

B&NES SEAGULL INQUIRY DAY, 27.11.2013

COMMENTS FROM FEDERATION OF BATH RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS

FoBRA represents 27 residents' associations across the city of Bath. We discussed the inquiry day at our committee on 25 November, with helpful input from Council officers. Given the timing I'm sorry that we were unable to submit these views in advance.

First of all, we welcome this inquiry day. The problems caused by seagulls are clearly increasing in Bath. More needs to be done, and it's not clear to us that a continuation of current methods is enough.

This isn't just a Council problem. Council, businesses, residents and visitors all have some role to play. Where the Council is uniquely placed is to find out about best practice, inform others, and to encourage them to take the most effective action.

For example, there used to be a scheme for the Council to support residents' groups who employed a pest controller to deal with nests and eggs. This action was successful in two central areas – the Pulteney Estate and the Circus Area, where I live myself. The Council have withdrawn the support, presumably as an economy measure, so the action has lapsed. This is a move in the wrong direction, and we should like the Council to reinstate it.

We are concerned that this conference may increase the focus just on food waste. This is a problem – it always has been – and we're all in favour of tougher enforcement action. But it's a problem of litter, and should be tackled on that front. We're sceptical as to whether it's driving the increase in gulls.

What does seem clear is that gulls come here because it's a good place to nest and breed. The roofs in Bath are free from natural predators. Gulls are long-living, so once they've got used to Bath, they are here for a long time, and the migratory birds keep coming back. We believe that more needs to be done to stop them nesting. Property owners – Council, businesses, housing associations and residents – need the best possible advice and encouragement.

Finally, we think that more needs to be done to control gull populations, using all possible humane methods. If there are legal barriers to action, we think these should be reviewed. Obviously this could not be done just for B&NES, so we urge the Council to contact other local authorities, and talk to the Government about the scope for change. We're very pleased to see other Councils here today, and hope this is the first step towards wider collaboration.

Henry Brown, Chairman of FoBRA
26 November 2013