



# PIGEON SURVEY

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TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

REPORT 89/16

12 DECEMBER 2016

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The purpose of this paper is to ask Members to determine a response to the recently conducted survey of the impact of pigeons on the town's retail shopping area.

**No. DETAIL**

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**1) BACKGROUND**

- a) Concern about the impact of pigeons on the town's central area is not new but has been more frequently expressed recently.
  - b) As a first stage in responding to that concern, the Town Council's Economic Development Officer Nicky Cox has conducted a survey of the town centre traders as a basis for clarifying the impact and its locations.
  - c) A copy of the results of the survey is attached to this Report.
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**2) RESPONSE**

- a) Nicky Cox has also researched responses to the same issues in other towns and the legislative context for responses.
  - b) The Town Council is asked to consider how it intends to respond to those issues as identified by the survey.
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# VENTNOR URBAN PIGEON SURVEY

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Conducted November 2016  
Ventnor Town Council

# Survey Data Gathering

Ventnor Urban Pigeon Survey Questions		Proprietors Consulted	Ventnor Town Centre Survey Responses			Equivalent Percentages			
			No	Yes	Unavailable	No	Yes	Unavailable	% Checks
1	Do you think the pigeons are a problem in the town?	89	11	52	26	12%	58%	29%	100%
2	Does your premises suffer from local pigeon activities?	89	25	38	26	28%	43%	29%	100%
3	Does your premises have any protection from the pigeons?	89	51	12	26	57%	13%	29%	100%
4	Have you incurred any costs because of the local pigeons?	89	40	23	26	45%	26%	29%	100%
5	Has your business been affected by the local pigeons?	89	52	11	26	58%	12%	29%	100%
6	Have you seen any people feeding the local pigeons?	89	48	15	26	54%	17%	29%	100%
7	Do you know where the local pigeons roost?	89	11	52	26	12%	58%	29%	100%
8	Is the condition of Ventnor spoilt by pigeon activities?	89	11	52	26	12%	58%	29%	100%
9	Should the Town Council stop people feeding the pigeons?	89	12	51	26	13%	57%	29%	100%
9	Should the Town Council seek pigeon prevention services?	89	11	52	26	12%	58%	29%	100%

Identical results are evident in both the **No** and **Yes** columns. It would be expected that individual shops would provide a random set of responses. In statistical terms, TRUE randomness would allow for two or more of the same number being evident in the collected survey responses – so no problem there.

And this would be expected to happen if a number of shops were located in the same area of town and collectively plagued by pigeons roosting and shedding droppings on their frontages and pavement.

