

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND ENVIRONMENT CAPITAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 5
16 JULY 2015	Public Report

Report of the Corporate Director of Growth and Regeneration

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PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL'S BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY: PROGRESS REPORT 2014/15

1. PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- a) Provide information with respect to progress against the actions and targets contained in the Council's Biodiversity Strategy (2010).
- b) Allow feedback to be given by the Committee with respect to progress against the existing strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Committee is asked to note progress made against the Council's 2010 Biodiversity Strategy and to make any recommendations with regards to the future implementation of the Strategy.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

3.1 The 2010 Strategy is linked to the Community Strategy and National Indicators via the Cleaner/Greener agenda and sections of these documents. Reporting against the Council Biodiversity Strategy will be used, along with other reporting, to give a more detailed picture of the breadth of the actions taking place for biodiversity within our local authority area.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 This report is submitted to the Committee by the Council's Wildlife Officer as a progress report for 2014/15 against the existing Biodiversity Strategy. The Strategy was agreed in 2010 with a requirement for annual reporting on progress against the specific actions and targets of the Strategy, a full copy of which is available on the Council's website using the following link: https://www.peterborough.gov.uk/council/planning-and-development/conservation-trees-and-hedges/natural-networks-partnership/#naturalenv_biodiversitystrategy

4.2 Following previous feedback from the Committee, this year's Progress Report has been modified to show how the Council is demonstrating progress against Defra recommendations as to how public authorities can show regard for biodiversity. This approach sets out the Council's achievements under four key headings – 1) Promoting Biodiversity in Planning, 2) Showing Regard for Biodiversity on Public Authority Managed Land & Buildings (Parks & Open Spaces, Nature Reserves, Woodlands, Roads & Verges, Cemeteries & Crematoria, School Grounds), 3) Protected Sites and 4) Green Infrastructure. This simplified approach has nevertheless been cross referenced with the approved Biodiversity Strategy to ensure all key actions are addressed in this Update Report.

4.3 Whilst much has again been achieved by all departments across the Council during the reporting period, particular highlights include:

- Re-opening of the Boardwalks Local Nature Reserve following replacement of flood-damaged bridges and walkways.

- Signing of 10-year Licence Agreement with conservation charity Froglife to take an active lead role in managing and promoting the use of the Boardwalks LNR which has included securing of Heritage Lottery Funding to deliver their “Dragonfinder” project.
- Peterborough achieved a figure of 79.5% (89 out of 112) Local Wildlife Sites in positive management which places the city in the top 10 performing local authorities in England as published by Defra on the National Indicator Target for Biodiversity (SDL 160).
- Installation of over 500m of pre-vegetated ‘coir’ rolls along a section of the River Nene west of Town Bridge. By providing a “soft-edge” to the concrete wall it will provide a visually attractive feature as well as supporting fish populations and other wildlife.
- Surfacing of new informal paths in Grimeshaw and Bretton Woods along with installation of new interpretation panels and strong community involvement with management of the woods, including application for a Green Flag Award (outcome currently pending).

5. KEY ISSUES

- 5.1 The key issues which the Committee need to consider are laid out in the appendices. All progress on required actions since the 2013/14 progress report have been achieved from within the Council’s existing budgets.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The 2010 Biodiversity report included consideration of cost and resource implications. It was made clear that the actions set out in the 2010 report would have to be achieved within existing resources and that it was envisaged that biodiversity gain could be made through adjusting rather than completely changing current practices. The adoption of the vision statement by Council strongly reinforced this.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Consultation and discussion has been undertaken with the Corporate Director of Growth and Regeneration and representatives from various departments including Bereavement Services, Children’s Services, Climate Change Team, Natural & Historic Environment Team and Amey.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 Feedback from the Committee will be used to inform the future focus of the Council’s Biodiversity Officer Working Group.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (Section 40).
- The Biodiversity Duty for Public Authorities, Defra Guidance, Oct 2014.
- Peterborough City Council Approach to Biodiversity submitted to the Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee in 2010.
- Peterborough Sustainable Community Strategy (including Rural Vision Strategy and Environment Capital manifesto).
- Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England’s wildlife and ecosystem services, Defra 2011

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 Appendix A: Report of progress for the Council’s Biodiversity Strategy against Defra recommendations as to how public authorities can show regard for biodiversity.

