

Public Report
Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 13 March 2024

Report Title

Scrutiny Review Recommendations – Nature Recovery

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Report Author(s)

Caroline Webb, Senior Governance Advisor
01709 822765 or caroline.webb@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to outline the outcomes and recommendations of the spotlight review into nature recovery undertaken by members of the Improving Places Select Commission. The review was prompted by Council's declaration of a nature crisis at its meeting of 25 May 2022, with a request that a review be held into how the Council can support improvements to ensure a more natural environment is enhanced.

Recommendations

- 1. That OSMB receives the report and considers the following recommendations:**
 - 1) Consider what resources are required to enable RMBC to lead on the Nature Emergency and co-ordinate its response to the Environment Act 2021, including the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Enhanced Biodiversity Net Gain, and other statutory reporting.
 - 2) In line with the RMBC Nature Crisis Motion (and the mandatory Enhanced Biodiversity Duty), consider how RMBC's response to the nature crisis can be implemented, reported, and resourced (taking note of the response to climate action).
 - 3) Consideration be given to the expansion of the Councillor's role as nature champions. This to include:

- a. How member stewardship of natural assets and geodiversity can be enhanced.
 - b. How nature recovery and climate action can be built into ward plans.
 - c. The involvement in overview and scrutiny in future monitoring and steering of this work.
 - d. Support through the Member Development Programme to ensure Members are equipped with appropriate skills and knowledge to undertake this activity.
- 4) Contribute to the South Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (including appropriate resourcing) detailing Rotherham's involvement in meeting South Yorkshire national and global targets of "30 x 30" as required by the Environment Act 2021.
 - 5) Consider and plan for how the RMBC estate including all green and blue infrastructure such as allotments, cemeteries, parks and sports fields, amenity spaces, communal gardens, railway and highway verges, field margins and hedgerows, rights of way and access routes, woodlands and nature reserves canals, rivers and other water dependent habitats; can contribute to biodiversity strategies and targets; demonstrating compliance with the Council's obligations for the Enhanced Biodiversity Duty (taking external advice where necessary).
 - 6) Prioritise Local Wildlife Sites and Woodlands - especially those in RMBC ownership- to contribute to these targets, with a coordinated 'one council' programme to increase their positive conservation management with resourced management, monitoring and reporting.
 - 7) Continue and expand the positive work already underway including tree planting, meadow management, changes in verge management, community engagement etc (as stated in the RMBC Nature Crisis motion)
 - 8) Utilise appropriate evidence and information from the forthcoming Rotherham State of Nature report, alongside the forthcoming SYLNRS, and the agreed priority species lists, to set local species recovery targets and work plans, and ensure sufficient resources are secured to embed this approach in long term management opportunities.
 - 9) Continue to apply robust planning policies and other policy tools to contribute to nature's recovery across the Borough, noting that Local Planning Authorities must have regard to the South Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy once published.
 - 10) Plan to work towards zero non-essential use of pesticides and zero glyphosate by the Council;
 - 11) Work with communities to support expansion of household composting, and supporting the development of nature rich gardens, including through awareness raising of the waste hierarchy and minimising the use of new and scarce resources and the associated impacts on the natural environment that these issues have; substantive resourcing and engagement plans will be essential.
 - 12) Work with partners, stakeholders, Parish Councils, communities, schools and residents on the above where appropriate.

2. That the report, as approved, be forwarded to Cabinet for its consideration.

- 3. That Cabinet is asked to formally consider its response to the above recommendations within two months of its receipt, in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.**

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 - Council Meeting: Notice of Motion

Appendix 2 – Acknowledgement and thanks

Background Papers

N/A

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

N/A

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Scrutiny Review Recommendations – Nature Recovery

