

Goose Management Scrutiny Review - Interim Report

Summary

1. This report provide information in support of objectives (ii) & (iii) of the review remit for the Goose Management scrutiny review, and asks the Task Group to agree what if any further information is required in support of those objectives.

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 drafting 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 drawn up:

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 and the University.

(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. Subsequently the Task Group identified dates for a number of meetings over which to conduct their review and the following review methodology was drawn up:

Meetings	Tasks
Meeting 1 - Formal Tuesday 26 th January 4pm (West Offices)	Objective 1 – To consider information relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The geese population in York • All previous related work undertaken by the Council • The associated cost to the city • Lessons learnt • Any associated health risks
Meeting 2 – Formal Tuesday 2 nd 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 th February 5.30pm (West Offices)	Objective 4 – Consultation Meeting Invitees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • York University • Friends of Rowntree Park • Friends of Chapman's Pond • Friends of New Walk • Friends of Leeman Park • York Environment Forum • York Ornithological Group • Askham Bryan College • Parish Councils with ponds/lagoons -

	<p>Wigginton, Dunnington (Hassacarr Nature Reserve), Askham Richard, Haxby & Holtby</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • York & District Amalgamation of Anglers • York Lakeside Holidays • Yorkshire Wildlife Trust • RSPCA • Public Health • RSPB • British Trust for Ornithology • Yorkshire Water • Yorkshire Farming & Wildlife Partnership • Canada Goose Conservation Society • Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust
<p>Meeting 4 – Informal Wednesday 17th February 5.30pm (West Offices)</p>	<p>To consider findings and consultation feedback, and identify appropriate review conclusions</p>
<p>Meeting 5 – Formal Thursday 3rd March 5.30pm (West Offices)</p>	<p>To consider draft final report.</p>

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 its first formal meeting on 26 January 2016, the Task Group received some introductory information including information on the law protecting wild geese in the UK, together with a detailed presentation on goose management from the Strategy & Contracts Operations Manager – see copy of presentation attached at Annex A.
8. It has not been possible to include an analysis of the information provided at that first meeting within the body of this report, as the agenda for this meeting was published prior to the first meeting taking place. Feedback and analysis from the first meeting will therefore be tabled at this meeting, so that the Task Group can confirm their views.

9. Objective (ii) - To examine best practice nationally and elsewhere.

An information pack containing best practice guides, examples of good practice, and information on arrangements within the EU, is 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. Objective (iii) - To consider technical options for dropping removal, the associated costs and external funding possibilities.

Two technical options have been identified:

- **Option 1** - The Tow and Collect Mini 700 is an engine-free, ground driven manure sweeper, which means there is no motor, no refueling and no hassles - cost excluding VAT is £3097.50.

The brushes rotate when the machine is pulled along. The 700mm wide pickup and easy-to-empty 320 litre (85 gallon) catching hopper means you can fit approx. 1-2 wheelbarrow loads in before you need to empty. This little machine is suitable for anything up to 6 horses or alpacas and it can be hitched to an ATV, quad bike or small tractor. The large chunky tires give the Mini 700 the traction to drive the brushes, and it would be effective in pastures up to 4"-5" (125mm) long. It is the most 'green' machine and is also the simplest. Even without an engine, the Mini 700 is 5x faster than a typical vacuum machine. This is due to its constant collection system not requiring a start and stop at each manure pile, just drive over it and the manure disappears – it's that simple.

Because of the constant sweeping motion of the brushes, it also removes the thatch and dead grass from the pasture – something a vacuum does not do. This promotes live grass growth and allows the pasture to gain more of the needed nutrients and sunlight to survive.

- **Option 2** - The Tow and Collect 1500 Pro is a speedy solution to cleaning large areas with ease – cost excluding VAT is £5,449.50.

The 1500mm wide pickup and easy-to-empty 610 litre (160 gallon) catching hopper means it can fit approximately 3-4 wheelbarrow loads before the need to empty. Not only does it clean pastures, it minimises the potential parasite re-infestation – as removing the manure will reduce the faecal egg count.

The Pro 1500 has a key-start 7hp engine which drives the brushes for constant collection – whether travelling at 2 km/hr or 15 km/hr, which is helpful if there are varying pasture surfaces and grass length. Because of the serious width of the Pro 1500, it can completely cover 1/2 acre in just over 10 minutes.

It provides constant rotation of nylon brushes allowing the machine to be continually on the move with no stop/starting required like a vacuum machine, thereby saving time and effort.

As with option 1, the constant sweeping motion of the brushes, removes the thatch and dead grass from the pasture – something a vacuum does not do.

11. Further information on both options is attached at Annex C and the Task Group can see both machines in action via the DVD provided at the meeting.
12. The cost of a suitable machine is not the only consideration. There is also a staff cost associated with the work required e.g. 1 Hr a day x up to 357 days a year. Plus the cost of disposal. 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.
13. Furthermore, a machine of the type suggested above would not be suitable for use at every site where geese are an issue, due to the size and/or layout of the site e.g. Memorial Gardens.

Next Stage

14. consultation Meeting on 9 February 2016 @ 5:30pm
Invitations have been issued to those consultees listed in the table at paragraph 5. The Task Group are asked to consider arrangements for the forthcoming consultation meeting, and identify any specific issues and/or questions to discuss with the attendees, in order that any supporting material required can be prepared for that meeting.

Council Plan 2015-19

15. 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 & Risk Management

16. At this early stage in the review there are no known implications or risks associated with the review. All implications and risks identified as part of the ongoing work will be detailed in the review draft final report for the consideration of the full Communities & Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendations

17. The Task Group are asked to:
 - Consider and comment on the information provided in support of Objectives (ii) and (iii) as detailed in paragraphs 8 & 11 above and annexes A & B;
 - Agree any further information required in support of Objectives (ii) – (iii);
 - Consider and agree the arrangements for the consultation meeting to be held on 9 February 2016 @ 5:30pm;

Reason: To progress this scrutiny review in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols

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Wards Affected: Guildhall, Micklegate & Hull Rd



Background Papers: None

Annexes:

Annex A: Copy of Presentation provided at meeting on 26 January 2016

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

Annex C: Examples of Technical Options