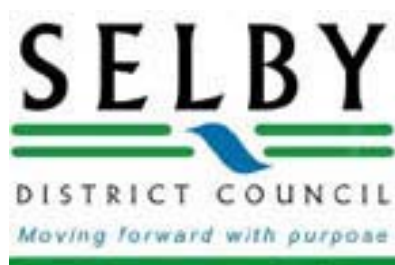


# **SELBY DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **Countryside and Green Space Strategy**

**2013**



### Purpose of the Strategy

This strategy sets out the Council's wider ambition toward the management of the countryside and green space throughout the district and how it can conserve and enhance the biodiversity by working with a range of partners and involving communities.

### Vision

*“To provide a strategic framework for the sustainable management and development of the countryside areas and green space within the Selby District”*

### Aims

- To promote a partnership approach with various agencies in implementing the Countryside and Green Space Strategy
- To work with developers to ensure biodiversity is enhanced and new green infrastructure is included as part of all new developments, helping to improve the environment
- To provide a net gain in biodiversity by creating new sites, enhancing and expanding existing sites and improving habitat connectivity
- To maintain and improve access to, and recreation opportunities in, the countryside and green space throughout the district, allowing people to experience and enjoy these areas
- To promote awareness, education and training in environmental and countryside issues, allowing people to appreciate, respect and understand what's around them
- To empower and enhance community involvement in the countryside and green space, encouraging people to be active and live well, and realise the benefits on offer
- To promote the economic viability of countryside communities, encouraging new business opportunities and existing business growth

### **Introduction**

This strategy represents the first formally adopted Countryside and Green Space Strategy for Selby district, providing a strategic framework for the sustainable development and management of the countryside and green space. It follows national guidance and learning, and complements the county-wide approach to countryside and green space management. This strategy will also act as a piece of background supporting information to support the Local Plan in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that in turn will help this strategy achieve its aims.

Fundamental to the development of this strategy has been the input by a range of partners and it is by continuing to adopt a partnership approach, involving all agencies with an interest in the countryside and green space that this strategy will be successfully implemented.

### **The Countryside and Landscape of Selby District**

For the purpose of the Strategy the term 'countryside' is defined as the area outside settlement boundaries. 'Green space' is defined as a plot of undeveloped land separating or surrounding areas of intensive residential or industrial use that is maintained for recreational enjoyment and ecological benefit.

Within the Selby district this covers an area of varied landscape with differing examples of countryside and green space. The district is relatively small, it is the most southerly district in North Yorkshire, covering an area of approximately 6,190 sq kilometres to the south of York and broadly contained by the A1(M) / A1 to the west and the River Derwent to the east.

Much of the District is relatively flat and low-lying, and is characterised by open, sparsely wooded arable landscapes including extensive areas of the highest quality agricultural land. More sensitive higher quality landscape is generally confined to the limestone ridge, which runs north-south along the western side of the District. In the North West district is more densely wooded and undulating. Again, in the more southerly parts of the district the landscape is less even. In terms of natural heritage

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the district is not that well known but there are significant archaeological remains along both the Southern Magnesian Limestone Ridge and within the Humberhead Levels. Medieval sites, particularly moated and manorial sites are a feature like the scheduled important monument such as Newton Kyme Henge. The Roman heritage of Tadcaster is particularly significant as is the Bishops Canal (now known as Bishop Dyke). Skipwith Common is also a significant resource for archaeology and biodiversity.

Flood storage areas provide and can play in adding value to the countryside, particularly ecological benefits. These areas can provide unique wetland habitat. Opportunities to create/manage flood storage areas in a similar way should be encouraged.

The District's biodiversity and green infrastructure is represented through a wealth of natural features and wildlife habitats, with international, national and local areas of wildlife and ecological value. The district is crossed by several major watercourses including the rivers Ouse, Wharfe, Aire and Derwent, and their associated washlands, which in the case of the River Derwent supports internationally important wetland. The Lower Derwent Valley and Skipwith Common are sites with European conservation status as well as nationally important Sites of Special Scientific Interest. In addition there are over 100 designated local Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCS), including species-rich grassland, ancient woodlands and wetlands. Many of these assets are irreplaceable and are a valuable part of the district's biodiversity that needs to be managed, enhanced and connected.

