

# **Council have no more money for Merchiston gull problem**

Last year the council agreed to fund a pilot scheme to get rid of gulls' nests in the Merchiston area of the city where the community council had reported a particular problem.

The pilot study was carried out, and has had a measure of success, but the cost of running such a scheme for a further 4 to 5 years is estimated to be around £36,000 and the council have decided that they cannot afford to keep paying for this service. Instead they will be suggesting to residents that they pay for the service themselves. The cost is estimated at £70 per household.

The pilot project removed 107 gulls' nests and 165 eggs were destroyed. During the pilot project no residents made any complaints about any nuisance from the birds.

The original quote to the council for running such a pilot was £25,000 but it actually only cost £9,000 as some of the roofs proved to be accessible even without the need for machinery such as cherry pickers. Even though the cost is reduced the council state that they do not have any money set aside for continuing to run the scheme, although they can offer it to the residents of Merchiston (and presumably other areas of the city) on a commercial basis. As well as this there will be more containerisation of rubbish in certain areas soon and gull proof bags are being introduced across the city where possible.

Dr Mairianna Clyde Chair of Merchiston Community Council said:-“We are disappointed by the report's findings but will continue to press for a gull task force in Edinburgh as has been undertaken by other local authorities with lesser resources than the capital.

Residents here have had considerable experience of de-nesting as a voluntary project was undertaken in areas of Merchiston and Bruntsfield between 2000 and 2005. We challenge the Council's view that four to five seasons are necessary, as our experience is that if an area is targeted intensively, it is 70-90% effective in only one season, and a second season is only necessary in order to mop up the residual problems and to consolidate the results of the first.

Thus we are seeking the support of the committee and of local councillors and the Neighbourhood Partnerships to continue the pilot for one further year so that its knowledge and expertise can become available to other areas of the city. The Council's own findings were that the gull problem in the pilot area intensively targeted in 2012 was substantially reduced so we are perplexed by this report. The costs of £9,000 would also be less £2,250 costed for a roof survey, meaning the total cost to the city in 2013 would be only £6,750. For this small investment, we think our fellow citizens deserve a better deal."



The main reason for destroying nests rather than simply culling birds is that it is a more effective way of decreasing the numbers of gulls in the area. If the eggs are simply removed but the nests are left in place then the seagulls will apparently keep on laying new ones. So one visit to remove the nest is more efficient. During the 2011 and 2012 gull nesting seasons a total of 79 complaints were received in each year. The council concludes from this that significant numbers of gulls have not simply moved on to neighbouring areas, which was one of the fears.

The pilot project was carried out in Bruntsfield Place, Dundee Terrace, Bryson Road, Watson Crescent, Fowler Terrace, Yeaman Place and Temple Park Crescent and followed from a project in Dumfries & Galloway where the council there had tried the same

method of curbing the numbers of gulls.

The council has produced a leaflet to assist those who are still affected by gulls [which is available on the council website.](#)