

The Nature Emergency

North Somerset Council acknowledges and notes:

1. That in February 2019, the council declared a climate emergency, as have over two-thirds of local authorities nationally;
2. The ecological emergency, noting specifically species extinction, loss of habitat and the connectivity of habitats, decline in pollinators which are crucial to food supply, and the loss of and decline in the quality of the soil;
3. That the climate and ecological emergencies are linked and both are the result of over-exploitation of the earth's resources and poor land management. However, there are other causes of the ecological emergency beyond climate change, including other forms of pollution, urbanisation, hydrological change, the proliferation of invasive species, and poor practices in agriculture, woodland management and fishing;
4. That in May 2019, the UN Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) raised the alarm about the urgent ecological emergency the world faces. The UK's State of Nature 2019 report also highlights the critical decline in biodiversity in the UK.

The council further believes that:

1. The survival of our society and economy depend absolutely on the health of the natural environment and ecosystems and the services they provide, for example clean water and air, food, and flood protection;
2. While reducing carbon from fossil fuels is the top priority for tackling the climate emergency, it is also necessary to find ways to increase carbon absorption or sequestration by the natural environment, by for example tree planting, peatland restoration, different methods of land management and improved agricultural practices that enable carbon to be drawn down into the soil on a large scale;
3. Throughout the district of North Somerset, there are opportunities to increase the sequestration of carbon by trees, grassland and soil, but further work is needed to:
 - Increase biodiversity and protection of habitats and species, including key pollinators and other insects
 - Increase soil quality and quantity, reducing chemical fertilisers and pesticides and preventing soil erosion
 - Increase local food production, utilising local productive capacity, through less intensive agricultural methods, as a number of local producers already do
 - Increase flood defences using natural flood mitigation measures
 - Protect our natural landscape and protect and enhance the associated ecosystems, whilst enabling sensitive development and more people to enjoy the benefit of time spent in nature

Therefore, in addition to the work already underway to address the climate emergency, this council formally declares an ecological emergency and resolves to:

1. Promote the policy as "tackling the climate and nature emergencies";
2. Whilst recognising the ongoing consultation regarding the new local plan, one of the aims of the local plan should be to achieve a biodiversity net gain;
3. Use existing planning policy and development management to ensure biodiversity is improved, environments enriched and the destruction of habitats is resisted when

development occurs. This could be achieved through development of a new Supplementary Planning Document (SPD);

4. Seek to work actively with partners locally in North Somerset, regionally in the West of England and beyond to drive collaborative action to improve biodiversity;
5. Identify areas within North Somerset which could be suitable for habitat restoration and seek to restore them through the council's emerging Green Infrastructure Strategy, due in April 2021;
6. Seek opportunities to promote local produce and reduce the intensity of agriculture of North Somerset through engagement with businesses and farmers;
7. Encourage residents, businesses and landowners to reduce pesticide use, and seek to become a pesticide-free council;
8. Continue to collaborate with our communities, businesses and other organisations such as schools and colleges to improve ecological knowledge and understanding and to encourage more sensitive land management.