

# North Somerset Council declares 'nature emergency' - what it means

The authority will use its planning powers to resist the destruction of habitats and ensure developments boost biodiversity

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📌 Cllr Robert Payne called on North Somerset Council to declare a nature emergency

The threat of mass extinctions and the loss of biodiversity must be at the heart of every decision North Somerset Council makes.

That was the message from Councillor Robert Payne, who said there is still time to “choose life” as his call to declare a nature emergency won unanimous support.

The authority will use its planning powers to resist the destruction of habitats and ensure developments boost biodiversity.

It will also identify areas across [North Somerset](#) which could be suitable for habitat restoration, and work with partners to reduce the intensity of agriculture and cut the use of pesticides.



Cllr Payne told the full council meeting on November 10: “It’s not very often that council discusses the very existence of humanity, but for me that is what we are facing.

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“Time is running out. Life is precarious but I believe that there is hope that we can turn things around.

“The turning point is here now so we can either continue to strip the earth bear, poison waterways, decimate habitats, leading us all down the road to oblivion or we can choose to do things differently – we can still choose life.

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“We need to take the responsibility of taking the lead in this. We have to put the nature emergency at the heart of everything we do.”

Cllr Payne quoted figures showing 133 species endemic to the UK have disappeared altogether since 1970 and said even where species are not specifically endangered populations are in significant decline.

He warned half of Britain's bird species, half of fungi, and a quarter of mammal species are at risk of extinction.

Seconding Cllr Payne's motion, Cllr Stuart McQuillan said there was a moral imperative to act and a selfish one, due to nature's importance to humanity and industry.

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Along with two thirds of authorities nationally, the council has already declared a climate emergency, and Cllr Bridget Petty said the two go hand in hand.

She said: “We can't build policies that respond to the climate emergency without recognising the emergency that we're seeing in nature.”

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Cllr David Shopland, a card-carrying member of the NFU, said the council may have to rethink creating paths across the countryside because it is incompatible with the nature emergency.

"If you are going to introduce the public at large into the countryside you will destroy the habitats of wildlife," he said.

"It has nowhere to move, it won't exist. We are creating paths everywhere for the public to go which are destroying the natural habitat."

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