

From: Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste
Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 24 May 2019

Subject: Kent’s Plan Bee - (Kent County Council Pollinator Action Plan)

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: County Council in July 2019

Electoral Division: All – Action Plan is County-wide

Summary: To provide an overview of the Kent County Council Pollinator Action Plan “Kent’s Plan Bee”.

Recommendation(s):

The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to recommend that the Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste approve the draft Pollinator Action Plan before it is taken to County Council.

1. Introduction

1.1 In May 2018 Mr Martin Whybrow, seconded by Mr Sean Holden, tabled a motion at Full Council calling for the establishment of a cross-party working group to produce a Pollinator Action Plan. The motion was unanimously carried and resolved that the County Council agreed:

- To produce a Pollinator Action Plan that would be produced and submitted to County Council for approval.
- To recognise the vital importance to Kent’s rural economy of pollinators and the fact that local authorities are well placed to make a significant contribution to reversing their decline, including through land and verge management, development control, and leadership and education across local communities; and
- To use the planning system to protect and increase pollinator-friendly habitat; managing council-owned and council-managed land to benefit bees and other pollinators including more pollinator-friendly cutting cycles; reduced use of bee-harming pesticides; and planting more wildflowers and other bee-friendly plants in our country parks and community spaces.

1.2 This motion built on the previous work undertaken by the Member-led Kent’s Plan Bee, and thus the Pollinator Action Plan has adopted this title.

1.3 Over the past 12 months a draft Action Plan has been developed by the following Members:

- Sean Holden (Chair)
- Andrew Bowles
- Sue Chandler
- Ian Chittenden
- Tony Hills
- Derek Murphy
- Lauren Sullivan
- Martyn Whybrow

1.4 This report provides an overview of the draft Action Plan “Kent’s Plan Bee”. A copy of the draft Action Plan is appended to this report.

2. Scope Kent’s Plan Bee and the need for action

2.1 Kent’s Plan Bee is an action plan that sets out how the County Council can make a greater contribution to slowing and reversing the decline of pollinators in Kent.

2.2 The Plan’s development responds to the National Pollinator Strategy for England and the call to local authorities to use their regulatory powers and other functions to deliver, inform and engage others to participate in work that will benefit pollinators. The Plan recognises that KCC, with its wide-ranging responsibilities, services and land holdings, is well placed to make a significant contribution directly through, for example, land management, but also provide leadership on this issue within the county in order to safeguard our native pollinators.

2.3 Pollinators are essential but are in serious decline. Many plants rely on insects to pollinate their flowers and to complete their reproductive cycle – most plants cannot set seed without being pollinated (receiving the pollen, usually from another flower). It has been calculated that one out of every three mouthfuls of the food we eat depends on pollination and the annual benefits of insect pollinators to the British economy have been valued at £691 million (Living with Environmental Change, 2014).

2.4 Habitat loss, pesticides and climate change have all contributed to the decline in pollinators:

- Half of the UK’s 27 bumblebee species are in decline.
- Three of the UK’s bumblebee species have already gone extinct.
- Across Europe, 38% of bee and hoverfly species are in decline.
- Two-thirds of the UK’s moths are in long term decline.
- 71% of the UK’s butterflies are also in decline.

3. Kent's Plan Bee – action for pollinators

3.1 The purpose of Kent's Plan Bee is to:

- Make the County Council a community leader in action for pollinators, showing the way in its own operations and property and by supporting others
- Ensure that pollinators' needs are always considered throughout Kent County Council's work and services
- Put the conservation of pollinators and their habitats at the heart of the council's land management and planning
- Make Kent County Council a significant contributor to the recovery of pollinator populations which will support biodiversity and the need of the county's agriculture.

3.2 The Plan will deliver these outcomes by taking action under the following objectives:

1. For Kent County Council to manage the land it owns or controls or can influence in a way which can benefit pollinators' forage and habitat.
2. For Kent County Council to use the planning system to protect pollinators and improve the habitats on which they rely.
3. For Kent County Council to deliver a campaign to encourage others to take action themselves, raising awareness of the importance of pollinators in our lives and everybody's potential role in protecting them.

3.3 High level actions that will deliver these objectives are identified within the plan, which is attached. These actions have been developed in discussion with the relevant services, including highways, Public Rights of Way, Country Parks, estates management and Countryside Management Partnerships.

3.4 It should be noted that changes to the way in which the County Council delivers our various functions cannot happen instantly. Kent's Plan Bee sets out an intention to incrementally make changes for the benefit of pollinators as service delivery and associated contracts allow. There is already good practice in place in areas of our estate – in particular the approach to land management in our Country Parks – from which we can learn and that we can build on.

4. Policy Framework

4.1 The Plan supports the Council's second Strategic Outcome of "Kent communities feel the benefits of economic growth by being in-work, healthy and enjoying a good quality of life" by helping to support:

- Kent business growth (much of Kent's agriculture, fruit farming especially, relies on pollinators).
- A physical and natural environment that is protected, enhanced and can be enjoyed.
- A good quality of life.

5. Financial implications

- 5.1 As noted above, Kent's Plan Bee sets out the County Council's intentions for how services and functions can be delivered for the benefit of pollinators. It is recognised that any changes must not place undue or new financial burdens on the authority.
- 5.2 Although a number of elements of this Action Plan can be absorbed by existing staff, opportunities for some of the work to be taken forward by undergraduate trainees to be hosted by the Heritage Lottery Funded project, Old Chalks New Down, are being explored. In the long term, there is the potential for other externally funded projects to provide additional resource for the County Council to maximise delivery against this Action Plan.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed (see appendix 2).
- 6.2 There will be limited negative impact from the Pollinator Action Plan and these impacts can be reduced or avoided all together with appropriate management.
- 6.3 The main potential impact will be where new land management practices could cause access issues for those with a disability or age protected characteristic. Changes (irrespective of protected characteristic) will need to be considered within the auspices of the Public Sector Equality Duty and appropriately managed. It is anticipated that land management changes will first be introduced at locations where impacts on any users are minimal.
- 6.4 The other potential impact will be where public facing/engagement material is developed. For all public facing work, design and accessibility standards will be followed to ensure these materials are appropriately accessible.
- 6.5 There are also opportunities to have a positive impact by considering how land management practices for pollinators may also deliver enhanced visitor/resident experiences for people within the age and disability protected groups – for example by designing pollinator friendly habitat to also provide sensory experiences.

7. General Data Protection Regulation Considerations

- 7.1 A DPIA is not required as this Plan does not require the processing of personal data. The only exception to this is the schools' competition for which a DPIA will be undertaken.

8. Recommendations

Recommendation(s):

The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to recommend that the Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste approve the draft Pollinator Action Plan before it is taken to County Council.

9. Background documents

National pollinator strategy: for bees and other pollinators in England
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-pollinator-strategy-for-bees-and-other-pollinators-in-england>

Helping pollinators locally: developing a local pollinator action plan or strategy (Buglife and FoE guide)
<https://www.buglife.org.uk/sites/default/files/Helping%20Pollinators%20Locally.pdf>

Living with Environment Change
<https://epsrc.ukri.org/research/ourportfolio/themes/livingwithenvironmentalchange/>

10. Contact details

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