

## **Somerset West and Taunton Council**

### **Ecological Emergency Motion**

Proposed by Councillor Dave Mansell and seconded by Councillor Dixie Darch

#### **Council notes:**

- 1) Our societies and economies are intimately linked with and depend on biodiversity and nature. The natural world is essential for the provision of nutritious food (with soil and pollinators having a vital role), clean water, fresh air, medicines, and protection from extreme weather, as well as being our source of energy and raw materials.
- 2) The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the relationship between people and nature. When we destroy and degrade habitats, we increase the risk of disease spillover from wildlife to people.
- 3) A recent assessment by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) found that species extinction rates are tens to hundreds of times higher than historical averages. Around one million animal and plant species are threatened with extinction, many within decades - more than ever before in human history.
- 4) Due to overuse of natural resources, WWF's 2020 global Living Planet Index shows an average 68% fall in monitored populations of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish between 1970 and 2016.
- 5) The State of Nature 2019 report highlighted the critical decline in biodiversity in the UK. Farming has had the biggest effect in recent decades and the impact of climate change is now increasing. 15% of UK species are classified as threatened with extinction and 2% are already extinct.
- 6) The Environment Bill will require the introduction of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Nature Recovery Networks.
- 7) Councils already declaring an ecological or biodiversity emergency include Bath & North East Somerset, Brighton and Hove, Bristol, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, Cotswold, Forest of Dean, Herefordshire, Mendip, South Somerset and Sutton.

#### **Council resolves to:**

- 1) Declare an ecological emergency.
- 2) Address ecological issues alongside climate emergency actions and ensure that

opportunities to gain co-benefits from addressing both the climate and the ecological emergencies are maximised.

- 3) Add ecological implications alongside those for climate and sustainability in committee and council reports.
- 4) Where possible, embed climate action and ecological initiatives within all council work areas, including COVID-19 recovery projects and programmes.
- 5) Promote woodland planting and rewilding in the right places and with the right species, peatland restoration, natural flood management, wild flower meadows, and habitat creation and restoration. As well as being important for biodiversity, these actions can often have an important co-benefit of storing carbon, so helping to address climate change.
- 6) Reduce energy and material consumption by promoting waste reduction, reuse and recycling, product durability, energy efficiency and renewable energy generation. Avoid consumption that threatens further destruction of globally important wildlife habitats and the use of single-use plastics without effective and on-going recycling in place.
- 7) Work with local, county, regional and national partners, including land managers and DEFRA, town and parish councils and the two local MPs to increase wildlife habitats, green infrastructure and natural capital in Somerset West and Taunton.
- 8) Ensure that addressing the climate and ecological emergencies and nature recovery are strategic priorities for planning policies and design guides for new development, including by identifying appropriate areas for habitat restoration and biodiversity gain.
- 9) Manage Council services, buildings and land in a biodiversity-friendly manner, including by reviewing use of harmful chemicals, such as pesticides, and taking opportunities to create new wildlife habitats.
- 10) Provide advice for local communities on how to incorporate biodiversity, green infrastructure and natural capital into Neighbourhood Plans and other initiatives.
- 11) Encourage residents to take biodiversity measures in their own homes by, for example, wildlife gardening and home composting.
- 12) Agree with the principles set out in recommendations 1-11 and requests that officers do a feasibility study and draw up a costed plan as part of the budget setting process for 2021/22 onwards. This would be to allow the production of an ecological emergency action plan and to report annually to Scrutiny Committee, Executive and Full Council on progress, continuing work and future projects to address both the climate and ecological emergencies.

## References

State of Nature 2019

- [nbn.org.uk/stateofnature2019](https://nbn.org.uk/stateofnature2019)
- [nbn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/State-of-Nature-2019-UK-full-report.pdf](https://nbn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/State-of-Nature-2019-UK-full-report.pdf)

IPBES, May 2019 - Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

- [ipbes.net/global-assessment](https://ipbes.net/global-assessment)
- [www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/05/nature-decline-unprecedented-report)

WWF, 2020 - Living Planet Report 2020

- [livingplanet.panda.org/en-gb](https://livingplanet.panda.org/en-gb)

Christine Johnson, 8 April 2020 - Why do viruses jump from animals to humans? Clues to the COVID-19 pandemic

- [blogs.royalsociety.org/publishing/why-do-viruses-jump-from-animals-to-humans-covid](https://blogs.royalsociety.org/publishing/why-do-viruses-jump-from-animals-to-humans-covid)