1.4	Repellents.....	8
2.1.5	Physical exclusion and habitat modification.....	8
2.1.6	Education .....	9
3	Population management control .....	10
3.1.1	Population Control and the Law .....	10
3.1.2	Controlling reproduction.....	10
3.1.3	Shooting, culling and trapping .....	11
3.1.4	Relocation .....	11
3.1.5	Integrated strategies .....	11
4	Management Options .....	13

## 1 Background

### 1.1 Population sizes

Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*), and Greylag Geese (*Anser anser*), have established large feral breeding populations throughout England over recent decades. Canada Geese are widespread in England and have an expanding range in Wales and Scotland (Gibbons et al. 1993). They are now classified as ‘abundant’ with a peak population size now estimated at c.127,000 in the UK (Austin et al. 2007). The population of feral Greylag Geese is estimated at somewhere in the region of 20,000 birds (Fenland Wildfowlers Association data) and is growing at a rate of over ten percent a year (British Library data). This is hugely increased by the arrival of ‘wild’ Greylag Geese from Icelandic and other Arctic environments each winter. However, both species do, however, tend to remain within a given area once settled.

The main issue regarding managing populations of these species is their current success rate and the associated regular increases in annual population size. Canada Geese in the United Kingdom, for example, are descended from birds originally introduced from North America in 1665 (Allan *et al* 1995). Their numbers only began to increase rapidly, after a relocation scheme implemented by the Wildfowl Trust and Wildfowler’s Association between 1953 and 1957 (Ogilvie 1978) was initiated. The population in Great Britain rocketed from around 2,000 individuals to reach over 64,000 by 1991 (Rehfishch *et al* 2002). Increases of around 8% per year have subsequently occurred. Whilst the feral Greylag population is estimated at a much lower level than Canada Geese, their population is increasing at around 10% per year. Any management activity to resolve local conflicts therefore needs to consider the underlying drivers affecting these increases. Both Greylag and Canada Geese are hereby referred to as Feral Geese for the purposes of this document.



### Bird Management Unit

---

Feral Geese in Europe have adopted a residential strategy and do not undergo long distance migrations (Cooleman 2005). Many birds now stay on or around the same water body throughout the year venturing only as far as necessary to find food, safety and breeding sites. The UK is not alone; Canada Geese in the USA have adopted similar behaviours, remaining at more southerly latitudes throughout the year, possibly attracted to urban areas by the increasing amount of suitable habitat such as city parks, rivers and lakes. With ample forage available (from grass, bread provision, waterweeds etc.), safety from predators (variable size lakes, ponds and rivers etc.) and large open spaces or islands that offer security or breeding sites, the survival rates of young geese generally higher than those of 'wild' geese. The increase in populations is therefore being driven by high levels of breeding success (recruitment), rather than immigration from the wild population. Any efforts to control local populations, therefore, do require long-term pressure to ensure they are not offset by immigration from other populations in the near vicinity.

In York, central population levels of both species vary significantly during the year. A census undertaken when adults were present with Goslings (late May 2009), revealed 187 adults and 40 juvenile Canada Geese and 290 adults and 92 Juvenile Greylag geese. i.e. a summer population of 609 feral geese (+16 hybrids). Key sites at this time of year were on the Ouse and Foss and the University for Greylag geese and the same, plus Rowntree Park, for Canada Geese. Given the corridors that the rivers provide, it is not surprising that movements and linkages between sites occur throughout the area. This census did not venture outside the central region approximately demarked on the following map.



Bird Management Unit

Figure 1. Census coverage for Greylag and Canada Geese in York, May 2009.





## Bird Management Unit

---

### 1.2 Concerns caused by increasing local populations

Natural and feral populations of geese across Europe and North America conflict with human and environmental interests in a wide variety of fields. Agricultural crop predation, amenity grassland damage, golf course deterioration, water pollution (Allan et al. 1995, Rusch et al. 1998) and risks to flight safety (Baxter & Robinson 2007) are all key problems caused by these species. Fouling of pasture can deter sheep and cattle from grazing, with damage levels directly correlated to the number of geese present (Spurr and Coleman 2005).

### 1.3 Disease transmission

Of perhaps the greatest concern is the potential for feral geese to act as vectors of avian borne disease (individuals that can carry disease within intestines or droppings for example, and transmit it to other species or locations). They may therefore be able to indirectly transmit disease to humans via land or water contamination. Water body eutrophication (where droppings result in a lack of oxygen or blooms of algae due to the extra nutrients being deposited in the water) can be a significant issue when large numbers of geese, sustained by open areas of grassland, roost on small water bodies. Although faecal matter (droppings) tends to sink to the bottom and remain within the sediment (Unckless & Makarewicz, 2007), it can lead to pollution with outbreaks of avian botulism or salmonella after periods of drought or when sediment is disturbed. Such events are not uncommon, an example being a small lake in north west London in 2008 having over 40 out of 80 geese and 15 Swans dying (Little Britain Lake, Uxbridge). Avian and human pathogens have been isolated from goose faeces including avian flu virus, Salmonella and E.coli (Allan et al.1995, Bonner 2004, Kuiken et al. 2006, Feare et al. 1999). They have the potential therefore to indirectly affect people (Bonner 2004) and other waterbirds (Blair et al. 2000).

Some studies suggest the risk of disease transfer to people may be over played. Geese are not, for example, important vectors of cryptosporidium (Kassa et al. 2004) and the risk from contact with their faeces probably varies according to season and area (Converse *et al.* 2003). Notwithstanding this, the distribution of Canada Geese is widespread, and their behaviour has enabled them to thrive in urban settings. They therefore pose a greater potential risk to human health than other waterfowl (Feare 1999). When congregations of birds remain in the same areas for long periods they can emaciate grass, nutify soils (through excessive faecal deposits), and make public areas unusable for picnics, resting or general park activities. Such situations are common in the York Park environments in areas close to waterways.



## Bird Management Unit

---

### 2 Potential Management Options

Management options currently available fall into two categories:

- 1). **Behavioural modification** by scaring, use of chemical or natural repellents, physical exclusion and habitat management.
- 2). **Population management control** by preventing eggs from hatching, shooting in or out of season, culling at moult, culling with other capture techniques and/or by relocation.

#### 2.1 Behavioural modification

##### 2.1.1 Acoustic stimuli

The gas cannon is the most commonly used acoustic scaring device. Whilst this can be effective in some environments, it is unlikely to be suitable for urban parkland and will not be suitable for specific targeting of one species. It is well known that acoustic scarers also need to be moved regularly and be deployed for long periods if they are to remain effective. This, however, has the potential to result in habituation (where birds begin to learn that a deterrent does not constitute a threat) hence they need to be used alongside other measures to maintain their effectiveness (ADAS 1987). Urban geese, which are not hunted and are used to a wide variety of man made noises may, therefore, quickly habituate. Deterrence via acoustic reports (loud bangs) would therefore require the use of reinforcement shooting so could only reasonably be deployed to prevent feeding in crop fields away from the public environment.

Others devices available produce loud shrieks or broadcast pre-recorded distress calls, infrasound or ultrasound. Geese do not hear ultrasound, and the few infrasound trials undertaken suggest they will not respond to this (Fidgen, unpubl 2005). Many species habituate less quickly to scaring devices that incorporate their own species' distress calls. Distress calls of gulls, crows and wading birds are used extensively to deter these species from airfields. The success of the method is, however, very dependant on how it is applied. Recent research successfully reduced crop damage by Canada Geese only when calls were used 'on-demand' (Whitford 2008). This basically meant that instead of using an automated method that set off deterrence calls every 10, 20 or 30 minutes (routinely), the method was only implemented whenever birds arrived at the site. A study by Mott and Timbrook (1988) was also successful for short periods (2-3 weeks), although the birds rapidly returned once scaring had stopped. A report commissioned by the acoustic control manufacturer "Goose Buster", suggested habituation to distress and alarm activity within 5-7 days, but longer success of 3-5 weeks when birds had a choice (i.e. Moving geese to another adjacent area) (Streng & Whitford 2001). Such activities were, however, deployed against migrant, rather than feral geese. Another study failed to scare any geese (Aguilera *et al.* 1991) and the method may be least effective against established resident and/or urban populations. The responsiveness of Canada Geese to distress calls (c.f. alarm calls) has not been tested in scientific trials although an independent user (Horton, pers comm.), suggests it can be effective in a parkland environment at moving birds to the nearest alternative safe environment. As with any other acoustic deterrents, their use may be inappropriate in areas where people find the noise levels offensive (Allan *et al.* 1995).





