

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Communities (Introduced by Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member (Health and Wellbeing))	Cabinet	Wednesday, 23 March 2022

Biodiversity Strategy and Environment Act 2021

Is this report confidential?	No
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Is this decision key?	Yes
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Savings or expenditure amounting to greater than £100,000	Significant impact on 2 or more council wards
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Purpose of the Report

- To obtain agreement to launch a public consultation on a Biodiversity Strategy for South Ribble.
- Following the consultation and subsequent adoption by Full Council of the Biodiversity Strategy, to consult and produce an Action Plan to achieve the stated objectives identified within the Strategy.

Recommendations to Cabinet

- That permission be given to launch a public consultation on the formation of a Biodiversity Strategy for South Ribble.

Reasons for recommendations

- Across the world biodiversity is under threat, either from pollution, development or changes in the climate. The lives we currently lead compromises our biodiversity. Habitats are being lost or fragmented, isolating plant and animal communities into ever smaller areas.

5. Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, and recently updated by the Environment Act 2021 public authorities in England are under a legal duty to have due regard to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in the exercise of its functions.
6. Public bodies must also determine what action is required to conserve and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of its functions and must determine such policies and objectives as appropriate to achieve this.
7. They must also publish biodiversity reports providing a summary of the action taken and planned and detailing the resulting biodiversity gains achieved.

Other options considered and rejected

8. Do nothing, this would negatively impact on the biodiversity of the borough and result in the council failing in its statutory duties to consider, conserve and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of its duties.

Corporate priorities

9. The report relates to the following corporate priorities: (please bold all those applicable):

An exemplary council	Thriving communities
A fair local economy that works for everyone	Good homes, green spaces, healthy places

Background to the report

10. Biodiversity is the term that describes the biological variety of our planet. It includes all plants and animals and the ecosystems that support them and us. It helps to shape the landscape of our area and our local distinctiveness and prosperity.
11. It contributes to good mental and physical health and wellbeing, and has a role to play in our response to Climate Change, Flooding, air, water and land quality.
12. Of those areas specifically identified as providing important biodiversity, over 40% are showing signs of declining. In addition, over 30% of priority species have also been identified as struggling. Action needs to be taken to protect them, and this is specifically identified within the legislation.
13. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 has recently been updated by the Environment Act 2021, reemphasising the Government's commitment to protection wildlife across the country.
14. The changes set a number of requirements for public bodies and the wider population. These include:

- The Local Authority must publish a biodiversity report and update on actions,
 - Ensuring, by condition if required, a 10% net gain on biodiversity for all planning applications above a single dwelling
15. The Biodiversity Report must provide a summary of the actions that have been taken to conserve and enhance biodiversity within South Ribble and the actions planned to be taken (An action plan) for conserving and enhancing biodiversity.
 16. In relation to the planning applications it will be a requirement in 2023 for all planning applicants to submit a biodiversity plan as part of the application and to have this approved by the local planning authority prior to the commencement of any works. There is currently no provision within the Council to review and comment on these plans.
 17. The first stage of the this process is to identify the current state of South Ribble's Biodiversity and to identify key objectives for its conservation and enhancement. It is proposed that this is done by way of a Biodiversity Strategy and subsequent Action Plan which will set out the Council's aims objectives for biodiversity within the borough.

Climate change and air quality

18. The work noted in this report impacts directly on the climate emergency work being undertaken and the green agenda corporate project. The strategy and subsequent action plan will help to achieve objectives of the climate emergency strategy and sits side by side with this work.

Equality and diversity

19. The biodiversity consultation will be open to all residents and businesses within the borough. It will be advertised on the website, via community groups and elected members, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to comment and contribute

Risk

20. The changes to the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty upon the Local Authority to produce an action plan and apply set conditions to planning permissions granted by the authority.
21. Failure to undertake these duties would result in the Council failing to meeting its statutory function, potential bad publicity, and failure of the Council to achieve its corporate vision and priorities.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

22. There are no financial implications of this report at this point.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

23. The great importance of addressing biodiversity loss is widely understood. Legislative changes as outlined in this report have further strengthened the position. To do nothing is not an option. Thus there are no concerns with this report from a legal point of view.

Appendices

Appendix A – Draft Biodiversity Strategy for Consultation

Report Author:	Email:	Telephone:	Date:
Neil Martin (Senior Environmental Health Officer)	nmartin@southribble.gov.uk	01772 625336	11.3.2022