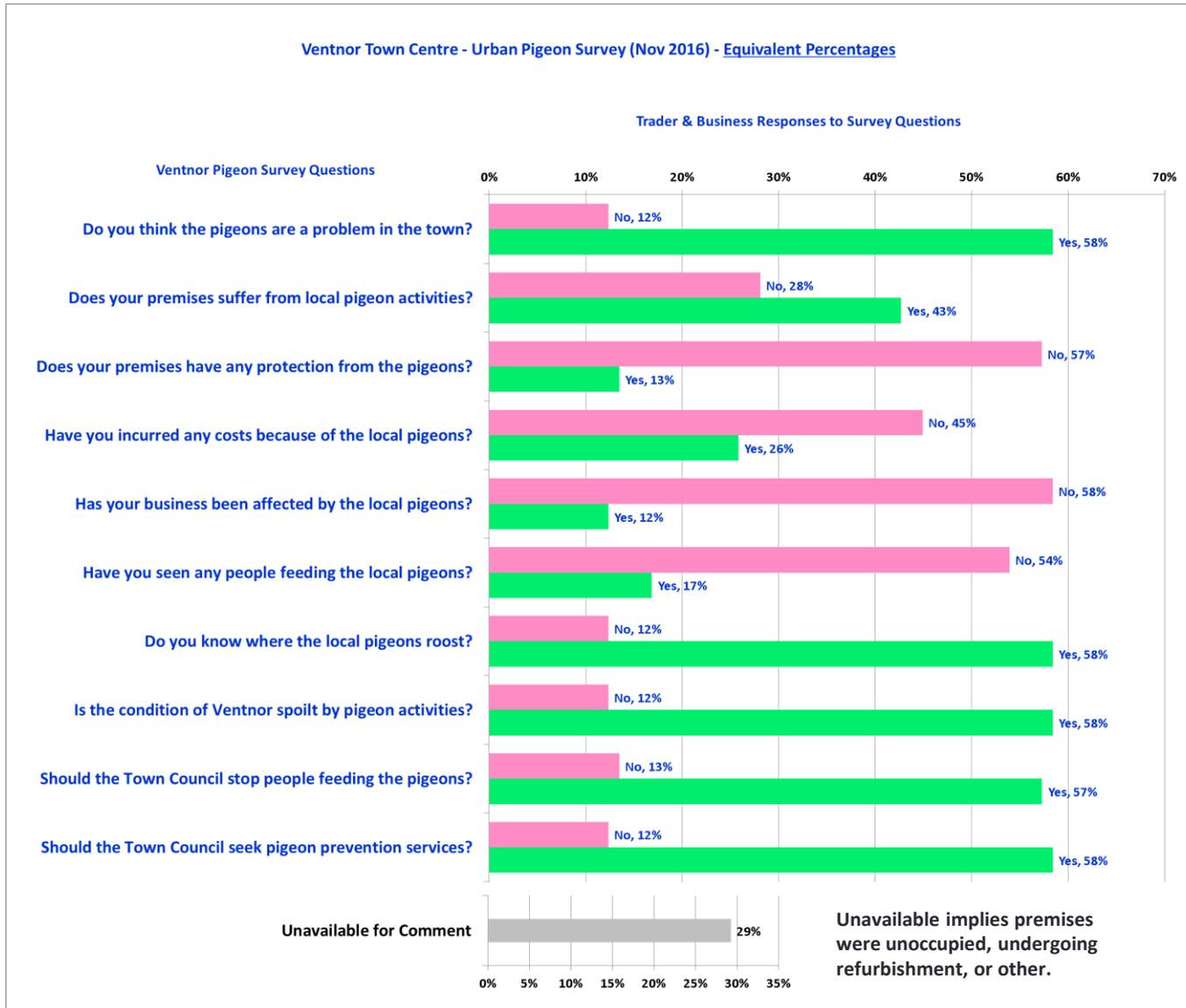
Collected survey responses for all 89 proprietors/premises consulted available in hardcopy.

# Survey Results by Opinion Data



Note that 26 proprietors or premises were unavailable. Unavailable implies that premises were either unoccupied, undergoing refurbishment, or other.

# Survey Results by Percentage



Pigeons are a problem for many town proprietors, especially their premises.

Affected businesses have to spend time and labour each morning to clear and clean their premises and adjoining pavement.

Areas of concentrated pigeon roosting in the town are evident to most proprietors.