## Bird Management Unit

---

### 2.1.2 Visual stimuli

Visual scaring devices come in a variety of forms, from scarecrows, to plastic strips attached to poles, kites, balloons, imitation figurines of birds of prey, birds of prey themselves and even inflatable human figures that rise from a box in the ground carrying an imitation gun (Scareyman). Just like acoustic devices they only remain effective for as long as the birds natural neophobia (fear of the new) persists. An eventual habituation to these devices is usual and urban geese may be far less easy to scare than other more timid species (Allan *et al.* 1995).

The use of birds of prey is, as far as we are aware, untried against urban geese. Whilst this method can have excellent results and clear large areas of target birds such as gulls and corvids from landfill sites (Baxter 2005), its success is often reliant on deployment of birds that actually hunt the prey species. Flights of falcons, when flown to a lure to “simulate” a hunting bird, are unlikely to impact on feral goose populations. Habituation by gulls took around five weeks in the urban environment when intensive non-hunting falconry was implemented in Dumfries in 2009 (Baxter, in press). Large falcons e.g. Gyr x Saker hybrids, or trained Eagle species may create fear in urban geese but their deployment would need significant, research, skill and investment and may prove difficult to implement in the urban environment.

Dogs (generally trained Border Collies), are frequently being used at airbases and in public spaces in the USA (e.g. [www.wildgoosechasers.com](http://www.wildgoosechasers.com)). There is little to suggest they would not be effective but the length of time needed to implement deterrence is not clear. Rowntree Park, for example, could be patrolled by a Border Collie on a daily basis, weekly basis, mornings, afternoons etc. Birds may disperse across the Ouse or further a field hence monitoring would be needed to evaluate whether dispersal was successful on a site by site basis or across a wider area. It is possible that, for example, deployment in key areas for alternate one-week periods (e.g. in April to reduce breeding use and June to prevent birds staying to moult), could be beneficial. This would need to be monitored and tested to determine the frequency and effort needed to maintain effect. It would appear that a full time programme is used in Stratford to achieve this aim (Feld 2005).

Laser bird deterrents have been in use for several decades and represent a possible option for dispersing feral geese. An evaluation of lasers to disperse American crows from a series of roost sites (Gorenzel 2002), suggested that single deterrence efforts each night were effective at dispersing birds but did not result in them staying away for the whole night. Deterrence against gulls at a UK winter roost took this methodology forward and implemented dispersal every 30 minutes throughout consecutive nights for as long as necessary. Full deterrence of the gull roost was achieved (Baxter 2007iii). Whilst not reported within this paper, a flock of around 80 feral geese were also dispersed to adjacent fields although small numbers of Mute Swans did not respond. Similarly, diving ducks and grebes responded by diving but dabbling ducks flew away. The predator response was therefore initiated by affected species. A similar trial of lasers was undertaken, against feral Canada Geese, at a small lake in London. About 120 birds were dispersed with a 90 second sweep of the site on one night, with zero birds returning to that roost after 3 nights of deterrence. This was a post-moult roost site used as a base to forage from (Baxter, pers obs). Lasers therefore have the potential to disturb and disperse birds (at night only), and may prove a useful tool within an overall integrated strategy.



## Bird Management Unit

---

### 2.1.3 *Lethal control as deterrent reinforcement*

Shooting, although usually regarded as a means of population control and discussed later, can be used to reinforce most other non-lethal scaring effort. The action of shooting combines visual and acoustic stimuli and can be used to reinforce methods by the occasional killing of a bird. Increased shooting pressure appears to improve the responsiveness to other scaring methods but is unlikely to be practicable in urban areas for safety and public perception reasons. It is nevertheless highly beneficial when confirming response rates of birds to other methods.

### 2.1.4 *Repellents*

Few chemicals that successfully deter, rather than poison, birds have been identified. Diazinon, an organophosphorous insecticide, has been effective in preventing damage by Canada Geese to golf courses but proved fatal to other wildfowl. Such chemicals are not approved for use in the UK. Naturally occurring plant products or their derivatives may provide a solution but again have issues in terms of UK regulation. Research in America and the UK, for example, suggests that Methyl Anthranilate (MA) and Cinnanamide can be effective in preventing many birds feeding on treated foods (Cummings et al. 1991, Crocker and Reid 1993). During commercial product testing in the USA, products such as “Rejex-IT” and “Goose chase”, which have MA as their active ingredient, are reportedly effective at reducing foraging activity on grass. MA is a derivative of grape juice, is widely used in the USA, and creates a bitter taste on the grass. It is viewed as harmless in the USA but is not licenced for use in the UK as it has the potential to cause harm to the birds. MA is extremely cheap to purchase and could possibly be used under a trial licence from the HSE in this country (manufacturers details from <http://www.bird-x.com/goose-chase-p-8.html>). Cinnanamide (taken as an extract from cinnamon), has been tested in cage-trials in the UK under licence but there is unlikely to be a sufficient market for the product to warrant further development.

More recent work has investigated the affect that endophytes have on the palatability of grasses and how incorporating them in some swards improves their repellence to herbivores such as geese (Cheplick and Faeth 2009). Endophytes are bacterium or fungi that live within a host plant for at least part of their life cycle. All plants have them, and their relationship with their host appears to be symbiotic. Many important forage and amenity grasses have fungal endophytes and their presence can improve the swards resistance to stresses such as drought and grazing. Particular strains, however, have now been developed in New Zealand that have an endophyte within them which massively increases the unpalatability of grass which results in digestive malaise (stomach upset) in geese. The manufacturer is currently seeking opportunities to trial its success in grassland environments against species such as geese. The issues at the moment involve whether or not large enough quantities of grass seed can be provided to cover sensible size areas (rather than, for example, 10m x 10m sample plots).

### 2.1.5 *Physical exclusion and habitat modification*

Geese can be excluded from sites through the use of fencing, wires or tape. These methods can be used effectively to restrict access to ponds, ditches and even cereal fields (Rochard and Irving 1987, Summers and Hillman 1990) but will only work under certain circumstances. Adult geese, for example, can fly for all except the moult period (c. mid-June to mid-July). Any mesh fence designed to prevent breeding



## Bird Management Unit

---

on a site is therefore reliant on the adults realising that nesting on a proofed island will result in their chicks being unable to escape. Traditional mesh designs with a gap at the bottom allow geese to exit after hatching whereupon they do not need to return to the island. Breeding control netting therefore needs to be at least 90cm high and fitted without gaps at the bottom.

Deterrence fencing has been used against other species (e.g. Lapwings) on airfields by spacing 1m rolls of orange plastic mesh fencing at 20-50m intervals across grassed areas so birds do not have a suitable view of the surrounding area (Deacon 2003). This results in the security offered by large open space security being removed and birds becoming more easily 'spooked'. The method is untried against geese but could create a useful barrier for short periods prior to, for example, events or picnic periods. It could create a relatively unsightly and unaesthetic result for the public, however.

In some cases habitat modification can be used to make places less attractive to geese. Geese typically choose to feed close to water, in places that are open and provide easy predator detection as well as flight escape routes (Conover and Kania 1991). Separating grassed areas from water bodies with a stand of trees that would need geese to have to fly out at an angle greater than 13° may be sufficient to prevent their access. Replanting areas with unpalatable swards and modifying cropping patterns so that fodder is not available close to water bodies may also help reduce damage by geese (Allan *et al.* 1995). It has been suggested that strips of longer grass can provide effective barriers to goose grazing. Strips of grass over 6" (150mm) in height around 10m or so wide surrounding waterbodies could be trialled. Our interpretation is that even if geese do not feed on this grass, they are likely to create trampleways through it, or fly over it and it is unlikely, however, to be effective.

Restricting access and habitat modification can be effective in the right circumstances, but can also affect other species, reduce public access or impact on recreational and landscape quality in public areas. Mesh fence netting to prevent breeding on islands is generally the most practicable solution presented for the majority of sites which use it.

### 2.1.6 Education

As a key driver of urban population control is the availability of food resources from the public, opportunities to minimise or ban the feeding of urban geese can be highly beneficial. The population of Canada Geese on a section of the river Thames that runs through central London halves in winter. The primary driver of this is a lack of publicly provisioned food and a lack of grass growth in winter.