1. Background

- 1.1 In May 2022, the Council resolved to declare a nature crisis (Appendix 1). It noted that almost half of all UK wildlife is in long term decline and 15% of species were at risk of extinction. The motion stated that the climate crisis was hastening the destruction of the natural environment, damaging habitats and disrupting ecosystems. The declaration of a nature crisis was first taken up by local people and groups, and called on the Council to do so too, noting that a thriving environment underpinned a healthy, prosperous society.
- 1.2 The resolution committed the Council to a range of activities, including ensuring its response to tackling climate change was extended to be compliment the aligned cause of nature crisis. It also committed the Council to continue its work to enhance biodiversity by adopting innovative approaches to support wild flowered areas and ecological approaches to grounds maintenance.
- 1.3 It asked that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board consider commissioning a review into how the Council can support improvements to ensure a more natural environment is enhanced. At its meeting of 14 September 2022, it was agreed that Improving Places Select Commission would add this to its work programme for 2023.
- 1.4 It should be noted that in order to expedite its referral to Cabinet at the beginning of the 2024/25 Municipal Year, the report has been submitted to OSMB for approval prior to its consideration by Improving Place Select Commission.

2. Key Issues

2.1 What is 'nature recovery'?

- 2.1.1 The earth is warming at an unprecedented rate through the activities of humans, particularly burning fossil fuels but also through changes in land and maritime use and agriculture. The long-term changes in climate, commonly referred to as global warming, has had a direct impact on weather systems. This means that locally more frequent heatwaves, flooding and damaging storms and other adverse weather can be expected. These events can all have a significant impact on human lives and nature.
- 2.1.2 As the climate changes, the threat to habitats and wildlife increases. The Local Government Association¹ states that the natural environment has an innate value, fundamental to health and well-being. It is the foundation of a productive economy, providing attractive neighbourhoods and access to green spaces. However, it asserts that the UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world. Citing evidence published by the House of

¹ [Nature recovery for local authorities | Local Government Association](#) (2024)

Common and in the State of Nature report², it reports that the UK, along with most other countries, has experienced a significant loss of plants, animals and fungi. Across the UK species studied have declined on average by 19% since 1970³.

2.1.3 Nature Recovery is about taking action to take better care of the environment, to ensure that it is healthier for future generations. The UK Government has committed to halting the long-term decline of species abundance and protecting 30% of land and sea by 2030⁴ (colloquially known as “30x30”). This will be achieved by restoring or creating wild-life rich habitats and halting the decline in species abundance. The ambition is to achieve high quality, accessible, natural spaces with increased biodiversity close to where people live and work, with a focus around the equal distribution of environmental benefits and resources to all. EIP23 makes a commitment that everyone should live within 15 minutes’ walk of a green or blue space.

2.1.4 The Environment Act 2021 introduced new duties for local authorities which are relevant to nature recovery and biodiversity including:

- All planning permissions granted in England (with a few exemptions) will have to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain [mandatory from February 2024 for all major applications and April 2024 for all small sites] (S98-101)
- Enhanced duty for local authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity (S102) and report on their actions (S103)
- Local Planning Authorities will need to comply with the above duty and have regard to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy in local planning policy and decisions (S102).
- Responsible authorities appointed by the Secretary of State (S105) to lead the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), working with a broad range of stakeholders.

2.2 Methodology:

2.2.1 The purpose of the review was to consider strategic approaches already in place and propose any additional interventions that can help the Council achieve its targets and fulfil its responsibilities in respect of biodiversity and nature recovery under the Environment Act 2021.

2.2.2 The review started its evidence gathering in March 2023, concluding its work later in the calendar year. Evidence was gathered through stakeholder meetings with partners and officers and fact-finding visits. In addition, expert testimony was received from Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust and other key organisations. Members of the review group were also provided

² [State of Nature 2023 - report on the UK's current biodiversity](#)

³ as above

⁴ [Climate adaptation for nature \(parliament.uk\)](#)

with written testimony and research, details of which are outlined in Appendix 2 of the report.

2.2.3 The review's scope included consideration of the following themes:

1. Protecting existing biodiversity against threats (including wildlife crime) and supporting nature recovery throughout the Borough including animal, plant, and fungi species to contribute to the South Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Nature Recovery Network and targets;
2. Assessing the condition and management of Rotherham's protected sites including Local Wildlife Sites, utilising appropriate evidence and information from the Rotherham State of Nature report⁵;
3. Assessing the implications of climate change on biodiversity in the borough.