Appendix A: Report of progress for the Council's Biodiversity Strategy against Defra recommendations as to how public authorities can show regard for biodiversity

PCC Biodiversity Strategy Ref.	Update on Progress/Action underway	Barrier to Progress	Future Action
Promoting biodiversity in planning and development			
7	<p>The Natural & Historic Environment Team continue to provide specific advice to both Development Management officers with regard to specific development proposals and to Planning Policy colleagues in relation to the Local Plan including policies and site allocation documents.</p> <p>An updated Peterborough Green Infrastructure (GI) Delivery Plan has been drafted in partnership with Nene Valley NIA staff. It is anticipated this will form the basis of a more comprehensive review of GI and Biodiversity policy anticipated to take place during 2015.</p> <p>The Highway and Drainage Control Team are influencing developers throughout the city to implement Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) which encourages biodiversity through the use of above ground drainage components, such as swales, attenuation basins and rain gardens.</p>	<p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>Continue current efforts.</p> <p>Review of current GI and Biodiversity policies planned during 2015/16.</p> <p>To introduce SuDS into the biodiversity policies to increase continuity and consistency.</p>
18	<p>The Natural & Historic Environment Team and Planning Policy have continued to support the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC) which has provided data for a number of Peterborough City Council projects and reports including those associated with the Local Development Framework, Annual Monitoring Report and Single Data List (SDL) 160.</p> <p>In addition, the Council receives an annually updated species data disc from the Records Centre to assist in identifying protected sites and species associated with each application. This 'front-loading' of data assists with identifying ecological issues at the outset of development and ultimately may enable developments to progress more smoothly than would otherwise be the case.</p>	<p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>Support for the CPERC is on-going. Continued budget allocations, subject to 2016/17 budget.</p> <p>Peterborough City Council to continue to provide environmental records to the Centre to ensure data records are as up to date and complete as possible.</p>

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	<p>Continued support for the long standing Peterborough Barn Owl recovery programme. This is now recognised as one of the most successful of these programmes in the UK. Monitoring in the last year has also included additional boxes erected in the previous reporting period which replace those lost or which had fallen into disrepair over the last 15 years. The data from this ongoing monitoring scheme has proved crucial in the provision of advice to the Planning Department with respect to a number of strategic planning applications for example for wind farm proposals and public inquiries and how they would relate to this key environmental feature of the surrounding area.</p> <p>County Wildlife Site monitoring has also had a key role to play in the ability of the authority to comply with these requirements.</p>	N/A	<p>A three year Service Level Agreement has been secured for the barn owl project up to 2014/15 and an extension to this agreement is currently being progressed.</p> <p>Continued budget allocations for Wildlife Trust SLA, subject to 2016/17 budget.</p>
Showing regard for biodiversity on public authority managed land and buildings: Parks & Public Open Spaces			
1,9	<p>The Natural and Historic Environment (N&HE) Team has continued general liaison and advice to officers and departments from across the Council, including for example Highways officers and Amey staff, to promote biodiversity being incorporated into all landscape management contracts.</p> <p>Green-spaces at seven locations including Thorpe Meadows and Ravensthorpe are now being managed by Amey in a way that promotes biodiversity, with a single cut taking place in September.</p>	<p>N/A</p> <p>Feedback from local residents has been both positive and negative which will help inform future locations for these areas.</p>	<p>Continue this role.</p> <p>The success of this approach is being regularly reviewed via close liaison between Amey, the Client Team and the Wildlife Officer, with consideration being given to further expanding this approach more widely across the city.</p>
8	<p>In addition to the above, further areas are being identified for trialling new approaches to landscape management. These include un-mown wildflower</p>	<p>Generally these trials have been</p>	<p>The trial areas approach continues and positive/ negative aspects of</p>

