

Biodiversity Scrutiny Review

Report Tuesday 17 April 2018



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Membership of the Environment & Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Members

Cllr Martin Love, (Chair).
Cllr Kevin Warnes, (Deputy Chair).
Cllr Mike Gibbons.
Cllr Andrew Senior.
Cllr Aneela Ahmed.
Cllr Ralph Berry.
Cllr Nussrat Mohammed.
Cllr Rosemary Watson.
Cllr Brendan Stubbs.

Co-opted Members

Nicola Hoggart – Environment Agency.
Julia Pearson – Bradford Environment Forum.

Alternate Members

Cllr Hawarun Hussain.
Cllr Michael Ellis.
Cllr Jack Rickard.
Cllr Sue Duffy.
Cllr Zafar Iqbal.
Cllr Sarfraz Nazir.
Cllr Rachel Sunderland.

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Chairs Foreword

This report has been produced by the Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to make a number of recommendations in response to its scrutiny review of biodiversity in the Bradford district.

The recommendations in the report are grouped under the three key lines of enquiry in the terms of reference of the review – utilising the Council's own resources, exploring areas where the Council has influence and raising awareness among the general public. The committee asks for a report in 12 months time to review progress against the recommendations.

I would like to thank fellow councillors, co-opted members of the committee and council officers for taking part in this scrutiny review but my thanks especially go to the members of a variety of expert community groups who took the time to attend the information-gathering session and to contribute their ideas and experience so fully to our discussions.

As you will see from the recommendations, the Council needs to work closely with such groups if we are to preserve and enhance biodiversity across the district for the benefit of future generations. Their knowledge, hard work and enthusiasm is a real asset to our district.

Cllr Martin Love
Chair, Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Executive Summary

This scrutiny review, undertaken by the Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, offers a view on Biodiversity activity taking place across Bradford District. There is much valuable work underway and this review aims to bring those different work streams together in order to improve the effectiveness of Bradford Council's approach, (and those of our partner organisations), to Biodiversity across the District.

The information gathering session undertaken as part of this scrutiny review focused on three areas for improvement, in accordance with the terms of reference adopted at the Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on Tuesday 21 November 2017. Specifically, the committee resolved to:

1. Examine ways in which Bradford Council can best utilise its own resources, both urban and rural (highway verges, street trees, parks, etc);
2. Consider areas which Bradford Council has an influence over, such as planning and land development;
3. Explore awareness-raising and education, through schools and with the public.

As a result of the review, this Committee has made a number of recommendations for consideration. These are contained (a) within the body of the report and (b) summarised at the end for ease of reference.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

At its meeting on Tuesday 25 July 2017, the Environment & Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a Scrutiny Review into Biodiversity.

What is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the existence of a wide variety of plant and animal species living in their natural environment and it plays a key role in:

- The protection of water courses;
- Soil formation and protection;
- Nutrient storage and recycling;
- Pollution breakdown and storage;
- Contribution to climate stability;
- Maintenance of ecosystems;
- Food pollination;
- Medicinal resources and pharmaceutical drugs;
- Research;
- Recreation and tourism;
- Quality of life.

The Council's role in Biodiversity

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, sets out a "biodiversity duty":

- Section 40, Duty to conserve biodiversity;

"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".

"Conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat".

Key Aims and Scrutiny Process

The three aims of this scrutiny review are outlined on the previous page.

Members have received and gathered a range of information provided by a range of different sources, including:

- relevant documents;
- relevant data;
- information gathering session with interested parties.

Chapter 2 – Key Findings

This section presents the findings of the Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee into Biodiversity.

The key recurring issues that have arisen during this scrutiny review have centred around:

- Maximising and co-ordinating resources for biodiversity;
- Managing the conflict between biodiversity and regeneration and other priorities;
- Auditing the District's biodiversity;
- Raising awareness;
- Dealing with invasive species;
- Agreeing the priority habitats and species.

Key Line of Enquiry 1 – Utilisation of its own resources, both urban and rural, (highway verges, street trees, parks, etc)

Members learned that the Council managed different assets which included highways and verges, parks, woodlands, countryside sites/nature reserves, moorland, farms, amenity grassland/open spaces, cemeteries and wetlands. However officers did indicate that due to financial constraints Bradford Council cannot now manage these sites in isolation and needs to work much more in partnership with other organisations and groups.

