

**Environment and
Sustainable Communities
Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**



16 January 2025

Management of DCC Land for Biodiversity –

2024-25 Update

**Report of Alan Patrickson, Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods
and Climate Change**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an update on the progress of the Parks and Countryside Team, together with colleagues within Clean and Green, in managing Nature Reserves and other Green Spaces for Biodiversity across Durham County Council (DCC) owned land.
2. To update on Parks and Countryside linkages to the Ecological Emergency and Climate Emergency reports. Full reports regarding the EEAP and CERP will be provided by colleagues separately.

Executive summary

3. The Council continues to support improvements to biodiversity, habitats, and landscapes for the benefit of people, communities, and wildlife.
4. Activities range from a host of landscape wide initiatives, through to the management of nature reserves, community conservation and education projects, facilities, and open space management. Progress continues to be evident across all work areas since previous committee presentations in May 2024.
5. The Parks and Countryside Team are continuing to make significant progress on the delivery of their objectives in terms of Biodiversity gain, alongside the wider Clean & Green adaption of current open space

management to benefit wider biodiversity goals, developed and reported through the recent Ecological Emergency Action Plan, (EEAP). Linkages refer to other projects and continuing delivery of programmes highlighting the issues referred to within this report.

6. The EEAP will soon feed into a County-wide Local Nature Recovery Plan, the development of which has seen progress in terms of public consultation and is currently finalising its overarching priorities and key measures for success. Countryside and Technical Services continue to play a role in inputting into the LNRS, giving guidance on a wide range of habitat types, including urban and peri-urban spaces within the strategy. The Ecology team are leading on the LNRS as the designated authority within the area.
7. The Parks and Countryside Team continue to deliver effective management for biodiversity across their 1500-hectare estate, which includes Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites and Destination Parks.
8. The Clean and Green Service now maintain 45 areas of meadow and wildflowers across the county. No new areas are currently planned until the biodiversity strategy is in place for the service. When this is complete, a more strategic and outcome-based approach can be taken in the selection of new sites. This will also partner with the LNRS.
9. The Teams have continued to effectively communicate key messages relating to biodiversity and climate change themes to a wide variety of schools and local communities. Specialist community projects and volunteering opportunities have continued to be delivered across the county. These have been targeted to facilitate a greater understanding of the value of biodiversity and of the countryside sites within people's own neighbourhoods and promote awareness of a wider nature recovery strategy and the impact of climate change. Groups engaged include primary and secondary schools, university/college students, pre-school children, groups of young people, adult groups, and retired communities.

Recommendation

10. That Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
 - a) Note that continued effective management of nature reserves, other countryside sites, and green spaces across Durham County Council is contributing significantly to biodiversity protection and gain.

- b) Note the progress made in delivering the linked objectives of the Parks and Countryside Service and Durham County Council's Ecological Emergency and Climate Emergency reports.
- c) Recognise the progress that has been made in the development of links between the Parks and Countryside Service and the delivery of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the county. Work in this area will continue as the LNRS develops and the Services remain committed to supporting the effective development of this strategy and aiding its delivery.
- d) Recognise that the proposed impacts of MTFP 15 may require mitigation in terms of prioritisation of site management and programming outputs.
- e) As per (d) above, mechanisms for seeking additional resource to continue successful programmes will be investigated.

Background

11. In their 2022-23 work programme, the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee included an item on the management of parks and green spaces across DCC owned land to come to formal committee. Members were provided with an overview of the management of DCC owned land for biodiversity on 23 February 2023, and the committee then attended a visit to Local Nature Reserves and open spaces on the 10 May 2023.
12. In their 2023-24 work programme the committee asked for an update on the progress of the Parks and Countryside and wider Clean and Green teams in managing DCC land for biodiversity. The committee attended a site visit at Hardwick Park on the 1 May 2024 led by the Principal Parks and Countryside Manager to see first-hand how biodiversity can be supported within a more formal outdoor setting. During this visit, members also heard about biodiversity management of other outdoor areas managed by the wider Clean & Green team. On the 10 May 2024 formal presentations were made to the committee and its members, offering further updates on the progress made, as well as the links between management practices and both the Ecological Emergency and Climate Emergency Response Plans, and the development of the county's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Update on Policies and Strategies

13. Management of the Parks and Countryside Estate continues to be shaped by Durham County Council's Vision, Environmental Statement and relevant policies within the Local Plan that aim to protect and enhance our biological resource, as well as be cognisant of the level of protection afforded to designated sites.

