

Agenda item 3

For decision - Adoption of the Frome Nature Recovery Plan

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Summary (including recommendations)

The Frome Nature Recovery Plan is a coordinated response to the urgent challenges posed by the nature emergency. It is evidence based and draws on the expertise and knowledge of a wide array of conservation and community stakeholders and local residents. It provides a strategic framework for protecting, restoring and enhancing biodiversity across Frome and supports climate adaptation, community wellbeing and delivery of statutory biodiversity duties.

The Plan aligns local action with the Somerset Local Nature Recovery Strategy, the Council Plan, the Climate Emergency and Ecological Emergency declarations, and the emerging work on climate adaptation.

The Plan identifies the River Frome corridor, woodland and tree networks, grassland connectivity and enabling concerted community action as the highest priorities.

Recommendation

1. To adopt the Frome Nature Recovery Plan as Council policy and use the Plan to:
 - a) Guide management of Council-owned land.
 - b) Coordinate wildlife improvements across key nature corridors.
 - c) Raise awareness of and interest in helping support local wildlife.
 - d) Incorporate the principles of the plan into relevant planning policy.
 - e) Empower community action.



Background

Frome Town Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2018 and an Ecological Emergency in 2021. [The Nature Recovery Plan can be viewed on the website at Appendix 3.1](#) and has been prepared to provide a coordinated evidence-based response to the urgent issues of biodiversity loss and habitat fragmentation.

The Plan draws on a wide array of ecological evidence including the Community Wildlife Mapping Project, Somerset Environmental Records Centre data, community engagement and alignment with the Somerset LNRS with input from a wide range of stakeholders as well as public engagement.

Key Findings and Strategic Importance of the Frome Nature Recovery Plan

The Nature Recovery Plan provides the first comprehensive town-wide assessment of biodiversity, habitats, ecological connectivity and community engagement in nature recovery across Frome. It demonstrates that while the town retains significant ecological assets and a highly engaged community, urgent and coordinated action is required to address continuing biodiversity decline and habitat fragmentation.

The plan's **vision** is to enable:

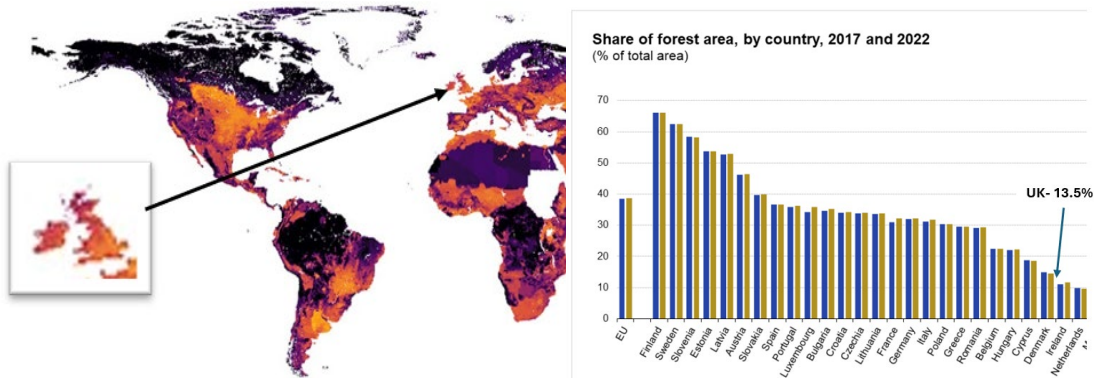
“A town where **nature is thriving, visible and valued** in every neighbourhood, with connected green spaces supporting wildlife, wellbeing and climate resilience”

The scale and urgency of the Nature Emergency

Biodiversity has been declining at alarming rates, caused by habitat loss, fragmentation, pollution, invasive species and climate change. The UK is one of the world's most nature-depleted countries and around one in six species is at risk of extinction. Ecological networks have become fragmented, making it harder for wildlife to move and adapt. Key challenges include:

- Biodiversity loss and declining species populations.
- Pressure on the River Frome from water quality issues and development.
- Increasing climate-related flood and drought risks.
- Rising future restoration costs if action is delayed.

Figure 1 - UK has lost nearly half of its original biodiversity and has among the lowest woodland canopy cover in Europe



Frome's ecological strengths

More than 1,300 species have been recorded across Frome. Habitats include river corridors, woodlands, wetlands, grasslands, hedgerows, orchards, allotments, gardens, parks and open spaces. These assets provide a strong foundation for nature recovery if managed and enhanced strategically.