Derelict land

Participants highlighted that there was a lot of derelict land in the Bradford District. The consensus was that this was a good opportunity to undertake some work on these areas of land, in relation to flood mitigation and biodiversity. However, further discussions highlighted that it was not clear where these pockets of land were.

Meadow Management

There were extensive discussions on good meadow management, particularly around allowing grass to grow in parks, such as Northcliffe Park in Shipley, which has been successful.

Officers suggested that meadow management was possible in other parks and the work in Northcliffe Park was successful due to individuals coming to cut and bail the grass and take it away. Good meadow management requires taking the grass off annually, to prevent the nutrients returning back into the soil.

The work in Northcliffe Park was a success due to a local farmer being able to come and take the grass off at the end of the season. However members heard that this would be difficult to undertake in other parks and meadow management elsewhere would require new machinery.

Nevertheless, there was consensus that good meadow management should be considered in other parks.

Planting for Play

Another participant suggested that there was potential in parks and particularly play areas to do some planting for “play”. This is something that has worked well in Kirklees Council, where they had struggled to maintain their play equipment in parks and has subsequently developed more natural types of play, sensory play and more natural play structures.

Whilst it was acknowledged that this was directly linked in with biodiversity, it was accepted that this would provide young people with the opportunity to have more natural experiences in their play, making them more aware of nature and being more comfortable with it.

Officers did agree that these were good ideas; however they did not have the officer time and resources to pursue ideas such as these. The Council has had success in some areas, which has been in partnership with organisations such as Bradford Forest School Network, for instance running courses in woodlands.

Funding

Colleagues from the Environment Agency highlighted that funds are available from the Environment Agency specifically to help meet the Water Framework Directive. This is particularly relevant as the District has a lot of watercourses. These are not always very visible, so funds could be utilised to try and open up those watercourses currently underground. Members learned that even though this is not a specific fund for Biodiversity, by opening up the watercourses space would be created for water; subsequently having an impact on the Biodiversity in that area. Funding for flood management projects can often be used to improve Biodiversity as part of the project. The Leeds Growth Fund is also a potential source of funding for watercourse projects, if they support the Fund’s objective as well.

Recommendation 1

That the Council along with ‘Friends of’ Groups and partner organisations undertake an audit of the District’s Biodiversity. (See Recommendation 5)

Recommendation 2

That the Council along with ‘Friends of’ Groups and partner organisations consider undertaking meadow management and planting for play in the District’s parks.

Recommendation 3

That Bradford Council, ‘Friends of’ Groups and partner organisations explore the funding streams that are available with the Environment Agency, through the Water Framework Directive.

Key Line of Enquiry 2 – Areas where the Council has influence over, such as Planning and Land development

Viability

Officers informed members that the Local Plan is critical in terms of where Bradford Council has influence over Planning and Land Development and there was considerable discussion centred around the whole issue of viability.

Members learned that whilst recommendations are made about the provision of open space, green spaces or asking for the development of wetland areas or habitat for Biodiversity purposes within a housing development the “viability card” is played particularly when a developer says that a site has become unviable and they cannot afford to develop it with the recommendations specified.

There was also concern expressed by members of the Committee, in relation to ensuring that there is enforcement taking place to ensure that developers are undertaking agreed work, especially in relation to Biodiversity.

Recommendation 4

That Bradford Council proactively ensures that conditions relating to Biodiversity are adhered to by developers and that enforcement activity is taken where such conditions have not been met.

Key Line of Enquiry 3 – Awareness raising and Education, through schools and with the Public

Public Engagement

Members learned of the importance of awareness raising and education through schools and with the general public and that this is a key area to unlocking how well Bradford Council performs in relation to Biodiversity. It appears that unless there is success at engaging with schools and the public about valuing what there is in the District, then it will be very difficult to make the desired improvements.