14. The updated 2024 Tree Management Policy continues to shape the corporate approach to managing trees for beauty, character, heritage, and biodiversity, whilst providing a level of reassurance for the public and householders regarding general tree safety and specific tree management.
15. The Council continues to react proactively to new legislative requirements pertaining to the environment; most recently the need for most developments within the catchment of the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Special Protection Area to be nutrient neutral. The Council is collaborating with partners, including Natural England, Northumbrian Water, Environment Agency, and Durham Wildlife Trust to develop mitigation strategies to enable development to proceed without negatively affecting the protected areas.
16. The council's Climate Emergency Response Plan 3 was adopted in July 2024. This plan runs from 2024-2027. Ensuring the county's natural environment is thriving and that it continues to play an important part in offsetting residual carbon emissions remains a key part of the plan's vision. The Parks and Countryside Team, alongside wider Clean and Green colleagues are continuing to contribute to this throughout their management practices and how they combat biodiversity loss. Positive management is currently aiding specific targets including halting the decline in the abundance of species, increasing tree and woodland cover, and restoring and creating habitats. The service areas are also continuing to support CERPs commitment to effective communication for action and informed decision making, breaking down the barriers to public understanding through comprehensive volunteering and education programmes, and targeted community activities. These continue to foster awareness of biodiversity and eco-systems, as well as climate change and natural solutions.
17. The work above links to the development of the county's Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The Parks and Countryside and wider Clean and Green Teams have been supporting the ongoing development of the LNRS by being a part of the Ecological Emergency work stream, and specialist sub-groups who are coming together to establish the key priorities of the strategy, and the practical measures needed to achieve them. Parks and Countryside Team have also been supporting public consultation on the strategy through their work with schools and other stakeholders. The LNRS is being developed to represent the views and needs of communities across the county and the Service continues to play an important part in this ongoing engagement process. Aiming for a draft by Spring 2025 and publication in Autumn 2025 – this aligns with what neighbouring authorities are planning.

Update on Resources

18. Investments for 2022/23 announced as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). This included additional staffing for the delivery of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Temporary Programming staff in the Countryside team, Rangers/Nature Reserve Officers, as well as support for woodland creation.
19. Temporary programming staff roles were extended for one financial year, with contracts now ending on 31 March 2026. These roles include one full-time Volunteer Programme Coordinator, one part-time Community Programme Coordinator and one full-time Assistant Education Officer.
20. Since recruitment to these three posts, engagement numbers have risen significantly across the Parks and Countryside Estate. The posts have played a central role in the delivery of engagement opportunities to over 5000 school pupils through 220 facilitated school visits in our destination parks. Their informal learning opportunities which include events, under-5s programmes and summer holiday clubs have engaged with 4000 people across the same period.
21. Across the wider countryside estate, the Volunteer Programme Coordinator has supported 66 new volunteers since the last committee presentations in May, bringing the total number of engaged volunteers to 336 since recruitment to the post. The work of the Community Programme Coordinator has engaged with over 600 members of harder to reach groups over the same period, and 2200 since the post began.
22. These engagement figures continue to show a significant level of growth across the three programming areas, providing benefits to biodiversity that include:
 - a. A large, growing volunteer workforce facilitating the management of our high-quality green spaces - nature reserves, country parks, railway paths and picnic areas are all supported by this workforce who undertake a wide range of practical activities around the county. Volunteers are supporting Ranger staff in their delivery of site management plans and associated biodiversity objectives.
 - b. Other community group involvement in practical activities and learning including harder to reach groups (e.g., those with additional needs, young people, those affected by poverty and deprivation) supporting the management of the countryside estate as well as helping to build resilient communities, tackle negative behaviours and develop local connections to countryside sites and green spaces.
 - c. Providing educational programmes that remind people of the value of high-quality green spaces, biodiversity, and eco-systems, increasing their understanding of the role the environment plays in the future of our planet and effects on climate change. Instilling

a life-long learning approach, providing opportunities for people of all ages to better connect with these themes and their local environment.