Areas of countryside such as Hambleton Hough (an area of natural beauty), and Barlow Common (a reclaimed former railway land, now a well-established nature reserve and other line and now an established nature reserve), together with other land owned by the Council such as Brayton Barff, help to conserve and enhance biodiversity. They also improve access and recreational opportunities and promote awareness of both the natural landscape and the managed countryside (agriculture), which form part of the district's green infrastructure. For example improved hedgerows or enhanced arable field margins can greatly increase farmland biodiversity, enhance high value areas, and help connect up the landscape.

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It is important to note the role of agriculture in shaping the district's countryside and that of the power industry, generating energy at Drax and Eggborough. The 19th century farming heritage of the district provides an important record of the intensification of farming that has shaped the district's landscape. Arable agriculture is important to the economy of the district and will continue to influence the shape of its landscape.

A full and detailed assessment of Selby District's landscape was completed in 1999 and is available on the Council's website or can be accessed on the link below:

[http://www.selby.gov.uk/service\\_main.asp?menuid=2&pageid=&id=2110](http://www.selby.gov.uk/service_main.asp?menuid=2&pageid=&id=2110)

Whilst the landscape and other elements reinforce Selby's local distinctiveness, it is the intention of this Strategy not only to maintain and enhance these natural and semi-natural elements, but also to recognise the importance of urban green space, as they too are relevant in terms of biodiversity, landscape and/or cultural heritage.

These are often areas such as community woodlands or urban river banks that provide space and habitat for wildlife with access to nature for people but they can also be man-made parks etc. Beyond the environmental benefits green space or 'Infrastructure' can provide economic, social and health benefits close to where people live and work, such as cycle routes for physical exercise and transport links or local food production in allotments being shared or traded.

Including green space as well as the wider countryside ensures the links with residents, who tend to use local green space more than accessing the wider countryside, are maintained. This, in turn, helps build and sustain the identity of the district by connecting the community with the countryside. Mapping the Green Infrastructure of the district will help to show where links can be made and ensure that important green space is not lost.

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Multi-functionality of places is a sustainable solution that allows different uses to co-exist. For example green spaces within flood plains often act as flood storages areas whilst also providing valuable areas for nature conservation and recreation.

### National Perspective

Nationally, countryside management is governed by the following:

- Natural Environment White Paper
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000
- Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act, 2006
- Biodiversity 2020: England's Biodiversity Strategy
- UK Biodiversity Action Plan

The Natural Environment White Paper is a “bold *and ambitious*” statement outlining the Government's vision for the natural environment over the next 50 years. The Government believe the paper sets out practical plans for a healthy, properly functioning natural environment that is the foundation of sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal wellbeing. Partnering is seen as key to successful delivery.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000 (CRoW Act) applies to England and Wales only. The Act provides for public access on foot to certain types of land, amends the law relating to public rights of way, increases measures for the management and protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and strengthens wildlife enforcement legislation, and provides for better management of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). North Yorkshire County Council is the responsible body for public rights of way and fulfils those obligations under the Act for North Yorkshire. Other aspects of the Act are the responsibility of all public bodies.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act came into force on 1st Oct 2006. Section 40 of the Act requires all public bodies including parish and town councils to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions. The aim of the biodiversity duty is to raise the profile of wildlife in England and Wales, so that its conservation becomes properly embedded in all relevant policies

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and decisions made by public bodies. Biodiversity 2020: England's Biodiversity Strategy is a new, ambitious biodiversity strategy for England that builds on the Natural Environment White Paper and provides a comprehensive picture of how Government intend to implement England's international and EU commitments. It sets out the strategic direction for biodiversity policy for the next decade on land (including rivers and lakes) and at sea. It builds on the successful work that has gone before, but also seeks to deliver a real step change focusing delivery in four outcome areas of; a more integrated large-scale approach to conservation on land and at sea; putting people at the heart of biodiversity policy; reducing environmental pressures and finally, improving our knowledge.