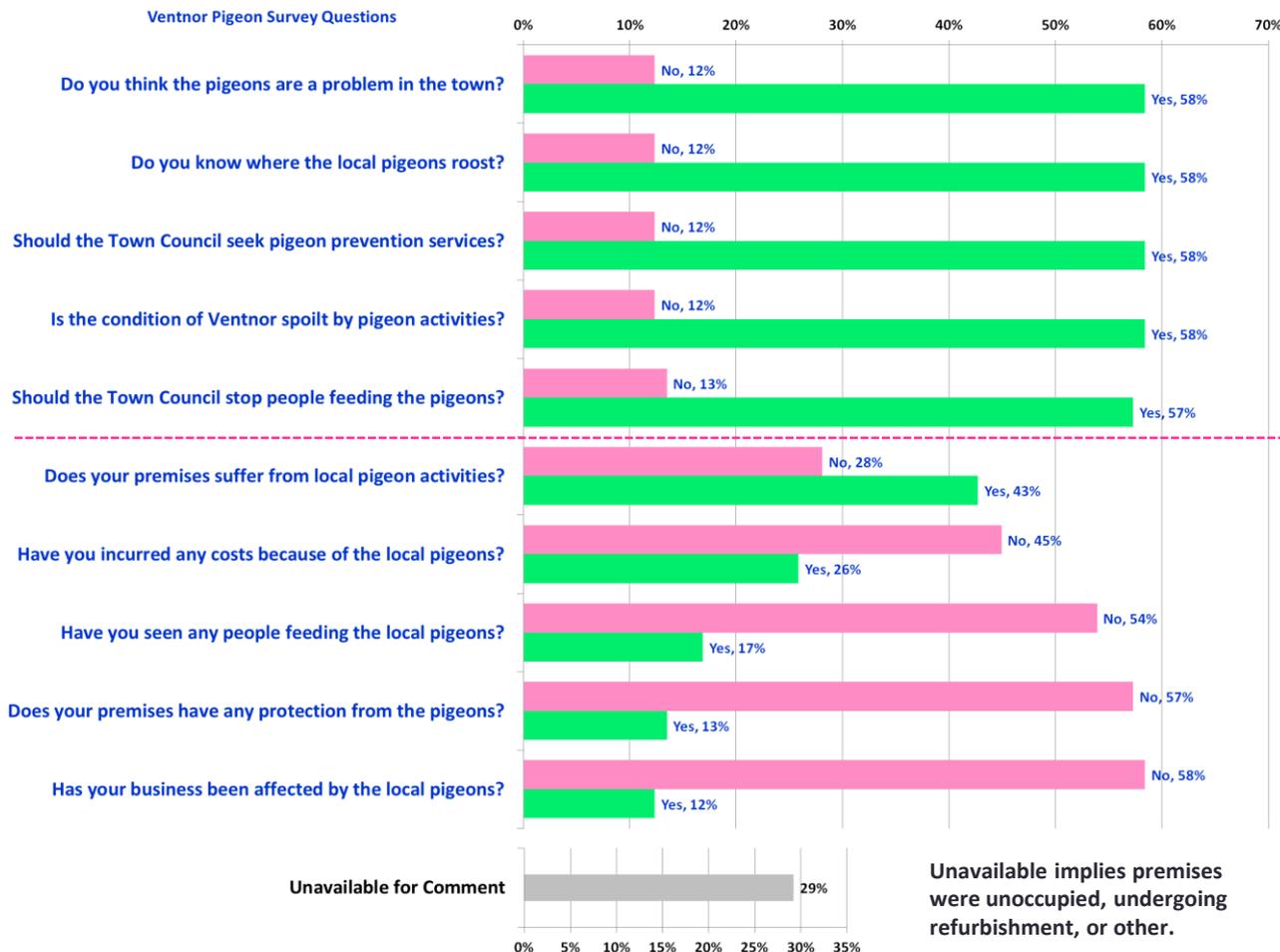
The main suggestion to reduce pigeon activity was the 'Hawk'. Other example defenders at: [www.stopbirdspetcontrol.co.uk](http://www.stopbirdspetcontrol.co.uk)

**Worrying comments by visitors:** town was scruffy and run down. The bus station is a disgrace. The owner needs informing of their responsibility.