- d. Encouraging the people of County Durham to become more involved in the protection of biodiversity in their own neighbourhoods and support ecological recording. Undertaking effective interpretation, marketing and communication that increases public understanding of biodiversity, vital habitats, and the county's unique environmental features, many of which support rare, nationally significant, and protected species. Utilising all available resources to develop these communications – including digital opportunities and new technologies.

23. The Parks and Countryside Team and their role in managing DCC land for biodiversity has benefitted hugely from the decision to continue temporary programming contracts into the 2025/26 financial year, allowing a level of forward planning to retain and build on community linkages already established. The ongoing temporary nature of these roles, however, remains a real concern for the Service.

24. The Parks and Countryside team have been delivering for biodiversity through active land management of the Countryside Estate for over 50 years. Biodiversity is considered in all activities undertaken. Resource needed to manage the 1500 ha Countryside Estate which comprises of designations - SSSI (Sites of Special Scientific Interest - 6), LNR (Local Nature Reserve - 22), LWS (Local Wildlife Site - 20), Destination Parks (2) and recreational assets such as the railway path network is significant.

25. The recruitment of two new Ranger/Nature Reserve Officer posts as part of the 2022/23 MTFP has provided an increase in resource that had a profound effect on the Service's ability to deliver its site management objectives. However, as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan 15 there is a proposal to lose one full time Ranger post. If this goes ahead, we will look to mitigate impacts through reprioritisation of site management and programme support and seek further development of external funding streams.

26. Resources have been redirected onto Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) with baseline habitat assessments being undertaken this year at: Broompark, Hayberries, Pity Me Carrs, Low Newton Junction, Tanfield Lea, Causey Arch, Witton Dene, Lanchester Valley RP – hurbuck triangle, Hardwick Park, Cocken Wood, Ferryhill Carrs. Some of these sites have existing assessments that are historical, so a comparison of habitats is timely.

27. Ranger staff continue to play a significant role in community engagement programmes, providing expert advice and support to programming staff and their delivery of volunteer services, targeted community projects and outdoor learning across the wider countryside estate (nature reserves, picnic areas and the railway path network) to provide a sustainable approach to land management, and an ongoing commitment to DCC's Climate and Ecological Emergency declarations.
28. The additional staffing resource provided to the Parks and Countryside Service since 22/23 has allowed increased capacity to secure external funding for the benefit of biodiversity. This has continued this year with additional funding schemes being supported by Northumbrian Water, Durham Heritage Coast, Newcastle University, the AONB and various Local Area Action Partnerships and local councillors. Commercial acumen remains present and supporting biodiversity management using external opportunities is significantly adding value to existing capital investment projects, revenue growth opportunities, and other Environmental Service level priorities, including those highlighted by the CERP, EEAP reports.
29. The Council continues to make use of new funding streams and opportunities to diversify biodiversity on selected areas of amenity green space, for instance successful rounds on Urban Tree Challenge Fund, as well as a recently awarded Parks Levelling up Grant, and Towns and Villages Walking and Cycling Capital investment programme.
30. The Parks and Countryside Team and wider Clean and Green Colleagues continue to lead on and feed into wider projects and initiatives across teams, with efficient partnership working regularly undertaken for the benefit of biodiversity. The National Trust led Durham City Green Corridor Project has developed significantly over the last six months. DCC staff have had a significant role in the planning for biodiversity management and community engagement for council sites within the corridor, taking on the role of one of the projects main partners. The Service is also a principal partner in the Species Coastal Grasslands Reconnected Project, being led by Durham Heritage Coast, with other principal partners including the National Trust and Durham Wildlife Trust. This project is in the early stages of delivery but has brought £975,000 from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and National Lottery Heritage Fund to restore Magnesian Limestones grasslands and create further habitats along Durham's Heritage Coast. The service also fed into the EOI leading to a potential Nature Towns and Cities bid to expand capacity whilst building a broader approach to whole a wider landscape project.
31. External funding streams can deliver action held within the EEAP, most notably developer contributions for biodiversity net gain (BNG) to deliver

habitat enhancement on Council land. This work will be highlighted by colleagues as part of EEAP updates.

