

Subject: Rossendale Biodiversity and
Geodiversity Action Plans 2009-
2010

Status: For Publication

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 18th March 2009

Report of: Executive Director- Business

Portfolio

Holder: Portfolio Holder for Environment

Key Decision: Yes

Forward Plan General Exception Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The two Action Plans have been produced as drafts in order to implement Rossendale Borough Council's Biodiversity Policy and part of the Environmental Strategy. The Action Plans require further development through consultation with the local community and other agencies in order to ensure that the ultimate Action Plan are appropriate to Rossendale.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities and associated corporate objective.

- Keeping Our Borough Clean and Green (Environment)
- Improving health and well being across the Borough (Health, Housing)

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no specific risk issues for members to consider arising from this report.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

4.1 Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth. This includes all species of plants and animals and all the natural systems that support them. Biodiversity is a core component of sustainable development, underpinning economic development and prosperity, and has an important role to play in developing locally distinctive and sustainable communities.

The conservation of biodiversity is vital in our response to Climate Change, as well as the delivery of key ecosystem services such as food management, pollination and provision of clean air and water.

Every local authority has a key role to play in conserving biodiversity through their role in developing and influencing local policies and strategies, planning and development control, owning and managing their estates, procurement, education and awareness.

Biodiversity is extremely important in its own right and we have international responsibilities as well as national. It plays a key role in underpinning local quality of life and giving a “sense of place”. Biodiversity offers opportunities for tourism, economic development, health promotion, sustainable communities and social cohesion.

4.2 Geodiversity is the range of rocks, fossils, minerals, soils, landforms and natural processes that make up the Earth’s landscape and structure. Geodiversity must be protected for its:

- Intrinsic Value
- Ecological Value
- Scientific Value
- Heritage Value, and
- Educational Value

4.3 Many people live in Rossendale due to its environment and public surveys highlight the natural environment as the most important factor in the quality of life in Rossendale. The Council is conscious of this value. However, it is a vulnerable asset and the Council aims to maintain and enhance it for the local people of Rossendale, as well as attracting tourists.

4.4 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 states that “every Public Authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”. The Council adopted a Biodiversity Policy Statement in November 2007.

4.5 Geodiversity links everything together, including people, culture, landscape and biodiversity. It underpins all our activities from farming (providing arable land) to engineering (providing the essential raw materials) and gardening to waste management.

Rossendale’s location has a rich landscape value; geodiversity is key to integrated management and conservation. The geology of the area is potentially a considerable asset for tourism and recreation.

Like biodiversity, it is important that policies reflect the importance of geodiversity. Geodiversity also requires conservation, sustainable management, education and interpretation to maintain and increase knowledge and the status of the sites.

- 4.6 Production of Action Plans in respect of Biodiversity and Geodiversity demonstrates the Council's commitment to the effective implementation of the Biodiversity Policy and Environmental Strategy. By exercising its leadership role, the Council can ensure that local biodiversity and geodiversity issues are taken into account in the formulation of plans and activities throughout the Borough.
- 4.7 There are already many initiatives ongoing within Rossendale in relation to Biodiversity and Geodiversity and it would be beneficial to be able to bring these valuable resources together. This would help raise awareness of the subjects, make people aware of what can be done and what help is available. Benefits would also be gained by linking the statutory and voluntary sectors, providing a focus for voluntary action and co-operation and providing information and advice including the involvement of children and young people.
- 4.8 Further consultation is essential to ensure that the Action Plans are based on appropriate and accurate local information and the advice of agencies and organisations with appropriate knowledge. The Plans will be developed during 2009/2010 with the intention of completing the plans by March 2010.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 5.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising for the Council in this report.

6. MONITORING OFFICER

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND POLICY (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

- 7.1 There are no HR implications. However, training would be required to enable staff to implement the policy and this would be arranged with partner agencies.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Lancashire County Council has produced Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plans but these are at a County level. By producing local versions, Rossendale Borough Council will be able to ensure it complies with its Biodiversity Policy by providing the information and guidance for local action to help deliver the aims of the Environmental Strategy.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 9.1 That the Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plans 2009-2010 be approved for the purpose of further consultation and development.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 10.1 Discussions have already been held with staff of Lancashire County Council, Lancashire Wildlife Trust and United Utilities. The documents will need further consultation with a wide range of organisations, groups and individuals in order to be able to gather relevant information and set realistic priorities, actions and targets.

11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is an Equality Impact Assessment required Yes

Is an Equality Impact Assessment attached Yes

12. BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required Yes

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required Yes

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Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
United Utilities Biodiversity Action Plan	Environmental Health
Harrogate District Biodiversity Action Plan	Stubbylee Hall
Lancashire Biodiversity Action Plan	Stubbylee Lane
Guidance for Local Authorities on Implementing the Biodiversity Duty – Defra	Bacup
	Lancashire
	OL13 0DE