Community engagement and Volunteering

A major strength of Frome is its highly engaged community. Volunteers, schools, residents and environmental groups contribute thousands of hours annually to habitat management, conservation activity, wildlife recording and education. The Council can build upon this by acting as a facilitator and coordinator of community-led action.

Figure 2 Community support for citizen science and enhancing local green spaces



Gardens and Neighbourhood Action

Private gardens and community green spaces collectively form one of the town's largest habitat resources. When connected together they provide vital habitat and wildlife corridors. Residents can contribute through pollinator planting, reducing pesticide use, creating ponds, planting native species, installing swift and bat boxes, creating hedgehog highways and participating in local wildlife surveys.

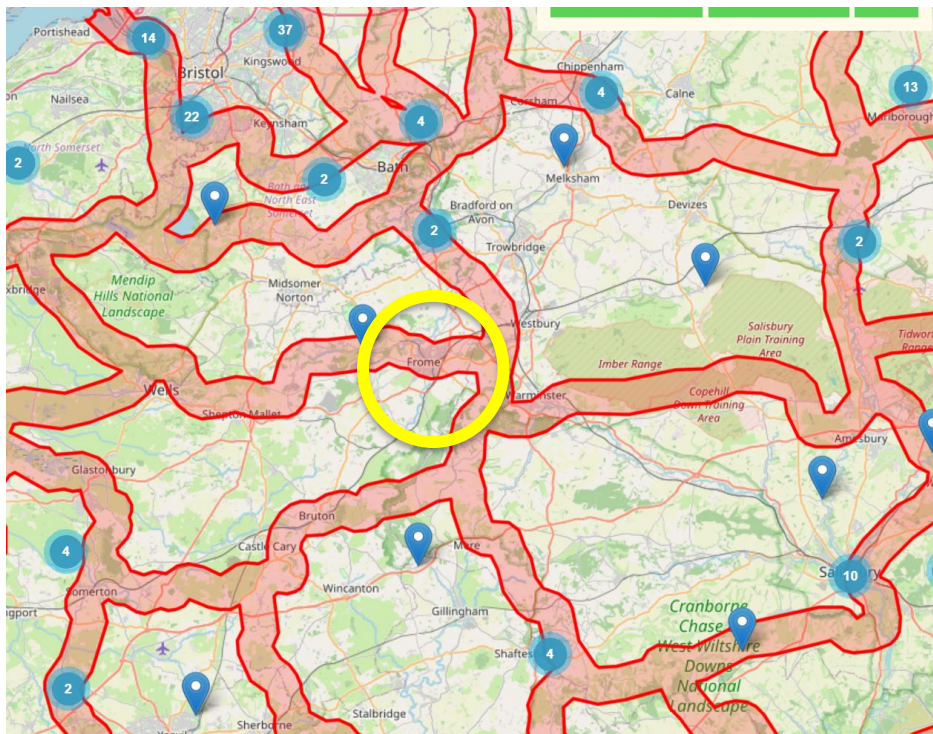
Habitat Connectivity and Ecological Corridors

The Plan concludes that nature recovery is most effective when habitats are connected. Connected ecological networks enable species movement, strengthen genetic diversity and improve resilience to climate change. Priority networks include the River Frome corridor, woodland and tree networks, grasslands, pollinator habitats and links between parks, allotments, schools and other green spaces.

Figure 3 - The RHS has highlights the vital role of gardens providing space for wildlife



Figure 4 B-Lines network identifying landscape scale nature corridors and very strong connectivity potential for Frome



The strategic importance of the river Frome

The River Frome is identified as the town's most important wildlife corridor. Improving habitat quality along the river can support biodiversity, improve water quality, increase flood resilience and deliver wider climate adaptation benefits. This work complements the River Charter and other river recovery initiatives.

Planning policy and decision making

Planning decisions have a major influence on ecological connectivity. The Plan recommends protecting mature trees, hedgerows, watercourses and open spaces while encouraging habitat creation, biodiversity enhancement, sustainable drainage systems and other nature-based solutions.