32. Currently, Parks and Countryside Team are responsible for delivering environmental benefits through Higher level Stewardship Schemes on five sites across the County. These schemes effectively pay the Authority for carrying an agreed specification of actions to improve habitat quality. All these schemes are nearing or finished the ten-year contract, and have annual, rolling contracts used until the future of environmental schemes are clearer. The forthcoming Environmental Land Management (ELMs) scheme, which will replace current Agri-environment schemes, should provide a mechanism to fund positive land management for biodiversity on parts of the Councils rural landholdings. We may look to increase the amount of land managed this way. However, we are still to see what the new schemes entail and until then will continue our existing schemes on an annual basis.

Clean and Green - Biodiversity and Sustainability Delivery

33. Durham County Council continues to provide major, active land management through both the Parks and Countryside, and Clean and Green and services involved with the woodland estate (CPAL and Landscape).
34. Parks and Countryside resources continue to be allocated to effective biodiversity management practices in high priority areas, such as the SSSI's and through ongoing Countryside Stewardship schemes.
35. Agreed work (through Natural England) is being achieved, with regular assessments of SSSIs being carried out by Natural England. These assessments facilitate targets established as part of the Environment Act. They monitor the effectiveness of biodiversity management practices implemented on SSSIs, and the current condition of rare and protected features on a landscape scale to help work towards nature recovery. There is a requirement that management practices are extremely high-level on all SSSIs, and favourable feature condition assessments are a strong measure of success. One such assessment was undertaken by Natural England within the last seven months. This showed feature conditions to be 'favourable' on the Parks and Countryside SSSI of Quarrington Hill Grasslands which was assessed as species rich, exceeding its targets for the presence of positive indicator species.
36. The Service continues to follow individual site management plans which have been established for all Parks and Countryside sites and are valid for 5 years. Each plan has an annual work programme that identifies what tasks are carried out in any year. Reactive work continues to be needed regularly - due to adverse weather, anti-social behaviour, or

customer comment or queries. Available resource will dictate actual works on site.

37. Contractors continue to be used to deliver larger targeted actions on sites, particularly those that have Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) support payments from DEFRA agreements. Parks and Countryside are awaiting confirmation of Defra review of the HLS regime and what this means for financial support of high value site management moving forward.
38. The 22/23 growth investments have provided further opportunities to engage the wider public in facilitating the collection of data, but there is little potential for full ecological assessments and reports across the entire estate (apart from LWS) – which would increase the potential to deliver significant biodiversity benefits through the restoration and creation of wildlife habitats. This will continue to be a piecemeal informal process, as per below.
39. Engaging the public in the collection of data has continued to be achieved through citizen science projects included as part of targeted sessions with community groups, and public Bioblitz events. The service has also supported national initiatives to encourage participation in surveying species including Butterfly Conservation's Big Butterfly Count and National Insect Day since the last committee presentations were made in May 2024. The ongoing commitment to providing these activities has facilitated species identification and recording by the public with assistance from local recording experts. Community based data collection continues to be achieved through the promotion of self-led opportunities to get involved in surveying, which has been communicated in print and through digital/social media platforms.
40. The wider Clean and Green Team are responsible for providing a variety of services including grounds maintenance of parks, open spaces, school grounds, cemeteries, and closed churchyards. Currently, the Clean and Green team are responsible for around 21 million square metres of green space across the county.
41. The Clean and Green Service has implemented a suite of biodiversity enhancements on open spaces ranging from habitat creation to changes in cutting regimes. The largest of the habitat creation projects has been the seeding of a hectare of open space in Durham to create a species rich grassland supporting a range of wildlife. Other interventions include overseeding grasslands with wildflowers at the Durham Coast and reducing cutting regimes on amenity grasslands across the county to allow wildflowers to set seed and spread. The service has also planted scrub woodland and installs and maintains all the Urban Tree Challenge Fund (UTCF) sites, with around eight hundred trees planted per year under this scheme.

42. Clean and Green Service currently maintains forty-five areas of meadow and wildflowers. This number includes 8 new sites (2023/2024). No new sites are currently proposed as we are currently completing a strategy for future sites, which will tie into the LNRS and give good strategic direction to new areas and deliver an outcome-based approach.
43. Other notable achievements include the continual reduction in the use of herbicides, and this will continue. Trials in several wards to cease spraying around obstacles on green areas has been very successful. A wider reduction in herbicide use was agreed as part of MTFP 15 (subject to financial settlement from central government).
44. Peated compost is still used by Morrison Busty nursery as peat free trials are continuing. Yet, no viable alternative has been found. The team are intending to undertake trials in 2025 of biochar enriched compost, and that is hoped to provide a viable alternative to peated compost.