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11	<p>verges in Barnack village centre, the Crematorium Wildflower area, Dogsthorpe and Olive Road allotment Initiatives & wildflower planting on earth bunds in Orton Malborne.</p> <p>The loss of trees, hedges and shrubs continues to be resisted unless there are sound horticultural or other reasons to indicate otherwise e.g. disease, structural damage or the shrubs are due for replacement. This approach is specified in the Trees and Woodland Strategy and is being applied by Amey.</p> <p>Where any trees or shrubs do require removal, they are to be replaced with native species.</p> <p>In addition the Natural and Historic Environment Team continue to provide this advice in relation to privately owned hedges and shrubs.</p>	<p>successful, however some concerns have been raised regarding the “un-tidy” appearance of unmown verges and their benefits for wildlife.</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>management investigated and addressed wherever possible. Dependent upon this, expansion of management for biodiversity within a site or to another similar site can then be given informed and realistic consideration.</p> <p>Continue this situation.</p> <p>Continue this situation.</p> <p>Continue this situation.</p>
21	<p>The Council and Amey continue to review the use of pesticides (including fungicides and herbicides) in the Council’s land management. COSHH regulations require that this is undertaken and therefore this is ongoing for all users of pesticides.</p>		
<p>Showing regard for biodiversity on public authority managed land and buildings:</p> <p>Nature Reserves</p>			
4,5	<p>Eye Green Gravel Pit LNR & CWS: The existing management by the Wildlife Trust on behalf of the Council continues to ensure this site remains in positive management. However it should be noted that the current agreement between Council & the Wildlife Trust is to be reviewed in 2016 and the Trust has a number of concerns regarding their continued</p>	<p>Concerns raised by the Wildlife Trust in relation to financial issues & development</p>	<p>Action is required to ensure the site continues to be positively managed by the Trust. Discussions are actively taking place between the Council & the Trust.</p>

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	<p>involvement at this site.</p> <p>Holywell Fish Ponds CWS: Existing management has been maintained during reporting period with Peterborough Conservation Volunteers having carried out a successful habitat management task. The Cambs Bat Group also continues to monitor the site's bat population.</p>	<p>pressure on the site means their future involvement is currently in question.</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Showing regard for biodiversity on public authority managed land and buildings:

Woodlands

<p>4, 5, 20</p>	<p>Council managed ancient woodland (Pocock's Wood, Grimeshaw Wood, Highlees Spinney, Spencer's Hurn & Water Spinney): The Council and Amey continue to support PECT who are leading on delivery of the woodland management plan as well as a Heritage Lottery Fund funded project to promote traditional woodland skills and public engagement within these woodlands.</p> <p>Recently a newly surfaced path has been installed in Grimeshaw Woods along with new interpretation panels. A new route through Pococks Woods has also been cleared and surfaced, and is due to be opened once new interpretation panels are installed later in 2015. Options for fencing to exclude deer from Pococks Wood are also currently being explored.</p> <p>Creation of a Friends Group is also being explored to assist in securing the long-term management of the woods.</p> <p>Bretton Woods has also been entered for a 2015 Green Flag Award, which helps to showcase the improvements to the woodland management, access</p>	<p>Current funding of the PECT Heritage Skills Project ends in Jan 2016 therefore securing future management and volunteer involvement is a high priority.</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>Continue to liaise with PECT to assist in establishing Friends Group and future funding to enable continued management and monitoring of woodlands.</p> <p>Currently awaiting outcome of Awards process which will help</p>
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	<p>and interpretation that have taken place as well as the community engagement work.</p> <p>Operational works within the shelterbelts has been followed by chipping the cut back into the belt and the stacking of the logs for their gradual decay and production of invertebrate habitat.</p>		guide any future improvements to the woods in this respect.
Showing regard for biodiversity on public authority managed land and buildings: Roads & Verges			
2	All County Wildlife Site (CWS) Protected Verges and extensions thereof within the Unitary Authority area continue to be managed according to best practice guidelines by Amey to assist in providing wildlife corridors involving a cut in Sept and removal of cuttings.	N/A	Continue this situation
Showing regard for biodiversity on public authority managed land and buildings: Cemeteries & Crematoria			
4,5,14	<p>Broadway Cemetery CWS: Management of grass cutting has been reviewed to ensure areas of species-rich grassland are allowed to flower and set seed before being cut in Sept whilst balancing this against need to open up cemetery to improve surveillance due to anti-social behaviour issues.</p> <p>Eastfield Cemetery: Site has been formally de-designated as a Wildlife Site as expected following a review by the Wildlife Trust.</p>	N/A	Continued to liaison between Bereavement Services and Wildlife Officer to ensure appropriate management of species-rich grassland
10	The Bereavement Services Team produced a management plan for the Crematorium Gardens of Remembrance which led, at the first attempt, to the award of the Green Flag in 2009. Development of the management plan has resulted in the award of a further Green Flag awards each year since.	N/A	Maintain Green Flag status.

