

<b>CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM No. 7</b>
<b>13 MARCH 2024</b>	<b>PUBLIC REPORT</b>

Report of:	Adrian Chapman, Executive Director Place & Economy	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Cllr Gavin Elsey Cabinet Member for Waste, Street Scene and the Environment	
Contact Officer(s):	Darren Sharpe - Natural and Historic Environment Manager Rowan Rumball - Senior Wildlife Officer Frances Payne – Wildlife Officer	01733453596 07753 564759 07930 228693

**THE CITY COUNCIL'S BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY: PROGRESS REPORT 2023**

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
<b>FROM:</b> Adrian Chapman - Executive Director Place & Economy	<b>Deadline date:</b> N/A
It is recommended that Climate Change & Environment Scrutiny Committee review the progress made against the Council's 2018 Biodiversity Strategy and 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:

1. 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.
2. Provide a general overview of how the implementation of the Biodiversity Net Gain objective, as outlined within The Environment Act 2021, will impact Peterborough City Council. Details on how BNG will change planning service burdens, requirements on planning applicants and the eventual change to the wider Peterborough City Council landscape will be explained. Feedback on approach and policy will be encouraged.

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:

- 6. Biodiversity
- 7. 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 2023:** This report is submitted to the Committee by the Council's Senior Wildlife Officer as a progress report for 2023 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-networks-partnership/#naturalenv\\_biodiversitystrategy](https://www.peterborough.gov.uk/council/planning-and-development/conservation-trees-and-hedges/natural-networks-partnership/#naturalenv_biodiversitystrategy)

The Progress Report shows how the Council is demonstrating progress against Defra recommendations as to how public authorities can show regard for biodiversity and also completes the requirement to publish reports on biodiversity under Section 40A of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. 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:

- Peterborough City Council and Froglife are collaborating to significantly increase the biodiversity value of the Eye Green Nature Reserve.
- We have employed an additional Wildlife Officer, this increase in capabilities will help allow Peterborough City Council planning service to manage the increased burdens related to Biodiversity Net Gain implementation, while continuing improvement of Peterborough City Councils natural areas.
- Peterborough achieved a figure of 77.5% (86 out of 111) County Wildlife Sites in positive management.

#### **Biodiversity Strategy & Green Infrastructure Strategy Supporting Planning Document:**

The 2022 Progress Monitoring Report outlined a requirement to update the following items of the Green Infrastructure Strategy 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.

Over the previous year it has become clear that The Environment Bill 2021 and the new Green Infrastructure Framework will fundamentally alter the requirements of the SPD. In addition to the previous, SPDs are to be phased out and replaced with Supplementary Plans. We are seeking

to create a new document that interwinds guidance on a Peterborough City Council approach to the implementation of The Environment Bill 2021 and the Green Infrastructure Framework.

Until that document is completed, we will still have a requirement for a Biodiversity Checklist to be submitted with all applicable planning applications. This checklist has already been updated to account for the latest Biodiversity survey guidance and to help applicants know when they are required to implement Biodiversity Net Gain.

- 4.2 As alluded to in previous paragraphs The Environment Bill 2021 will impose a statutory Biodiversity Net Gain Objective on all applicable planning applications. This objective has far ranging ramifications and may significantly alter both the design of developments and the use of green infrastructure outside of the applications red line boundary. Appendix B aims to summarise the new burdens for applicants, the Local Planning Authority and how BNG may change the wider Peterborough City Council Landscape in order to inform the committee. We would welcome the committee's opinions on the planning services approach to implementation of the Biodiversity Net Gain Objective in Peterborough City Council.

### **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 2023 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 council's 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 2<sup>nd</sup> March to 29<sup>th</sup> 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.

## **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](#).
  - [PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCIL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY: Version for Adoption by Council December 2018](#).
  - [Environment Improvement Plan 2023, HM Government, 2023](#)

## **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: Biodiversity Net Gain Overview