Given that geese are known carriers of Avian Botulism, Salmonella, E.coli and Avian Flu, for example, and that there is potential risk of disease transmission via faeces present on grass (e.g. small children picnicking and retrieving dropped food), education to reduce feeding may be prudent. Similarly, the usual food source provided is bread and this is at risk of causing malnutrition to birds and a wing deformation known as "angel wing" (Manitoba, 2009).

Signage confirming geese / rats / pigeons carry diseases could be beneficial. Geese can also become aggressive when defending young. Educating the public about these problems may help to reduce the likelihood of them providing additional food.



## Bird Management Unit

---

### 3 Population management control

#### 3.1.1 Population Control and the Law

All birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WACA) 1981 as amended. However, exemptions are available that allow control of some species for Public Health and Public Safety and Air Safety.

Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) can be controlled at any time to preserve public health or public safety under a general licence; this permits the use of both egg control (via oiling or pricking) and lethal control (using permitted methods) of adults. It is expected that all non-lethal methods of deterring populations have been tried and can be shown to be ineffective. Licences are available on-line from Natural England.

Greylag Geese (*Anser anser*) are not covered under the general licence and therefore specific licences would need to be obtained to allow egg or adult control techniques to be used legally. All non-lethal methods used for controlling populations need to be listed within the licence application to confirm lethal control is a necessary measure. Licences can be obtained through Natural England. Greylag geese can, however, be shot under the WACA (1981) Schedule 1 Part 2, during an open season, which runs from 1<sup>st</sup> September until 31<sup>st</sup> January, with landowners permission.

#### 3.1.2 Controlling reproduction

A key driver behind preventing population increases locally is to prevent internal recruitment (breeding) from occurring. This can be achieved humanely by preventing either the adults breeding (through deterrence) or their eggs hatching. Various options are available. Chemosterilants for Canada Geese are not available although surgical sterilisation of males would be effective but is extremely difficult to achieve across all individuals and incurs the expense of veterinary deployment. Nesting adults sit closely on their nests and can be easily shot at close range whilst defending their eggs. However, other, often more publicly acceptable methods include egg destruction, removal or treatment to prevent hatching.

Treatment usually entails pricking the eggs, boiling the eggs, replacing the eggs with dummies, or coating them in paraffin oil (Allan *et al.* 1995). Treated eggs are left in the nest to allow the female to continue incubating them as normal. Doing so is more effective at controlling reproduction than destroying clutches or removing them. This merely results in the females relaying (Baker *et al.* 1993).

Canada Geese are long-lived birds and have especially low mortality at urban sites (12-16 year life spans are not unusual). It may therefore take many years of concerted effort before a programme of reproductive control begins to reduce an *in situ* population size. Furthermore, if a few clutches are missed and allowed to fledge the limited recruitment can be sufficient to replenish the normal annual losses of adults. A concerted effort is therefore required to ensure 100% of eggs are oiled in at least 95% of nests. Non-feral goose populations that do not have immigration issues can be held static by collecting 72% of eggs each year (Barnard 1991). Over 50% reductions in Canada Geese populations (4000 birds at 58 sites across a 100 sq km area), have been achieved using integrated programmes of annual egg oiling at all sites and adult moult culls at upto 15 key sites (Baxter *pers. obs.*).



## Bird Management Unit

---

### 3.1.3 *Shooting, culling and trapping*

Populations of wild geese in the USA have been shown to withstand heavy shooting pressure. Annual harvests of up to 40% appear to have no impact on overall numbers (Shaeffer *et al.* 1987). Similarly, in both Finland and New Zealand winter shooting alone and extensions in the shooting season, respectively, caused no reduction in the population size (Vikberg and Moilanen 1985, Imber and Williams 1968).

Furthermore, in many urban scenarios shooting may be impossible due to reasons of safety considerations and public perception.

Other methods of culling geese are possible. Large numbers can be caught during their annual moult. At this time the geese are flightless for around 3-4 weeks (Cramp and Simmons 1977) and can be rounded up or corralled into enclosures that can be set up on appropriate waterfronts. Once caught, geese can then be despatched humanely using cervical dislocation, lethal injection or shooting (note that some methods may require the presence of a veterinary officer and a specific licence even for Canada Geese). This form of cull is advantageous in so far as it causes an immediate reduction in numbers, decline in damage and removes a large proportion of adults from an area.

Fera has undertaken a number of such culls under licence in the UK with high success. Nevertheless, repeat operations over 2-5 year periods may be required if mop up breeding control is not continued in future years. Surplus non-breeding birds may also choose to moult elsewhere and can then repopulate an area the following year if not deterred. When these birds return to their natal sites (where they hatched) they typically fill in the gaps made in populations by any moult-cull.

Trapping can be used to catch small numbers of geese. This, however, often requires a period of baiting as well as acclimatisation to the traps presence and, therefore may not be discreet enough in public areas (P. Irving *pers comm.*). The use of bait treated with stupeficient may also be feasible but runs the risk of affecting non-target species and would require a trial licence to use in the UK.

### 3.1.4 *Relocation*

Relocation has been used very successfully in America to reduce resident Canada Geese populations. The relocated birds have been used to boost hunted populations or form new colonies (Conover 1993, Cooper 1986). However, mass relocation is an expensive operation and given the current problems here in the UK as well as the rest of Europe, many landowners are unlikely to want them and the UK government is unlikely to licence such activity. Further redistribution is also likely to encourage their geographical spread and so should be discounted as a control option (Allan *et al.* 1995).

### 3.1.5 *Integrated strategies*

It is rare that a single strategy can be effective at all sites, all of the time. Integrating options therefore represents the most effective way of approaching wildlife management problems. Several examples exist whereby resources have been targeted at each area where problems have been occurring in order to facilitate an overall reduction. Battersea Park in the mid 1990's (Underhill 1996), represents such a case. A suite of measures were used as part of an integrated management strategy (IMS) to reduce the attraction of the area by fencing, food reduction, education and



## Bird Management Unit

---

lethal control. Any birds that continued to attempt to breed following the fencing operation had their eggs oiled or pricked, after which 154 out of 262 adults present were culled. Numbers fell to 63 the following year (down from the 108 remaining in 1994). The overall sub-population (including nearby areas) only declined by a total of 66 birds. This indicated either local recruitment, dispersal or immigration had occurred. Despite this, the park itself showed a significant decline in numbers and had the programme been continued or expanded across the area, may have resulted in long term or wider area declines. Independent monitoring in 2007, however, showed greater numbers were present than in 1994 (Baxter, 2007i).

A recommendation from this research was that the process should be implemented across a wider range of sites to include all birds within local sub-populations (birds that move around but remain within a given area). This has been done in west London since 2000 and has covered egg oiling at 58 sites over 100 sq km area alongside moult culls that have removed over 1500 adults at 15 key sites (Baxter 2009). This strategy has resulted in a population of 3750 birds that was expanding at 12% a year in the year 2000, being reduced to less than 2000 birds by 2008. Sites at which culls have been undertaken have declined by around 67% with some now abandoned altogether. Without additional work to remove or prevent birds being able to utilise attractive habitat, however, such activities will need to be continued year on year.

Similar strategies have been deployed by the 'Geese Peace' organisation based in the USA (Feld 2005). They include elements of scaring, limiting food access and egg control. These strategies rely on acceptable and unacceptable areas in which humans and Canada geese can co-exist. The objective is to arrange, via local contributions and training of volunteers, a reduction in Canada goose numbers from key areas by egg oiling, and a deterrence of moulting birds by regular and routine patrols from Border Collie dogs. The programme has had a level of successful deployment in Stratford upon Avon in the UK (<http://www.geesepeace.org/Stratford-upon-Avon.htm>). From discussions with the president of this organisation they also encourage artificial feeding of birds using foods that do not contain bread in order to reduce the risk of flightless birds developing (bread does not contain sufficient calcium and minerals to allow correct bone formation resulting in birds with weak, upward bending wings developing). Data from the Stratford Society suggested reductions from around 800 birds to 120 birds had been achieved by autumn following the year the programme started. It is understood from discussions that continued dog work has, to date, prevented the majority of moulting birds from returning but that the 'resident' population remains stable. Similar moult dispersal could be possible in York as geese have access to rivers and can therefore move freely between areas.

Removing the availability or attraction of an area through habitat management, dispersal of birds away from key areas and prevention of population rises provide the main drivers behind the integrated management strategies available for York.