Engagement, Education, and Behaviour Change

45. The Parks and Countryside Programming Team have continued to deliver biodiversity/climate change themed learning to large numbers of children and young people through school education, events, and activities. A captivating programme for schools engaged has engaged with 5000 school pupils since the last reporting period in May 2024, with an additional 4000 people taking part in informal learning opportunities, events, and activities.
46. The nature of many of these visits has been shaped by DCC's climate change and ecological emergency delivery plans. The formal education programmes at our destination parks have several new facilitated workshops on offer for primary schools including *Keep the World Clean, Let Nature Recover, Eco-Explorers, Animal Adaptations, There is no Planet B and Temperate Forest*. Over 100 sessions of these workshops have been delivered to primary schools over the last seven months. A strong new KS3 offer for schools is also in development, ready to be launched early 2025 which focuses entirely on themes linked to nature recovery biodiversity and climate change themes. Links to the EEAP remain interlaced throughout the Parks and Countryside outdoor learning programme at all key stages and explores the ecological emergency in detail with groups, delivering activities that focus on vital themes alongside biodiversity, including ecology, food, energy, and weather/landscape changes.
47. A full programme of educational opportunities to support consultation on nature recovery has now been delivered by the Parks and Countryside Education Team, giving over 400 children a voice to the Local Nature

Recovery Strategy. Consultation work is continuing with to gauge the level of environmental understanding that exists among young people.

48. An extensive level of other public engagement work has continued to take place across the Parks and Countryside Estate in the last seven months in the form of targeted community programmes. These have included a comprehensive volunteer led guided walks programme, alongside workshops that have supported 600 hard to reach individuals into our parks, nature reserves, railway paths and picnic areas. These harder to reach groups have included children, young people, older people, those with additional needs (physical, emotional, behavioural), and those affected by deprivation.
49. The delivered community projects have directly supported the Climate Emergency and Ecological Emergency response plans, bringing information on climate change effects and natural solutions to people on a more personal and local level, and directly influencing behaviours for the benefit of biodiversity and conservation.
50. Planned community projects are in place for 2025-26 financial year focusing on sites identified as at higher risk of anti-social behaviour, lack of public buy-in in terms of habitat protection, and low levels of engagement/learning in terms of biodiversity, ecology, and climate change priorities.
51. The Parks and Countryside Team has continued to see a significant rise in the number of volunteers supporting both practical site management activities and programming objectives. This increase now equates to a percentage rise of 246% in the number of volunteers who have supported the Service since the appointment of a new Volunteer Co-ordinator in 2022. This includes regular weekly volunteers alongside corporate groups who have contributed hours to the Service.
52. Volunteer hours have risen by over 90% since 2022 with 14,200 volunteer hours being undertaken throughout 2023. This huge number of volunteer hours equates to the equivalent of £160,000 of annual in-kind assistance. This figure is based on the metric used by DCC AAP projects when calculating volunteer match funding. Over 9,400 volunteer hours have been delivered so far, this financial year (April-November 2024), showing a consistent high-level of commitment from individuals and groups, while demonstrating the continued positive impact of the Volunteer Programme Coordinator role. This work continues to include practical tasks that are undertaken in support of site management staff and their biodiversity management priorities. They also include hours devoted by volunteers to the community guided walks programme which helps promote the historical, cultural, and environmental features and value of the county's countryside to the public, and sense of ownership for local green spaces.