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21	The use of pesticides in the Council's cemeteries has been significantly reduced and is now only used for weed control on paths and roads. The use of pesticides in the Crematorium gardens has also been significantly reduced by a policy of manual hoeing and weeding of the beds, etc. Pesticides are now only used for treating the roses or for weed control on paths and roads.	N/A	Continue this situation.
19	Consideration to be given to the installation of a barn owl box at a suitable location within the Crematorium/ Pockocks Wood area	Will require liaison with Colin Shawyer (raptor specialist) re location, monitoring etc.	Wildlife Officer to liaise with Colin Shawyer re location and availability of nest boxes.

**Showing regard for biodiversity on public authority managed land and buildings:
School Grounds**

16 15,19	73 schools have either registered, participated, or are currently working towards an eco-school award (see below). Others are actively involved in similar schemes or have developed their own action plans; PECT have their own education officer who assists schools with the scheme. Many of these schools also have school gardens and wildlife spaces.	N/A	Continue these efforts.
	Children's Services Assets & School Place Planning Team operate a "landlord's consent" scheme whereby all schools are required to register capital works to their premises. This enables monitoring and advice to schools in respect of grounds works, planting schemes, ponds, etc. Occasionally works which are not in accordance with Council policy or procedure, such as inappropriate felling or pruning of trees, can be intercepted via this scheme.	N/A	Continue these efforts.
	Children's Services has responsibility for all trees on Council controlled school sites with maintenance of trees being carried out on a 3 year rolling programme, ensuring all sites are visited on a regular basis and general advice given, including the addition of features which will enhance the	N/A	Continue these efforts.

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	grounds as wildlife habitats.		
Protected sites			
3, 20	<p>Orton Pit is the only Council owned SSSI and consists of part of the treebelt which runs along the southern edge of the Fletton Parkway. Funding was secured in 2014 from both the Trees & Woodland Strategy budget and via a mitigation package as part of the Fletton Parkway widening scheme to deliver a range of habitat enhancement works during winter 14/15.</p>	N/A	Continue to liaise with Highways, Amey and Froglife to ensure this area of SSSI continues to be managed appropriately going forward.
4,5	<p>All Council County Wildlife Sites (CWS) continue to be in positive management to conserve and where possible enhance the sites for the criteria for which they are designated CWS.</p> <p>The re-surveying of all CWS has continued during the reporting period including provision of advice to landowners and activities carried out on behalf of the Natural and Historic Environment Team by the Wildlife Trust via a Service Level Agreement.</p>	N/A	Continued budget allocation for SLA with Wildlife Trust, subject to 2016/17 budget.
19	<p>Peterborough Road Pond CWS has benefited from careful tree management works by Amey; pollarding of the large Willow trees has allowed light to reach the pond which will benefit amphibians and other species in this area. Further restoration of the pond by dredging is planned to take place later during 2015 subject to securing funding.</p>	Funding (e.g. via POIS/ s.106) required to deliver project.	Wildlife Officer to explore funding options with a view to carrying out works in autumn 2015 once funding secured.
13	<p>Continued support for monitoring and habitat management for the rare Four-spotted Moth in Peterborough. The monitoring has also allowed the extension of the neighbouring County Wildlife Site and its continued assessment as being in positive management which has directly contributed to the Single Data List 160 target included in the Local Area Agreement.</p> <p>Peterborough Conservation Volunteers have played a vital role in</p>	N/A	Continued budget allocations subject to 2016/17 budget.

