

## Statement from Ian Barrett, Chief Executive Avon Wildlife Trust

Avon Wildlife Trust warmly welcomes the inclusion of the Nature Emergency in Bath and North East Somerset's proposed core policies.

The facts on what is happening to wildlife and ecosystems around the world are truly shocking

We've lost 60% of populations of wild vertebrates worldwide since 1970

We've lost 44m songbirds in the UK since 1960s (20%)

And 30m hedgehogs since the 1950s (95%)

In the West of England, we've lost 93% of our swifts and starlings since 1994

The insects that provide the basis of natural food webs are disappearing with falls of over 75%

We no longer see bugs on our windscreens when we drive in the summer

Populations of insect eating birds like the partridge and cuckoo have fallen by over 90%

This matters not just to wildlife lovers

Healthy ecosystems provide clean air and water and reduce flooding

75% of the crop types grown by humans require pollination by insects

- over 50% of the products in supermarkets are dependent on pollinators

Over half the world's GDP - \$44 trillion

is moderately or highly dependent on nature and its services

And this is a problem that's accelerating

- Extinction rates are currently 100-1000 times the background level
- 1 in 6 species in UK at risk of extinction

It is no overstatement to say that we are facing an **ecological emergency** that we need to tackle to save our planet for people and wildlife

**The good news – as with climate change - is that it's not too late if we act decisively now to protect and restore ecosystems at home and abroad**

The ecological emergency is related to the climate crisis, but they are not the same.

Addressing the ecological emergency within climate emergency strategies is not enough.

The causes and solutions are different

- Climate change is primarily caused by the burning of fossil fuels  
**whereas**
- ecosystem breakdown is primarily caused by the destruction and fragmentation of habitats
- Tackling climate change primarily requires a move to renewable sources of energy  
**whereas**
- rebuilding ecosystems needs the rebuilding of connected habitats and reductions in pesticide use

We need to tackle both emergencies

We rely on functioning ecosystems for our air, water, health, quality of life, food and economy

So *if* we manage to transition to a zero carbon economy and fix the climate crisis, but our ecosystems collapse, we still face an existential threat to our future

The Council's draft strategy talks about the natural emergency, but the priorities and actions set out are all about carbon

This is only half of the solution

Avon Wildlife Trust calls on B&NES Council to take the opportunity of the inclusion of the nature emergency in its strategy to declare an ecological emergency

The Council is already doing a lot of work in this area that is currently under the radar

This is not a big step from where the Council is now

But leadership in this area will help to establish momentum nationally and regionally, bringing more focus to the action needed to save our natural environment for people and wildlife

This is not a call for Council resources

But leadership in this area will help us to secure the resources that are needed to ensure nature's recovery

We need a roadmap and an action plan for tackling the ecological emergency in B&NES

**Declaring an ecological emergency is a small step, but could provide a crucial rallying point for action to save our natural environment for people and wildlife**