## Bird Management Unit

---

### 4 Management Options

Feral geese in York breed along the banks of the two main rivers and occasionally in local parks. Ringing returns (Bone pers comm.), show that some birds move significant distances but the majority remain faithful to York as long as they have breeding sites, feeding sites and security available throughout the year. In urban environments current best practice emphasises the use of integrated management strategies that combine techniques (Mott and Timbrook 1988, Heinrich and Craven 1990) and the use of repellents and population control to reduce damage at sensitive sites (Conover 1993). No single technique is likely to resolve the overall issue.

#### Habitat Management

Habitat management techniques require geese to feel insecure and unwelcome by prevention (physical exclusion) or habitat modification (removal of attractive sites). Options include:

- Identification of all breeding sites
- Installation of goose proof fencing to all breeding sites where possible
- An education programme to prevent birds being fed by the public
- A refresh of signage
- The prevention of access to grass areas via fencing or planting
- Application of MA under a trial licence
- Sowing of endophytic grass seeds if available

Reducing the security, proofing or removing breeding sites and minimising or eliminating feeding opportunities should be the primary methods used so that remaining birds can be dispersed or moved more easily.

#### Egg management

Egg management is one of the most effective ways of containing population growth provided coverage is high and the vast majority of nests and eggs are located (estimates of over 90% coverage needed to prevent growth). Options include:

- Continue ongoing egg oiling programme, under licence for Greylag Geese.
- Work with other landowners to include more nest sites within the treatment area.



## Bird Management Unit

---

### Deterrence or removal

Following as much habitat management and egg control as possible, deterrence or removal strategies should be targeted at the remaining key times and locations. In general, techniques that modify behaviour such as scaring can be advantageous as they are more publicly acceptable. Use of these techniques may be time limited to coincide with peak periods of conflict. However, the main problem with these techniques is habituation. Options include:

- Deterrence at night by lasers
- Deterrence during the day by trained dogs
- Testing the use of distress calls
- Testing the use of falconry

Birds will, however, become accustomed to many stimuli if they are not reinforced (e.g. shooting) or varied. Some scaring and exclusion techniques can also be unselective and influence the behaviour of other species. Loud or visual stimuli may also conflict with public access or land use requirements.

Shooting in fields known to be frequented by York birds (via monitoring from August to confirm movements), may provide a method by which reductions could be made in the problems associated with geese without culling in the urban area. Reductions in this way could be achieved by:

- Culling in urban area during moult
- Shooting in surrounding farmland during autumn (either in season or under licence).

### Conclusions

A combination of techniques, tailored to individual sites represents the most appropriate way forward. This could entail education and breeding control across York, followed by deterrence from key sites that cause the most concern. Similarly a moult round-up and cull could reduce the overall issues significantly but may not prove to be an acceptable way forward.





## Bird Management Unit

---

### References

- ADAS (1987). Bird scaring. Leaflet P903, MAFF Publications.
- Aguilera, E., Knight, R.L. and Cummings, J.L. (1991). An evaluation of two hazing methods for urban Canada Geese. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 91: 32-35.
- 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. *Wildl. Biol.* 1: 129-143.
- Austin, G.E., Rehfisch, M.M., Allan, J.R. & Holloway, S.J.(2007). Population size and differential population growth of introduced Greater Canada Geese *Branta canadensis* and re-established Greylag Geese *Anser anser* across habitats in Great Britain in the year 2000: Capsule Both populations are increasing at a similar rate. *Bird Study*, Volume 54, Number 3, 1 November 2007 , pp. 343-352(10).
- Baker, S.J. Feare, C.J., Wilson, C.J., Mallam, D.S. and Sellars, G.R. (1993). Prevention of breeding Canada Geese by coating eggs with liquid paraffin. *International Journal of Pest Management.* 39: 246-249.
- Baker, H., Stroud, D.A., Aebischer, N.J., Cranswick, P.A., Gregory, R.D. McSorley, C.A., Noble, D.G. & Rehfisch, M.M. (2006). Population estimates of birds in Great Britain and the United Kingdom. *British Birds* 99: 25-44.
- Barnard, S. (1991). Modelling the Canada goose population at Great Linford. *Game Conservancy Annual Review* 22: 141.
- Baxter, A.T., & Robinson, A.P. (2007). Monitoring and influencing feral Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*) behaviour to reduce birdstrike risks to aircraft. *International Journal of Pest Management.* October - December 2007; 53(4): 341-346.
- Baxter, A.T. (2007i). Heathrow Airport Canada Goose Moulting Management & Census; CSL Commercial in confidence report to BAA. Issue Date: 08/08/2007, pp13.
- Baxter, A.T. (2007ii). Canada Goose breeding control in the vicinity of London Heathrow Airport: 2007.; CSL Commercial in confidence report to BAA. Issue Date: May 2007, pp11.
- Baxter, A.T. (2007iii). Laser dispersal of gulls from reservoirs near airports. Birdstrike Committee USA / Canada, Kingston, Ontario, 9<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> September 2007.
- Blair, M.J., McKay, H., Musgrove, A.J. & Rehfisch, M.M.(2000). Review of the Status of Introduced Non-Native waterbird species in the Agreement area of the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement. BTO Research Report No. 229 to DETR, Thetford, UK: BTO.
- Bonner B.M. (2004). Do Canada Geese carry infectious agents for birds and man? *Eur. J. Wildl. Res.* 50: 78-84.
- BSCUSAi. Understanding and reducing bird hazards to aircraft. Significant Birdstrikes. Available from: <http://www.birdstrike.org/events/signif.htm>
- BSCUSAii. Birdstrike Committee USA web site. Available at <http://www.birdstrike.org>
- Cheplick, G.P. and S.H. Faeth. 2009. *Ecology and Evolution of the Grass-Endophyte Symbiosis*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.



### Bird Management Unit

---

Close. et al. (in prep). Modelling of Canada goose population dynamics (University of Newcastle upon Tyne PhD thesis).

Conover, M.R. (1993). Ecological approach to managing problems caused by urban Canada Geese – Proceedings of the 15<sup>th</sup> Vertebrate Pest Conference University of California, Davis Ca: 110-111.

Conover, M.R. and Kania, G.S. (1991). Characteristics of feeding sites used by urban-suburban flocks of Canada Geese in Connecticut. Wildlife society Bulletin 19: 36-38.

Converse, K.A., Lolcott, M.J., Docherty, D.E., & Cole, R.A. (2003). Screening fecal material from Canada Geese for potential human pathogens. International Canada goose Symposium. Monona Terrace Convention Center, Madison, Wisconsin, USA, March 19-21. 2003.

Cooper, J.A. (1986). The effectiveness of translocation control of Minneapolis St. Paul Goose populations. In: Adams, L.W. & Leedy, D.L. (eds.); Integrating Man and Nature in the Metropolitan Environment. Proceedings of a National symposium on urban Wildlife, Chevy Chase, pp 169-171.

Cooper, J.A. & Keefe, T. (1997). Urban Canada goose management: Policies and procedures. Transactions of the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference [TRAN. N. AM. WILDL. NAT. RESOUR. CONF.]. pp. 412-430.

Cramp, S. & Simmons, K.E.L. (1977). Handbook of the Birds of Europe, Middle East and North Africa. The Birds of the Western Palearctic. Vol. 1 Ostriches-Ducks. OUP.

Crocker, D.R. and Reid, K. 1993. repellency of cinnamic acid derivatives to Rooks and chaffinches. Wildlife Society Bulletin 21: 456-460.

Cummings, J.L., Mason, J.R., Otis, D.L. and Heisterberg, J.F. (1991). Evaluation of Dimethyl and Methyl Anthranillate as a Canada goose repellent on grass. Wildlife Society Bulletin 19: 184-190.

Deacon, N. 2003. The use of natural and artificial line of sight obstructions as bird deterrents on near and aerodromes. International Birdstrike Committee, Proceedings of Warsaw meeting, Poland, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2003.

Eschenfelder, P. (2000). Jet Engine Certification Standards. Proceedings of the International Birdstrike Committee, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 17-21 April 2000. Available from [http://www.int-birdstrike.org/Amsterdam\\_Papers/IBSC25%20WPIE1.pdf](http://www.int-birdstrike.org/Amsterdam_Papers/IBSC25%20WPIE1.pdf)

Feare, C.J. Sanders, M.F., Blasco, R. & Bishop, J.D. (1999) Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) droppings as a potential source of pathogenic bacteria. J. Royal Society for the Promotion of Health. 119(3) 146-155.