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16	undertaking work on Peterborough sites to maintain and bring them into positive management. They continue to undertake conservation tasks on Council Nature Reserves and other CWS including the Boardwalks LNR, Barnack Grassland and Sutton Disused Railway CWS.	N/A	Continued budget allocations subject to 2016/17 budget.
Green infrastructure			
4, 5, 20	<p>The Boardwalks Local Nature Reserve: The sections of damaged walkway and bridges have now been replaced by the Council enabling the site to be re-opened to the public. However the remaining sections of walkway are also due for replacement and this is planned to take place during 2015 following the release of s.106 funds which have been secured via the planning process.</p> <p>A Licence Agreement has recently been signed between the Council and Froglife enabling Froglife to take an active role in leading on the management and promotion of this site over a 10 year period. Much has already been achieved during early 2015 thanks to Froglife's HLF funded Dragonfinder project.</p>	<p>S.106 funds not currently available, however they are expected to be released within the next few months.</p> <p>A Management liaison group is being established to ensure all interested parties are aware of and actively involved with the site.</p>	<p>Wildlife Officer to liaise with Amey to obtain quotes for replacement of all remaining sections of older walkway, to be implemented immediately following release of s.106 funds.</p> <p>Froglife to continue to lead on site management and establishment of liaison group.</p>
20	<p>Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area (NIA): The Natural Environment Team has worked closely with the RNRP to deliver this scheme within the Peterborough area including the successful installation of over 500m of pre-vegetated coir rolls along a section of the River Nene west of Town Bridge. By providing a "soft-edge" to the concrete wall it will provide a visually attractive feature as well as supporting fish populations and invertebrates such as dragonflies, and potentially water voles too.</p>	N/A	Monitor success of coir roll project and consider installing at other riverside locations where appropriate.
13, 20	<p>Peterborough's Buzzing is an exciting new Heritage Lottery Fund funded project led by Buglife in partnership with the Council. Three urban green spaces have been identified as suitable locations where existing amenity</p>	Licence agreements currently being prepared to enable	Wildlife Officer to assist with securing licence agreements then to work closely with Buglife to

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	<p>grass will be transformed into wild-flower meadows supporting a range of plants and insects. Funding will cover the initial establishment costs with longer term maintenance to be carried out by Amey at what will be a lower cost than current management.</p> <p>The Werrington Brook Improvement Programme is underway following completion of the feasibility project in 2014. This significant water improvement programme is expected to improve the biodiversity and habitats of several watercourses including Werrington Brook (including Cuckoos Hollow), Marholm Brook and upper Brook Drain. It will help to meet Water Framework Directive (WFD) requirements for Peterborough's urban watercourses. The programme includes physical river modifications, reduction of pollution at source and behaviour change It is being jointly led by the Council and Environment Agency.</p>	<p>project to take place on no Council land.</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>ensure project is successfully delivered.</p> <p>Council to continue to work in partnership with EA to deliver project.</p>
12, 15	<p>The Council continues to provide support for small-scale community wildlife schemes, including encouraging community management of existing landscaping where requested and appropriate such as Broadway Cemetery and Cuckoos Hollow groups. The Probation Services also undertake works on semi-natural areas and Nature Reserves.</p>	N/A	Continue this situation.
17	<p>The Council continues to report annually to Defra on the National Indicator Target for Biodiversity (SDL 160) regarding the percentage of Local Wildlife Sites in positive management across the Unitary Authority area. During the most recent reporting period (13/14) Peterborough achieved a figure of 79.5% (89 out of 112 sites) in positive management which places Peterborough in the top 10 performing local authorities in England.</p>	N/A however continued budget allocations to support Wildlife Trust and CPERC essential.	Currently awaiting analysis of 2014/15 data by CPERC with target set at 90/ 112 sites.
17	<p>In establishing measurable annual targets for the creation of new areas of wildlife interest, the Biodiversity Partnership is currently reviewing and updating the local Biodiversity Action Plan targets for specific habitats and species for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.</p>	N/A	Continue to support the Biodiversity Partnership.

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6	<p>Peterborough City Council continues to work in partnership and support PECT in developing the Forest for Peterborough concept. The F4P Business Plan sets out specific targets for tree planting and woodland creation in the city and PCC continues to seek opportunities for new tree planting as well as monitoring the number of trees planted on its own land.</p> <p>Tackling Non-native Species: The Council & Amey continue to employ best practice procedures to deal with invasive non-native species on sites of wildlife importance; or where these are on land in the Council's control and threaten habitats and species of importance or the coherence of habitat networks.</p> <p>The Boardwalks LNR is the only relevant known site containing Orange Balsam and Japanese Knotweed. Initial treatment of Knotweed appears to have been relatively successful, however follow-up treatments are likely to be necessary for several years to effectively eradicate this species from the LNR. A quote from Amey is currently being sought to carry out treatment during 2015.</p> <p>Effective control of Orange Balsam is currently being achieved by Peterborough Conservation Volunteers (PCVS) on behalf of the Council.</p>	<p>Continued funding required during short-term to ensure full eradication of Knotweed from Boardwalks LNR.</p> <p>N/A effective control currently taking place.</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>Continue to support PECT in delivering and monitoring this project.</p> <p>Amey to continue programme of treatment of Knotweed as detailed in updated five year management plan.</p> <p>Continued financial support of PCV's, subject to 2016/17 budget.</p> <p>Continue this situation.</p>