

RED KITE CAMPAIGN

Recommendation:

To undertake a campaign to encourage residents to appreciate red kites but not to feed them. This would include a leaflet drop targeted at known feeding locations, posters and social media posts.

1. Executive summary

The reintroduction of Red Kites has been a great success story and they are now part of our everyday lives in Wallingford. But they are beginning to associate people with food and to occasionally become a nuisance. Kites do not need direct feeding, as evidenced by their rapid expansion. We feel it is appropriate to undertake a campaign to encourage residents to appreciate red kites but not to feed them. This would include a leaflet drop targeted at known feeding locations, posters and social media posts

2. Background

Red Kites were historically widespread in the UK. They were brought close to extinction in Tudor times due to a bounty for any animal 'causing a nuisance'. Small populations survived in central Wales, but kites were faced with extinction in Britain. In total 68 birds from Wales and Spain were released in the Chilterns Hills from 1990 to 1994. There are now over 1200 breeding pairs and some 10,000 individuals – it's the biggest species recovery success story in UK conservation history.

Red Kites mainly eat dead animals, such as roadkill, plus worms and insect. Their phenomenal expansion following reintroduction demonstrates that there is sufficient food available for them in the environment to continue to flourish and spread.

3. Issue

Some people, including Wallingford residents feed kites in their gardens with chicken wings and other scraps. This undoubtedly a spectacular scene, but unfortunately it has meant that kites are beginning to associate food with people. Occasionally kites have swooped on people in the Kine Croft seeking food. If this increases there is a danger that red kites could become a nuisance again, like gulls at the seaside.

We need to encourage residents to appreciate red kites but not to feed them.

4. Options

Option 1 (preferred) Undertake a red kite campaign. Distribute leaflets, targeted at known feeding locations, put up posters and post on social media. A first draft leaflet is attached.

The wording has been approved by Chilterns National Landscape. However, we need to obtain a good photo and permission to use it.

Option 2. Do nothing. People will continue to feed kites. They will increasingly associate people with food and swoop on us, probably changing public opinion towards kites being a nuisance again.

5. Proposal

Councillors support Option 1.

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Role title: Councillor

Date of final version: 14 October 2024

Reviewed and approved by Town Clerk

Support Red Kites to thrive naturally

Red kites are magnificent birds; adult kites have a wingspan of almost 2 metres. They are now an important part of our everyday lives. But like all wildlife, we need to manage our interactions with them.



Red Kites were brought close to extinction in Tudor times due to a bounty for any animal 'causing a nuisance'.

They were reintroduced in the 1990s. There are now over 10,000 birds. It's the biggest species recovery success story in UK conservation history.

Red kites mainly eat dead animals, such as roadkill, plus worms and insects. Their rapid expansion after reintroduction shows they have plenty of food available in the environment.

Admire red kites, but please don't feed them, they will associate humans with food and become a nuisance again, like gulls at the seaside.