2.2.4 The review group consisted of the following members:

- Cllr Ken Wyatt, Chair
- Councillor Tinsley, Vice Chair
- Councillor Havard
- Councillor Browne
- Councillor McNeely
- Councillor Taylor

2.2.5 Witnesses were drawn from the Council and its partners. The Chair would like to put on record his thanks for the contribution of each participant and their evident commitment to tackling this issue.

- Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust
- Sorby Natural History Society
- Nature Action Rotherham
- Sheffield Area Geology Trust
- South Yorkshire Police – Rural Crime Unit
- River Catchment Partnership
- Environment Agency
- South Yorkshire Woodland Partnership
- South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority
- Severn Trent Water
- Yorkshire Water
- Members of the Rotherham Local Wildlife Sites Panel
- Renewi
- Regeneration and Environment Services, RMBC

⁵ It was noted that Rotherham State of Nature report was independently produced and therefore its recommendations and conclusion may not be supported in entirety by RMBC.

- Planning Services
- Climate Team
- Green Spaces
- Ecology
- Trees and Woodland
- Asset Management (Cleaning)

2.2.6 The Chair also extends his thanks to Katherine Harclerode (former Governance Advisor) who supported the review and has since left the authority.

2.3 **Summary of issues raised:**

2.3.1 Members assessed the state of biodiversity in Rotherham, examining pollution levels in air, soil and water and the associated impact on biodiversity. The impact of wildlife crime was also considered. Consultees were asked to highlight species and ecosystems currently at risk and identify where efforts should be focussed to ameliorate effects of pollution where possible and protect existing biodiversity.

2.3.2 Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust (SRWT) gave a comprehensive presentation focusing on the state of nature in Rotherham, including:

- 1) Protecting biodiversity against threats
- 2) Rotherham's protected sites
- 3) Implications of climate change on biodiversity
- 4) Pollution – water, (soil, air)

2.3.3 SRWT shared some headlines on the national 'State of Nature' and highlighted that many of the national environmental concerns or threats were also factors in Rotherham. This included the impact of agricultural management, climate change, pollution, woodland and freshwater management, wild-life crime, and invasive non-native species. As an illustration of nature depletion, examples were given of local decline in bird species abundance, the rise in numbers of invasive non-native species (e.g. Japanese knotweed, Himalayan Balsam etc) and the impact of disease and pests. Using data from the Weston Park weather station (Sheffield), it was outlined that there had been a steady rise in mean temperatures locally, with this rise accelerating over recent decades. It was highlighted that the effects of climate change and rising temperature would affect the ecological health and biodiversity of the borough, making it less able to mitigate and adapt to future challenges.

The invasive species data and weather data are from Rotherham where SRWT led a partnership 'Sheffield State of Nature Report' (2018). Bob Croxton from the Sorby Natural History Society and Sheffield Bird Study group was developing a Rotherham 'State of Nature' report which has not yet been published.

2.3.4 As part of a co-ordinated response to the threats, key bodies across the sub-region have formed a Local Nature Partnership. The partnership has

assessed the condition and management of Rotherham's protected sites including Local Wildlife Sites. Current mapping undertaken by South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority suggested that just over 3% of Rotherham was identified as core nature sites: priority habitat as 'good' or 'fairly good' condition, with almost 13% identified as restoration: priority habitat not in good condition. Woodland cover in Rotherham was also below the national average of 13%, requiring over 1000 hectares of planting to bring it in line with this standard. However, by mapping sites there was a greater opportunity to increase the size, quality and connectivity of sites and generate Bio-diversity Net Gain (BNG) through green infrastructure schemes, woodland creation and local projects.

- 2.3.5 As part of its evidence gathering, Members examined biodiversity improvement actions currently in place. With a view to enhancing biodiversity, the meeting sought to establish what action is already being taken by the Council, community organisations and partners to achieve targets and uphold duties under the Environment Act 2021.
- 2.3.6 Using case studies to illustrate how "30 x 30" (30% of land for nature by 2030) was being delivered, SRWT outlined the work undertaken under the Rotherham Rivers Programme (2013-2027+). The programme aims to create a network of connected, high quality habitats along the waterway corridors of the Don and Rother in Rotherham, supporting clean water, natural flood storage, increased biodiversity and enjoyment opportunities for people as part of a thriving landscape. Working with partners, including the Environment Agency and Rotherham Borough Council, the programme aims to look after habitats in the River Don and River Rother catchments in South Yorkshire, to create a resilient ecological network from the moors of the Peak District to the floodplain of the Lower Don Valley and the heart of urban Sheffield and Rotherham.

