

Statement on Rights for Nature, Lin Patterson 12-09-24

B&NES Council is recognised as one of the very best in the country for biodiversity policy and action, coming joint 1st nationally.

Our climate action plans are in line with **national legislation: the Climate Change Act 2008** and the UK's climate advisory body, the **UK Climate Change Committee** which issues regular reports. These national bodies are critical in allowing, but also limiting, what is possible for B&NES to do, and we need to engage over those national limitations.

This council is hyper-aware of the extreme urgency, growing exponentially with each passing day, for the necessity for significant action on the ecological and biological crisis. But their dazzling list of accomplishments can and must be expanded upon. How? By laying the groundwork for enshrining an advanced principle that can profoundly address the ecological emergency.

First, it requires an individual act of imagination; you, imagining, reaching, for a perspective slightly alien in our current culture, but enshrined for millennia in human consciousness: that nature is alive and has rights; that these rights could and should be legalized to protect them in the face of ever-expanding construction and exploitation of the natural world. If there were more time I would remind you of the mass extinction affecting insects, birds and mammals to tear at your heartstrings. But you know this.

Around the world this legal movement is taking hold, starting years ago with countries having indigenous populations where there was still a connection to the principle. Now governments at various levels are adopting rights for nature, including at the local level; for instance, by the city of Santa Monica in California to name but one. There is a growing, modern pool of knowledge to draw upon for drafting a measure in B&NES. I invite you to Google "Rights of Nature".

Does B&NES already have enough legal protection? No. The case of the Lidl controversy in Lambridge proved that. The only reason that nature remains intact there is that there was not sufficient turning space for enormous delivery vehicles. The land, animals and capacity for human enjoyment of nature were not protected. The land needs legal advocacy, and the B&NES **Green Motion on the Rights of Nature soon to be proposed by Cllr Joanna Wright** offers a step by step way towards that. **The motion will be presented for your consideration on the 19th.**