# British Army deployed to tackle Birmingham's severe rodent crisis



The British Army has been deployed to assist Birmingham in addressing a severe rodent infestation partially caused by ongoing refuse collection strikes. Pest control experts have characterised the situation in the city as ‘apocalyptic’, with a significant increase in reported rat sightings and public health concerns arising from the accumulation of waste.

The request for military support comes amid an escalating crisis in Birmingham, Britain’s second-largest city, where nearly 400 bin workers have been intermittently on strike since January, primarily due to disputes over pay and working conditions. A spokesperson from the government confirmed that a small number of office-based military personnel with logistical expertise would provide assistance to Birmingham City Council, although they will not be involved in the clearing of rubbish. The spokesperson added, "The government has already provided a number of staff to support the council with logistics and make sure the response on the ground is swift to address the associated public health risks."

The situation has led to a reported increase in pest control work, with companies indicating that they have seen business surges of 50% or more. William Timms, a pest control expert from WJ Pest Solutions, noted he has encountered rats of significant size, one measuring 22 inches long, and described the conditions as akin to "a third world country." He further pointed out that the environment created by the refuse build-up has become a perfect breeding ground for rodents, stating, "If you put a male and female rat in that environment within a year you’re going to have just under a million rats."

Reports from residents highlight the severe impact of the strike, with many expressing frustration with both the striking workers and the city council. Health Secretary Wes Streeting conveyed concerns regarding public health risks due to the growing rat population, stating during an interview with Times Radio, "As the bin bags are piling up, we see rats and other vermin crawling around."

The local authority, plagued by financial difficulties, has declared a ‘major incident’ as a direct result of the sanitation crisis. The council has not only faced the immediate challenge of dealing with the refuse but has also proposed measures such as increasing the ‘rat tax’—now under scrutiny as it could burden the city's financially constrained residents. This proposal follows the declaration of bankruptcy by the council in 2023.

Locals in various neighbourhoods, such as Sparkhill and Balsall Heath, have shared unsettling experiences of encountering rats rummaging through refuse. Student Sandy Du described the rats as being "the size of baby cats," expressing concern about their health implications. Other residents echoed her sentiments, highlighting the pervasive presence of rats in their daily lives, with one mentioning a rat sighting in their vehicle.

An online petition has gained traction, with over 4,000 signatures, urging the Labour-led council to address the issue and resolve the ongoing labour dispute. Despite assurances from Birmingham City Council that they are working to manage waste collection, frustrations continue to mount among residents who feel let down by the handling of the situation.

Angela Rayner, the Deputy Prime Minister, has indicated that the government is involved in efforts to address the crisis, stating, "The people of Birmingham are our first priority…my department is working with Birmingham City Council to support its response to accelerate clearing the backlog." The Labour-run council has asserted its commitment to providing essential services and has urged the Unite union to return to negotiations to find a resolution to the ongoing disputes.

As the strike drags on, with no immediate end in sight, the combination of accumulated rubbish and rampant rodent populations poses significant public health risks, drawing attention not only from local residents but from health authorities and governmental bodies as they seek to restore order in Birmingham.

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