

REPORT TO SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE - 19 FEBRUARY 2020

UK STATE OF NATURE REPORT 2019

1 Reason for Report / Summary

- 1.1 The Sustainability Committee is asked to consider the implications for the Council of the UK State of Nature Report 2019. The State of Nature Report 2019 follows those produced in 2013 and 2016. More than 70 wildlife organisations have joined with Government agencies to present the clearest picture possible of the state of UK species and habitats.

2 Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Consider the implications of the UK State of Nature Report 2019 for all Services and functions within Aberdeenshire Council.**

3 Purpose and Decision-Making Route

- 3.1 The UK State of Nature Report 2019 summarises the results of five decades of monitoring of UK species. The purpose of the Report is to identify and communicate trends in species populations and distribution. Reports have been produced every three years since 2013.
- 3.2 Aberdeenshire Council Priority 11 identifies the Council's commitment to 'protect our special environment'. In order to protect the environment, we need to understand the key trends and the issues facing nature. This Report is an important summary and communication tool to allow the Council to do that.
- 3.3 The Sustainability Committee has not received a report on the State of Nature before. It should be noted that the work the Council does in protecting and enhancing biodiversity is collated and reported each year to the Sustainability Committee. The intention is to bring the report of 2019 action to the 20 May, 2020, meeting of the Committee.

4 Discussion

- 4.1 The State of Nature Report 2019 can be accessed at this website: <https://nbn.org.uk/stateofnature2019/reports/>. The full UK Report, a Scottish chapter and a summary for Scotland can be accessed at the web address. The Scottish Summary provides a helpful snapshot of the Report and can be accessed here: <https://nbn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/State-of-Nature-2019-Scotland-summary-v2.pdf>.

- 4.2 Some of the key headlines from the Report, summarising five decades of monitoring:
- a 24% decline in average species abundance across all monitored wildlife,
 - 49% of Scottish species have decreased; 28% have increased,
 - nature is changing rapidly, with 62% of Scottish species showing strong changes,
 - of the 6,413 species found in Scotland which have been assessed, 11% have been classified as threatened with extinction from Scotland,
 - the evidence suggests that the way we manage the land and sea, coupled with the increasing influence of climate change, are having the biggest effect on wildlife populations,
 - it is not too late to act – much is known about the causes of decline and the ways in which we can reduce impacts and help struggling species.
- 4.3 The Report presents a mixed picture. Some species are faring well in our changing environment or, like the pine marten for example, are bouncing back from very low population levels. However, the overall trend in both the abundance and distribution of our wildlife continues to be downward.
- 4.4 The Report identifies the significant impact modern human society is having on UK nature. Given that nature sustains human society, providing food, water and resources, it is clear that its protection and enhancement is essential.
- 4.5 Through the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, all public bodies in Scotland have a duty to further the conservation of nature while exercising their functions. The UK State of Nature Report 2019 highlights why this duty is so important.
- 4.6 Aberdeenshire Council can and does influence nature through its work – on the land it owns and manages or the ways in which it works with, influences and regulates others, for example. The protection and enhancement of nature needs to be considered in all aspects of work. As stated above, a Report on the Council's action in 2019 to protect and enhance nature will be brought to the next Sustainability Committee meeting.

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 5.1 This report and the UK State of Nature Report 2019 contribute to the delivery of the following Council Priorities:
- Priority 1 in supporting a strong, sustainable, diverse and successful economy, given nature's keystone role in supporting human society, and

- Priority 11 in protecting our special environment, as it helps to understand and address the pressures on nature.

5.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial		X	
Staffing		X	
Equalities		X	
Fairer Scotland Duty		X	
Town Centre First			X
Sustainability	X		
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing		X	

5.3 An equality impact assessment is not required because this is a report produced by external organisations and it does not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.

5.4 This report and the UK State of Nature Report 2019 have been identified as having positive impact on sustainability by allowing the Council to better understand and address the protection and enhancement of nature.

5.5 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level:

- ACORP010 Environmental challenges e.g. extreme weather events, climate change, as the Report aids the Council in understanding the risk faced as a result of environmental change and the loss of nature. Nature underpins society and the economy, meaning that impacting it significantly is a pressing risk for Aberdeenshire.

6 Scheme of Governance

6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

6.2 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of:

- Section S1.1a of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance, as part of the Committee's role in approving, reviewing and monitoring the Council's work in respect of sustainable development and climate change, in order to ensure compliance with relevant statutory duties;

and

- Section S1.1c of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance, as part of the Committee's role in promoting awareness of the need for sustainability within the Council and wider community of Aberdeenshire

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