Feld, David (2005). <http://www.geesepeace.org/integratedsolutions.html>

Federal Register (2006). Migratory Bird Hunting and Permits; Regulations for Managing Resident Canada Goose Populations; Final Rule. Department of the Interior, Part III. 50 CFR Parts 20 and 21. Thursday 10th August 2006. Federal Register, Vol. 71. No. 154.

Gibbons, D.W., Reid, J.B. & Chapman, R.A. (1993). The new atlas of breeding birds in Britain and Ireland 1988-1991. T & AD Poyser Ltd. London.

Gorenzel, W. P., Blackwell, B. F., Simmons, G. D. Salmon, T. P. & Dolbeer, R. A. (2002). Evaluation of lasers to disperse American crows, *Corvus brachyrhynchos*,



## Bird Management Unit

---

from urban night roosts. *International Journal of Pest Management*, Volume 48, Issue 4 October 2002 , pages 327 – 331.

Heinrich, J.W. and Craven, S.R. (1990). Evaluation of three damage abatement techniques for Canada Geese. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 18: 405-410.

Imber, M.J. and Williams, G.R. (1968). Mortality rates of a Canada goose population in New Zealand. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 32: 256-267.

Kassa, H., Harrington, B.J. & Bisesi, M.S. (2004) Cryptosporidiosis: A Brief Literature Review and Update Regarding Cryptosporidium in Feces of Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*). *Journal of Environmental Health* 66: 34 - 39.

Kear, J. (2005). *Bird Families of the World. Ducks, Geese and Swans*. Oxford University Press. pp 908.

Kirby, J.S., Haines, W.G. & Austin, G.E. (1999). Translocation of Canada Geese *Branta canadensis* in Great Britain. *Ringed & Migration* (19). pp 264 - 271.

Kuiken, T., Fouchier, R.A.M., Rimmelzwaan, G.F. & Osterhaus A.D.M.E. (2006). Emerging viral diseases in waterbirds. *Waterbirds of the world*. Eds. G.C.Boare, C.A. Galbraith & D.A.Stroud. The stationary office, edinburgh, UK. pp 418-421.

Manitoba Wildlife Management (2009) . Available from: [http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/wildlife/problem\\_wildlife/waterfowl\\_cranes.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/wildlife/problem_wildlife/waterfowl_cranes.html)

Mott, D.F. and Timbrook, S.K. (1998). Alleviating nuisance Canada Goose problems with acoustical stimuli. In: Crabb, A.C. & Marsh, R.E. (eds.); *Proceedings of the 13<sup>th</sup> Vertebrate Pest Conference*, University of California, Davis Ca: 301-305.

Pimentel, D. (2002). *Biological Invasions*. Chapter 7: Economic and Environmental Costs of Alien Vertebrate Species in Britain p.125.

Rochard, J.B.A. and Irving A.J.B. (1987). A trial of fine overhead lines to exclude gulls from a feeding site. *Central science laboratory, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Guildford*, pp 9.

Rowell, H., Ward, R., Hall, C. & Cranswick, P. (2004). *The Naturalised Goose Survey 2000*. Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Research report, Slimbridge.

Rusch, D.H., Samuel, M.D., Humburg, D.D. & Sullivan, B.D., (Eds), (1998). *Biology and management of Canada Geese*. *Proceedings of the International Canada goose symposium*, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. 515pp.

Scottish Executive (2007). *Report of the National Goose Management Review Group: Review of the National Policy Framework for Goose Management in Scotland - Response by the Scottish Executive*. SECTION 2 Population Viability Analyses (PVA) and review of populations of Geese wintering and breeding in Scotland. Available from: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/10/30142133/3>

Shaeffer, S.E., Malecki, R.A. and Trost, R.E. (1987). Survival harvest and distribution of resident Canada Geese in New York 1975-1984. *Transactions of the North-East section of the Wildlife society* 44: 53-60.

Spurr, E.B., & Coleman, J.D. (2005). *Review of canada goose population trends, damage, and control in New Zealand*. Landcare Research Science Series No. 30. Lincoln, Canterbury, New Zealand, 2005. Manaaki Whenua Press.

Streng, L.A & Whitford, P (2001). *Efficacy of Recorded Alarm and Alert Calls for Canada Goose*. Available from Dispersal <http://www.pestproducts.com/goose.htm>



### **Bird Management Unit**

---

Summers, R.W. and Hillman, G. (1990). Scaring Brent Geese *Branta bernicula* from fields of winter wheat with tapes. *Crop Protection* 9: 459-462.

Thorpe, J. (2005). Fatalities and destroyed aircraft due to birdstrikes, 2002-2004 (with an appendix of animal strikes). International conference held in Athens, May 23-27, 2005, Athens Greece: International birdstrike committee 27: 17-25.

Underhill, M (1996). Integrated Management of Urban Canada Geese, web citation: [http://wildlife1.wildlifeinformation.org/s/00Ref/proceedingscontents/proceedingsref100\\_waterfowlinformationnetwork/paper11.htm](http://wildlife1.wildlifeinformation.org/s/00Ref/proceedingscontents/proceedingsref100_waterfowlinformationnetwork/paper11.htm)

Unckless R.L. Makarewicz J.C. (2007) The impact of nutrient loading from Canada Geese (*Branta Canadensis*) on water quality, a mesocosm approach. *Hydrobiologia*. 586: 393-401.

Vikberg, P. and Moilanen, P., (1985). Introduction of the Canada goose in Finland. *Suomen Riista* 32: 50-56.

Whitford, P.C. (2008). Successful Use of Alarm and Alert Calls to Reduce Emerging Crop Damage by Resident Canada Geese near Horicon Marsh, Wisconsin. *Proc. 23<sup>rd</sup> Vertebr. Pest Conf.* (R. M. Timm and M. B. Madon, Eds.) University of California, Davis. 2008. Pp. 74-79.

