

GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 8
16 JANUARY 2017	Public Report

Report of the Corporate Director of Growth and Regeneration		
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THE CITY COUNCIL'S BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY: PROGRESS REPORT 2015/16

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1
 - a) Provide information with respect to progress against the actions and targets contained in the Council's Biodiversity Strategy (2010) and allow feedback to be given by the Committee with respect to progress against the existing strategy.
 - b) Provide details of a proposed update to the Council's Biodiversity Strategy and associated timescales for consultation and completion.

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 proposed update of the Strategy.

3. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND RELEVANT CABINET PORTFOLIO

- 3.1 The 2010 Strategy is linked to the Environment Capital priority and associated outcomes including improving Peterborough's natural environment and advising on biodiversity. 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.
- 3.2 Communities and Environment Capital Cabinet Portfolio.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 **Update Report for 2015/16:** This report is submitted to the Committee by the Council's Wildlife Officer as a progress report for 2015/16 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 The Progress Report shows 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 Update Report has also 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:

- Full replacement of flood-damaged bridges and walkways at the Boardwalks Local Nature Reserve.
- Additional improvements to wildlife habitats and interpretation facilities at the Boardwalks LNR carried out by conservation charity Froglife under a licence agreement with the Council.
- Peterborough achieved a figure of 80.5% (91 out of 113) 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).

4.4 **Biodiversity Strategy Update:** The Council's current Biodiversity Strategy was adopted by Council in 2010 and now is considered to be an appropriate time to review the Strategy.

4.5 It is proposed that the Council's Biodiversity Strategy is incorporated into a new Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Strategy which is currently being drafted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that will support the emerging Local Plan. The intention is that the new Strategy will act as a "one stop shop" source of guidance and advice for biodiversity and green infrastructure.

4.6 The Vision and Approach set out in the current Biodiversity Strategy is not proposed to be significantly revised, however some of the specific actions are likely to require revision due to completion of certain actions and new actions being identified. No additional financial implications of the revised strategy are anticipated to the Council; instead actions would be achieved via mechanisms such as Planning Obligations or external grants etc.

4.7 Regarding timescales, the Wildlife Officer is currently drafting the SPD, supported by Planning Policy officers and a small working group consisting of local conservation organisations and land managers. It is anticipated that the Draft Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Strategy will be presented to Scrutiny Committee at the same time as the emerging Local Plan (currently expected to be in May 2017) for comment by Members.

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 2014/15 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. It is intended that the revised Strategy would take a similar approach.

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 any changes to the updated Strategy.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

- 9.1
- 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.
 - 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>A Peterborough Biodiversity & Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy is currently being drafted in partnership with a number of local conservation organisations with the intension of the document being adopted as an SPD that will support the emerging Local Plan.</p> <p>The Sustainable Drainage 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>Draft Document to be produced and made available for comment by Scrutiny Committee in May 2017.</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 2017/18 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>

PCC Biodiversity Strategy Ref.	Update on Progress/Action underway	Barrier to Progress	Future Action
	<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 2017/18.</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>	N/A	Continue this role.
8	In addition to the above, further areas are being identified for trialling new approaches to landscape management. These include un-mown wildflower	Generally these trials have been	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.

PCC Biodiversity Strategy Ref.	Update on Progress/Action underway	Barrier to Progress	Future Action
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>	N/A	Continue this situation.
<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 Wildlife Trust has recently ended its involvement at this nature reserve following termination of its lease in Sept 2016. The Council is therefore currently fully responsible for the site’s management and to ensure this site remains safe for visitors and in positive management. However this will require additional resources to achieve,</p>	<p>Approval for additional resources to manage the site currently being sought.</p>	<p>Negotiations currently ongoing as the Council seeks an appropriate external organisation to manage the site on its behalf.</p>

PCC Biodiversity Strategy Ref.	Update on Progress/Action underway	Barrier to Progress	Future Action
	<p>therefore options are currently being explored with other conservation organisations to ensure the management plan is delivered in the most cost effective manner.</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>	N/A	N/A

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

4, 5, 20	<p>Council managed ancient woodland (Pocock's Wood, Grimeshaw Wood, Highlees Spinney, Spencer's Hurn & Water Spinney): The Council are currently finalising a Licence Agreement with the recently formed Nene Coppicing & Crafts CIC who will then lead on delivery of the approved site woodland management plan.</p> <p>A new footpath through Pococks Woods has been opened and new interpretation panels are installed during 2015. New fencing to exclude deer from Pococks Wood has also partially been installed.</p> <p>The establishment of Nene Coppicing & Crafts CIC has helped secure the long-term management of the woods.</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>	<p>N/A (Licence agreement anticipated being completed by end of 2016).</p> <p>N/A</p>	Continue to liaise with Nene Coppicing & Crafts CIC to enable continued management and monitoring of woodlands.
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PCC Biodiversity Strategy Ref.	Update on Progress/Action underway	Barrier to Progress	Future Action
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	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.	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.
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.

