

Report to Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services

Date April 2013

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Reducing Canada Geese numbers</b>
<b>Presented to Cabinet Member by:</b>	<b>John Satchwell</b>

<b>Purpose of Report</b>
To Propose options for the reduction of Canada Geese numbers in Urban Parks.

**Key Points**

- Large numbers of Canada Geese are reported each year on Sandwell's Parks and Open Spaces; as many as 700 hundred birds may be present at any one time. Canada Geese feed predominantly on organic matter found in and around pools. Large flocks are often seen grazing on the boroughs sports pitches amenity areas that are in close proximity to water bodies.
- Canada Geese normally remain close to the site where they are hatched, and once young birds mature they may wait several years before moving onto other breeding sites.
- When grazing they may produce droppings at a rate of every six minutes. The droppings contain bacteria that may be harmful if faecal matter is inadvertently swallowed and in addition, makes grassed areas unattractive and paths slippery. If the droppings are passed into water bodies they may cause increased nutrient loadings leading to possible toxic algae blooms and low oxygen levels in the water adversely impacting on fish stocks.
- Canada Geese have few natural predators, with such a low mortality rate adult bird numbers have increased year on year.
- There is very little evidence to suggest that natural factors (such as a limited food availability), which could become more severe as numbers increase, act to control current numbers, thus reductions in feeding alone will have little effect.
- Low annual mortality, high reproduction rates and the availability of suitable habitat gives the population scope to increase in the absence of management measures.

- Canada geese are herbivores, grazing on both land and water plants. Amenity grassland is extremely susceptible to geese damage, where regular feeding takes place.
- Canada Geese can damage the habitat of other wildlife, for example by grazing or trampling nesting sites of other bird species.
- The lack of natural predators means that they are naturally tame and easy to feed at the bank side. Numerous measures have been tried to reduce the numbers through pricking and oiling eggs. Also the installation of fencing of pools has been introduced but has proven unsuccessful in controlling the numbers to manageable levels.
- Reductions in Canada Geese numbers would help to reduce the levels of damage to parks and open spaces. Parks would become cleaner and safer with a reduction in droppings and associated grass damage. Lower numbers would reduce the public's opportunity to feed the geese. Footpaths, fields and pond edges would be less of a hazard.

### Recommendations

- Based on the evidence in the summary statement that management control methods for the reduction in Canada Geese are implemented as follows
- The dispatching and culling can only take place when birds are flightless during the moult which takes place between late May and the end of June. It should be noted that for effective control this should take place year upon year. We pilot a project and identify two locations where the problems exist and measure the outcomes and gauge public reaction.
- We continue to prick or oil eggs during the breeding season.
- When the opportunity arises we seek to redesign our parks landscape to make unsuitable habitat for geese to thrive
- We attempt to discourage the feeding of Canada geese in our Parks and Countryside.

### Implications

#### *Financial*

We have obtained an estimated cost of between £700 and £1000 per park. . Revenue funding has been identified to finance the pilot scheme The company employed to carry this work out will be required to be licensed by Natural England to undertake the dispatching and culling.

<i>HR/Personnel</i>	
<i>Community/ User / Carer</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Members of the public may oppose the dispatching and culling , the potential for adverse publicity may arise from such measures</li></ul>
<i>Equality and Diversity</i>	None.