

2.3 Deputy S. Power of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the inappropriate feeding of seagulls by householders in high density housing areas:

I preface this question by saying that I have had correspondence with that department for 2 years on this subject. Can the Minister outline what action, if any, the Health and Social Services Department is able to take to stop the inappropriate feeding of seagulls by some householders in high-density housing areas that cause annoyance to other householders or neighbours?

Deputy A.E. Pryke of Trinity (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

The Health and Social Services Department does not have any legal power to deal with the feeding of wild birds, including seagulls. Furthermore, I am not aware of any other States department having a power conferred in law that would address this particular problem. The Statutory Nuisances (Jersey) Law 1999, administered on my behalf by the Health Protection Service, provides a legal remedy only in cases where the animal, bird, insect, reptile or fish is kept, and thereafter that the manner in which they are kept is prejudicial to health or a nuisance. Where complaints have arisen of disturbance due to activity, it has been customary for my officers to seek an informal solution that best fits with the needs of both parties; however, the difficulty of problems of this nature are that each side often becomes entrenched with little prospect of a solution.

2.3.1 Deputy S. Power:

If I may be allowed? I thank the Minister for her comments; however, it is not a solution that is satisfactory. Can I suggest to the Minister that 4 district councils in the U.K. - Brighton and Hove, East Devon, Bradford and Dorset and Dumfries - have found out that there is an increase in seagull populations in their areas, and these are typical of all U.K. town councils, and they have introduced a culling campaign to collect the eggs. Would the Minister not consider that?

The Deputy of Trinity:

As I said, I think the best is to try and educate people and see if we can come to an amicable agreement with both parties, but also to educate the general public that feeding of birds really should be carefully considered. I know that the Ornithologist Society and the Société has been very proactive in this case.

2.3.2 Deputy J.B. Fox of St. Helier:

Is the Minister aware that one of the problems, certainly in the urban area of St. Helier, is that most of these birds are breeding on roofs of properties that are let to many residents and therefore no one takes any individual care? Also, the feeding habits is mostly from discarded waste from the domestic household bin that is causing the problems and this needs to have a multi-department approach in order to solve it. Thank you. Does the Minister agree?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Yes, I do, and as I said, education is a good way forward. Most people fail to bag waste appropriately and therefore birds with the skills of herring gulls can pounce and take free advantage of a free lunch. Jersey, we are so different from other places. I understand that herring gulls can now live in the middle of France because they have that free lunch.

2.3.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

It is very simple. Would the Minister be in favour of a ban on feeding seagulls?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I think, in some ways, feeding birds is ... I know a lot of people do it, but it is finding the appropriate places so that these things do not happen, because I can understand that it becomes a great nuisance to neighbours.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Just to clarify, was that a yes or a no?

The Deputy of Trinity:

It was neither. I would need some more information.

2.3.4 Deputy S. Power:

The reason I ask this question is that some of my constituents are being driven to distraction by sleep deprivation and these gulls dive bombing and ripping open black bags. Can the Minister make a simple statement to the public and urge them to not feed seagulls?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I know that has been done many times and I have ... I know they have protection. We have worked very hard with the Deputy and with other parishioners with this specific issue. I have offered to go and see the relevant parties to see if we can come to sort of informed way forward.