

Nature Recovery Declaration

Cabinet Member for Housing, Ecology and Climate Change



Date: 07/06/2022
Agenda Item: 5
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Key Decision? YES
Local Ward All
Members

CABINET

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Nationally we face a nature crisis where wild species are in decline, habitats are being destroyed, and the UK is the most nature-depleted country in Europe. Climate change and nature recovery are inextricably linked – as many promising and effective solutions to the climate crisis are Nature Based Solutions, which have the potential to bring in funding for the council.
- 1.2 The Wildlife Trust is encouraging local authorities to make a commitment to nature’s recovery by implementing a Nature Recovery Declaration. Making a Nature Recovery Declaration is an action from the Staffordshire Sustainability Board (SSB), of which Lichfield District Council is a member. There is a push from the SSB and chair of the Wildlife Trust, for the authorities who haven’t already done so to take action. There is more focus now on the climate and nature crisis than there has ever been, with mounting pressure on businesses, authorities and organisations to respond through recognition, commitment, and action.
- 1.3 The Declaration builds on momentum from COP26 and would place the council in a strong position to fulfil the aspirations and legal requirements of the new Environment Act, which became law in November 2021. Lichfield District Council has a reputation for being a leading authority in Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain, and there is a desire to keep that notoriety.
- 1.4 This paper proposes the council makes a Nature Recovery Declaration, obligating it to targeted actions which make a difference to nature locally.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves the text of and makes a Nature Recovery Declaration.

3. Background

- 3.1 The UK is facing wide scale habitat loss, and its state of nature and species are under threat. However, figures show that restoring nature habitat systems could provide up to 37% of the CO₂ mitigation required to meet the Paris Agreement.
- 3.2 Committing to nature’s recovery, through a Nature Recovery Declaration would obligate the council to undertake targeted actions which make a real difference to nature locally, and to work towards a Nature Recovery Network, along with embedding nature recovery across Council policy and all work areas. The declaration is a first step for each authority, and the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust has worked with the council to create a declaration unique to the district (see Appendix).

- 3.3 The Wildlife Trust are creating a 'Nature Recovery Network' which would work towards establishing a coherent and resilient ecological network where wildlife can live, commute, forage, and breed. For its part, in 2019 Lichfield District Council commissioned the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to complete a Nature Recovery Network map of the whole District.
- 3.4 This work links to the Environment Act 2021, in particular three sections (in part 6 of the Act) which link to biodiversity. Staffordshire County Council is required to produce and implement a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), and been requested by DEFRA to be the provisional LNRS responsible authority – whilst recognising that this required a collaborative partnership approach which Lichfield District Council will be involved in. The Nature Recovery Declarations acknowledge the issues around biodiversity and contain actions linked to the LNRS. The LNRS includes a map and strategy setting out nature recovery priorities in Staffordshire and Stoke, and was agreed on the 10th of February 2022.
- 3.5 Only a handful of local authorities around the country have declared an ecological emergency, and by making this commitment, with Cabinet's endorsement, to support nature's recovery, Lichfield is demonstrating leadership by recognising the urgency of the nature crisis – that it is no longer enough to simply try and halt the decline of nature, but to try and reverse the decline, and increase species and habitat abundance.

Alternative Options	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do nothing. Not approving and making a Nature Recovery Declaration, will result in Lichfield District Council not making progress against the objectives of the Staffordshire Sustainability Board (SSB). The Council's reputation as a leader in considering Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain may be jeopardised.
Consultation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leadership Team 2. Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (SWT)
Financial Implications	<p>There are no direct financial implications associated with making a Nature Recovery Declaration.</p> <p>However, responding to the nature crisis, which has been articulated within this document, may have financial implications which would be dependent on the mitigating activities chosen and carried out.</p> <p>By investing in Nature Based Solutions, there are opportunities to generate revenue funding for the council – through managing offsets on our own land and assets, and becoming a broker to connect buyers and sellers.</p>
Approved by Section 151 Officer	Yes
Legal Implications	<p>There are no direct legal implications associated with making a Nature Recovery Declaration.</p> <p>However, if not approved, Lichfield District Council may be at risk and vulnerable to challenge (i.e., by the public, community groups, media) – over our response to the climate and nature crisis. Without the declaration, and associated works, LDC will be less prepared for the full legal obligations and responsibilities of the new Environment Act.</p>
Approved by Monitoring Officer	Yes

