



## Seagulls Advice and Information

The local authority often receive reports with regard 'seagulls' causing a nuisance from diving or swooping, general noise and fouling. The seagulls usually relate to either Herring Gulls or Kittiwakes. These are two species of seabird that breed within our urban areas and consequently may come into conflict with people.

Below is some information and practical advice on how best to tackle the challenges that may arise due to the proximity of gulls and people, within the laws that are designed to protect them. By playing your part you can help us to address some of the issues associated with them by:

Never feeding the gulls

Never dropping litter – dispose of it in a public bin or take it home

Not overfilling your bin so the lid cannot close

## The law

All wild birds, their nests, eggs and chicks are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

The act indicates that it is illegal to capture, injure or destroy any wild bird or interfere with its nest or eggs. No action may be taken against the gulls themselves, and it is illegal to kill or

otherwise harm them. In the event of a prosecution the maximum fine is £5000 and or a six month prison sentence.

This means that any measures to bird proof buildings or clear old nests at the end of the season must be completed in winter. An exception to this would be if there was a safety issue eg a nest blocking the gas flue outlet. Issues of noise and nuisance would not be considered an exception.

Where such measures are proving ineffective, landowners can take immediate action if these gulls pose a risk to public health or safety under the terms of a [general licence](#), (a licence which is already in place provided certain conditions are met). The general licence is available to view on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) site along with when this would apply.

## What action can you take?

There are a variety of ways to legally help deter Herring Gulls and Kittiwakes from nesting on your property; some are more effective than others and the costs vary.

### 1. De-nesting

At the end of every nesting season (usually September until February) remove all nests and nesting material from your building. Note that it is unlawful to remove a Kittiwake nest once active i.e. as soon as the first new nesting material has been added.

### 2. Proofing buildings

Removing nests alone will not discourage the birds from coming back. The birds will build another nest the following spring. To prevent them nesting we recommend the proofing

of affected buildings. A variety of methods may be used alone or in combination, but it is recommended to take specialist advice for your building, as each situation is different. Here are some options you could consider:

### **Bird exclusion netting**

Fine netting with a maximum mesh size of 25mm may be fitted to buildings but it is crucial that it is installed correctly. The mesh should be kept taut on four sides to prevent birds' wings becoming caught in the mesh. It is also important to maintain and regularly inspect the netting to prevent it from tearing or sagging otherwise birds can get behind it or even construct a nest on top of loose netting. It is also important to make sure that all possible nesting and roosting sites on the roof, especially behind chimney stacks and building /window ledges, are protected.

### **Bird repellent gel (sometimes referred to as 'fire gel')**

There are bird deterrent gels on the market, which are non-toxic, do not harm the birds and are much more discreet than netting. The gel can be applied on likely nesting surfaces, especially narrow linear features like ledges. Birds are deterred from landing on a surface by the smell of the gel, the UV light reflected from it and the feel of it. It is usually applied in small dishes at close intervals and claims to remain effective for at least two years even in harsh climates. The gels, applied through a cartridge gun are very cost effective compared to netting.

### **Bird spikes**

Although some buildings have used pigeon spikes to deter Kittiwakes, there are some concerns. Kittiwakes build up sizeable nests year on year, adding to previous material.

Examples are common where Kittiwakes have used the spikes to secure their nest to a ledge. Wider ledges may need several rows of spikes and even so the birds may attempt to build on top of the spikes. There are also instances where birds have become injured by standing on the spikes. Be wary that most pigeon spikes are not strong enough for larger gulls like Herring Gulls and more substantial stainless steel ones are recommended.

### **3. Who should do the work?**

You can do winter proofing or winter nest clearing work yourself or engage someone else to do it for you. There are a number of pest control companies available to carry out proofing.

If you are planning to remove nests and eggs of named species the process outlined in the "The Law" section above must be followed and ensure a licensed contractor is obtained.

### **4. When should it be done?**

Outside the nesting season, usually between September and February, but check for late-fledging birds and be sure the nests are no longer in use. If you engage a company to do the job they will advise you further on your particular situation.