

Part I

Item No.

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Executive Member: Cllr Max Holloway

All Wards

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CLIMATE BIODIVERSITY CABINET PANEL – 15 JANUARY 2025
REPORT OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (RESIDENT SERVICES AND CLIMATE
CHANGE)

**WEWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL – COUNCIL SUPPORT OF THE CLIMATE
AND NATURE (CAN) BILL**

1 Executive Summary

1.1 This report outlines the proposal of supporting the Climate and Nature Bill 2024.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council supports the Climate and Nature Bill.

3.0 Explanation

3.1 Five out of ten local authorities within Hertfordshire have already signed up.

3.2 Approximately 374 district/borough/parish councils have already signed up across the UK.

3.2 The Climate and Nature (CAN) Bill is a legally-binding mission statement which will ensure policy and action on the climate and nature crisis is science-led and people-oriented.

3.3 The UK led the world with the Climate Change Act of 2008, and did so again with its commitment to Net Zero by 2050. In both cases, other countries followed the UK's lead. The CAN Bill would set a gold standard for other developed nations. By passing it, UK politicians would help inspire positive action across the world.

3.4 Regarding emissions; the UK's current targets are far from sufficient for 1.5°C—a target that is now more urgent than ever, as the door is closing on the chance of keeping temperatures close to the Paris Agreement pledge. The Government policy announcements aimed to tackle the Delivery Gap, but the Ambition Gap remains.

3.5 Regarding nature; the most recent State of Nature Report confirms that “Overall, the UK is one of the most nature depleted countries globally due to human activity, with less than half of its biodiversity remaining”.

- 3.6 It is critical that we tackle the interconnected climate and nature crises together.
- 3.7 If made law the CAN Bill would ensure that the UK:
- Creates a joined-up plan—the crises in climate and nature are deeply intertwined, requiring a plan that considers both together.
 - Cuts emissions in line with 1.5°C—ensuring UK emissions are reduced rapidly, for the last chance of limiting warming to 1.5°C.
 - Not only halts, but also reverses the decline in nature—setting nature measurably on the path to recovery by 2030.
 - Takes responsibility for our overseas footprint—both emissions and ecological.
 - Prioritises nature in decision-making and ends fossil fuel production and imports as rapidly as possible.
 - Ensures no-one is left behind—through fairness provisions.
 - Involves the public—giving people a say in finding a fair way forward through a Climate & Nature Assembly, an essential tool for bringing the public along with the unprecedented pace of change required.
- 3.8 The CAN sets out four main clauses: a target for climate, a target for nature, accounting for the UK's footprints (both emissions and ecological footprints) and fairness involving the public. More information on these can be found in appendix A.

Implications

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 There will be no legal implications as a result of supporting the Climate and Nature Bill.

5. Financial Implication(s)

- 5.1 There will be no immediate financial implications as a result of supporting the Climate and Nature Bill. Existing financial implications relating to our corporate priority on Action on climate Change and subsequent net zero and biodiversity commitments have already been considered.
- 5.2 The bill requires the government to set out a strategy within 12 months of the Act passing. It is unknown at this stage whether the strategy would lay additional requirements on Local Government. Any such implications would be considered at the appropriate time and fed back through government consultation on the strategy. The Government has included financial provisions for costs of implementing the Act. This may be utilised to support Local Government if there are increased burdens, which we anticipate would be considered once a strategy has been proposed by the Government.

6. Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 There will be no risk management implications as a result of supporting the Climate and Nature Bill.

7. Communication

- 7.1 There are minor communication implications as a result of supporting the Climate and Nature Bill; we may want to promote our support via a press release, promote on the climate hub and disseminate internally to staff.

8. Security & Terrorism Implication(s)

- 8.1 There will be no security and terrorism implications as a result of supporting the Climate and Nature Bill.

9. Procurement Implication(s)

- 9.1 There will be no procurement implications as a result of supporting the Climate and Nature Bill.

10 Climate Change Implication(s)

- 10.1 We are not on track to meet the Paris Agreement of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, as emission cuts are insufficient.
- 10.2 We have no chance of limiting warming to anywhere near safe levels unless we protect and restore nature; particularly the critical ecosystems that support life and store huge amounts of carbon, such as peatlands, woodlands, seas and wetlands, as well as rivers and soils.
- 10.3 We need to increase ambition and encourage others to do the same in an equitable way.
- 10.4 Welwyn Hatfield Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, has net zero targets for the council and for the borough and has a corporate objective to improve biodiversity. Supporting of the CAN bill will reaffirm our climate and nature commitments and ensure we are helping to lead the way on this global challenge.

11. Human Resources Implication(s)

- 11.1 There will be no human resources implications as a result of supporting the Climate and Nature Bill.

12. Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)

- 12.1 There will be no health and wellbeing implications as a result of supporting the Climate and Nature Bill.

13. Link to Corporate Priorities

- 13.1 The support of the Climate and Nature Bill aligns with every single one of our objectives within the 'Action on Climate Change' corporate priority.
- Renew our commitments to be a net zero Council by 2030 and borough by 2050

- step up climate change adaptation and mitigation measures
- Lead by example and encourage others to make positive change
- Increase and promote biodiversity

14. Equalities and Diversity

14.1 There will be no equalities and diversity implications as a result of supporting the Climate and Nature Bill.

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Date: 3.1.25