

The Kirklees Biodiversity Strategy

The overall aim of all biodiversity work is to halt and reverse the decline of biodiversity

The Objectives of the Biodiversity Strategy

The objectives of the Biodiversity Strategy in Kirklees are:

- To inform key partners, landowners and the private sector of the importance of land management for biodiversity and, its role in addressing and mitigating the effects of climate change.
- To ensure that biodiversity is addressed and taken into account in the delivery of all relevant council services and the council is compliant with National Performance Indicator 197 (the positive conservation management of Local Sites).
- To support biodiversity work in the wider district.

Why is Biodiversity Important?

Most people acknowledge that wildlife and the natural environment are important in their own right but biological diversity is also a key sustainability issue, with many economic and social benefits of managing land for biodiversity. These include:

- Climate change mitigation; semi-natural habitats like blanket bog and woodland help lock up and accumulate carbon so reducing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.
- Helping to monitor the effects of climate change.
- Reduced flood risk by storing water in wetland habitats, so reducing peak river flows.
- Reduced pollution levels in watercourses; by releasing stored water over a longer period of time wetlands increase low water flows of rivers which dilutes pollutants.
- Reduced soil erosion from agricultural land; a number of land management practices which benefit biodiversity help stabilise and retain soils on the land.
- Reduced air pollution; trees and other semi-natural vegetation help capture particulate air pollutants in urban areas.
- An improved quality of life for all by providing a more attractive environment.

What is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity is short for biological diversity. It refers to the variety of life on earth, from the largest species of mammals and biggest of trees, down to the most microscopic of bacteria. Humans are just one part of this range of complex relationships, which include everything from our rarest plants and animals to those common to our local environment.

Managing land for biodiversity may result in reduced agricultural production. This is offset by those additional benefits (often termed 'ecosystem benefits') mentioned above.

Biodiversity and Climate Change

The conservation and enhancement of biodiversity is an important contribution we can make towards addressing climate change. For example, many natural and semi-natural habitats act as carbon 'sinks', storing carbon from the atmosphere. We need to maximise the use of these

carbon sinks through appropriate land management practices. Of prime importance in Kirklees are the upland blanket bogs which contain enormous quantities of carbon in their peat soils. If we fail to act on the causes of climate change, the consequences for biodiversity could be devastating, as species fail to cope with the changing climate and environment. We can help wildlife adapt to climate change by creating habitat networks.

The Kirklees Biodiversity Strategy – Framework for Delivery

The strategy outlines the approach to meeting the targets for Habitats and Species of Principal Importance as set out in the Kirklees Biodiversity Action Plan. There are several national drivers to help deliver such biodiversity benefits. They include:

- Legislation which protects certain species and habitats against harm or loss.
- Planning Policy Statement 9 on Biological and Geological Conservation.
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 which imposes a duty on public bodies to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Other related environmental policies that benefit biodiversity indirectly (such as the Water Framework Directive, 2000).
- Financial support mechanisms including agri-environment, forestry and a range of other grant schemes such as landfill tax credits, lottery, etc.
- The realisation of the importance of ecosystem services provided by semi-natural habitats, especially relating to climate change.

These drivers and incentives will form the basis of the Kirklees Biodiversity Strategy with the aim of delivering the Kirklees Biodiversity Action Plan through the following processes.

Planning and Development: by achieving the highest standards of good practice in development control and ensuring the new Kirklees Local Development Framework is robust with regard to biodiversity protection and enhancement.

Council Services: build on the council's EMAS accreditation, in particular by adopting the principles as set out in the NERC Duty and demonstrating excellent environmental practices.

Farmers and Landowners: by encouraging farmers, individuals, companies and other landowners to manage their land for biodiversity benefit and to support their work through information provision and helping them to access funding streams.

Voluntary Organisations, Community Groups and Schools: to encourage, support and work with these groups to deliver biodiversity objectives in Kirklees for the benefit of local communities.

Partnership Working: our achievements are down to partnership working. We will continue to harness and develop the skills and high levels of knowledge and commitment in the Biodiversity Partnership, in a way that brings rewards for wildlife and people.

Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping – Setting out the Geographical Priorities in Kirklees

Kirklees has a varied natural environment, ranging from the remote Pennine uplands of the west, to the intensively farmed agricultural land to the south-east. The urban settlements thread through this landscape, each with their own identity. As with local communities, a "one-size fits all" approach to management for biodiversity is inappropriate and for this reason a 'Biodiversity Opportunities Map' has been developed for the district. This establishes the overarching habitat types across the district and identifies them as priorities in those particular areas.

Further Information

The Kirklees Biodiversity Action plan www.kirklees.gov.uk/biodiversity

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan <http://www.ukbap.org.uk/>

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