<p>Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable people to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – live healthy and active lives • Shape place to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – keep it clean, green and safe – preserve the characteristics – make sure sustainability and infrastructure needs are balanced • Develop prosperity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – enhance the district for all – invest in the future • Be a good council that is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – transparent and accountable – responsive and customer focussed
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<p>Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications</p>	<p>None</p>
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<p>Crime & Safety Issues</p>	<p>None</p>
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<p>Environmental Impact</p>	<p>By making a Nature Recovery Declaration, the council will be developing and building on the work it is already undertaking and collaborating with other authorities of the Staffordshire Sustainability Board (SSB), with regards to the climate and nature crisis. It will help focus on the important commitments to the environment by helping create more, bigger, better, and joined up habitats. Investing in nature recovery and Nature Based Solutions will also help alleviate and resolve impacts of Climate Change.</p> <p>Not making a Nature Recovery Declaration would leave Lichfield District Council behind the rest of Staffordshire and the SSB with regards to the climate and nature crisis – potentially missing out on opportunities for collaborative works that have bigger impact and better outcomes for the environment and the district.</p>
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<p>GDPR / Privacy Impact Assessment</p>	<p>None</p>
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	Risk Description & Risk Owner	Original Score (RYG)	How We Manage It	Current Score (RYG)
A	Reputational. Lichfield’s current reputation as a lead authority in ecological matters is jeopardised - owned by Cabinet	LIKLIHOOD IMPACT SEVERITY	Lichfield District Council will retain their reputation and legacy for being a lead in environmental matters, with; Natural England, other organisations, and partners, and within the Staffordshire Sustainability Board (SSB) by making a Nature Recovery Declaration.	LIKLIHOOD IMPACT SEVERITY
B	Environmental. Impacts to the environment are not mitigated or worsened - owned by Cabinet	LIKLIHOOD IMPACT SEVERITY	By making a Nature Recovery Declaration, Lichfield District Council will actively work to create, restore, and enhance the districts local wildlife, which will positively impact the environment and respond to the climate and nature crisis. Staying ahead and involved with the collaborative work from the Staffordshire Sustainability Board (SSB) can lead to bigger/better environmental outcomes.	LIKLIHOOD IMPACT SEVERITY

C	Legal Responsibilities towards the Climate and Nature Crisis are not met - owned by Cabinet	LIKLIHOOD	Lichfield District Council has until 2023 to be fully compliant with the Environment Act 2021. Making a Nature Recovery Declaration will put the council in a stronger position to understand and fulfil those requirements and legal obligations.	LIKLIHOOD
		IMPACT		IMPACT
		SEVERITY		SEVERITY
D	Legal, Open to Challenge due to lack of action or refusal to work with SSB in regards to the Climate and Nature Crisis - owned by Cabinet	LIKLIHOOD	Through making a Nature Recovery Declaration, and remaining an active and involved member of the Staffordshire Sustainability Board (SSB), Lichfield District Council will be able to demonstrate our willingness to respond to the climate and nature crisis alongside other Staffordshire authorities, and can receive support by the SSB should challenge occur.	LIKLIHOOD
		IMPACT		IMPACT
		SEVERITY		SEVERITY

Background documents Any previous reports or decisions linked to this item	Lichfield District Council (LDC) Nature Recovery Declaration
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Relevant web links Any links for background information which may be useful to understand the context of the report	https://www.staffs-wildlife.org.uk/blog/liz-peck/staffordshire-county-councils-declaration-natures-recovery https://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/downloads/file/1400/ecology-nature-recovery-network-mapping-2019
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