PCC Biodiversity Strategy Ref.	Update on Progress/Action underway	Barrier to Progress	Future Action
Showing regard for biodiversity on public authority managed land and buildings: School Grounds			
15,19	<p>The Peterborough Eco Education Framework (PEF) was formally launched in July 2015 in the place of the previous “eco-schools” award scheme. A limited number of schools participated in the first year to allow it to be trialled and amended according to their feedback. It was offered to all schools from the summer term 2016.</p> <p>Certificates are awarded by theme and when a school has 5 certificates they can fly the Peterborough Eco Framework Flag if they wish.</p> <p>21 Certificates have been awarded across 9 of the 10 themes available. PECT have their own education officer who assists schools with the scheme. Many of these schools also have school gardens and wildlife spaces.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Amey 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 grounds as wildlife habitats.</p>	<p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>Continue these efforts.</p> <p>Continue these efforts.</p> <p>Continue these efforts.</p>

PCC Biodiversity Strategy Ref.	Update on Progress/Action underway	Barrier to Progress	Future Action
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. A range of habitat/ tree works were completed during winter 14/15 which has greatly enhanced the wildlife value of this part of the SSSI.</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 winter 2016/7 in partnership with Froglife.</p>	N/A	Wildlife Officer to oversee works by Froglife during winter 16/17.
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>	N/A	Continued budget allocations subject to 2016/17 budget.
16	<p>Peterborough Conservation Volunteers have played a vital role in 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,</p>	N/A	Continued budget allocations subject to 2016/17 budget.

PCC Biodiversity Strategy Ref.	Update on Progress/Action underway	Barrier to Progress	Future Action
	Barnack Grassland and Sutton Disused Railway CWS.		
Green infrastructure			
4, 5, 20	<p>The Boardwalks Local Nature Reserve: All sections of flood-damaged walkways and bridges have now been fully replaced by the Council to a high standard.</p> <p>Froglife continue to take an active role in leading on the management and promotion of this site and adding value via a 10 year licence agreement with the Council. For example they have recently secured external funding to enable a site warden to lead volunteer tasks at the site twice per week.</p> <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. Which has provided a “soft-edge” to the concrete wall and acts as a visually attractive feature which also supporting fish populations and invertebrates such as dragonflies, and potentially water voles.</p>	N/A	Continue to liaise with Froglife re site management.
20	<p>Peterborough’s Buzzing is a Heritage Lottery funded project led by Buglife in partnership with the Council. Two urban green spaces were identified as suitable locations where existing amenity grass would be transformed into wild-flower meadows supporting a range of plants and insects. The sites (at Holywell Ponds and Thorpe Meadows) have now been prepared and seeded and will be managed as wild-flower meadows by Amey going forward.</p>	N/A	Ensure meadows continue to be appropriately managed by Amey.
13, 20	<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</p>	N/A	Council to continue to work in partnership with EA to deliver project.

PCC Biodiversity Strategy Ref.	Update on Progress/Action underway	Barrier to Progress	Future Action
12, 15	<p>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>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> <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	Continue this situation.
17	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.	N/A	Continue to support the Biodiversity Partnership.
17	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.		Continue to support PECT in delivering and monitoring this project.
6	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	Continued funding required during short-term to ensure	Amey to continue programme of treatment of Knotweed as detailed in updated five year management

PCC Biodiversity Strategy Ref.	Update on Progress/Action underway	Barrier to Progress	Future Action
2	<p>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>The Council approved a new strategy for the management of the Farms Estate in July 2015 which includes recommendations for the improvement of the natural environment, for example by planting more trees to benefit wildlife and landscape.</p>	<p>full eradication of Knotweed from Boardwalks LNR.</p> <p>N/A effective control currently taking place.</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>plan.</p> <p>Continued financial support of PCV's, subject to 2016/17 budget.</p> <p>Continue this situation.</p> <p>Continued liaison between Council's Wildlife Officer and Farms Estate manager to identify suitable schemes to progress.</p>

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