## **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.

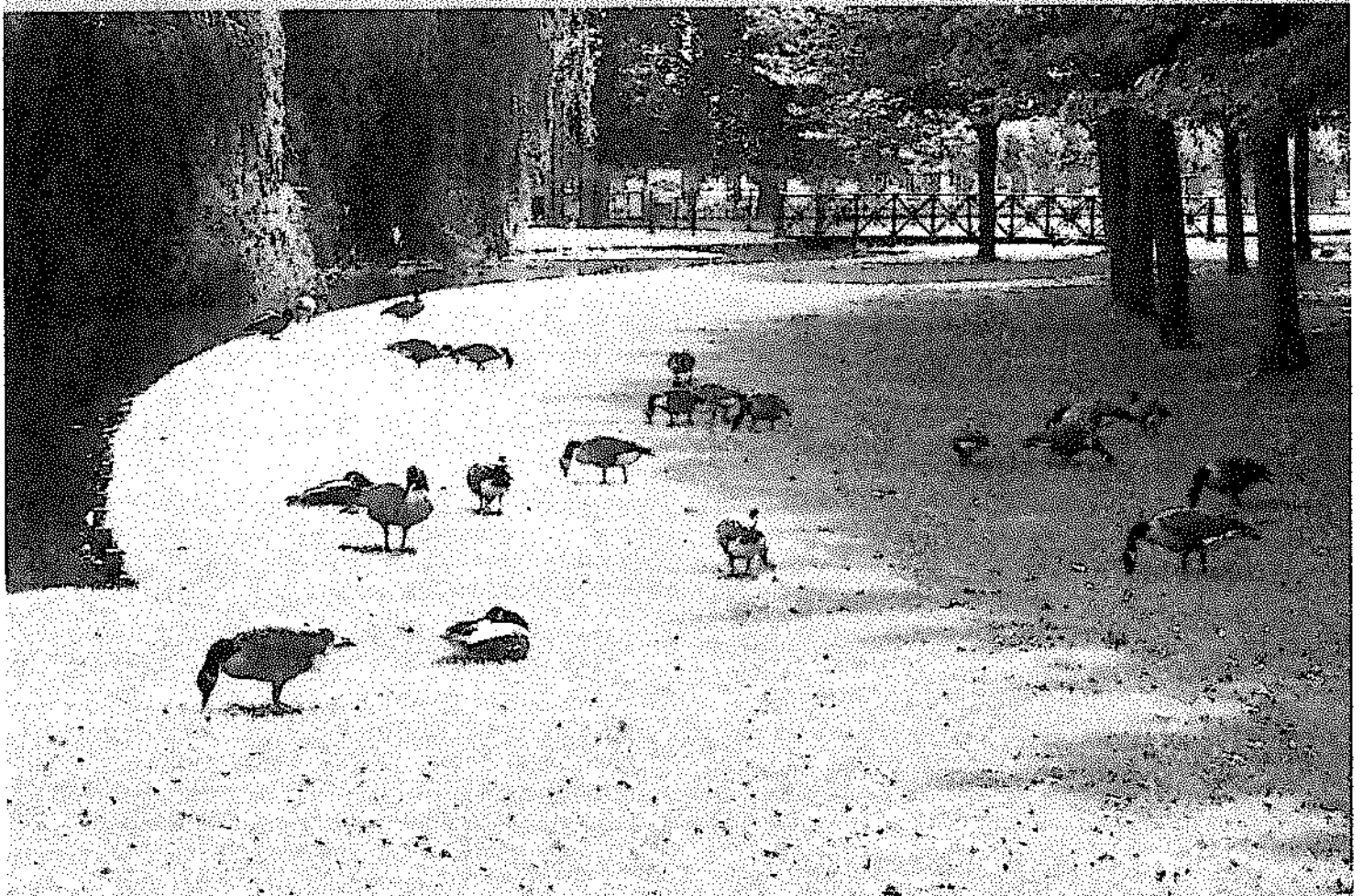
#### **Information Pack**

- 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





# 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

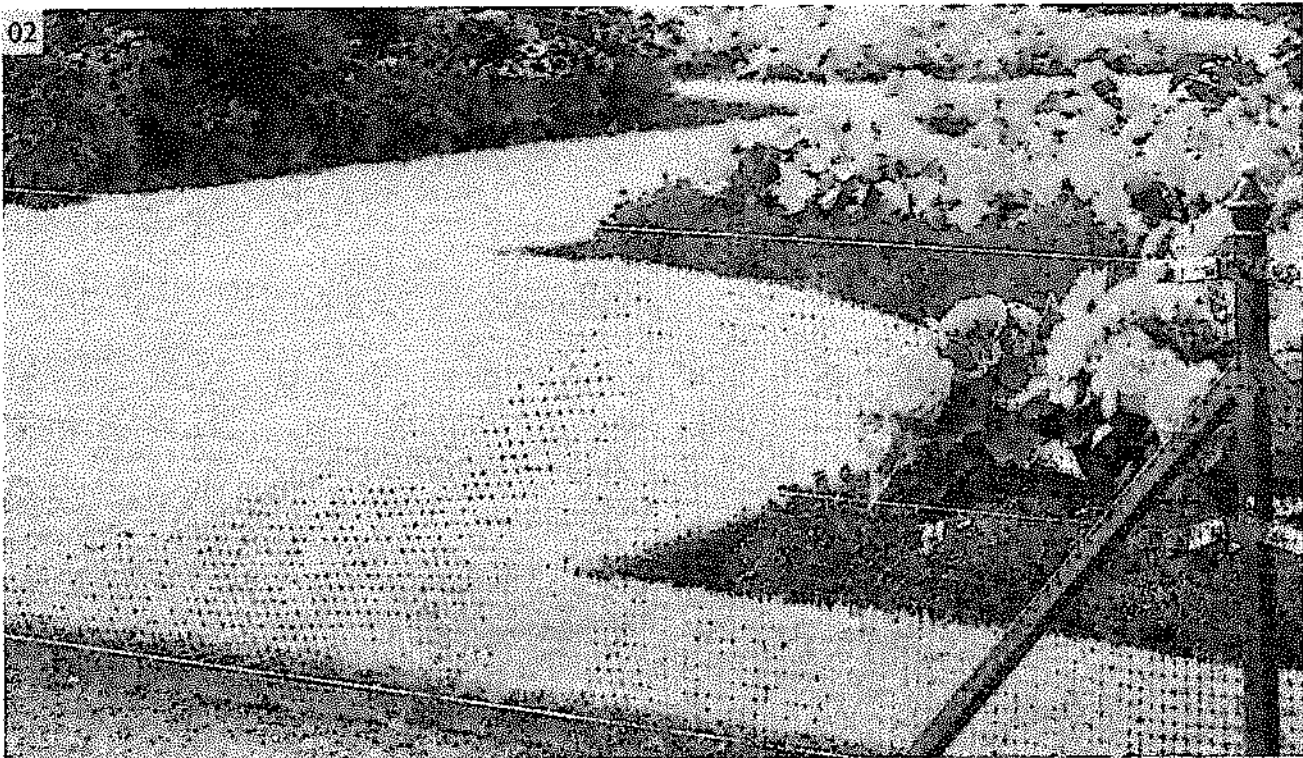
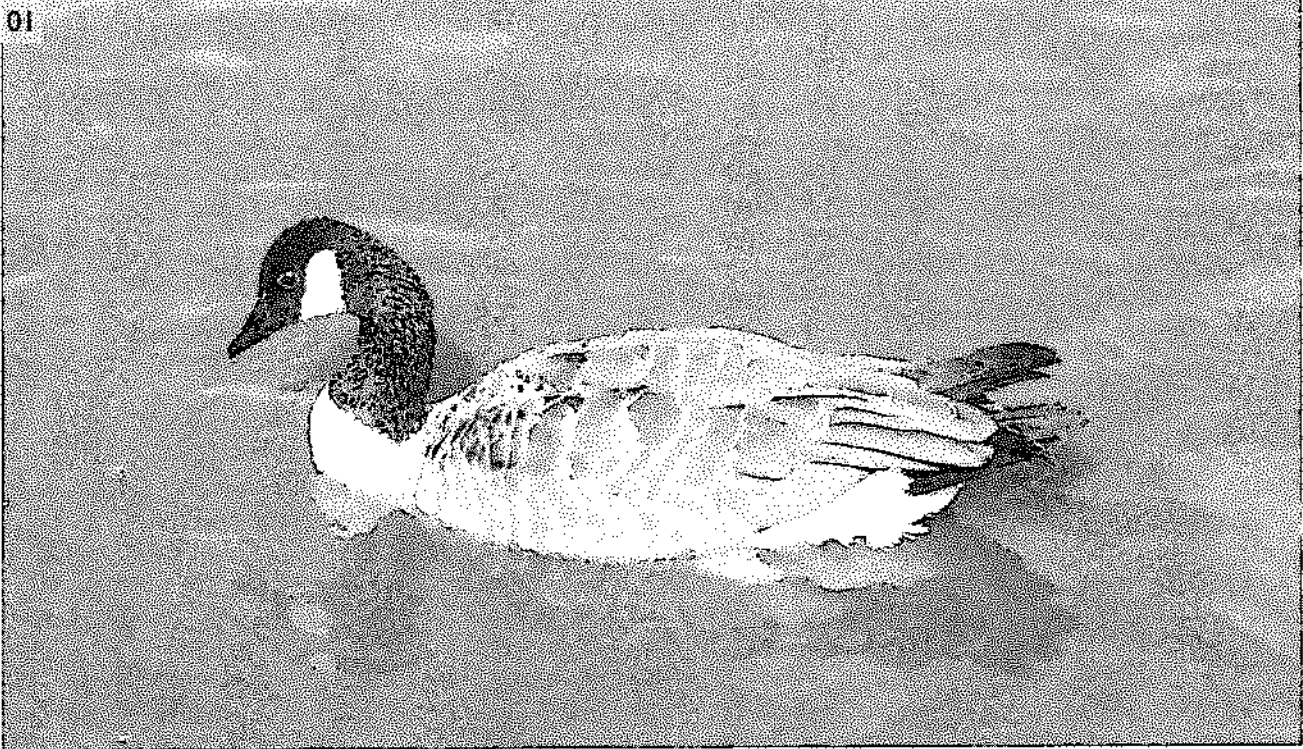
During the breeding season, geese may become more aggressive towards people, dogs and other waterfowl. Dogs may provoke a particularly fierce response from geese during the breeding season.

