

## **NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **HIGHWAYS AND NEIGHBOURHOODS CABINET MEMBER**

#### **BIODIVERSITY**

##### **1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 To adopt the revised Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan (“BAP” or “Plan”) and commit the Council to actions in the Plan.
- 1.2 To commit the Council to a target of 2 hectares (ha) of Local Nature Reserve for every 1,000 people.
- 1.3 To provide an update on Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), Local Geological Sites (LGS) and the Single Data Set. To commit the Council to manage Local Sites that it owns or controls to favour wildlife and geology.
- 1.4 To agree the Council's payment to the Lincolnshire Biodiversity Partnership (“LBP” or “Partnership”).

##### **2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The term ‘biodiversity’ is now used to describe the variety of life on earth and the systems that support that variety.
- 2.2 In 2008, the Council adopted the second edition of the BAP (minute ref 18(17)). Over the years, the Partnership has achieved many of the targets in the Plan. The third edition of the Plan is now ready for action.
- 2.3 The Council has declared ten Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) to date. Recently, the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) set a target of 2 hectares (ha) of LNR for every 1,000 people. As the LSP no longer exists, the Council will need to set its own targets for LNRs.
- 2.4 In 2008, the Council also agreed to work with the Partnership to survey and select LWS and LGS (minute ref 19(18)). These Local Sites are protected by the 2003 Local Plan and the Core Strategy. We survey and select them using clear guidelines. By April 2011, we had surveyed over 300 sites and 187 of these had been selected as Local Sites.
- 2.5 For the Single Data Set, the Council has to report the percentage of Local Sites that are positively managed for wildlife or geology. From March 2009 to March 2011, this figure increased from 59 per cent to 70 per cent. The Council has improved this figure by working on sites such

as road verges, Broughton Pocket Park and Conesby Quarry. We now need to do more on our sites whilst also supporting private landowners.

2.6 The Council now needs to decide whether to continue working in this way and whether to agree the payment for the Partnership.

### **3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

#### **3.1 Option one**

- a) To adopt the revised Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan.
- b) To commit the Council to actions in the Plan.
- c) To adopt a target of 2 hectares (ha) of LNR for every 1,000 people.
- d) To agree the Council's payment to the LBP.

#### **3.2 Option two**

- a) To prepare a separate BAP that would only be used by the Council.
- b) To commit the Council to actions in its own Plan.
- c) To set a higher or lower target for Local Nature Reserves.
- d) To pay for fewer services from the LBP or none at all.

### **4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

#### **4.1 Option one**

4.1.1 Council staff have been working with the Lincolnshire BAP for over ten years. By working with the Partnership, the Council has achieved much more than it would do on its own.

4.1.2 The Council will need to pay £9,957.64 to benefit from the Partnership services for 2012/13. This payment covers the running of the BAP, habitat work groups, the Local Sites systems and the local environmental records centre.

4.1.3 An increase from 1.2 to 2 hectares of LNR for every 1,000 people in North Lincolnshire seems realistic. We have plans to declare new reserves in the next three years.

4.1.4 Working with Local Sites and the Plan will involve all parts of the Council that own or control buildings, Local Sites, parks and other open areas.

#### **4.2 Option Two**

4.2.1 For the Council to work outside the Partnership would take up a lot of staff time and money. It would mean losing the support of other organisations that work with the Lincolnshire BAP.

4.2.2 The Local Strategic Partnership Environment Board supported the current target for Local Nature Reserves. A higher or lower figure could be chosen, but there is no clear reason to do this.

4.2.3 If the Council does not manage Local Sites, then they will start to decline. The Council's Single Data set figures will get worse and the Council will fail to meet its duty to conserve biodiversity.

4.2.4 If the Council does not pay for services from the Lincolnshire Biodiversity Partnership, it will hit the following problems:

- We will not have support in carrying out the BAP or reporting BAP actions.
- We will not have a system to deal with Local Sites for the Local Development Framework or the Single Data Set.
- We will not have easy access to wildlife records and will have to pay for each data search.

## **5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)**

### 5.1 Financial

5.1.1 Paying for services from the Partnership will cost £9,957.64 for 2012/13. This shall be met from the Environment Team budget. Trying to meet the Council's duties in-house would cost more than this in staff time or consultant fees and new systems.

5.1.2 With careful planning, we may be able to reduce the costs of some projects whilst also working to enhance biodiversity. We can often get grants to cover some of the costs.

### 5.2 Staffing

5.2.1 We will not need extra staff under Option 1. To carry out option 2 would be a big drain on staff time or might require extra staff.

### 5.3 Property

5.3.1 Our duties already require us to manage our property to benefit wildlife and geology (see section 6). Like many landowners, the Council owns land that has value for wildlife, but also has potential development value. Where we cannot avoid development of a Local Site we require measures through planning to enhance biodiversity or provide replacement habitat.

## **6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)**

6.1 We have carried out an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) of the recommendations. The main points are as follows:

### 6.2 Statutory

6.2.1 All public authorities have a duty to conserve biodiversity under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. For the Single Data Set, the Council has to report on the percentage of Local Sites that are in positive management.

### 6.3 Environmental

6.3.1 The recommendations will improve the natural environment and may also improve the built environment and historic sites.

### 6.4 Crime and Disorder, Health and Social Inclusion.

6.4.1 Actions to improve biodiversity have been shown to reduce crime, fear of crime and vandalism. They also help to improve the mental and physical health of local people. Volunteers and community groups are actively involved in the BAP.

## 7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

7.1 The Partnership has consulted the public on the draft Action Plan via its website, the Lincolnshire Show, Lincolnshire newspapers and radio interviews. Over 260 questionnaires were returned.

7.2 We carried out an internal consultation in October 2011 and agreed amendments with colleagues.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 To adopt the revised Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan and commit the Council to actions in the Plan.

8.2 To commit the Council to a target of 2 hectares (ha) of Local Nature Reserve for every 1,000 people.

8.3 To commit the Council to manage Local Sites for wildlife and geology.

8.4 To agree payment to the Lincolnshire Biodiversity Partnership.

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### **Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

- Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan – Third edition