Participants identified that Bradford Council does engage with 'Friends of' groups and communities and if it was not for these groups, the Council would not be doing as well in some areas in its Biodiversity work, as it is now. However whilst it was felt that there had been some engagement across the District, overall it was thought that Bradford Council did not engage with its citizens well and that engagement was also becoming fragmented; particularly amongst some 'Friends of' Groups.

One Councillor indicated that there had been a lot of educational work undertaken through 'Friends of' Groups and Conservation groups, particularly in south Bradford. It is through those partnerships, which have been forged over years that the work was taking place.

Officers highlighted that the whole environmental education aspect had reduced over the years and that the Council has tended to leave this activity to outside organisations.

A Councillor stressed that the Council does less everywhere now, not just in terms of awareness raising or engagement and therefore it was important to start to think about doing things differently, for instance, Ward Councillors acting as facilitators between the different Community Groups.

Another participant said that there are various community groups within the District involved in Biodiversity, but a "point of contact", is what was missing for the community groups. Furthermore, members also heard that a lot of this work was not co-ordinated and that establishing a Biodiversity partnership would be a good way forward. A Biodiversity partnership would also allow for much better use of resources and sharing of knowledge.

Schools

Further discussions revealed that whilst there is some engagement taking place within schools in relation to the Biodiversity agenda, on the whole, most community groups were still having difficulty in engaging with schools in relation to Biodiversity related projects.

Participants suggested that Bradford Council could support the community groups, in making the engagement with schools more effective; perhaps having a Biodiversity ambassador within schools.

On a particularly positive note, one participant indicated that a lot of successful work had been undertaken with schools in relation to Biodiversity activity on Ilkley Moor. Members learned that the reasons why this was successful is due to the involvement of not just the schools in Ilkley, but also across the District. As well as this, the Biodiversity projects were linked into the national curriculum, which gives a good base for the session and

subsequently the schools are more willing to engage. An example of a project undertaken on Ilkley Moor, was in relation to learning about the water cycle.

Recommendation 5

That Bradford Council, along with 'Friends of' Groups and Community Groups, forms a Biodiversity Partnership. The Partnership should develop a Biodiversity Action Plan, which could include actions relating to:

- **Auditing the District's Biodiversity;**
- **Raising the awareness of the importance of biodiversity; through more engagement with schools and local residents, including the use of social media;**
- **Protecting and enhancing the District's biodiversity resource; by improving the quality of the local environment;**
- **An ongoing programme of Biodiversity projects and activities across the District.**

Recommendation 6

That Ward Councillors are encouraged to work with schools in relation to Biodiversity activity and projects. Officers from Bradford Council should facilitate this.

Recommendation 7

That, where possible, Biodiversity activity and projects taking place in schools should be linked in with the National Curriculum.

Chapter 3 – Concluding Remarks

Throughout this Scrutiny Review, it became clear that in order for Biodiversity work across the District to be effective, there needs to be a multi-faceted approach to this area of work. In times of diminishing resources, it is imperative that we are creative in using our own resources by facilitating and working more in partnership. Our Ward Councillors also have a key role here, especially in engaging with schools and community groups.

This Committee has sought to take a balanced approach in its deliberations relating to this Scrutiny review and aimed to ensure that this report encompasses the views and concerns of all interested parties.

The scrutiny review report identifies a number of recommendations. If implemented, these will further improve the approach to addressing biodiversity across the District.

Bradford Council's Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, will monitor future progress against these scrutiny review recommendations.

Recommendation 8

Bradford Council's Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee to receive a report back in 12 months, which monitors the progress against all the recommendations contained within this scrutiny review.

Chapter 4 – Summary of Scrutiny Review Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That the Council along with 'Friends of' Groups and partner organisations undertake an audit of the District's Biodiversity.

Recommendation 2

That the Council along with 'Friends of' Groups and partner organisations consider undertaking meadow management and planting for play in the District's parks.

Recommendation 3

That Bradford Council, 'Friends of' Groups and partner organisations explore the funding streams that are available with the Environment Agency, through the Water Framework Directive.

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Bradford Council's Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee to receive a report back in 12 months, which monitors the progress against all the recommendations contained within this scrutiny review.