Funding from a range of partners allowed improvements to be made to the river corridors, including:

- Better water quality
- More resilience to flooding
- Control of invasive plant species
- Increased the amount of quality ecological data
- More opportunities for the public to enjoy nature reserves
- Better partnership working in the area and involvement of local site users
- This programme involved over 100 volunteers, with RMBC undertaking over 560 hours of community engagement.

- 2.3.7 The RMBC Climate Change Manager outlined that extensive work had been undertaken to reduce the Council's carbon footprint in recent years, with many of the initiatives supporting both climate reduction and nature recovery agendas. This includes tree planting, management of green

spaces and opportunities for ‘greening’ and increasing biodiversity across arable land. It was noted that there were opportunities to closely align both agendas to provide nature-based solutions to reduce the impact of climate change; including construction, landscaping, sustainable drainage, catchment-wide schemes for flood management and sympathetic planting.

- 2.3.8 A detailed presentation was given on the specific implications of the Environment Act 2021 across Planning, Green Spaces and Ecology teams and decision-makers in the Council and the Combined Authority (SYMCA). SYMCA is the Responsible Authority for the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), working with each of the four local authorities within the South Yorkshire region and the Peak District National Park. The LNRS was to be completed by March 2025.

The Enhanced Biodiversity Duty is a strengthened duty on the Council who is now required to strategically review its policies and operations at least every 5 years and assess what action they can take ‘to further’ the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. Under new legislation, the Council will need to establish appropriate working practices, to deal with all planning applications for both large sites (mandatory from February 2024) and small sites (mandatory from April 2024) to deliver BNG+10% for all development proposals (with few exemptions).

Other requirements include:

- Ensuring the ongoing monitoring and reporting of environmental impacts to satisfy and strengthen the Council’s approach to meet the Enhanced Biodiversity Duty.
- Updating of all condition monitoring of the Council’s adopted local sites series: including Local Wildlife Sites and Local Geological Sites identified in the Sites and Policies Document.
- Ensuring that the Local Plan “Has regard to... the LNRS when published”
- In the longer term, five to ten years, consider refreshing the Rotherham Biodiversity Action Plan and Green Infrastructure Strategies, and the preparation of a State of Nature Report and Biodiversity Strategy. I

It was highlighted that these duties will most certainly cross council joint action and require additional staffing, capacity and funding. It was recognised that this presents a significant challenge for all local authorities and will be a barrier to the delivery of future nature recovery activities.

- 2.3.9 Evidence was presented demonstrating how current planning requirements protected biodiversity and nature recovery, and how requirements were expected to evolve within planning policy.

It was highlighted that over 70% of the borough was allocated as “Green Belt”, with approximately 15% designated as Non-Statutory Protected

Sites⁶. Requirements for biodiversity governed existing planning decisions through legislation (e.g. Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981), National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) guidance and local planning policy.

In meeting these requirements, key challenges were identified, particularly around enforcement on biodiversity obligations and how skills and capacity of existing and future staff can be supported.

- 2.3.10 In a submission to the review, the Environmental Services Manager highlighted the impact of climate change on the Grounds Maintenance Service. With warmer winters, and wetter summers, it was noted that growth was rarely slowing down, which meant that the maintenance schedules were not as effective as they once were. It was felt that comparison with other local authorities and ground maintenance companies would be helpful to establish how other bodies were coping and adjusting to the continual demand.

Climate change had also made an impact on the die-back of evasive plant species and grasses, which meant that native flowers were taking longer to establish or were not viable. Collaboration between the Climate Change team, and specialists in the Ecology Team could assist Ground Maintenance to adapt.

Over several years, wildflower sites had been planted, (some of which had received national recognition) – it was noted that over the last two years this had increased from 5000m² to 15,000m² however, the Service needed assistance to understand the net gain from this and other activity to encourage natural biodiversity.

