

REPORT TO:	ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 12
DATE OF MEETING:	12TH AUGUST 2021	CATEGORY: (See Notes) DELEGATED or RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	ALLISON THOMAS, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR – SERVICE DELIVERY	OPEN
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SUBJECT: WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ACTION PLAN FOR NATURE ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: EDS01

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Committee notes the scope and content of the Action Plan for Nature prepared for the Council by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.
- 1.2 That the Committee approves the Action Plan for Nature Work Programme.

2.0 Purpose of the Report

- 2.1 To update the Committee on the development of the Action Plan for Nature for South Derbyshire and the proposed work programme to deliver enhancements to biodiversity within the District.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The South Derbyshire District Council Corporate Plan sets out key aims for the period 2020-2024. These are:
 - Keeping a clean, green District for future generations by improving the environment of the District; tackling climate change and enhancing the attractiveness of South Derbyshire.
 - Working with communities and meeting the future needs of the District by engaging with our communities; supporting and safeguarding the most vulnerable and delivering excellent services; and
 - Growing our District and our skills base by developing skills and careers; supporting economic growth and infrastructure and transforming the Council
- 3.2 The Council committed to preparing a Biodiversity Action Plan within the Corporate Plan (ref E1.3). This Plan, known as the Action Plan for Nature has now been finalised by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust with support from FPCR (an Environmental

Consultancy Company). Derbyshire Wildlife Trust have worked collaboratively with the Council's Biodiversity Working Group over the past year. A final copy of the Action Plan for Nature (APN) is appended to this report together with the work programme which has been compiled by the Biodiversity Working Group following receipt of the APN. In brief the Plan sets out to ensure that the Council can take an integrated approach to delivering biodiversity enhancements across the District by:

- providing an assessment of baseline biodiversity within the District;
- highlighting existing habitat networks and the District's key locations;
- identifying strategic gaps in biodiversity provision;
- proposing opportunities for habitat enhancement and creation, both strategically and spatially through modelling and stakeholder consultations;
- identifying spatial priorities for habitat and species recovery;
- outlining funding, community involvement, partnership and policy opportunities and highlighting any potential challenges.

3.3 The work programme then seeks to map out short to medium-term actions to improve biodiversity through a combination of changes and enhancements to the Council's own functions and management and joint working with other public bodies, charities and stakeholders that have a role in improving and managing the Natural Environment. The APN provides much of the evidence and guidance that underpins the work programme, although some of the activities are already ongoing reflecting the fact that the Council has already been actively working on its own initiative and with partners to improve the environment in accordance with the aims of the Corporate Plan. However, the APN and associated work programme sets out the full range of projects and activities the Council is seeking to deliver and the timeframe over which these will be brought forward.

3.4 The APN and associated work programme will help focus Council resources on those projects and locations which are likely to have the greatest benefits and will ensure that the Council can work productively both across Council Services and with external bodies to significantly improve biodiversity in the District and beyond. It should be noted however, that the APN and work program will, by design, have a limited shelf life. The legislative and policy backdrop in respect of biodiversity and environmental protection is currently subject to very significant change. The Environment Bill is currently making its way through parliament and is likely to be enacted later this year. In addition, significant changes to the planning system are currently proposed.

3.5 This report does not describe in detail the scope and content of changes proposed but the Government is seeking to restore natural habitats and increase biodiversity and the Environment Act will include a new legally binding target on species abundance to halt the very recent significant declines in species. However, it will take a number of years for all of the emerging legislation and policy to fall into place. In this period the Council will need to work, most likely at a sub-regional or city region level¹ with partners to create a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (a further proposed requirement of the Environment Bill) and eventually this may update the Council's approach to enhancing biodiversity and joint-working. In the interim, however, the APN and work programme will provide a clear list of priorities and actions that can help the Council deliver against the aims of the Corporate Plan and prepare for the greater role the Council will need to play in conserving and enhancing biodiversity.

¹ [Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilots: lessons learned - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/local-nature-recovery)

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 It is expected that the actions outlined in the work programme can be delivered within existing staff resources, subject to the timely appointment the committed posts within the review of Cultural and Community Services. However, duties imposed through the enactment of the Environment Bill and other legislation, or through the addition of other unidentified biodiversity work could place additional resource burdens on the Council. These could have financial implications which will need to be kept under review.

5.0 Corporate Implications

Employment Implications

- 5.1 Changes to the management of sites can in some circumstances be more intensive than established management regimes, there will be a likely need for additional training in some services
- 5.2 The progression of many actions outlined in the work programme will fall to the Council's new biodiversity officer. Any failure to recruit to this post in a timely way could affect the delivery of some of the actions outlined.

Legal Implications

- 5.3 All public authorities in England have a duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their policy or decision making.

Corporate Plan Implications

- 5.4 As previously noted the Corporate Plan commits to keeping a clean, green District for future generations and includes aims to improve the environment of the District; tackle climate change and enhance the attractiveness of South Derbyshire. Specifically, the Service Plan for the Service Delivery Directorate commits to the Delivery of Biodiversity Action Plan through the Biodiversity Working Group.

Risk Impact

- 5.5 There is increased awareness from the public about the decline in biodiversity. Failure to adequately protect and enhance biodiversity within and around South Derbyshire will lead to further declines in the condition of the natural environment and could compromise the ability of the Council to deliver the Government's commitment to reversing the loss of biodiversity, as well as Corporate Plan aims to improve the environment of the District.

6.0 Community Impact

Consultation

- 6.1 Not applicable

Equality and Diversity Impact

- 6.2 Not applicable

Social Value Impact

- 6.3 Improving biodiversity and access to biodiversity is known support the health and wellbeing of local communities.

Environmental Sustainability

- 6.4 The APN and work programme will help to improve the environmental sustainability of the Council's management of its own land as well as influence the delivery of environmental enhancements of that or other landowners and partners.