**City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Biodiversity Scrutiny Review

Terms of Reference

See Part 3E paragraphs 2.1 to 2.11 of the Constitution of the Council.

Background

At its meeting on Tuesday 25 July 2017, the Environment & Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a Scrutiny Review into Biodiversity.

Key Lines of Enquiry

The key lines of enquiry for this scrutiny review are to:

- Examine ways in which Bradford Council can best utilise its own resources, both urban and rural (highway verges, street trees, parks, etc);
- Consider areas which Bradford Council has an influence over, such as planning and land development;
- Explore awareness-raising and education, through schools and with the public.

Methodology

The committee will receive and consider a variety of evidence/information provided by a range of interested parties. The Committee may adopt one or more of the following methods to collect evidence/information:

- relevant documents;
- relevant data;
- written submissions from, or meetings with interested parties;
- undertake relevant visits.

Indicative list of interested parties

An indicative list of interested parties is provided below. This is not definitive or exclusive and can be developed as the scrutiny progresses.

Organisation / Department	Contact
Bradford Council Executive Portfolio Holders.	Cllr Alex Ross-Shaw. Cllr Sarah Ferriby.
Bradford Council Officers.	Danny Jackson - Countryside and Rights of Way Manager. Biodiversity Officer - . Julian Jackson – Assistant Director, Transport

Organisation / Department	Contact
	& Planning. Andrew Marshall – Planning & Transport Strategy. Chris Eaton – Development Manager. Bob Thorp – Trees/Woodlands Manager.
Regional/National Organisations.	Environment Agency – Tim Selway. West Yorkshire Ecology – Robert Masheder. Natural England – Ailsa Henderson. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust – Sarah Goldsmith.
Local Organisations.	Forest of Bradford – Ian Butterfield.. Bradford Environmental Educational Services – Julia Pearson. Bradford Urban Wildlife Group – Hugh Firman.. Wharfedale Naturalists – Peter Riley. Aire Rivers Trust/Friends of Bradford’s Becks – Barney Lerner. Low Moor and Oakenshaw Conservation Group – Clare Stonehouse. Nell Bank Centre – Dan Goodey. Friends of Ilkley Moor – Owen Wells. Friends of Baildon Moor – David Sturge.

Indicative Timetable

Date	Milestone
Tuesday 21 November 2017.	DRAFT Terms of Reference to be presented to the Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee – for discussion and approval.
Tuesday 9 January 2018.	Information gathering session – focusing on the three key lines of enquiry for the Scrutiny Review.
Tuesday 17 April 2018.	Final review findings and recommendations.

Scrutiny Review Participants

Information evidence-gathering session, City Hall, Bradford, 9 January 2018

- Cllr Martin Love, (Chair, Environment & Waste Management Overview & Scrutiny).
- Cllr Kevin Warnes, (Deputy Chair, Environment & Waste Management Overview & Scrutiny).
- Cllr Brendan Stubbs, (Member, Environment & Waste Management Overview & Scrutiny).
- Cllr Rosie Watson, (Member, Environment & Waste Management Overview & Scrutiny).
- Cllr Alex Ross-Shaw, (Bradford Council Portfolio Holder – Regeneration, Planning & Transport).
- Cllr Sarah Ferriby, (Bradford Council Portfolio Holder – Environment, Sport & Culture) .
- Julia Pearson – Co-opted Member, (Bradford Environmental Educational Services).
- Nicola Hoggart – Co-opted Member, (Environment Agency).
- Danny Jackson – Bradford Council’s Countryside and Rights of Way Service.
- Andrew Marshall – Planning and Transport Strategy.
- Chris Eaton – Development Manager.
- Bob Thorp – Trees/Woodlands Manager.
- Clare Stonehouse - Low Moor and Oakenshaw Conservation Group.
- Barney Lerner - Aire Rivers Trust/Friends of Bradford’s Becks.
- Robert Mashedder - West Yorkshire Ecology.
- Tim Selway – Environment Agency.
- Owen Wells - Friends of Ilkley Moor.
- David Sturge - Friends of Baildon Moor.
- Tracey Grey – Friends of Ilkley Moor.