- 2.3.11 An overview was given of how Cleaning Services supported the biodiversity and climate change challenge. It was outlined that with over 350k hours of cleaning activity undertaken across schools, Council and community buildings per year, it was important that there was continuous review of utility use; procurement strategies for products and equipment; and environmental impact.

The service only used products which minimised harm across the life-cycle of use i.e. from the sourcing of the raw material, through production, transportation, usage and then environmental impact after use. Current work was on-going to develop cost effective toxin-free sanitisers and cleaning agents.

Rotherham cleaning services only procure from accreditor suppliers who:

- Traded ethically and sustainably;
- Provided supporting information for any claims made;
- Provided only quality, fit for purpose products.

⁶ These are areas which have been designated for protection including local wildlife sites; regionally important geological sites or local nature reserves.

Assurance was given that environmental factors were a material consideration of the service, underpinned by an aim to eliminate any product or process which opposes the biodiversity or climate change challenge objective stated by the Council.

2.3.12 A series of site visits were organised on local wildlife habitats, with the review panel taken through key issues and concerns by expert witnesses:

- Local Wildlife Site 127, 'Centenary Riverside LNR'
- Silverwood
- Herringthorpe Valley Park

Whilst it was noted that there was a good level of monitoring and records of wildlife in Rotherham, the site visits reinforced the previous evidence provided by other expert witnesses. In summary, this included:

- Variable levels of site quality with many wildlife habitats being in poor condition (as outlined in the mapping exercise);
- Decline in varieties of species of wild birds, insects and rare plants;
- Impact of rural crime and site security with examples given of the negative impact of off-road vehicles, poaching, vandalism and arson;
- How greater emphasis could be placed on utilising local conservation expertise.

Other points raised in the discussions included:

- How crime can be 'designed out' of wildlife sites by increasing visitor numbers and natural surveillance. (Although consideration also needed to be given to managing the impacts of increased pressure on wildlife sites created by encouraging increased visitor numbers.)
- Improving communication and information sharing of local projects and initiatives.
- Maximising opportunities for external funding (for example the National Lottery).
- Consider how nature mitigations can be built into new developments. For example, the installation of bat bricks, swift boxes, wildlife-friendly soffits etc should be considered as part of new developments or refurbishment of existing housing stock.

2.3.13 Complimenting the local sites visits, further information was given on Local Wildlife Sites.

Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) were identified and selected locally using scientifically determined criteria and surveys. Local Wildlife Sites Panel and Local Geological Sites Panel oversaw site selection process. The panels endorsed qualifying sites for the Council approval (through the officer delegated decision process). The boundaries were included in the Council internal and external mapping systems.

2.3.14 In respect of the Local Wildlife Sites Panel, the local sites system duties involve staff from Green Spaces and Planning Policy Teams and the input

of external experts on the panels. The Biological Records Centre was central to its operation. The work required in the maintenance of the local sites system was reported as significant and varied. Although there was a rolling 10-year program of site monitoring, there have been gaps in on site local wildlife site monitoring due to vacancies and backlogs.

- 2.3.15 Local Wildlife Sites were areas of land that were especially important for wildlife and some of the Borough's most valuable wildlife areas. They have a huge part to play in the natural green fabric of our towns and countryside. They made up a web of steppingstones and corridors for wildlife, forming key components of ecological networks. It is anticipated Local Wildlife Sites will be a central component of the forthcoming SYLNRS. The Council had responsibilities to local sites through the enhanced biodiversity duty and the boundaries were needed for the Local Plan satisfying national and local planning policy. The network of sites added to the character and fabric of Rotherham making it more resilient to climate change factors, offering its natural services to the local communities.
- 2.3.16 The LWS panel were concerned about damage to sites from development, vandalism and poor or little management. Most Local Wildlife Sites were privately owned although a significant number were under Council ownership (e.g. green spaces, housing, asset management or schools). Whilst land under the stewardship of Green Spaces were managed for biodiversity, it was unclear if this was extended to other sites in Council ownership. It felt that there was greater potential for the Council to improve biodiversity present on all its sites recognising that issues such as nature recovery and climate actions are cross-cutting.
- 2.3.17 A written submission was received from the Rotherham Local Geological Sites Panel (RLGSP). It outlined the rich geodiversity of the Borough and gave examples of the important role of geodiversity in the formulation of a nature recovery strategy. RLGSP advocated a holistic and sympathetic understanding of landscapes and argued that highlighting geological foundations and features of an area and its (natural) sites will enhance the general public interest, understanding and engagement with the natural world and biodiversity.

