

Appendix One

S.40(1) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 as amended

Consideration of action that Northumberland County Council could undertake to conserve and enhance biodiversity during 2024-2029

The purpose of this document is to set out work currently undertaken by Northumberland County Council that conserves and enhances biodiversity, and to identify workstreams where consideration will need to be given to actions that could be undertaken to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

It will be used to help inform a Council-wide biodiversity plan that will be developed during 2024, so inclusion of any topics or workstreams at this stage does not mean that any commitment has been made to take action; it simply signals that these are areas that will need to be reviewed as part of the process of developing the biodiversity plan.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Northumberland County Council, on behalf of the North of Tyne Combined Authority, is the responsible body for the North of Tyne Local Nature Recovery Strategy which covers Northumberland, Newcastle upon Tyne and North Tyneside. The LNRS will identify and map priorities for nature recovery within this area and identify potential implementation mechanisms to achieve these priorities. A Steering Group has been established comprising officer from Northumberland County Council, Newcastle upon Tyne City Council, North Tyneside Council, Northumberland National Park Authority, Natural England, the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission, North Pennines AONB Partnership, Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership, the Environmental Records and Information Centre for Northeast England and Northumberland Wildlife Trust, and work is commencing on this project, which will take about 18 months to complete.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Mandatory BNG is due to be introduced for major development in November 2023 and for minor development in April 2024, requiring developers to demonstrate a 10% increase in biodiversity value using a metric developed by DEFRA. This will be achieved through the creation for new habitats and the enhancement of existing habitats both on the development site and elsewhere.

The Council will be developing a range of actions to help developers to address this obligation and to ensure that good ecological outcomes are realised through it. To ensure that there is an adequate supply off offsite BNG land to support the Council's economic development obligations, land at Potland Burn former surface mine site will be developed as a strategic BNG site, where the Council will create new habitat and sell BNG units to developers in need of them to achieve the required net gain for their developments.

The Council's estate will be reviewed to identify other land where habitats could be created or enhanced, funded by the sale of BNG units.

Land Use Planning

Review approaches to nature conservation taken in development management and strategic planning work to identify opportunities for changes that will secure better ecological outcomes.

Management of designated sites

a) SSSIs and European Sites:

Continue the operation of Space for Shorebirds, the Council's coastal mitigation service. Work with the Steering Group to evaluate progress and identify opportunities for improvement.

Continue to manage Hadston Links SSSI in a way that best conserves and enhances the amphibian population; review management to identify any opportunities for further improvement

Continue to manage New Hatley Ponds SSSI in a way that best conserves and enhances the dune grassland; review management to identify any opportunities for further improvement

b) Local Wildlife Sites:

Continue to manage the Spetchells LWS at Tyne Riverside Country Park in a way that best conserves and enhances the plant and invertebrate communities of importance; review management to identify any opportunities for further improvement

Review management of Pegwhistle Fen LWS at Plessey Woods Country Park

Review the management of other Local Wildlife Sites managed by the Council, identify opportunities to improve management, where possible supported by BNG funding.

Review the funding and operation of the Northumberland Local Wildlife Sites Partnership with Northumberland Wildlife Trust, Newcastle City Council and North Tyneside Council

c) Country Parks and Local Nature Reserves:

Review current management plans, identify opportunities to improve management, where possible supported by BNG funding.

North Pennines and Northumberland Coast AONBs

Continue funding contributions to both AONBs and hosting of the Northumberland Coast AONB staff team; review contribution to management planning process and management plan implementation in light of new duties being introduced through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.

Berwickshire and Northumberland Marine Nature Partnership

Continue funding and hosting arrangements; work with MNP Project Officer and Climate Change Team to understand potential value of carbon sequestration in marine and coastal habitats and opportunities to secure this.

Northumberland Peatland Partnership

Explore opportunities to support the work of the Partnership with capital funding for peatland restoration.

Woodlands and trees

Develop links between the Great Northumberland Forest and Local Nature Recovery Strategy to maximise ecological benefits arising from the GNF.

Other climate change work

Explore opportunities for greater ecological benefit, including promoting other types of habitat creation that secure carbon sequestration.

Grounds Maintenance Review

Explore opportunities for better ecological outcomes through changes in grounds management practices as part of the forthcoming grounds maintenance review.

Invasive Non-Native Species

Review current policy for the management of INNS on NCC land.

Flood Management and Coastal Change

Review to identify any opportunities to secure improved ecological outcomes.

Property Services and Capital Projects

Ensure biodiversity gain is considered and where possible maximised in plans for council projects such as new schools, public buildings and in the management of existing estate.

Support for the Environmental Records and Information Centre

Continue support through a Service Level Agreement

Other work areas

Assess opportunities in:

Sustainable procurement

Waste management