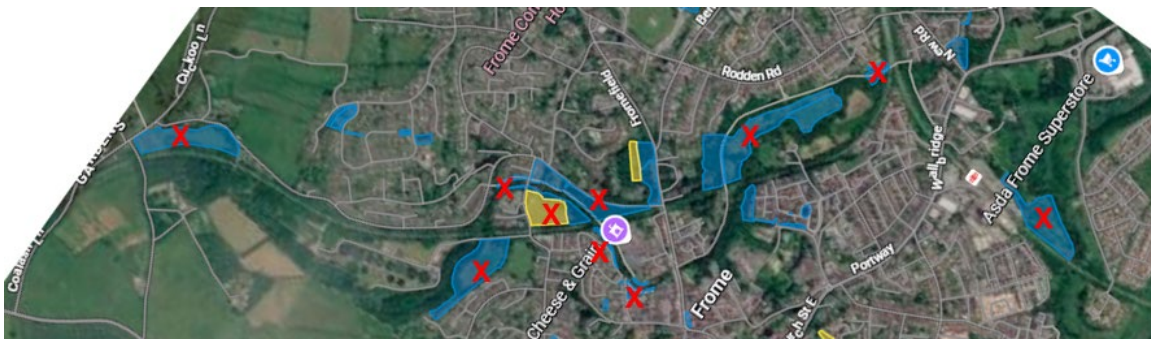
Monitoring and Delivery

The Plan emphasises ongoing ecological monitoring through habitat surveys, species recording and citizen science. Priority delivery actions include habitat creation, tree planting, orchard management, river restoration, invasive species control, community projects, wildlife monitoring and embedding biodiversity within Council policies and land management.

Relevance to Frome Town Council

The Plan provides a framework for managing Council-owned sites including Adderwell Water Meadow, Rodden Meadow Nature Reserve, Frome Community Woodland, Welshmill, Weylands, allotments, parks and open spaces. It promotes a consistent approach to biodiversity enhancement and community engagement.

Figure 5 - FTC as a landowner is a major custodian of the riverside habitats through Frome



Strategic benefits and partnerships

The Plan supports delivery of Somerset Local Nature Recovery Strategy priorities, strengthens partnerships with key environmental organisations, improves access to

environmental funding and supports Biodiversity Net Gain and climate adaptation objectives.

A call to action

The Plan identifies a comprehensive set of prioritised actions in the following areas:

Habitat Creation and Land Management

The Plan prioritises improving habitats across Town Council land through enhanced management plans, habitat surveys, new meadows, wetlands, ponds, orchards and tree planting. Community involvement will be encouraged through initiatives such as Pocket Meadows and pollinator planting projects.

River Recovery

Key actions focus on protecting and restoring the River Frome through habitat enhancement, invasive species control, adoption of the River Charter, appointment of a Community Guardian and closer partnership working to improve water quality, biodiversity and flood resilience.

Community Action and Species Recovery

Residents will be encouraged to support nature through wildlife-friendly gardening, wildlife housing such as swift and bat boxes, community events, educational activities and school engagement programmes. These initiatives aim to increase public participation in nature recovery and species conservation.

Monitoring and Education

The Plan expands citizen science, wildlife recording and community monitoring programmes to improve understanding of local biodiversity while supporting learning opportunities for schools and volunteers.

Planning and Partnerships

Nature recovery will be embedded within planning and policy decisions through protection of ecological corridors, promotion of green infrastructure and biodiversity net gain, and partnership working with developers, landowners and environmental organisations to secure long-term delivery and funding.

Conclusion

The Nature Recovery Plan demonstrates that Frome possesses significant ecological assets and an exceptionally engaged community. Through coordinated habitat restoration,

nature-friendly planning, community action and long-term monitoring, the Plan provides a practical framework for reversing biodiversity decline and creating a town where nature is thriving, visible and valued in every neighbourhood.

Other options considered	Do not adopt the Plan and continue activities without a single strategic framework for coordinating nature recovery actions.
Key considerations for the Council	Adoption does not create significant new statutory obligations but provides a strategic framework to guide policy, land management, investment decisions and partnership activity.
Consultation and feedback	The Plan has been developed through extensive community engagement, ecological evidence gathering and collaboration with partner organisations and local volunteers.
Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan	Supports environmental sustainability, biodiversity recovery, climate resilience, community wellbeing and stewardship of natural assets.
Financial and Risk Implications	Adoption has no immediate direct budget implication. Individual projects arising from the Plan will be brought forward through normal approval and budget processes.
Legal / HR Implications	Supports delivery of biodiversity duties and consideration of the Somerset Local Nature Recovery Strategy. No specific HR implications identified.
Equalities Implications	Positive impacts through improved access to nature, green space and opportunities for community participation.
Community Safety Implications	None identified.
Climate Change and Sustainability Implications	The Plan directly supports climate adaptation, carbon sequestration, natural flood management, habitat restoration and ecological resilience.
Health and Safety Implications	None identified.
Constitutional Requirements	N/A
Background Papers	None
Report Sign-Off	Peter Wheelhouse, Town Clerk 29/09/26

Recommendation

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