# Birmingham's refuse collection strikes lead to public health concerns over rat sightings



A series of ongoing strikes in Birmingham’s refuse collection sector have resulted in significant public concern regarding health and safety, particularly with reports of unusually large rats being sighted across the city. The indefinite strike, initiated last week by nearly 400 council waste operatives, stems from disputes over pay and working conditions, particularly concerning the downgrading of health and safety roles — a move the Unite union claims could cost affected workers up to £8,000 annually.

On 20 October, Wendy Morton, the Member of Parliament for Aldridge-Brownhills, addressed the situation during a session in the House of Commons. She expressed alarm over reports of rats "the size of cats" emerging as a direct consequence of the accumulating rubbish due to the strikes. Morton referred to these rodents as "Squeaky Blinders," underscoring her concerns about the public health implications of the strike-related refuse pile-up.

The issue has escalated dramatically, with residents striving to rid themselves of waste amid the chaotic collection of rubbish. Disturbing footage surfaced showing groups of locals swarming a bin collection lorry as it made its rounds in an effort to dispose of their long-accumulated refuse, highlighting the desperate situation faced by Birmingham residents. Police intervention was necessitated on multiple occasions to manage the situation, resulting in two arrests — one for obstruction and another related to drug possession.

West Midlands Police reported that officers were deployed to oversee the borough in light of growing tensions. They confirmed the potential health risks posed by discarded waste scattered throughout the streets. A spokesperson from the police stated, “We have a duty to keep people safe and ensure the road is clear and safe to use,” indicating the collaborative effort required by various public agencies to address the significant refuse issue.

Local residents have dubbed the crisis "binmageddon," reflecting their frustrations with the striking workers and the visible deterioration of sanitary conditions in the city. Experts from pest control organisations, such as Grahame Turner from the National Pest Technicians Association, highlighted that the heaps of rotting food provide a "banquet" for vermin, further exacerbating the situation. “Pests like rats, mice and even squirrels are on the lookout for easy meals,” Turner noted, elaborating on how the current conditions provide ideal breeding grounds for these animals.

As the strike continues without resolution, the accumulation of waste continues to pose a serious threat to public health, raising concern among residents who are left to navigate the streets amidst growing piles of rubbish and the risks associated with the accompanying wildlife.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/birmingham-bin-strike-dates-map-b2712734.html> - This article supports the claim of ongoing strikes in Birmingham's refuse collection sector due to disputes over pay and working conditions, leading to significant public concern about health and safety.
* <https://www.itv.com/news/central/2025-03-11/council-refuse-workers-begin-indefinite-strike-amid-row-over-jobs-and-pay> - This news piece corroborates the indefinite strike by nearly 400 council waste operatives in Birmingham, highlighting the dispute over jobs and pay.
* <https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20009/waste_and_recycling/3020/waste_and_recycling_industrial_action_-_faq_for_residents> - This webpage from Birmingham City Council provides information on the industrial action affecting waste and recycling services, including guidance for residents during the strike.
* <https://www.itv.com/news/central/2025-03-11/council-refuse-workers-begin-indefinite-strike-amid-row-over-jobs-and-pay> - This article mentions the Unite union's stance on the council's use of temporary labor and the potential for disruptions to extend into the summer.
* <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/birmingham-bin-strike-dates-map-b2712734.html> - This article discusses the public's frustration with the situation, including the accumulation of waste and reports of large rats, which has been dubbed 'binmageddon'.
* <https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20009/waste_and_recycling/3020/waste_and_recycling_industrial_action_-_faq_for_residents> - This webpage outlines the council's advice to residents during the strike, including how to manage waste and recycling.