

Motion to: Council

12 March 2024

Subject: Norwich Nature Networks

Proposer: Councillor Champion

Seconder: Councillor Fox

The ecological crisis represents one of the most significant existential threats that humanity has faced since the dawn of civilisation. Current rates of extinction may be 1,000 times greater than global natural background levels; it is imperative that addressing this is treated as the emergency that it is, and that bureaucracy not be allowed to hinder immediate action. The UK has lost half of its biodiversity, and without action one in six species are at risk of being lost from Great Britain.

Biodiversity loss is a systematic challenge and demonstrates our failure as human species to live within the planetary boundaries. To address this challenge Norwich City Council introduced the Biodiversity Strategy, which aims to create a city where biodiversity can sustainably recover and thrive, halt species decline and increase species diversity and abundance by 2030 or sooner. The council's commitment to lead and coordinate nature recovery in the city is an important step and this motion aims to support and enhance this work. It is imperative that the council's expands its capacity to follow through with these aims as a matter of urgency.

For nature to recover, as outlined by the Biodiversity Strategy, we need 25% of the population – 1 in 4 people – to visibly act, which would create a social 'tipping point', where the majority will follow. As the strategy states, "opportunities to create stepping stones within the network will be sought in the form of smaller green spaces in the built environment, such as residents' gardens, on a voluntary basis. As such, there is a need to increase inclusiveness of decision making, to foster an enabling environment for local participation, and to be more effective in the communication of these goals.

There are significant citizen science initiatives that would both benefit the local environment, and the ecological literacy of our citizens. By taking a leading role in communicating these initiatives, the council would enhance its understanding of the levels of biodiversity within the city and identify areas and measures to increase these levels. One of main ways in which the Council can help publicise these initiatives is by becoming more proactive in its use of its publications and social media channels to generate interest and to increase participation and impact.

Council notes:

- 1) Norwich City Council acknowledges the Climate and Ecological emergencies, with the establishment of the Climate and environmental emergency executive panel, and as such there is a need for urgency on matters relating to biodiversity and climate resilience in Norwich.
- 2) That the city council, as noted in the Biodiversity Strategy of 2022, “has an important leadership role to play as an anchor institution in creating sustainable communities where biodiversity can thrive”.
- 3) The strategy also notes that “in order to maintain and improve biodiversity across the city, action will need to be taken at every level, from individuals to large organisations, and from gardens to road verges and our green spaces, to our industrial estates and new developments”.
- 4) Further to this, the biodiversity strategy also references educational benefits.

Council **RESOLVES** to:

- 5) Inform, enable and support residents to participate in the already stated goals of the biodiversity strategy.
- 6) Publish, in every Citizen Magazine, information on activities beyond the council’s own work about local wildlife, conservation and other environmental events
- 7) Publish a minimum of two social media posts a month from Council channels on nature and conservation initiatives in the city, in addition to publishing posts celebrating environmental awareness days.
- 8) Create a page on the Council’s website, accessible from the Council’s Home Page, with information packs on environmental topics in the city, a glossary to improve resident’s ecological literacy, and an assessment of the impact of biodiversity loss and climate change impact on Norwich, informed by panels such as the CEEEP committee.
- 9) To identify, once the Biodiversity Strategy Officer has been recruited, potential areas of the city for nature recovery purposes that are unsuitable for commercial development, with a view to establishing interconnected nature corridors across the city building on the evidence provided in the Biodiversity Baseline Survey, and to undertake further work to understand initial and ongoing resource requirements to develop these.
- 10) Advertise the newly created Biodiversity Strategy Officer role by the end of April.

