

Task and Finish Group Proposals for a Biodiversity Strategy

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
<p>1. Biodiversity in Planning: Ensure that biodiversity is protected and enhanced within the planning system in Rutland and deliver the key principles for biodiversity set out in national planning guidance. Where full protection is not possible, mitigation and compensatory measures should be put in place, as well as enhancement measures, to deliver a net gain in biodiversity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Services department to seek advice of internal advisors, and relevant statutory and non-statutory conservation bodies with regard to specific development proposals, as well as during the development of related planning policy documents. • All developments to demonstrate no net loss to biodiversity and ideally achieve net gains, via use of an approved RCC scoring matrix. • Monitor net impacts to priority habitats, which are recorded for all EIA developments, seeking to ensure all schemes result in overall priority habitat gain, via use of an approved RCC scoring matrix. • Promote the protection, extension and creation of priority habitats via the planning system.
<p>2. Biodiversity Data: Ensure that up to date biodiversity data is available and used appropriately to support this approach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support LRERC (Leicestershire and Rutland Environment Records Centre) via appropriate service level agreements to ensure up to date ecological data is provided to help inform planning decisions and to enable the RCC to report annually on its progress of ensuring that Local Sites are in positive conservation management (i.e. those sites which are being managed in order to conserve their nature conservation interest). • Support the development and maintenance of a Rutland specific Biodiversity Action Plan which would survey local habitat resources and concentrate on species and habitats of local conservation concern. • Signpost to sources of information, via a new biodiversity page or area on the RCC external website.

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3. Green Spaces: Increase and diversify wildlife interest in green spaces and provide access to sites of wildlife interest for all sections of the community. Also to promote accessibility to wildlife by creating these new habitats in public areas and encourage their creation in private areas such as schools and RCC-owned places of work.

- Develop a pollinator action plan for Rutland. Refer to: www.buglife.org.uk
- Investigate the use of the disused railway line.
- Work with community groups to develop the disused Oakham canal for biodiversity enhancement.
- Look at green spaces owned by RCC and select sites to encourage wildflowers, using native wild-flower seeds/ plants to further enhance grassland as required.
- Where RCC owned or managed land forms part of a wildlife corridor (e.g. road verges), its management will aim to facilitate its role as a part of the ecological network it is part of.
- Consult with parish councils to find out if they have any sites which would be good for pollen and nectar or wild flower mixes. Also identify any land owned by RCC that would be good for this.
- Continue to review the use of pesticides, including neonicotinoid insecticides (NNI's) which are currently subject to a temporary moratorium banning the use of three major NNI's, on Council managed land (including through external service providers), seeking to reduce or eliminate their use wherever possible, such that their use is consistent, minimised and very carefully targeted in line with COSHH regulations requirements. Glyphosate is an essential tool in conservation and should be used in accordance with current guidelines on advice given by a BASIS qualified agronomist.
- The loss of hedges and shrubs will be resisted unless there are sound horticultural or other reasons to indicate otherwise e.g. the maintenance of highway safety, disease, structural damage or the hedging or shrubs are at the end of their useful life expectancy.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional laying and coppicing should be carried out on suitable hedges to provide a variety of nesting sites for hedgerow birds.
<p>4. Non-native invasive species: Take action to deal with invasive non-native species, prioritising where these are present on sites of wildlife importance; or where these are on land under RCC control and threaten habitats and species of importance or the coherence of habitat networks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ best practice procedures to deal with invasive non-native species (which locally include Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed, Orange Balsam, New Zealand Pygmy weed and Parrots Feather) on sites of wildlife importance; or where these are on land under RCC control and threaten habitats and species of importance or the coherence of habitat networks, noting the Local Authority legal duty to control these species on all its land. • Take action to comply with the 1959 Weed Act.
<p>5. Priority Habitat and Species Targets: Contribute to the achievement of the Priority Habitats and Species Targets relevant to RCC's functions and areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an RCC management plan for priority habitat and species. • Have a county wide initiative to create new priority habitats. • Support existing long-term monitoring and enhancement of key priorities species including The Hawk and Owl trust, RSPB. • Look at RCC bulk buying bat, owl and bird boxes, and selling to parish councils at cost. • Signpost to relevant local voluntary wildlife groups, via a new biodiversity page or area on the RCC external website.
<p>6. Awareness raising: Make every attempt to ensure that employees and members of RCC are aware of the importance of and need to safeguard, enhance and promote Biodiversity through RCC's activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforcing RCC's climate action plan. • Articles in One Council. • Climate Change Champion. • Enhanced RCC website and intranet. • Include in staff and member induction programmes. • All Council and contract staff directly involved in the management of open space should be given training and

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	<p>guidance on good management practice to safeguard and promote Biodiversity</p>
<p>7. Wider understanding: Promote wider understanding and enjoyment of Rutland's wildlife and habitats.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotions using discover Rutland / tourism, etc., and actively encourage engagement with tourism bodies.
<p>8. Involvement: Promote active interest and involvement in wildlife issues at the local, national and international levels by all sections of the community, at home, in the workplace, in schools as a leisure activity and as part of the local economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signpost to the schools pack from the Woodland Trust. • Link to Rutland Agricultural Society educational establishment. • Attend Rural Services Network conferences • Link to Anglian Water sites and activities, e.g. bat nights / badger walks. • Support initiatives to encourage wildlife friendly gardening
<p>9. Statutory Sites: Take reasonable steps consistent with the proper exercise of RCC's functions, to further the conservation and enhancement of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), International Sites and Local Nature Reserves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By working in partnership with Anglian Water at Rutland Water - an SSSI and site of European Importance – the Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust, the Woodland Trust, -Natural England and the - Environment Agency. • Assist Natural England with the conservation and enhancement of SSSIs, for example through supporting the creation of habitat links to connect SSSIs within the wider landscape. • Continue to work with Natural England in their role as statutory advisor in planning and development matters pertaining to Nationally and Internationally designated sites. • Identify suitable locations that may be designated as new Local Nature Reserves (LNR's).
<p>10. Non-Statutory Sites: Work with the Wildlife Trust, and Local Sites Partnership to further the conservation and enhancement of Local Wildlife and Geological Sites. Also to ensure that up-to-date information is available for all local</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will ensure that all protected road verges are managed using best practice techniques which involves mowing in late summer/ early autumn and all arisings removed.

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<p>sites in Rutland and work with partners to deliver the targets of the Environment Action Plan with respect to Local Sites.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a regular programme of re-survey or monitoring visits to County Wildlife Sites in the Rutland area.
<p>11. Continue to provide support and advice to the Partnership Board and associated initiatives within Rutland.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create 'Objective Specific Actions' for RCC to deliver, aiming to create more and better-connected habitats which provide the space for wildlife to thrive and adapt to climate change.
<p>12. Keep abreast of developments in the field of biodiversity and maintain regular links with wildlife organisations to ensure best practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain cognisant of future national government plans and adopt them early.
<p>13. Develop a separate Tree Strategy to sit alongside the Biodiversity Strategy and as part of the overall Environmental strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the work of the already established RCC Trees symposium which aims to join up land owners who want trees to be planted, people who can supply trees for planting and people who volunteer to plant them. • Be mindful of the potential conflict of tree planting based on carbon benefits versus biodiversity benefits and take this into consideration when planting trees on RCC maintained land and in the planning process. • The loss of trees will be resisted unless there are sound horticultural or other reasons to indicate otherwise e.g. disease, structural damage. • Explore funding opportunities for creating and enhancing the biodiversity value of Council land through the planting of trees.