

## **A Borough Nature Recovery Declaration**

### **This council acknowledges that:**

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 halt and reverse this is urgent;
- b) Nature provides us with vital support systems, 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 impacts of the climate change 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 across the Borough have an impact on nature, and we have responsibilities to make decisions to protect and enhance it.

### **This Council further acknowledges that:**

To address the nature crisis and aim to achieve the multiple environmental benefits that nature can bring to people, the 'Bigger, Better, More and Joined-up' principles of the 2010 Lawton Report – 'Making Space for Nature' - should be followed to help rebuild nature:

- a) There must be more space given to wildlife;
- b) Existing wildlife spaces must be expanded;
- c) The quality of existing wildlife spaces should be improved by better habitat management;
- d) The connectivity between wildlife spaces must be enhanced.

### **This Council resolves:**

In order to support the recovery of nature across Newcastle and wider Staffordshire, this council commits to:

1. Create **an annual** Local Nature Recovery Action Plan that will sit under the umbrella of the Councils Sustainable Environment Strategy and alongside complimentary policies such the Urban Tree Planting Strategy. **As part of this annual plan, we will invite Staffordshire Wildlife to submit an annual report and recommendations to be considered by the Council.**
2. Develop a Local Habitat Map that identifies existing habitat sites, priority areas for protection, improvement and expansion as part of the emerging Borough Local Plan. **To demonstrate this responsibility this council will commit to**
  - **To divest any investments in fossil fuels via the Local Government Pension Scheme**
  - **re-wilding 5% of the boroughs green spaces by 2025**
  - **Identify a site in the borough for a wetland, to support the restoration and expansion of natural habitat**
  - **Create an annual budget, to be determined by council for investment in the boroughs biodiversity projects.**

- Not building on a borough green space unless at least 51% of the effected ward population support the proposed development via a council initiated consultation process.

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

4. Improve access to nature by following the Natural England 'Nature nearby – Accessible Natural Greenspace' guidance.

5. Demonstrate leadership by championing Nature Recovery and supporting residents as well as the local business and education communities to take action to put nature into recovery.

6. Appoint the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Recycling as the member of the Cabinet as the designated lead for tackling the nature crisis.

7. Appoint the Executive Director of Operational Services as the Lead Officer for coordinating council operations in relation to local nature recovery.

8. Integrate the targets, objectives, and outcomes of this motion with those outlined in the existing Sustainable Environment Strategy to ensure measures to tackle climate issues compliment the principles of local nature recovery.

9. Wherever possible, the council will invest in nature-based solutions and seek to use contractors with the lowest carbon footprint, in order to tackle the local nature crisis and climate change together.

10. Provide training and development resources for Elected Members and staff about the need for and benefits of an effective local nature recovery actions.

11. That the Economy, Environment & Place Scrutiny Committee monitor the Recovery Action Plan alongside its scrutiny of the Sustainable Environment Strategy.

12. Work closely with Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Wildlife, North Staffordshire Friends of the Earth and other local partners to form a Staffordshire-wide Local Nature Recovery Partnership.

13. Inclusion within policy of the 2030 species abundance target, including the new requirement for planning applications to provide Biodiversity net gain and encourage developers to put nature and local nature recovery strategies at the heart of their work.

14. Council agrees to ask the Portfolio-holder for Environment to write to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and Alok Sharma, President of COP26 to urge a commitment on spending and timing for an urgent and effective scheme of investment in workforce training, technological innovation and industry standards to allow local government to make urgent progress in meeting its challenges meaningfully in the financial year 22/23.

Proposer: Cllr Fox-Hewitt

Seconder: Cllr Jones