

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 5
28 FEBRUARY 2023	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Adrian Chapman, Executive Director Place & Economy	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Cllr Nigel Simons Cabinet Member for Waste, Street Scene and the Environment	
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THE CITY COUNCIL'S BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY: PROGRESS REPORT 2021-22

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Adrian Chapman - Executive Director Place & Economy	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that Climate Change & Environment Scrutiny Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Note progress made against the Council's 2018 Biodiversity Strategy and to make any recommendations with regards the ongoing delivery of the Strategy. 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted to the Climate Change & Environment Scrutiny Committee as a requirement to annually report progress on the actions and targets of the Council's 2018 Biodiversity Strategy.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide information with respect to progress against the actions and targets contained in the Council's Biodiversity Strategy (December 2018) and allow feedback to be given by the Committee with respect to progress against the existing strategy.
- Provide an update of charities and landowners activities for biodiversity in the Peterborough Area.

2.2 This report is for the Climate Change and Environment Scrutiny Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference Part 3, Section 4 - Overview and Scrutiny Functions, paragraph No. 2.1 Functions determined by Council

- Biodiversity
- Green Space

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	No	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	N/A
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4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

Background

4.1

Update Report for 2021/22: This report is submitted to the Committee by the Council's Wildlife Officer as a progress report for 2021/22 against the existing Biodiversity Strategy. The Strategy was agreed in 2010 and updated in December 2018 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-environment-partnership>

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
- 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.

The council has achieved many improvements that align with the biodiversity strategy, particular highlights include:

- Sourced funds to improve the floral biodiversity of the protected road verges through the Peterborough City Council Area.
- Additional improvements to wildlife habitats and interpretation facilities at Werrington Brook in collaboration with the Environment Agency.
- Peterborough achieved a figure of 78.4% (87 out of 111) County Wildlife Sites in positive management.

Biodiversity Strategy & Green Infrastructure Strategy Supporting Planning Document:

In 2018 both a Green Infrastructure Strategy SPD and an updated Biodiversity Strategy were published. There have been 4 years since the document was published, which have seen some sections be adopted through planning enforcement, some sections adopted through developers following new government guidance and some sections remaining outstanding. There is potential for the SPD to be updated to better help the objectives described in the Biodiversity Strategy be achieved.

It is envisaged that the following items will be required to be added or amended in future iterations of the SPD:

- All biodiversity checklists
- The schedule of Priority Green Infrastructure Projects
- Introduction of a new section on Biodiversity Net Gain as outlined in The Environment Bill 2021.

Overall, the approach to the SPD will not change, but rather the processes of achieving Green Infrastructure Delivery will be updated to represent modern themes and legislation. This along with quality-of-life improvements for practical users and increased advertisement of the document will hopefully result in wider uptake of the principles.

- 4.2 Peterborough City Council are aware of a broad range of external organisations also undertaking biodiversity positive projects across the unitary area. Following a request from committee members an appendix B has been added to this report that summarise some of the fantastic work that PCC partners are doing in the area. Please note that city council are not necessarily claiming authorship of the document within appendix B.

Key issues

- 4.3 The key issues which the Committee need to consider are laid out in the appendices.

5. Corporate Priorities

- 5.1 The recommendations are linked to the following Council's Corporate Priorities:

The Economy & Inclusive Growth

- By promoting and protecting the biodiversity and ecology within the Peterborough City Council area, we protect the valuable ecosystem services provided to us from the natural environment.
- Over the 2022 period it is expected that the works directed by the biodiversity strategy have overall created a net negative carbon emissions impact. Although the actions completed by the council, such as habitat management, may increase the councils carbon outputs, the works enable the biodiversity on sites to increase. With this increase in biodiversity tends to result in an overall increase in biomass which locks carbon dioxide into the plants. So, the city's overall carbon output will be reduced. This report discusses progress and updates and proposes no changes to practices, therefore there is no carbon impact.

Our Places & Communities

- The ongoing measures to involve the community of volunteers allows them to both value the assets but also taking advantage of the benefits of green areas within Peterborough.
- The green areas in Peterborough provide massive savings to the local health services through cleaning pollutants from the air to providing mental support to those in need.

Sustainable Future for City Council

- Extensive efforts to enhance and expand the ecological data sets held within the council, enables proactive delivery of service that prioritise limited resources to safeguard the sustainable future of our biodiversity resource.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Consultation and discussion have been undertaken with various internal teams including Bereavement Services, Climate Change Team, Natural & Historic Environment Team, Drainage team and Aragon.

It should be noted that the Strategy originally underwent four weeks public consultation from 2nd March to 29th March 2018.

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

- 7.1 It is anticipated that the Climate Change & Environment Scrutiny Committee will consider and comment on the report and set out its views for Officers implementing the Biodiversity Strategy.

8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 The Council's Biodiversity Strategy recognises that biodiversity is under threat from habitat and population fragmentation, climate change, invasive non-native species as well as development and land pressures. Biodiversity is a truly cross cutting theme. The Council will therefore, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as consistent with proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. Scrutiny Committee members are asked to provide feedback to support the continual improvement of delivering the Biodiversity Strategy.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 Other alternative options include:
1. Have no Biodiversity Strategy-This was dismissed as it was considered that the Council would not comply with best practice and would be unable to coordinate Biodiversity Activities across the Council or to monitor progress.
 2. Create a New Biodiversity Strategy- This was dismissed as it is still considered that the Strategy remains relevant and fit for purpose. The document is considered typically to have a 10 year life span.

10. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 10.1 The adopted Strategy does not introduce any financial costs and does not require any additional investment. The Strategy is not intended to introduce financial implications for the Council, but instead to provide guidance to assist with meeting current legislative and policy requirements.

Legal Implications

- 10.2 The Strategy is not intended to introduce legal implications for the council but instead to provide guidance to assist with meeting current relevant environmental legislation.

Equalities Implications

- 10.3 There are no known implications, positive or negative.

Rural Implications

- 10.4 There are no known implications, positive or negative.

Carbon Impact Assessment

- 10.5 Over the 2022 period it is expected that the works directed by the biodiversity strategy have overall created a net negative carbon emissions impact. Although the actions completed by the council, such as habitat management, may increase the councils carbon outputs, the works enable the biodiversity on sites to increase. With this increase in biodiversity tends to result in an overall increase in biomass which locks carbon dioxide into the plants. So, the city's overall carbon output will be reduced.

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11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

- 11.1
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (Section 40).
 - The Biodiversity Duty for Public Authorities, Defra Guidance, Oct 2014.
 - PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY: Version for Adoption by Council December 2018.

- A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment, HM Government, 2021

12. APPENDICES

12.1 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 B: Report of progress of charities and landowner's activities for biodiversity in the Peterborough Area

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