# Survey Results by Priority

Ventnor Town Centre - Urban Pigeon Survey (Nov 2016) - Prioritised Percentages

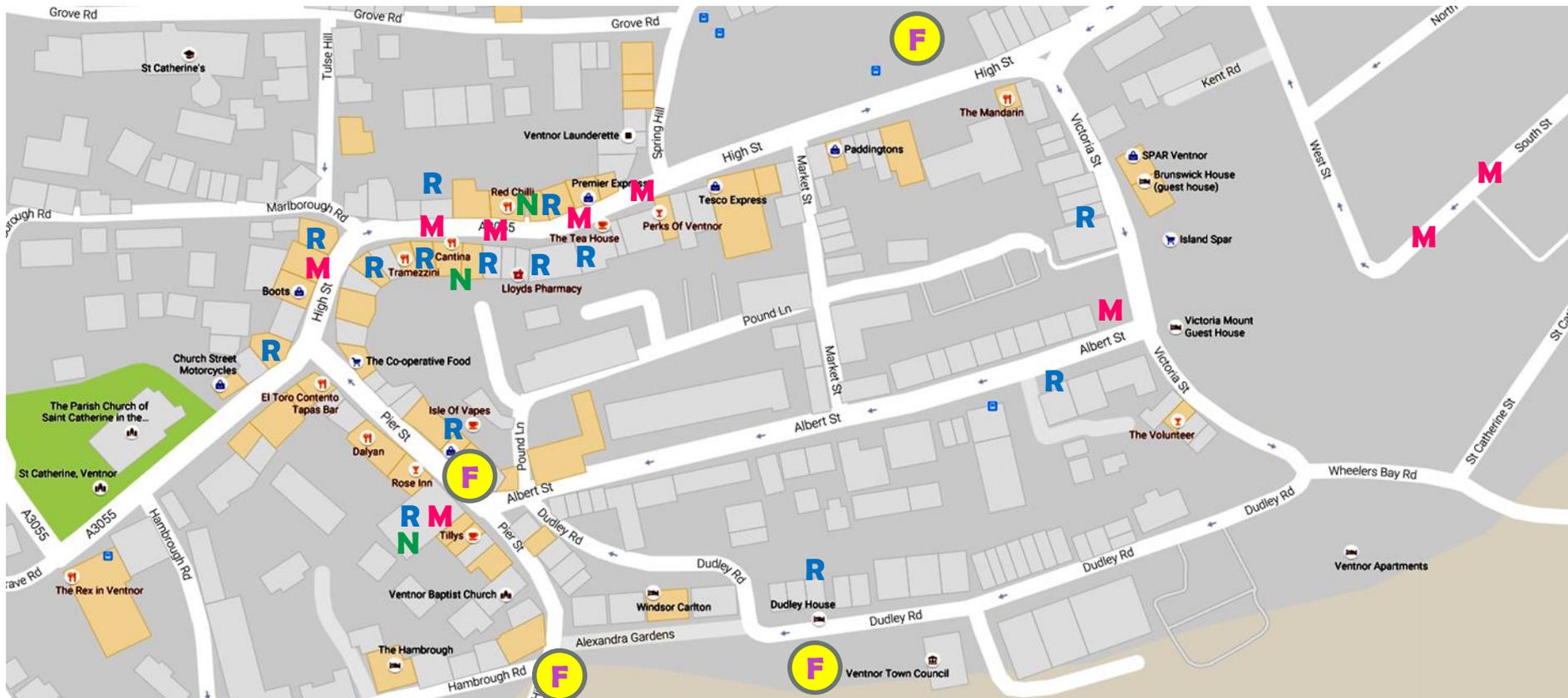
## Trader & Business Responses to Survey Questions



Very concerned about the condition of the town centre in terms of image and hygiene. Also the perception of Ventnor by visitors. The town expects the Council to take action.

Although many town businesses have not been affected from a retail viewpoint, their premises suffer. Some have tried to prevent roosting using netting or spikes at their own expense. But this has failed to deter local pigeon activities.

## Survey Feedback on Roosting Patterns



Legend: R = Roosting   N = Visible Nests   F = Being Fed   M = Pigeon Mess

Comment by one proprietor suggested that back in the 50s and 60s, Ventnor did not have a problem with pigeons until food takeaway outlets opened. However, although takeaway outlets may have helped to increase the pigeon population, local pigeons have become more reliant on community members feeding the pigeons with grain at various locations in Ventnor, including the seafront.

## Summary Feedback from Shops in the High Street

Many town proprietors spend time each morning washing down the pavement area outside their retail business premises. Although many do this practice, proprietors are aware that some shops don't tend to bother.

Between Perks and Burfields ( Perks, Island Footwear, Dentist, The Kitchen House and Time for Tea restaurant), there are considerable problems with pigeons. Staff have to clean their doorways and pavement every day usually without adequate PPE as advised by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE); shop windows have to be cleaned regularly; restaurants are unable to place items or wares on the pavement; visitors are in danger of being splattered; and residents in the flats above cannot open their windows especially in Summer.