## 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





01 02 03  
In large numbers, Canada geese can damage vegetation in and out of the water and create a large amount of mess © Alan Cathersides

04 05 06  
A Canada goose on water © Alan Cathersides

07 08 09  
Important vegetation may require specific protection from being eaten or trampled by Canada geese © Alan Cathersides

## Annex B - Item 1

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 in 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

## Annex B - Item 1

in place but preventing them from hatching means adults continue 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

Andrews, J and Rebane, M 1994 *Farming & Wildlife: A Practical Management Handbook*. RSPB

British Association for Shooting and Conservation, 2011 *Canada Geese: A Guide to Legal Control Methods*. British Association for Shooting and Conservation [www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/canadageese\\_tcm6-4547.pdf](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/canadageese_tcm6-4547.pdf)

Natural England, 2011 *Control of Canada geese: round-up and cull during the moult (flightless period)*, 3 edn. Natural England [publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/30011?category=41001](http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/30011?category=41001)

Natural England, 2011 *The Management of Problems Caused by Canada Geese: A Guide to Best Practice*, 4 edn. Natural England [publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/15010?category=41001](http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/15010?category=41001)

Natural England, 2011 *Use of liquid paraffin BP to prevent eggs of certain birds from hatching*, 2 edn. Natural England [publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/19009?category=41001](http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/19009?category=41001)

Underhill, M 1997 *London Lakes Rehabilitation Project Overview: Phase 3 - Waterfowl Monitoring and Management*. Wandsworth Borough Council

Wilkinson, M et al. 1998 *London Lakes Project: an overview of works and results of the project*. Wandsworth Borough Council

## Annex B - Item 1

## 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](mailto:northeast@english-heritage.org.uk)

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

Yorkshire and the  
Humber  
37 Tanner Row  
York  
YO1 6VVP  
Tel: 01904 601901  
e-mail: [yorkshire@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto:westmidlands@english-heritage.org.uk)

East Midlands  
44 Derngate  
Northampton  
NN1 1UH  
Tel: 01604 735400  
e-mail: [eastmidlands@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:southeast@english-heritage.org.uk)

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

National Office  
The Engine House  
Firefly Avenue  
Swindon  
SN2 2EH  
Tel: 01793 414700  
e-mail: [customers@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:customers@english-heritage.org.uk)

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.

Published by English Heritage 2014  
Product Code: 51922

[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

Please do not print this document unless you really need to.

If you would like this document in a different format, please contact our customer services department on telephone: 0870 333 1181  
fax: 01793 414926 textphone: 01793 414878  
email: [customers@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:customers@english-heritage.org.uk)



When you have finished with this review please recycle it



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Natural England Technical Information Note TIN003

# 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 amended<sup>1</sup>. 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

Natural England Technical Information Note TIN009

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

- 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.

Natural England Technical Information Note TIN009

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

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.

Unightly 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

Natural England Technical Information Note TIN009

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

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



Natural England Technical Information Note TIN009

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

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.

Natural England Technical Information Note TIN009

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

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.

Natural England Technical Information Note TIN009

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

### 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.

Natural England Technical Information Note TIN009

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

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.

Natural England Technical Information Note TIN009

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

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

Natural England Technical Information Note TIN009

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

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.

Natural England Technical Information Note TIN009

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

**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 kept 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.

Natural England Technical Information Note TIN009

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

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](mailto: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](http://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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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/](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*



Natural England Technical Information Note TIN009

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

*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.



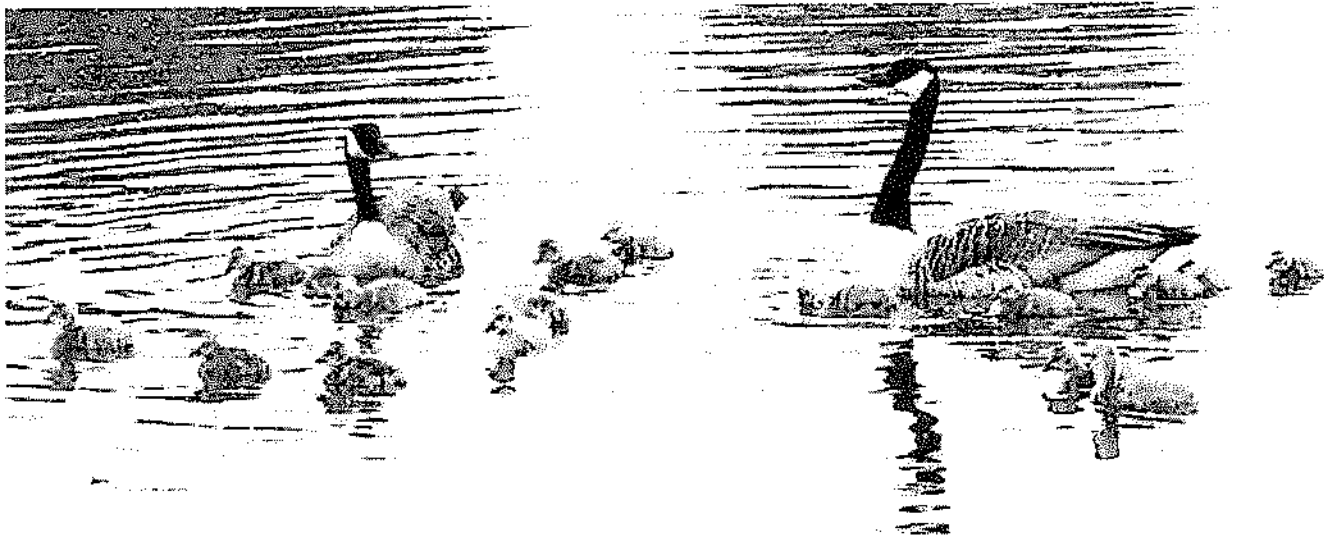
## Rural Development Service Technical Advice Note 51

# 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



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

Page 2

**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<sup>1</sup>. 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.

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

Page 3

- During the moult both adult and juvenile birds must feed from the water or wade 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.

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

Page 4

- 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

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

Page 5

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

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

Page 6

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,



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

Page 7

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 kept 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.

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

Page 10

**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](mailto: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](mailto: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/qm/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](mailto: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 carcass 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.

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

Page 11

- 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**

This leaflet was produced by the Defra Rural Development Service (RDS) and the Central Science Laboratory (CSL).

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<sup>1</sup>: 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.

Unightly 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 be 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 kept 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.

#### Site-based Management Measures

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.

#### Population-based Management

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

- *Translocation* - This method has been used in 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 continue 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](http://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 <sup>1</sup>
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. Forvaltningsplan 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)

<sup>1</sup> 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 Gorizia 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 <i>versus</i> 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 destruction

### 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)	?	?	?

**Communities & Environment Policy Scrutiny Committee****15<sup>th</sup> March 2016****York Floods Update****FLOODED PROPERTIES**

The floods of December 2015, the worst since 1982 in terms of impact on the City, resulted in the internal flooding of 627 properties (453 residential and 174 commercial). In the case of 1 residential property and 21 commercial properties this was the second time in approx. 1 month that they had suffered as they were affected by both Storms Desmond and Eva.

More than 900 properties have been visited by council officers in the aftermath of the flooding and where flooding has been confirmed the suite of grants made available by Government has been applied. £189k has been paid automatically via council tax payment accounts. 764 Council tax exemptions have also been granted totalling more than £267k.

The application process for businesses was administered by 'Make it York'. 90 businesses have successfully applied for the grants totalling £180k. Business rate relief exemptions totalling more than £1.15M have also been made to date.

The Property Level Resilience Grant scheme has been developed by DCLG and Defra, which will provide up to £5k to homes or businesses to make their property more resilient or resistant to future flooding. Works to make properties easier to recover – installing hard floors, raising electrics, and resilient wall finishes etc. deliver resilience and the installation of flood proof doors or barriers, air brick covers and other such measures can make a property more resistant to flooding.

14 applications for this grant have so far been approved; totalling more than £63k in grant funding, however, this is a highly technical process and involves a range of internal officers across several departments to be administered. Close working is also required with insurers, loss adjusters and contractors.

We are also working closely with the Two Ridings Community Foundation in their administration of the York Disaster Fund and they have also joint funded a caseworker to aid the delivery of the flood grant process.

City of York as a Lead Local Flood Authority have carried out a range of investigations into flooded properties and businesses across the city, advice and help has been provided to a range of property owners. Blockage removal, asset repair and clean up of a wide range of ditches and streams have been carried out and close working has been required with the Environment Agency, Internal Drainage Boards and Yorkshire Water. These works will provide a wide range of inputs for the independent inquiry which will deliver the investigation requirements of Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act (2010).

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

Several critical pieces of infrastructure were affected by the floods. The **Foss Barrier** is the most obvious. This is back in operation but work is required to maintain and improve it. It was under review at the time of the flooding but detailed upgrade plans are not yet in place. £10M additional Government funding has been committed to work on the barrier and we are working closely with the Environment Agency on their plans.

The **flood defences** through the City were not breached. However the river levels were only 200mm below the top of them for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time in 4 years.