53. New opportunities for corporate groups to become involved in Parks and Countryside volunteering has continued to be developed since the last committee report in May 2024, with 550 corporate volunteering hours delivered from a range of local businesses and organisations. Development of the corporate offer will continue into the new financial year, with additional opportunities on offer and successful marketing and promotion strategies remaining in place to maximise uptake.
54. The Parks and Countryside Team have developed higher levels of involvement in national initiatives to support the protection of nature reserves and other countryside sites and green spaces around the county. A full programme of community engagement was delivered over the summer months and included community litter picks, bioblitz events, bat walks, *Big Butterfly Count* activities and celebrations of *National Insect Week* and *Don't Step on a Bee Day*. The Service also promoted activities as part of *Heritage Open Days* and carried out community activities linked to fire prevention on countryside sites and effective dog control. Community and educational opportunities were also provided to harder to reach communities through the Fun and Food initiative to support those who may otherwise have been unable to visit our green spaces.
55. Interpretation improvements continue to be made across the Parks and Countryside Estate. Since the last update to the committee in May 2024, new interpretation has been installed at Low Newton Junction, and projects developed for replacement interpretation, signage and waymarking across the Auckland Way Railway Path, Ferryhill Carrs and Hardwick Park. These will continue to provide new levels of information relating to site specific biodiversity and conservation value, historical and cultural significance, as well as how countryside sites play a role in nature-based solutions and the effects of climate change. Interpretation improvements continue to make a significant contribution to education and promoting public awareness and ownership objectives highlighted by the CERP, EERP, and LNRS.
56. Social Media channels managed by the Parks and Countryside Team in partnership with DCC marketing and communications are seeing a consistently good level of engagement and are continuing to be used to promote key topics linked to the ecological and climate emergencies. - Public posts are published regularly to raise awareness of the work of the Team across the estate and its importance to biodiversity and the ecological emergency. General posts are also regularly made on the platforms, often linked into national initiatives to educate followers about County Durham's wildlife and habitats, as well as ways they can get involved in helping their local green spaces. Just recently we have been given permission to develop a logo for the Service, which will assist with promoting our objectives.

Clean and Green Open Space Management for Biodiversity

57. Ongoing intensive maintenance is the enemy of biodiversity; restricting plant growth through mowing and strimming limits or prevents habitat creation for insects, small mammals, birds, and other animals. In addition, native weed species are more than twice as beneficial to pollinators and insects as ornamental and wildflowers (Balfour & Ratnieks 2022, appendix 4). By using different methods, Clean and Green are seeking to change the management of currently mown grassed areas to make them havens for wildlife. However, a good balance between providing useful public amenity and aesthetics and creating wildlife habitats is possible. The approach is also dependant on future BNG aspirations, the LNRS and wider policy needs.
58. In partnership with DCC's Ecology team, a strategy for habitat and meadow creation across the county is in development, which will follow national mapping from agencies such as Bug life, who have created a Bee-lines map, showing the commonly used pollinator corridors across the country. By cultivating meadow and wild sites along the bee lines, their use by pollinators can increase. In turn, and in doing so, other animals, insects, and plant species are supported as well. This approach is intended to dovetail with the LNRS and BNG strategy and will not therefore be finalised until after those policies have been approved.
59. The approach for each site will be determined by the nature of the site itself, some will significantly benefit from wildflower meadows, some will be grassland meadows, many will be encouraged to self-seed to produce native grass meadows. When developing plans for each site, a wide variety of factors will be considered when dividing how to manage. Including native species in the area, soil and land type, cost, and benefit to the local community.

Use of Herbicides in public spaces

60. Use of Glyphosate is still widespread across the county and is the current primary herbicide. Whilst studies show it is safe for long term use, (please see the amenity forum document in the appendix 2) there is a growing concern around its use. You can see the results of Cardiff's trials of alternative herbicides in appendix 3. Through informal in-house trials we have determined that there are currently no viable cost-effective alternatives to glyphosate for herbicide in the public realm. As such, the approach to reducing dependency on glyphosate, should be to simply reduce the use of herbicide.
61. Trials were undertaken in 23/24 and 24/25 on reducing herbicide use on open spaces in select wards around the county. The trials were a success with no complaints about weeds around obstacles. As part of

MTFP 15 (subject to the financial settlement from central government), a reduction of herbicide use has been proposed to widen the above approach to the whole county.

Conclusions

62. Durham County Council continues to be pro-active in its reaction to new legislation and national policy development and collaborates with partners to protect natural assets. The Council has committed to a Climate Change Response Plan and most recently an Ecological Emergency Action Plan which ensures through decision-making, that net gains in biodiversity through the adoption of environmentally beneficial management regimes.

63. The work promotes an awareness of biodiversity and the impact of climate change on nature within County Durham.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable

Finance

MTFP 15 proposals and impacts thereof will need to be considered.

Consultation

Not applicable

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable

Human Rights

Not applicable

Climate Change

The decline in biodiversity detailed in previous reports.

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable

Staffing

MTFP proposals and impacts thereof will require consideration.

Accommodation

Not applicable

Risk

Not applicable

Procurement

Not applicable