

# Motion to Declare a Nature Emergency and Accelerate Nature Recovery in Hastings

Proposed by: Cllr Jo Walker

Seconded by: Cllr Julia Hilton

This Council notes that:

- The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, with nearly one in six species at risk of extinction and an average decline of 19% in species abundance since 1970.
- Biodiversity loss and climate change are interconnected crises that require urgent, coordinated action at all levels of government.
- Hastings is rich in natural heritage, including important woodlands, wetlands, and coastal habitats that provide essential ecosystem services such as flood mitigation, air purification, and carbon sequestration.
- Hastings Borough Council has previously demonstrated its commitment to tackling climate change by declaring more Local Nature Reserves in the Borough than any neighbouring authority, through the Climate and Nature Bill, and ongoing nature recovery projects such as the Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

This Council believes that:

- Recognising the Nature Emergency will reinforce the Council's commitment to protecting and restoring biodiversity and ensure nature recovery is embedded across all policies.
- Proactive investment in nature delivers significant benefits for people, wildlife, and the local economy, often at little or no extra cost.
- The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)-a statutory requirement under the Environment Act 2021-provides a framework to set clear, measurable objectives for habitat restoration, tree planting, and nature-based solutions to climate adaptation. This helps direct funding and action where it will have the greatest impact for biodiversity.
- Council-owned land, including parks, road verges, and woodlands, offers a key opportunity for nature recovery through improved management practices such as reduced mowing, rewilding, and tree planting.
- Collaboration with local landowners, farmers, and land managers is essential to achieve landscape-scale

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nature recovery by supporting sustainable land management practices, access to agri-environment schemes, and opportunities for habitat creation and connectivity across public and private land.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Declare a Nature Emergency, acknowledging the severity of biodiversity decline and the need for urgent local action.
2. Develop a Nature Emergency Action Plan, aligning with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and setting out measurable targets for biodiversity enhancement.
3. Embed nature recovery into all planning and policy decisions, ensuring new developments contribute to habitat restoration, tree canopy expansion, and sustainable drainage.
4. Commit to managing at least 30% of council-owned land for nature by 2030, supporting the UK's 30x30 target.
5. Work with local environmental groups, businesses, and communities to enhance nature recovery efforts and secure funding for green infrastructure projects.
6. Participate in the Woodland Trust's Nature Emergency Scorecard initiative-a tool designed to assess and monitor local authority action on biodiversity-using it to track progress, identify gaps, and strengthen efforts to protect and enhance nature locally.

Hastings Borough Council recognises that urgent and ambitious action is needed to protect and restore our town's natural environment. By declaring a Nature Emergency and implementing these actions, the Council will ensure that Hastings remains a place where both people and wildlife can thrive.