2.4 Recommendations

- 2.4.1 The motion, as agreed, committed the Council to a range of activities, including ensuring its response to tackling climate change was extended to compliment the aligned cause of nature crisis. It also committed the Council to continue its work to enhance biodiversity by adopting innovative approaches to support wild flowered areas and ecological approaches to grounds maintenance. The review group thanked the local groups and residents for its assistance and advice in bringing forward the motion.
- 2.4.2 The review group thanked officers, partners and expert witnesses for their openness in responding to enquiries. They were assured by the evident commitment across agencies to address the challenges of nature recovery. The examples given showed the complexity and sensitivity of this work and

the part each agency plays. The review hopes that the observations and recommendations make a timely contribution to this vital agenda.

2.4.3 **The recommendations are as follows:**

- 1) Consider what resources are required to enable RMBC to lead on the Nature Emergency and co-ordinate its response to the Environment Act 2021, including the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Enhanced Biodiversity Net Gain, and other statutory reporting.
- 2) In line with the RMBC Nature Crisis Motion (and the mandatory Enhanced Biodiversity Duty), consider how RMBC's response to the nature crisis can be implemented, reported, and resourced (taking note of the response to climate action).
- 3) Consideration be given to the expansion of the Councillor's role as nature champions. This to include:
 - a. How member stewardship of natural assets and geodiversity and be enhanced.
 - b. How nature recovery and climate action can be built into ward plans.
 - c. The involvement in overview and scrutiny in future monitoring and steering of this work.
 - d. Support through the Member Development Programme to ensure Members are equipped with appropriate skills and knowledge to undertake this activity.
- 4) Contribute to the South Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (including appropriate resourcing) detailing Rotherham's involvement in meeting South Yorkshire national and global targets of "30 x 30" as required by the Environment Act 2021.
- 5) Consider and plan for how the RMBC estate including all green and blue infrastructure such as allotments, cemeteries, parks and sports fields, amenity spaces, communal gardens, railway and highway verges, field margins and hedgerows, rights of way and access routes, woodlands and nature reserves canals, rivers and other water dependent habitats; can contribute to biodiversity strategies and targets; demonstrating compliance with the Council's obligations for the Enhanced Biodiversity Duty (taking external advice where necessary).
- 6) Prioritise Local Wildlife Sites and Woodlands - especially those in RMBC ownership- to contribute to these targets, with a coordinated 'one council' programme to increase their positive conservation management with resourced management, monitoring and reporting.
- 7) Continue and expand the positive work already underway including tree planting, meadow management, changes in verge

management, community engagement etc (as stated in the RMBC Nature Crisis motion)

- 8) Utilise appropriate evidence and information from the forthcoming Rotherham State of Nature report, alongside the forthcoming SYLNRS, and the agreed priority species lists, to set local species recovery targets and work plans, and ensure sufficient resources are secured to embed this approach in long term management opportunities.
- 9) Continue to apply robust planning policies and other policy tools to contribute to nature's recovery across the Borough, noting that Local Planning Authorities must have regard to the South Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy once published.
- 10) Plan to work towards zero non-essential use of pesticides and zero glyphosate by the Council;
- 11) Work with communities to support expansion of household composting, and supporting the development of nature rich gardens, including through awareness raising of the waste hierarchy and minimising the use of new and scarce resources and the associated impacts on the natural environment that these issues have; substantive resourcing and engagement plans will be essential.
- 12) Work with partners, stakeholders, Parish Councils, communities, schools and residents on the above where appropriate.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 Members are recommended to approve the recommendations.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 See paragraphs 2.2.5 and Appendix 2.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 Implementation of any recommendation made to a partner organisation is at the discretion of the relevant partner organisation.
- 5.2 Implementation of recommendations addressed to a directorate of the Council is a matter reserved to the relevant directorate. Timescales for Council directorates responding to scrutiny recommendations are outlined in the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution of the Council.