This area of the town is particularly affected. Pigeon guano is dense on the pavement and unless cleared becomes slippery in the rain thereby potentially causing a health and safety hazard (slips, falls and injuries), for customers entering and leaving the premises. In addition, breathing dust or water droplets containing contaminated bird droppings can lead to several diseases including:

- **Psittacosis** – this is a rare infectious disease caused by a bacterium called *Chlamydia psittaci*. It is mainly associated with parrots and other similar species but does affect other birds, including pigeons. Symptoms are commonly a flu-like illness and pneumonia usually appearing 5-19 days after exposure.
- **Salmonella** – this may also be present in some bird droppings. It is a bacterial infection that can cause significant diarrhoea.

Then there is the situation where pigeons either fly or walk into premises or feathers are blown in. Again this is a food hygiene hazard that restaurants and cafés have to mitigate; avoiding food, beverage and stock contamination. Also stated during the survey was that town landlords were negligent in their duty to protect both their properties and the health and safety of their tenants from pigeons roosting and breeding on and in their properties.

## Summary Feedback from Shops Near the Old Bus Station.

Again many proprietors in Pier Street spend time each morning washing down the pavement area outside their business premises; and are often affected by pigeons wandering into their premises or feathers being blown in. This particularly affects cafés, restaurants, pubs and food outlets along Pier Street.

Reliable sources say that each morning over 100 pigeons congregate on top of the Old Bus Station office. The office roof is a known pigeon breeding area. Consequently the newly born pigeons are an ideal target for rats. The amount of pigeon guano that has not been cleared in the entrance of the bus station is considerable.

Proprietors did complain about the mess caused by pigeons to either their own cars or vehicles in general, which can cause severe paint deterioration. It was also mentioned that owner proprietors of town buildings were forced to redecorate their properties due to pigeon activities. In some cases having to replace their shop canopies.

Some raised the issue of 'pet sensitivity and infection', of and to, their pets – primarily dogs walking through infectious pigeon guano. This also raised the heated issue of irresponsible pet owners not clearing up their dog's poo when out walking – and where were the dog wardens?

Interestingly, retail properties on the left side of Pier Street after the Rose pub have been, and are currently, unaffected by pigeon activity all the way round to the old post office. As too properties across from the old post office from St Catherines Church down towards HRD the estate agents.

From Boots to the Blenheim pub, the pavement is usually splattered with pigeon mess, and being a busy bus stop area, the pigeon mess is transferred to other parts of the town – shops, cafés and restaurants – by pedestrians, buggies or mobility scooters. The town proprietors are not aware of any regular contracted cleaning of the pavements in Ventnor either by Highways, Island Roads or the Isle of Wight Council – only themselves!

## Summary Points From Survey

- The consensus of opinion amongst the majority of town retail proprietors and service businesses is simply get rid of, or reduce, the pigeon population in town; and that the town council should take some proactive actions to help both shops, pubs, cafés, restaurants and businesses against the local pigeon population and the visible damage the local pigeons do to Ventnor town centre.
- However although the majority of town proprietors are against the pigeons (viewed as vermin, flying rats), there is a minority of homing pigeon enthusiasts who do not want to see any drastic action taken against the local pigeons. Their opinions are both valid and valuable.
- But the majority of town proprietors, and importantly the tenants living in the flats above the shops, experience severe problems with pigeons nesting on roofs and window sills especially during the Summer. For example windows have to be kept shut and shop doors closed.
- Several community members deliberately feed the pigeons in certain areas of Ventnor, resulting in local pigeons being reliant on people providing a sustainable food source. The pigeons in Ventnor are homing pigeons, consequently if they breed here and are fed here, then this will always be their home for life.
- Landlords who own and manage flats in the town should be part of the equation to reduce pigeons roosting and breeding. There is a genuine health and safety hazard to individuals, families with children, and to pets also, living in the flats above the shops. For example medical conditions of asthma.
- Complaints have been raised about food takeaway cartons and residue food being deliberately thrown into shop doorways and the street, and not responsibly put into public waste bins.
- Comments raised that there is no signage to deter the public from feeding the pigeons, or suitable humane deterrents to prevent the local pigeons from roosting and breeding. Neither is there any formal help for retail proprietors and businesses in clearing and cleaning the town centre from pigeon guano.

# Just for Interest – Choice of Weapons

