

People and Gulls Summit

23 September 2025

Great Glen House, Inverness



NatureScot
NàdarAlba

Scotland's Nature Agency
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

Introduction and agenda

The Minister opened the summit by thanking attendees, including local government, community groups and BID groups, for their time and expertise. He recognised the significant impact of urban gull populations, which is being felt in a number of our towns and cities across Scotland. These challenges affect communities, businesses, and public services alike, and efforts must be increased to prevent these negative impacts from continuing. That means making our towns and cities less appealing to gulls and limiting their opportunities to nest. The aim of the summit was practical, to share best practice, learn from real-world examples, identify policy gaps, and agree on a collective way forward. The goal was clear: to ensure that suitable and effective measures are in place before the start of the nesting season next year. The Minister acknowledged this as a shared challenge, but one we can overcome by working together.

Session 1 People and gulls - Understanding our collective experience	Session 2 State of gulls - Understanding gull Decline	Session 3 Managing impacts and living with wildlife
A chance for people to tell their stories, voice issues and tensions they have experienced and share collective experiences and examples of managing these issues.	Time for species experts to discuss populations, data on specific species, differentials between cliff breeding, urban, inland non-urban colonies. How these are used in modelling. Plans for further work/surveys.	NatureScot's approach to licencing and species management. Where gull licencing policy has come from and what the policy is aiming to achieve.

Key take away points

- There was widespread agreement that gulls do cause issues for some people in our urban areas and the need for solutions to be implemented.
 - It was important that we all had open discussions and were able to express our real lived experiences.
 - Success will require continued discussion and transparency; this is about balancing the impacts on people and gull conservation.
 - NatureScot and Scottish Government are committed to action and change, working in partnership with others across all interests.
 - Overall, we need to consider the whole lifecycle of gulls – as such implementing meaningful long-term solutions will not be a quick fix.
 - There are several tools available to help management of gulls which often don't require a licence. Licensed control is but only one option.
 - We will promote the development of an overall **Gull Management Strategy** – learning from other similar approaches with a variety of species.
 - While a national framework will help provide direction, it must be within the context of **local solutions**.
 - **We must keep learning from each other** – different stakeholder groups are taking a variety of approaches to managing gull impacts.
 - Across Scotland, **better data and information** is needed on overall gull population trends, their numbers in urban areas, and their use of urban and non-urban landscapes.
 - **For Licensing – transparency on the guidelines and actions is essential.** The guidelines must tackle the range of situations reported and there must be no surprises to applicants.
 - The solutions to develop a sustainable long-term approach to manage the problem belong with us all and lie in a commitment to **partnership and a joined-up approach**.
 - We will all use the period from now to the nesting season next year to put in place actions – **the winter period is key to plan and prepare for next year**.
 - Funding will be required of which the **£100k from NatureScot** is a start to prime this work.
 - We need different solutions applied together and we NatureScot need to continually test, and sense check our approaches.
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Actions



1. Run **three regional roundtable events across Scotland** to continue to develop a partnership approach with those not able to attend the gull summit, and to tackle the problem – joint approaches will have a better chance of getting funding to tackle the root of the problem.
2. Distribute the **£100k that has been made available to assist local authorities to develop an area wide gull management approach**. This area wide approach will:
 - better understand gull populations and their movements at a local level,
 - identify the range of measures that could be practically applied in different context,
 - identify areas with highest gull impact,
 - develop a strategic view as to where and how gulls can be moved on from areas of high impact,
 - provide a locally coordinated area-based licensing approach.
3. Develop a **national awareness campaign** to encourage people not to feed gulls and carry out proper waste management.
4. Continue to **gather gull data nationally**, with increased focus on **improving survey techniques for gulls nesting in urban areas**.
5. Develop best practice guidance to include:
 - Waste management in urban areas to limit food availability to gulls,
 - “**Push**” (moving gulls out of high impact urban areas) and “**pull**” (attracting gulls to areas where gull impacts are lower),
 - Survey techniques that assess local urban populations, movements, and high impact areas,
 - Study methodologies to assess the human behaviours that contribute to high gull impacts.
6. Consider the development of a regular People and Gulls Forum.

Further information

Gull Information – Including links outcomes and presentations from the Gull summit:
www.nature.scot/plants-animals-and-fungi/birds/seabirds-and-shorebirds/gulls

Further information on Gull management is available at:
www.nature.scot/doc/guidance-gull-management

Licensing guidance is available at:
www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/licensing/species-licensing-z-guide/birds/birds-licences-public-health-and-safety-and-air-safety