6 Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 Any financial or procurement implications arising from this report will be considered as part of the Cabinet response to its recommendations.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no HR implications directly arising from this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 There are no implications directly arising from this report.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

–

10.1 Members of the OSMB review group have due regard to equalities and human rights in developing recommendations.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 Referenced throughout the report.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 The implications for partners are described in the main sections of the report. Implementation of any recommendation is at the discretion of the relevant partner organisation. The recommendations contained in this report are offered acknowledging the contributions that have been made by each of the partner organisations.

13 Risks and Mitigation

13.1 There are no risks directly arising from this report.

Accountable Officer(s)

Emma Hill, Head of Democratic Services and Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Report Author: Caroline Webb, Senior Governance Advisor
01709 822765 or caroline.webb@rotherham.gov.uk

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

[Agenda item - NOTICE OF MOTION - NATURE CRISIS - Rotherham Council](#)

25 May 2022 – Council Meeting

This Council notes we are in the middle of a nature crisis. Almost half of all UK wildlife is in long term decline and 15% of species are at risk of extinction. The climate crisis is only hastening this destruction of the natural environment, damaging habitats and disrupting ecosystems. Yet it is these very habitats that have the potential to lock up carbon and fight back against rising global temperatures. It is essential that we not only protect these spaces, but let them thrive – for the benefit of people, planet and nature. We recognise that the terms Nature, Ecological and Biodiversity can be and are often used interchangeably by people and, for the purpose of this motion, all mean the same thing.

Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta's review into The Economics of Biodiversity, commissioned by Her Majesty's Treasury, highlighted that humanity does not exist in isolation from nature but sits within it. Nature is an asset on which all aspects of our society depends and with biodiversity declining faster than at any time in human history, we are undermining the productivity, resilience and adaptability that nature lends our society.

As we recover from the Covid-19 crisis, the need for nature-rich green spaces where we live and work is clearer than ever and will help health, education and the economy build back stronger. We recognise that the Climate and Nature emergencies are intrinsically linked with each other and also to social justice; and by building a better world to deal with the Climate and Nature Crises we will also be building a better society. We recognise that action must be taken now to remedy this and to put nature into recovery at a local level, not only to benefit Rotherham, but in support of regional, national and international work to do the same.

This Council therefore notes and recognises that

- a) Nature is in long term decline and urgent action must be taken to reverse this.
- b) A thriving natural environment underpins a healthy, prosperous society.
- c) The nature and the climate crises are intrinsically linked and that the impacts of the climate crisis drive nature's decline, while restoring nature can help to tackle the climate crisis.
- d) Local people and groups have recognised the issues and have declared a Nature Crisis for Rotherham themselves and call on the Council to do so too.

This Council resolves to:

1. Therefore, this Council proposes to declare a Nature Crisis for Rotherham.
2. Ask the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to consider commissioning a review into how the Council can support improvements to ensure a more natural environment is enhanced.

3. Ensure our responsiveness on tackling climate change is extended to be complimentary to this separate but well aligned cause.
4. Continue to further our work on enhancing biodiversity by adopting innovative approaches to support wild flowered areas and ecological approaches to grounds maintenance.
5. Note the ongoing significant progress the Council is making through its Climate Change Action Plans for a carbon neutral Council by 2030 and Borough by 2040.

On being put to the vote, the motion as submitted was declared as carried by majority.

Appendix 2:

The Chair thanks the following Subject Matter Experts and Advisors consulted:

- Abbi Reid, MCIWM
- Robert Croxton, Naturalist
- Bill Bailey, Naturalist
- Cara Case, CPSS
- Dr Nicola Rivers, MCIEEM, SRWT
- Liz Ballard, Chief Executive SRWT
- Roy Mosely, SRWT
- Duncan Hawley, SAGT
- Kim Phillips, MBE
- Erika Phoenix, Catchment Partnership
- Sgt. James Shirley, SYP Rural Crime
- Sgt. Paul Jameson, SYP Rural Crime
- Katie Dearnley, SYP Engagement and Consultation Officer
- Richard Sulley, SYMCA Policy
- Laurie Heykoop, SYMCA Policy
- Andrew Fairburn, Severn Trent Water
- Tim Myatt, Yorkshire Water
- Claire Barrow, Environment Agency