

Seagulls advice and information



About seagulls

Seagulls are a common feature of many seaside towns and are becoming increasingly common in urban settings due, in large part, to the easy availability of food and nesting sites.

Herring gulls are common in this area. They are large, with grey upper feathers and black ends to their wings which have white tips. They have a yellow beak with a red spot and their legs and feet are a pink flesh colour.

Seagulls usually build their nests in May and lay two or three eggs which take three weeks to hatch. The chicks stay in the nest for five or six weeks and will fly in late July or early August.

The seagull problem

Gull colonies can present problems, including noise, fouling, spreading rubbish and even swooping at people, usually to protect their chicks or to snatch food.

There can also be damage to roofs and gutters, and blockage of gas flues caused by nesting materials can have serious consequences if gas fumes are prevented from venting properly.

What the law says

It is illegal to capture, injure or destroy any wild bird, or interfere with its nest or eggs.

Licences issued by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) allow control measures to be taken where there are public health or safety concerns.

However, the law does not permit individuals to carry out control measures for gulls if they are causing noise nuisance, fouling or simply damaging property. Penalties for disregarding the law can be severe.

What can be done to deter seagulls?

Don't feed the seagulls

Members of the public are strongly advised not to feed the seagulls as this will increase their population.

Penalties could be issued against those who persistently cause a nuisance by feeding seagulls.

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Eliminate the food source

Placing extra waste beside your wheelie bin can also attract them.

All those who are able to use a wheelie bin for their household waste are asked to do so. For Whitehaven residents who use bin bags, Whitehaven Town Council can provide gull-proof bags. It is preferable that waste is placed outside of a property on the collection day itself, rather than the night before.

Prevent nesting sites

If gulls start nesting on a roof, it is likely that more gulls will be attracted to nest on nearby properties. Where more and more properties have gullproofing measures in an area, there will be less chance for a gull colony to grow.

Gull-proofing measures can include:

- chimney guards
- roof spikes
- roof wires and nets

It is an offence to disturb an active nesting site. The RSPB advises that householders must “tolerate the nesting birds until the chicks naturally fledge the nest, and then the nest can be removed and deterrents put in place to prevent its return.”

If you are a tenant, it is recommended that you discuss the measures to be taken with your landlord.

Pest control

Whilst deterrent measures should always be tried in the first instance, after all methods have been tried and a legitimate reason can be shown, it can be possible to seek the assistance of a licensed pest control contractor.

Useful contact details

Cumberland Council

Market Hall
Whitehaven
Cumbria
CA28 7JG
0300 373 3730
info3@cumberland.gov.uk

Whitehaven Town Council

Civic Hall
Lowther Street
Whitehaven
Cumbria
CA28 7SH
01946 67366
clerk@whitehaventowncouncil.co.uk

Natural England

0845 601 4523
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england

RSPCA

0300 1234 999
www.rspca.org.uk

British Pest Control Association

01332 294 288
www.bpca.org.uk

National Pest Technicians Association

01773 717716
www.npta.org.uk