

4 March 2021**Agenda Item:8****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, INVESTMENT AND GROWTH****CONSERVATION INTERNSHIP TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE BIODIVERSITY ACTION GROUP****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval for the recruitment of a further temporary Conservation Intern to support the work of the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group.

Information

2. The County Council is a signatory to the Nottinghamshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) and the Conservation Team supports the work of the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (BAG) partnership in the delivery of the actions and targets set in the LBAP. The BAG partnership was established in 1998 and consists of a variety of organisations, including voluntary, statutory and community groups, working together to conserve and enhance the natural environment of Nottinghamshire for the benefit of both wildlife and people. The Action Plan currently includes a list of 20 priority habitats and 20 priority species for Nottinghamshire, for which there are actions to help improve their conservation status. The work of the Nottinghamshire BAG partnership is coordinated by the County Council's Biodiversity Officer.
3. The BAG partnership had, for some time, recognised the need for additional resources to assist with the delivery of key aspects of the partnership's work plan. The work of the BAG partnership, including information on key habitats and species, projects and opportunities to get involved, is made available to the wider public through a website that receives hundreds of hits each month. It was identified that this needed to be moved onto a modern platform and its content updated. Similarly, the programme of updating the habitat and species action plans that are the core documents referred to in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) was constrained by a lack of capacity within the partner organisations.
4. In 2019, the BAG Steering Group agreed to use some of its funds to offer a paid student placement. It was anticipated that this would lead to improved capacity and progress by working closely with the partnership to update the LBAP documents and, at the same time, make them web-based and user friendly for both the partnership and the public.
5. Between July 2020 and April 2021, the County Council has hosted the first Nottinghamshire BAG student placement in the post of 'Conservation Intern'. The current Intern was appointed following a competitive recruitment and selection process, and is an undergraduate student studying Ecology and Conservation at Nottingham Trent University (Brackenhurst). The Intern

has provided additional support and capacity for the work of the Notts BAG partnership, including updating habitat and species action plans. They have also been able to make good progress in updating the Notts BAG website, as well as increasing the use of social media (Facebook and Twitter).

6. One unforeseen benefit has been that the Intern has been able to assist with the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping Project (BOM). This important piece of work has recently been supported with additional funding from Natural England and will become the basis of the Nature Recovery Networks for Nottinghamshire.
7. The success of the placement has encouraged the BAG to seek a further placement, to ensure that the momentum is not lost. In line with the current arrangements, a new student placement would work closely with, and be managed by, the Biodiversity Officer and their work programme would be overseen by the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group Steering Group. Working within the County Council facilitates these working arrangements, in addition to giving access to specialist resources such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS).
8. The principal role of the new student placement would be to continue the work being undertaken by the current post holder in:
 - updating the NottsBAG partnership website;
 - improving the partnership's social media capability (principally though twitter and Facebook);
 - working with partners to update the suite of Habitat and Species Action Plans;
 - and, assisting with the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping (BOM) Project.
9. The placement post provides an excellent opportunity for students to gain significant practical experience in the conservation sector, including working with a wide range of partners and specialists. It also gives them access to wider training opportunities available to all NCC staff, which will enhance their employability in the longer term.
10. It is anticipated that the placement would be made available as a temporary post of up to 10 months to students who are either studying at a Nottinghamshire-based University, or normally resident in Nottinghamshire but studying outside the county. It would be open to students who are about to graduate and students on courses that include a work placement year. This is the same route to recruitment that was successfully used for the current placement.
11. The salary and any associated costs of the placement would be entirely funded from the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group budget, which is managed on their behalf by the County Council. The Conservation Intern is a Grade 3 post, for which the starting salary is currently £19,312 per annum.
12. This student placement is currently an additional offer, separate to the wider County Council Graduate Development Programme. The potential for this to be offered as a specialist role alongside the main programme will be investigated, subject to securing a sustainable source of funding.

Other Options Considered

13. The County Council could choose not to support a further student placement. This would, however, mean that some of the priorities identified by the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group would stall, until another way of delivering these could be identified.

14. The County Council could choose to support the hosting of a further student placement by a partner organisation. This could be investigated with partners organisations, but the Steering Group has already noted that it would be desirable for the student to continue being hosted by NCC, due to the need for their work to be closely overseen by the Biodiversity Officer.

Reasons for Recommendation

15. To facilitate the work of the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group and provide a further opportunity for a student from, or studying in, Nottinghamshire to gain significant work experience within the conservation sector.

Statutory and Policy Implications

16. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

17. The costs of the placement would be fully met by the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group, as set out in paragraph 11.

Implications for Sustainability and the Environment

18. The Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group plays an important role in protecting and enhancing the natural environment of the County, as set out in paragraph 2. The student placement position helps to provide additional capacity to support the work of the BAG.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1) That Committee approves the recruitment of a further student placement to the post of Conservation Intern on a temporary basis, for a period of up to 10 months.

Matthew Neal
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For any enquiries about this report please contact: Heather Stokes, Team Manager
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Constitutional Comments (KK 11/02/2021)

19. The proposal in this report is within the remit of the Communities and Place Committee.

Financial Comments (SES 10/02/2021)

20. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 16 of the report.

21. The costs of the placement would be fully met by the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group, as set out in paragraph 11. The salary and any associated costs of the placement

would be entirely funded from the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group budget, which is managed on their behalf by the County Council. The Conservation Intern is a Grade 3 post, for which the starting salary is currently £19,312 per annum.

HR Comment (JP 18/02/2021)

22. Recruitment to the post will be in line with the Authority's recruitment policy.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

Electoral Divisions and Members Affected

- All