

Task and Finish Group Proposals for a Biodiversity Strategy

OBJECTIVE	RECOMMENDATIONS
<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 as set out in national planning guidance and the emerging Local Plan (see links to policies below)</p> <p>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> <p>Site Allocations DPD 2014 Policy SP15 &19 https://www.rutland.gov.uk/my-services/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/the-adopted-local-plan/</p> <p>Emerging Local Plan Policy EN1, EN3 and EN9: file:///C:/Users/jomorley/Downloads/RCC%20Local%20Plan%20Regulation%2019%20(1).pdf (p87 on)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Planning Services department promotes the protection, extension and creation of priority habitats via the planning system and seeks the 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. • That the newly created Climate Action Group, as part of a responsibility for enhancing and protecting biodiversity, oversees development plans and looks to undertake a further biodiversity assessment, at the outline planning stage for large scale developments, to ensure that there is no net loss to biodiversity and ideally net gains are achieved. This would be on top of the work officers do and would provide a 'gold standard' approach to promoting biodiversity • That the Climate Action Group then monitors net impacts to priority habitats, which are recorded for all EIA developments, seeking to ensure all schemes result in overall priority habitat gain.
<p>2. Biodiversity Data: Ensure that up to date biodiversity data is available and used appropriately to support this approach.</p> <p>https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2018/5/2/LRERC-charging-and-data-use-policy.pdf</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That RCC supports 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). • That RCC supports 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.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">That RCC through the work of the Climate Action Group signposts to sources of information, via a new biodiversity page or area on the RCC external website.
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">That RCC works with community groups and supports them and their parish councils to take on community ownership of sites to develop areas for biodiversity enhancement. A 'toolkit' consisting of expert advice, any funding streams available and information on how groups apply to get their scheme accepted should be developed. Existing schemes such as Ketton's Community Orchard (https://www.scog.org.uk/community-orchard-project-1) and the Melton and Rutland Waterways Canal Trail https://meltonwaterways.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Oakham-Canal-Trail-Sep-2017.pdf should be showcased via a biodiversity page on the RCC website.Green spaces owned by RCC should be reviewed and sites selected 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, via the Parish Council Forum, to identify 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.Encourage the development of a pollinator action plan for Rutland. Refer to: www.buglife.org.ukContinue 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

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	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• RCC to resist the loss of hedges and shrubs 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.• Landowners should be encouraged to carry out traditional laying and coppicing on suitable hedges to provide a variety of nesting sites for hedgerow birds, and signposted to capital grants that are available for this. https://www.gov.uk/guidance/countryside-stewardship-capital-grants-manual-from-9-february-2021
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As part of its Environmental Strategy RCC should commit to employing best practice procedures to deal with invasive non-native species (which locally include Ragwort, 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.• Encourage residents who see invasive non-native species to report to RCC and DEFRA and signpost how to do this on the biodiversity webpage. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-on-how-to-prevent-the-spread-of-ragwort https://www.gov.uk/guidance/stop-ragwort-and-other-harmful-weeds-from-spreading#report-harmful-weeds
5. Priority Habitat and Species Targets: Contribute to the achievement of the Priority Habitats and Species Targets relevant to RCC's functions and areas.	<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.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support existing long-term monitoring and enhancement of key priorities species including The Hawk and Owl trust, RSPB.• Signpost to relevant local voluntary wildlife groups, via a new biodiversity page or area on the RCC external website. https://www.lrwt.org.uk/ https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/in-the-community/protecting-our-environment/our-biodiversity-work/
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote the work of the Climate Action Group• 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 guidance on good management practice to safeguard and promote Biodiversity
7. Wider understanding: Promote wider understanding and enjoyment of Rutland's wildlife and habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promotions using Discover Rutland and actively encourage engagement with tourism bodies.
8. Involvement: Promote active interest and involvement in wildlife issues at 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use the Biodiversity webpage to signpost to schemes such as the schools pack from the Woodland Trust and the Rutland Agricultural Society educational establishment. https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/schools-and-communities/ https://www.rutlandshowground.com/the-rutland-agricultural-society/ https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/in-the-community/schools/primary-resources/• Promote the Anglian Water sites and activities, e.g. bat nights / badger walks.• Support initiatives to encourage wildlife friendly gardening• RCC Comms to support and promote national biodiversity initiatives• Promote the work of the Climate Action Grouup

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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.	<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, Rutland Water Partnership 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).
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 ensure that up-to-date information is available for all local sites in Rutland and work with partners to deliver the targets of the Environment Action Plan with respect to Local Sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• RCC to commit to managing all protected road verges using best practice techniques which involves mowing in late summer/ early autumn.• Maintain a regular programme of re-survey or monitoring visits to County Wildlife Sites in the Rutland area.
11. Develop a separate Tree Strategy to sit alongside the Biodiversity Strategy and as part of the overall Environmental strategy	<p>The Tree Strategy is already in development and will pick up on the following recommendations made by the Group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To 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.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To resist the loss of trees unless there are sound horticultural or other reasons to indicate otherwise e.g. disease, structural damage.• To explore funding opportunities for creating and enhancing the biodiversity value of Council land through the planting of trees.• To identify and recommend RCC owned land for tree planning |
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