



Buxton Civic Association
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BCA Biodiversity Group response to High Peak Borough Council's Draft Parks Management Strategy and Pavilion Gardens & Serpentine Management Plan. This response concentrates on the Biodiversity aspects of the two reports

We are suffering a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency as declared by the council in October 2019, when they stated that "natural habitats, wildlife and biodiversity are in peril".

Whilst we welcome the inclusion of biodiversity in the Parks Strategy, we feel it only touches on this vital issue and does not set out a route to achieve improvements over the 10 year period.

We welcome the fact that two of the 8 bullets under the final commitment relate to biodiversity and wildlife conservation but would like to see these elaborated on. Currently the document gives no guidance on how these would be achieved.

We would like to see more innovative management schemes that tangibly increase biodiversity in our parks and open spaces through wildlife friendly management policies and habitat creation. We believe that it is entirely possible to significantly increase the biodiversity value of our parks whilst respecting and maintaining their wonderful heritage value. Parks offer great opportunities for the council to demonstrate the principles of wildlife and environmentally friendly gardening (see below), which the public can then be encouraged to adopt in their own gardens.

All aspects of biodiversity should be considered, from soil biota to mature trees, and parks should be managed as elements in green corridors and the wider landscape. Measuring the success of this strategy requires an assessment of the current wildlife value of our parks, and defined targets for improvement.

We would like to see biodiversity conservation and enhancement as a core value in policy making, with clearer integration of relevant strategies and policies, such as the Climate Emergency Declaration, Tree Strategy, and High Peak Open Space Study.

Never has there been a more important time to promote contact with nature. Parks could provide many valuable opportunities for improved contact with nature and these should be actively planned and designed for. A better integrated strategy would link biodiversity policy and habitat creation with wider benefits that help to create a healthier High Peak. Connecting with nature and wildlife is known to provide health and well being benefits, and creates a positive feedback loop where those who are more connected with nature will behave more positively towards the environment.

BCA Biodiversity Group welcomes the opportunity to work with the council through the recently formed Climate Change Working Group Biodiversity Sub Group. In relation to



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parks, we are keen to support the Council by for instance, advising on strategies to increase biodiversity (including the principles of wildlife and environmentally friendly gardening), and help provide survey details of the wildlife supported. For example, members currently conduct regular Wetland Bird Surveys in the Pavilion Gardens, Buxton-wide Hedgehog Surveys, and can advise on wildflower areas in the Serpentine.

We would like to see much more detail in the strategy and management plans and a commitment to:

- the principles of wildlife and environmentally friendly gardening (including use of nectar rich flowers throughout the flowering season, berry bearing shrubs, cover for nesting birds, creation of ponds and wetland areas, leaving habitat piles, etc), including the development of a policy to use these for public education
- natural planting schemes and designated native wildflower areas, and more wildlife friendly flowers and shrubs in existing formal planting schemes
- end the use of peat and peat based products
- end the use herbicides and pesticides including avoiding use of slug pellets in parks and open spaces
- a tree policy that prioritises the planting of native trees that support the highest levels of biodiversity
- bird nest boxes in all parks, and installation of hedgehog houses and bat boxes where appropriate
- creation of bird feeding stations near to seating areas: these could possibly be maintained by volunteers
- a reduction in mowing regimes
- surveying and assessing the current wildlife value of parks to allow schemes to be measured

A shift towards more natural management schemes would:

- improve soil health



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- increase pollinators and other invertebrates
- support higher numbers of birds and mammals
- increase opportunities for visitors to engage with nature and enjoy well being benefits
- increase the opportunity for nature themed education
- reduce the use of resources

Pavilion Gardens & Serpentine Management Plan

BCA Biodiversity Group would welcome the opportunity to work with the council to advise on the Pavilion Gardens & Serpentine Management Plan, alongside other community and interest groups.

We would like to see this management plan apply the principles laid out above and specify how and where the principles will be put into practice. The management plan should also commit to a more detailed use of both parks as demonstrations of good practice in wildlife friendly gardening (including within a formal heritage garden) for the purpose of public education.

Whilst recognising the potential for naturalisation of the Serpentine, the plan does not detail measures to enhance biodiversity in other ways, and fails to protect existing habitats. It does not explore the considerable opportunity to increase habitats and biodiversity, and in missing this opportunity, fails to create a vision of how our parks could be spaces for people and nature. Opportunities should be taken to design areas and features (including bird feeding stations and viewing screens) to enable the public to have better contact with nature.

Natural assets such as wildflower and bird species should be listed in more detail alongside the physical assets of the park, to demonstrate their importance and ensure that they are protected for future generations.

The Serpentine in particular has scope for a biodiversity focussed management plan, which builds upon the existing wildflower areas and more natural planting schemes. The plan acknowledges that it "does have some areas which lend themselves more readily to naturalisation for the benefit of biodiversity", but we would like the Serpentine



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plan go much further and focus on biodiversity as a core element.

Points of concern in the Pavilion Gardens & Serpentine Management Plan:

- The wildflower areas in the Serpentine have been reduced by two thirds. The decision was upheld as wrong following a formal complaint made last year. We would expect to see a commitment in this plan to at least reinstate the areas.
- The maintenance schedule shows the intention to rotovate the Serpentine wildflower areas in April. This is contrary to advice given by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust in 2019, and would cause damage to the established wildflower areas.
- Native wildflowers are of greatest benefit to pollinators, and most suited to the environment. We would like to see the plan commit to maintaining the wildflower areas in the Serpentine with native species such as Knapweed, Birds Foot Trefoil and Meadowsweet. The image used in the management plan is of non-native species, and this type of meadow scheme would be better suited to other areas of the Pavilion Gardens.
- A formal parkland mowing schedule reduces biodiversity, and cutting some areas less regularly should be considered across all parks, and in particular in the Serpentine.
- The management plan does not describe important bird populations. Birds are mentioned in terms of 'monitoring of wildfowl and rodent populations' which implies that wildfowl are considered to be vermin. The river and lakes are important feeding habitats for Kingfisher, Dipper, Grey Wagtail and Heron, there are good numbers of Goldcrest, Nuthatch, and other woodland birds, and the wildfowl provide opportunities for contact with nature.
- The management plan does not fully consider the biodiversity of the River Wye and lakes, including an important population of Brown Trout, and Sticklebacks in the lakes. Invasive Signal Crayfish are present in the river, and are likely to pose a threat to native river life if unmanaged. We would also like to see exploration of management strategies similar to those used in Ashwood Park, to slow the flow and improve the biodiversity of the river.
- Until c.10 years ago, there was a healthy population of Water Voles using the river through The Serpentine. Measures should be taken to improve habitat to encourage repopulation by this endangered species.



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