We are working closely with the Environment Agency on a joint study via Defra Flood Defence Grant in Aid funding to identify the long term interventions that are needed to provide flood protection in the city. The York Flood Plan builds on the latest flood modelling that is currently being finalised and will look at the improvements that are needed to flood defence assets in the city and the actions that can be taken across the wider catchment to manage future climatic change. The outputs of the study will develop the long term investment plan for flood risk measures in the city and will be a key output to support the independent review.



**Castle Mills Sewage Pumping Station** failed in the face of the floods from the Foss basin. A significant proportion of the city's sewage is managed by this station. Whilst it is back in operation Yorkshire Water are drawing up long term plans to increase its resilience, we will support them in the delivery of this work wherever possible.

The **BT Telephone Exchange** in Garden Place was severely affected by the flooding of the Foss resulting in large parts of the City losing both telephone (landline and mobile) and data coverage for up to 24 hours. The responsibility for the defence of major utility infrastructure sits with the utility companies, however as the Lead Local Flood Authority we have made representations to all utility providers following the floods to ensure they consider their resilience plans.

## **THE RESPONSE**

With the advent of the Civil Contingencies Act, the local authority's role in emergencies became one which is much more proactive. During events such as these the council moves very rapidly from being a mainly 'office hours only' organisation to needing to be much more a 24/7 organisation.

The response of colleagues across the council on a Bank Holiday weekend was gratifying.

- Hazel Court colleagues reported for duty on Boxing Day night and worked long hours to render assistance.
- Customer Service colleagues formed a 24hr rota to ensure residents were able to get the information and assistance they needed and offers of help were directed to those able to deal with them.
- Major Incident Response Team volunteers staffed a Rest Centre at Archbishop Holgate's School which offered shelter and support to up to 150 residents, some of them vulnerable.

Many colleagues found themselves thrust into roles outside of their day to day work. For instance,

- Collating and allocating offers of accommodation from generous members of the public, with all of the potential safeguarding issues that it raises.
- Managing the coordination of the many and varied donations of clothing, toys, food and cleaning equipment from finding storage locations to identifying and delivering those things to those who needed them.
- Constant delivery and monitoring of communications to ensure all communities were supported in the aftermath of flooding.
- There were also over 600 volunteers, both groups and individuals and from all over the country to manage and deploy (once again being mindful of potential safeguarding issues)

The learning from the experiences of those involved is being gathered and will be formed into guidance to be included in future iterations of the Council's Emergency Handbook.

As would be expected, the event has tested the Council's overall response to emergencies and several suggested changes to that response have been raised in debriefs of those involved. Some of these will undoubtedly be reflected in reviews of the Council's emergency plans and will be considered in the independent review process.

We have attended a wide range of flood meetings and surgery's led by the MP's and Ward Councillors and we have also delivered a range of drop in sessions in collaboration with the Environment Agency. All have given opportunities to provide support and information to affected communities and to gather important data on the ways in which the flooding affected people, we have also used the sessions to promote the range of support and grant packages that are available from CYC, Two Ridings Community Foundation and the support of the Major Incident Response Team.

Sandbags are often a touchstone for those in danger of flooding. Legally, the council has no responsibility to provide sandbags, indeed that is the policy of some local authorities. Nevertheless rather than seek their own solutions (many of which may be potentially better than sandbags) even people who know they live in a flood zone still rely on the council to provide them, often at the last minute. This obviously

creates strain on our resources at a busy time and is something that needs to be considered moving forward.

## **RECOVERY**

A Recovery Group chaired by the Chief Executive was set up from Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> December and started to scope out the issues that needed to be addressed to return the affected communities to normality as soon as possible, even as the response was ongoing.

The focus which this group brought to the recovery effort undoubtedly helped to maximise the impact that the activities it was directing had in the ongoing 'return to normality'.

A wide range of departments including Housing, Finance, Communications, Highways, Public Realm, Waste, Transport and Make it York have had their work steered by the recovery group, the group also received inputs from the military, the Environment Agency and DCLG.

Our recovery processes will also be reviewed in light of the event and this will form a key part of the independent review process.

We continue to work closely with DCLG and Defra through provision of ongoing data and narrative reporting and we have met with representatives of both departments in various forums.

## **INDEPENDENT INQUIRY**

The holding of an independent inquiry into the floods and the response to them was agreed by Council leaders in early January. As mentioned above, the inquiry will also provide the investigative requirements of Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act (2010) which the Council, as Lead Local Flood Authority, is empowered to carry out.

An advert for the independent chair of that inquiry has been published, including terms of reference, which are to be refined with the successful candidate.

The Council leader and Group leaders are to meet for informal discussions with the shortlisted candidates on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2016 with formal interviews in early April.

This will be followed by a further advertisement for the members of the panel. Should it be found to be appropriate one or more of the unsuccessful applicants for independent chair may be suitable and willing to act as panel members.

It is important that the inquiry is not pre-empted or the gathering of evidence for it duplicated and work is underway to provide background information ready for the inquiry.

**Steve Waddington**

**Assistant Director Housing & Community Safety**

**15<sup>th</sup> March 2016**

## Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee – Workplan 2015-16

Dates	Work Programme
16 June 2015 @ 5:30pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introductory Report inc. Ideas on Potential Topics for Review in this Municipal Year</li> <li>2. Verbal update on the Costs Associated with Fly-tipping</li> <li>3. Further Implementation Update on Recommendations from Community Resilience Scrutiny Review</li> <li>4. Workplan 2015-16</li> </ol>
27 July 2015 @ 5:30pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attendance of the Executive Member for Environment</li> <li>2. Safer York Partnership Bi-Annual Performance Report (Jane Mowat)</li> <li>3. Briefing Paper on Domestic Violence (Jane Mowat)</li> <li>4. Report on Proposals for New Community Engagement Model (CC/MB)</li> <li>5. Workplan 2015-16</li> </ol>
22 Sept 2015 @ 5:30pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attendance of Executive Member for Housing &amp; Safer Neighbourhoods</li> <li>2. CYC Year End Financial &amp; Performance Monitoring Report</li> <li>3. CYC First Qtr Finance &amp; Performance Monitoring Report (Patrick Looker)</li> <li>4. Update on the work of AVANTE (Alcohol, Violence &amp; Night-Time Economy) (Tanya Lyon SYP)</li> <li>5. Feasibility Report on Proposed Scrutiny Topics: ‘Geese’ and ‘Stag &amp; Hen Parties’</li> <li>6. Implementation Update on Recommendations from Domestic Waste Scrutiny Review</li> <li>7. Workplan 2015-16</li> </ol>
17 Nov 2015 @ 5:30pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implementation Update on Recommendations from Domestic Waste Scrutiny Review</li> <li>2. Overview Report on Work of Substance Misuse Team</li> <li>3. Implementation Update on Recommendations from A-boards Scrutiny Review</li> <li>4. Update report on work of Horse Bailiff</li> <li>5. Update Report on Stag &amp; Hen Parties Scrutiny Review – Proposals for Review Remit</li> <li>5. Proposed Geese Scrutiny Review - Feedback from the meeting with Friends of Rowntree Park</li> <li>6. Workplan 2015-16</li> </ol>
20 Jan 2016 @ 5:30pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attendance of the Executive Member for Environment</li> <li>2. CYC Second Qtr Finance &amp; Performance Monitoring Report (Patrick Looker)</li> <li>3. Safer York Partnership Bi-Annual Performance Report (Ian Cunningham/Jane Mowat)</li> <li>4. Safer York Partnership Report on Domestic Violence (Mowat)</li> <li>5. Consultation Report on ‘Review of Neighbourhood Working Arrangements’ (Charlie Croft)</li> <li>6. Report on York Tenancy Strategy &amp; CYC Allocations Policy (Steve Waddington) - <i>deferred</i></li> <li>7. Workplan 2015-16</li> </ol>

15 March 2016 @ 5:30pm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CYC Third Qtr Finance &amp; Performance Monitoring Report (Patrick Looker)</li> <li>2. Update on the Community Safety Unit (Jane Mowat)</li> <li>3. Update on the Hate Crime Action Plan (Jane Mowat)</li> <li>4. Report on York Tenancy Strategy (Steve Waddington)</li> <li>5. Update on CYC housing Allocations &amp; Choice Based Lettings (Steve Waddington)</li> <li>6. Goose Management Scrutiny Review – Draft Final Report</li> <li>7. Briefing Update on Floods Programme (Steve Waddington)</li> <li>8. Workplan 2015-16</li> </ol>
17 May 2016 @ 5:30pm	