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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday 19 February 2021 15:41
To: WildBirdDeclarations
Subject: Wild Birds Derogation Licences for the year ahead - 2021.22

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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To whom it concerns

As a resident of Balbriggan for the last 38 years I have noticed with concern the rapid increase in recent years of seagulls nesting on the roof spaces of our homes, schools, shops and workplaces.

These gulls are quite invasive in our estate, on our roofs, on the streets and green spaces. As more and more people have taken to walking the open green spaces during Covid-19 restrictions in 2020 and again in 2021 they now find they are the target for aggressive attacks at certain times by the gulls. These gulls should not be a deterrent to the adults and children trying to get fresh air and exercise in equal measures.

They start the mornings off sometimes at 05.30-06.30am with what appear to be warning cries and stir up a cacophony of noise as other gulls join in. This sleep disturbance is nothing like the singing of the smaller birds at sunrise, the morning chorus.

The gulls also drop waste onto the rooftops when feeding themselves or their young, sometimes there is a clatter of noise as they fight over the debris. This must surely be a threat to families health as the debris washes down off the roofs or is carried into houses by insects.

It's becoming impossible to care for the smaller bird life in the area, which now appear to be reducing in numbers as the bigger, aggressive gulls fight them off. One has to be careful in placing seed out for small birds so as not to encourage the scavenging gulls to descend in numbers.

The gulls have become very observant of human habits and are very aware that wherever humans are there is the likelihood of food scraps being left behind or disposed of. Indeed they are not shy about swooping down on kids and adults if they see any food in their hands or beside them on benches or seats.

While Balbriggan would be used to seagulls for generations as a fishing town; these issues have arisen since Balleally landfill closed in 2013, and we now have very high density colonies established and expanding in our estates, on our schools and on businesses - and the situation is out of control; there are identical problems in the wider communities of Skerries, Howth, Drogheda, the City Centre and around the country. Many of our Hospitals, schools, service stations also have large seagull colonies established on or around them.

Some of the factors that you should note are summarised as follows:

1. Noise day and night for over five months April to Sept. - serious sleep deprivation impacting people at work, driver safety etc.
2. Extensive faecal mess on homes, schools, play areas, food premises - all over the place; a serious public health issue
3. Aggressive foraging, attack and injury by seagulls in schools, in home gardens, on the streets, at shops and supermarket
4. Very aggressive attacks on people during breeding time and when chicks are on the ground before they can fly

5. Expensive damage to roofs, flashing (flooding), solar panels, windows, cars - including to schools and to business premises, €000s.
6. Noticeable drop in other small-medium bird species where the big urban colonies have established.

I believe that the minimum requirement is that people's homes, schools, hospitals and all premises involved with human food must be deemed to be unsuitable for seagull breeding; in the UK, Local Authorities provided nest / egg removal services for areas heavily impacted by the problem.

The stretch of water that separates Ireland from the west coast of England and Wales is not that wide that the gulls in that jurisdiction will not eventually look to Ireland as the place to relocate to as they become displaced from nesting areas in the UK. This may indeed be already happening in the northern and eastern counties of this island.

It's time for Ireland and it's local authorities to take a strong lead in this and not be seen to drag our heels slowly behind our nearest more proactive neighbours.

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Regards

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Balbriggan
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