

NOTICE OF MOTION FOR FULL COUNCIL

See [Part D of the Council's Constitution – Council Procedure Rules](#) – for the rules on motions

Title of Motion:	Protecting Areas of Significance for Nature
Date of Council meeting:	15 th July 2025
Proposer of Motion: (Name, and signature if hard copy submitted)	Councillor Keith Melton
Seconder of Motion: (Name, and signature if hard copy submitted)	Councillor Matthew Spours

Background/supporting information (maximum 300 words):

The Government's revised National Planning Policy framework introduces new rules allowing developers to compensate for environmental impacts by making payments into a Nature Restoration Fund (NRF). While the establishment of a fund to support ecological restoration is laudable, these rules raise critical concerns regarding the protection of sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs), areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONBs), and other ecologically significant places.

It is our view – which we share with many nature-based NGOs – that Section 3 of the Bill needs serious amendment before it is acceptable. At the moment we are concerned that it encourages or allows developers to offer “cash to trash” the natural environment.

Key Objections:

- **Insufficient Mitigation:** Environmental offsetting through the NRF risks underestimating the complexity and scope of damage caused by development. Financial compensation may not fully restore lost biodiversity or ecosystem health.
- **Short-Term Solutions:** The NRF focuses on immediate financial measures rather than addressing the root causes of ecological degradation, such as unsustainable development practices and inadequate long-term conservation strategies.
- **Risk to Protected Areas:** Allowing developers to bypass direct protection obligations could weaken current protections under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations. SSSIs, AONBs, and other habitats could face increased threats.
- **Alternative Uses of Funds:** Recent controversies, like the Scottish Government's diversion of NRF funds for non-environmental purposes, highlight risks that the fund could be misused or deprioritised.
- **Economic Prioritization Over Sustainability:** Critics argue that the NRF, if not carefully implemented, may prioritise development at the expense of the long-term health of natural habitats.

Motion to be proposed (active section):

Newark and Sherwood DC calls upon the Government to amend Part 3 of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill before it becomes an Act of Parliament.

Developers must be required to demonstrate that their projects will not harm biodiversity or reduce the resilience of natural ecosystems, with financial offsets only used as a supplementary measure under strict regulatory oversight.

Furthermore, NSDC resolves to write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to express our concerns regarding these changes in the following terms:

Re: Concerns Over the Nature Restoration Fund in Part 3 of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill

I am writing on behalf of Newark and Sherwood District Council expressing our serious concerns regarding Part 3 of the Government's Planning & Infrastructure Bill that involves proposals that will allow some developments to make payments into a Nature Restoration Fund (NRF) thereby disregarding existing, tried and tested legislation, currently affording protection to European Sites, sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) and protected species.

Whilst we commend the initiative to establish a UK-wide NRF and its potential to support nature restoration efforts, we believe these changes present substantial risks to biodiversity, ecosystems, and the integrity of protected areas and protected species.

It is our view that Part 3 of the Bill needs substantial amendment before it becomes an Act of parliament. Specifically, we are concerned about:

- The adequacy of financial offsets in fully mitigating environmental damage;
- The potential for short-term solutions that fail to address the root causes of ecological degradation;
- The weakening of protections afforded under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations;
- With the potential removal of site ecological survey work, a subsequent degradation of the application of the ecological mitigation hierarchy;
- The prioritisation of economic development over the long-term sustainability of habitats and species.

We urge the Government to reconsider Part 3 of the P&I Bill and provide greater assurances that protected areas and protected species will continue to receive the highest level of legal protection.

Developers must be held accountable for demonstrating that their activities will not harm biodiversity or reduce the resilience of ecosystems, with financial offsets used only as a supplementary measure under rigorous control.

We are further concerned that the process proposed would be highly likely to remove biodiversity restoration to areas entirely separated from the areas which may be harmed and will, anyway, not be capable of restoration at anything close to a "Like for Like" level.

We look forward to your response and hope to see action taken to address these pressing concerns.

Date and time received:

(for completion by Democratic Services)

7 July 2025 – 10.20