

# High Peak Borough Council

## Nature Recovery Declaration

### This council acknowledges that:

**1. We are experiencing a nature crisis. With 41 per cent of wild species in decline nationally, and 15 per cent facing extinction, we recognise that:**

- a) Nature is in long term decline, and the requirement to take action to reverse this is urgent;
- b) Nature provides us with vital support systems ['ecosystem services'], and severe declines in biodiversity are undermining nature's productivity and adaptability, posing excessive uncertainty for our economies and wellbeing;
- c) A thriving natural environment underpins a healthy, happy, prosperous society;
- d) The nature crisis and the climate emergency are intrinsically linked. The impacts of the climate crisis are driving nature's decline, while restoring nature provides a wide variety of cost-effective benefits to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change;
- e) Many of our areas of work have an impact on nature, and we have responsibilities to make decisions to protect and enhance it.

**2. To address the nature crisis and aim to achieve the multiple environmental benefits that nature can bring to people, this council acknowledges that the 'Bigger, Better, More and Joined-up' principles of the 2010 Lawton Report should be followed:**

- a) There must be more space given to wildlife;
- b) Existing wild spaces must be expanded;
- c) The quality of existing wild spaces should be improved;
- d) The connectivity between wild spaces must be increased.

### In order to support the recovery of nature across Derbyshire, this council commits to:

**1. Apply and implement the new Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) that will sit within the national Nature Recovery Network. Ensure it underpins all planning, development and land management decisions.**

**2. Develop and implement an evidence-based strategy and action plan including short and long-term targets for putting nature into recovery by 2030. Publish interim reports on progress made. This should complement the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.**

**Areas of focus will include:**

### **Land and watercourse management**

**2.1** Manage at least 30% of council-owned land for the benefit of wildlife by 2030, in line with UK Government's national and international commitments. Increase space for wildlife and commit to the long-term maintenance and expansion of the Nature Recovery Network.

**2.2** Ensure the council's Nature Recovery Network map is used strategically – helping to guide development decisions and green infrastructure planning. The map should be fundamental to the authority's Local Plan, ensuring that there are dedicated, joined-up spaces for nature as well as housing, industrial areas and other land uses.

**2.3** Prioritise the restoration of peatland habitats and other high quality natural habitats, including taking measures to reduce the likelihood and severity of wildfires. To halt the destruction of peatlands globally, the authority will adopt a peat-free policy for all council contracts and supplies.

**2.4** Formulate a tree strategy which is underpinned by Nature Recovery Network mapping across the local authority area, pursuing a "right tree, right place" approach.

**2.5** After satisfying safety and visibility priorities, ensure highways verge-cutting regimes maximise potential for biodiversity, carbon storage and sequestration.

**2.6** Set a measurable target and timescale to support making Local Wildlife Sites better for wildlife. Work to improve them could include, for example, restoring wetland areas, increasing wildflower diversity on grassland areas and making woodlands better for birds and butterflies.

**2.7** Carry out a carbon audit of local authority sites to establish how carbon storage/sequestration can be improved.

**2.8** Set a measurable target to restore the rivers, streams and wetlands in the High Peak that have been identified as being most in need of re-naturalisation, utilising the expertise of the Environment Agency, who monitor the ecological health and pollution levels in our watercourses. Publish publicly-accessible reports on the ecological health of watercourses in the High Peak on an annual basis.

**2.9** Invest in nature-based solutions to improve the landscape's resilience to climate change, and provide natural solutions to reduce carbon, manage flood risk, and sustain vital ecosystems. Land for the delivery of nature-based solutions should be allocated within the Local Plan.

### **Species abundance**

**2.10** Work with partners to help reintroduce or boost populations of wild species in the High Peak that have been identified as being a priority for local conservation efforts.

### **People and communities**

**2.11** Launch a citizen science project to involve local people in supporting wild species that are at risk in the High Peak. The project will focus on supporting volunteers to collect data on species which have been identified as a priority by Derbyshire Ecological Record.

**2.12** Support, educate and raise awareness amongst businesses, communities and the wider public to take action to put nature into recovery through council communications channels.

**2.13** Improve access to nature by following the Natural England 'Nature Nearby' guidance. Particular regard will be given to areas where the amount and quality of accessible natural greenspace is below Natural England's Targets.

**2.14** Invest long-term funding in green prescribing programmes in the community, which connect people to the natural world and provide sustained health benefits through nature-based activities.

**3. Under the Environment Act 2021, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) will become mandatory for the majority of developments from January 2024. To ensure that this new legislation delivers real benefits for nature, the council will:**

**3.1** Introduce a 20% Biodiversity Net Gain commitment across all council-owned land, and aspire for greater than the minimum 10% on privately-owned land.

**3.2** Collaborate with county partners, in order to ensure that the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain aligns with the Nature Recovery Network and delivers the best outcomes for nature.

**3.3** Develop a locally-specific Biodiversity Net Gain policy which requires developers to take into account the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and local nature recovery plans, such as the Plan for Nature. Setting a local BNG policy will help target offsite BNG delivery in the right places and can also feed into the 'strategic significance' score that is part of the Biodiversity Metric. Ensure these policies are embedded within the Local Plan.

**4. Embed nature's recovery into all strategic plans and policy areas, not just those directly related to the environment. Ensure the LNRS is well understood across the authority and complements other relevant plans and strategies.**

**5. Integrate the targets, objectives and outcomes of this motion, ie. the strategy and action plan, with those outlined in the existing Climate Change Action Plan to ensure measures to tackle climate issues do not contravene the principles of enhancing biodiversity. Wherever possible, the council will invest in nature-based solutions to climate change in order to tackle the nature crisis and climate emergency together.**

**6. Form a steering and monitoring group to focus on achieving the targets and objectives outlined in this motion. This group will be comprised of: cross-party representatives, council staff and relevant experts from external organisations. This**

**group will monitor progress, identify opportunities for improvement and report back to the Council.**

**7. Issue a declaration of compatibility alongside all future council motions and policy to ensure that any conflicts with nature's recovery are made apparent.**

**8. Appoint a member of the Cabinet as the designated lead for tackling the nature crisis.**

**9. Appoint a council employee as the designated lead for coordinating council operations in relation to the ecological emergency.**

**10. Ensure elected members and employees receive training about the nature crisis and their role in supporting nature's recovery.**

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