



Pigeon Control Advisory Service
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U-Turn Council Dubbed ‘The Worst Council in Britain’ By Experts

The Pigeon Control Advisory Service UK Division (PiCAS UK) has slammed Chester City Council for abandoning its no-cull policy where pigeons are concerned. In 2001 Chester City Council agreed to put aside its outdated and ineffective pigeon culling strategy and initiate a humane but effective pigeon control programme in Chester city centre, acting on advice from PiCAS UK.

PiCAS UK has learned that Chester City Council recently culled pigeons in St Martin’s House prior to demolition, contravening the council’s own no-cull policy and breaking a longstanding agreement made with PiCAS UK in 2001.

It was PiCAS UK that recommended the installation of a pigeon coup (or dovecote) in Kaleyards as a humane but 100% effective means of managing pigeon flock size in Chester city centre. The dovecote was designed to provide pigeon feeders with a legitimised feeding area to stop random feeding taking place throughout the city centre and provide problem birds with a daytime perching facility, thereby reducing soiling on properties throughout the city centre.

The concept behind a pigeon coup is to close down large-scale roosts such as St Martin’s House and allow the excluded birds to relocate into a dovecote facility such as the one in Kaleyards. Once pigeons have relocated and become established in the dovecote breeding can be controlled via egg removal and replacement with dummy eggs - flock size will then reduce dramatically.

This method is now being used throughout Europe with massive success. It is only successful, however, because it is a humane and non-lethal programme and as such is accepted and embraced by persistent pigeon feeders. In order to control an area-wide pigeon flock effectively there must be a degree of control over both breeding and food sources. By culling the council has not only dashed any hope of cooperation from Chester’s pigeon feeders (the source of the problem) but it has wasted an opportunity to move more of Chester’s pigeon population to take up residence in the dovecote where their breeding can be controlled.

Far from reducing the problem in the city centre Chester City Council’s recent cull will actually *increase* pigeon flock size by between 15% and 30%. Scientific research and

research undertaken by the PiCAS Group over the last 35 years has confirmed that pigeon flock size will rise back to the pre-cull level and exceed it within a matter of weeks following a cull. This is because pigeon flock size is dictated, absolutely, by the extent of available food. When a cull takes place food levels rise significantly for the remainder of the flock and mass breeding takes place – the result is a population explosion.

Chester City Council has wasted public money on culling pigeons in the city and yet the council was made abundantly aware that culling will only act to increase pigeon flock size as far back as 2001. Even in light of this the council went ahead with this barbaric cull.

Chester City Council's unprofessional and in some cases laughable attempts to deal with the city's pigeon problem over the last 7 years has now earned the council the dubious title of the worst council in Britain by PiCAS UK.

Chester City Council was offered a package by PiCAS UK that would have provided the city with a humane, cost-effective and sustainable programme that would have reduced and controlled pigeon flock size on a year by year basis. Instead Chester City Council has chosen to turn the clocks back and revert to 19th century methods of dealing with the problem.

Guy Merchant said: "It is almost impossible to believe how badly the city council has handled this problem. They are living in the dark ages where this issue is concerned. The council has completely ignored the advice provided to them, failed to introduce the wide-ranging package of controls recommended to them and bowed to pressure from the business community to cull. If Chester City Council had worked closely with PiCAS UK from day one the city would now have a unique and completely effective pigeon control system that would be an example to councils throughout Britain."

Further information on all aspects of pigeon control can be found on the PiCAS UK website at: www.picasuk.com.

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Editors Notes:

The Pigeon Control Advisory Service is the only independent consultancy service worldwide providing advice on all aspects of humane and effective bird control but specialising in pigeon control. The PiCAS Group consists of PiCAS International servicing the needs of clients worldwide and PiCAS UK providing the service in the UK. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), considered to be the leading authority on birds and bird management systems worldwide, refers many of its bird control enquiries to PiCAS UK and the PiCAS Group is recommended by numerous national and international agencies worldwide.

Scientific research* and research carried out by the PiCAS Group has proven, conclusively, that all lethal methods of pigeon control are totally ineffective in the medium and long-term reduction of pigeon numbers. The same applies to the control of virtually every other species of wild bird. In areas where lethal control operations have been carried out there will be seen to be an initial short-term reduction in numbers but, within a matter of weeks, pigeon numbers will have increased back to the pre-cull figure and in most cases will have exceeded it. This is because killing adult pigeons in a feeding flock favours younger birds that would otherwise have a poorer chance of survival. Many older non-breeding birds are removed during these culling operations and the younger healthy breeding stock remains in situ and thrives as a result. Lethal control cannot be seen as a viable method of reducing flock size under any circumstance, irrespective of the size or extent of the problem.

Pigeons control their own numbers very effectively according to the volume of food available to them. An adult pair of pigeons will usually breed 4-6 times a year but can breed more frequently in optimum conditions, producing 2 young each time. If, however, the food supply reduces and there is only sufficient food available to support the existing flock, adult birds may only breed once or twice a year or possibly not at all. Pigeons will not breed if there is insufficient food to service the needs of their young. If the food supply increases for any reason (following a cull for example), pigeons will breed continuously until the flock reaches the point where it is fully exploiting the food available to it. In other words there is a minor population explosion each time a cull takes place. The end result is an estimated 15% -30% increment in flock size over and above the pre-cull figure.

Acknowledgements:

** Regulation of the street pigeon in Basel by Daniel Haag-Wackernagel, 1992*

This story and other breaking news items can be found on the PiCAS UK website at www.picasuk.com.