Although the national and local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) have been superseded by the '*Biodiversity 2020: England's Biodiversity Strategy*', BAPs remain a good benchmark, recognising the UK's most threatened species and habitats and establishing local plans that allows them to recover. The most-recent list of UK BAP priority species and habitats was published in August 2007 following a two year review of the BAP process and priorities. There is a BAP for Selby district that can be viewed by following the link below:

[http://www.selby.gov.uk/service\\_main.asp?menuid=&pageid=&id=971](http://www.selby.gov.uk/service_main.asp?menuid=&pageid=&id=971)

## **North Yorkshire Perspective**

In July 2012, Defra formally endorsed the formation of the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Partnership (LNP). The overarching vision of this partnership is to see the natural environment of North Yorkshire & York conserved, enhanced and connected across the whole LNP area for the benefit of wildlife, people and the economy. To achieve this vision of an integrated natural environment the Partnership has set out its ambitions through four key themes:

- Nature
- Economy
- People & Communities
- Climate Change

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The LNP strategy (to be published 2013) will identify:

- How the LNP through its range of partners will contribute towards these priorities
- The locations of where activity is likely to take place
- How the LNP can support the work of local groups and projects, and where necessary lead on work on the ground
- What themes and issues related to the natural environment the LNP will advocate at a strategic level

Selby has been identified by the LNP as an area where landscape enhancement would improve quality of place and assist in enhancing the wellbeing of communities.

### **Selby District Perspective**

Selby District Council has gone through a period of significant change. With significant reductions in public sector funding, the Council has prioritised delivering the good quality services that it is best placed to deliver and that our residents and businesses expect. However, the Council also recognises the importance of the district biodiversity and green infrastructure and believes by working with a range of partners the Council can use its countryside assets to help deliver on its corporate plan that in turn will help deliver the aims of this strategy.

This evidences how this strategy has not been developed in isolation and works to complement a number of the Council's key strategies and plans including the Core Strategy, the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Corporate plan. It will also act as background supporting information the Local Plan that in turn will help support the conservation and enhancement the district's biodiversity, including species-rich grassland, ancient woodlands and wetlands.

Fundamental to this strategy's success is the Council's ability to bring together a number of organisations to help maintain the district's landscape and wildlife, as well as organisations that support individuals and communities to be aware of, get involved and be active in, the conservation and enhancement of Selby district's countryside and green space.



### The Partnership Approach

In progressing the Countryside and Green Space Strategy and the development of the site specific Management Plans, key partners have been identified. These include organisations such as: Natural England, Groundwork North Yorkshire, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, The Wildlife Habitat Protection Trust and North Yorkshire County Council. Other partners will also be included in the wider consultation and development of site specific Management Plans, including partners such as Yorkshire Water, the National Farmers Union, Town and Parish Councils, Selby District Association of Voluntary Services (AVS), local Scout and Guide groups and other community groups that can assist the Council in achieving the aims and outcome objectives of this strategy. This diverse range of organisations with different knowledge, expertise and skills will work with Selby District Council, to manage our wide range of habitats and landscapes. Together we will work with town and parish councils to link communities and volunteers to help manage the district's countryside including species rich grassland, ancient woodlands and wetlands and the Council's nature reserve Barlow Common and areas of natural beauty like Hambleton Hough and Brayton Barff. Local community groups, working with experienced partners such as Groundwork North Yorkshire, will be able to form their own 'countryside management partnerships' and as a collective, help deliver the aims of this strategy.

To encourage this partnership approach to the management and development of the district's countryside, wider public consultation will be carried out with all town and parish council's, with the wider community working with Selby District AVS and through each of the district's Community Engagement Forums. It will help to map the district's green space, allowing the strategy to target and focus effort where it is most needed. This is necessary for this strategy to justify developer contributions as part of the Planning process. It will also help achieve the aim to promote awareness and educate people about the district's countryside and green space issues. Community involvement is key to the success of this strategy, encouraging ownership and allowing people to contribute and help shape the strategy is a positive way to connect people with their local green space and the wider countryside.

## **Selby District Countryside and Green Space Strategy Framework and Themes**

This strategy will cover a period of five years and will be reviewed annually. It sets out a strategic framework for the sustainable management of the countryside and green spaces across Selby District. The Countryside and Green Space Strategy will be implemented through a range of partnerships and Countryside Management Plans. These will be reviewed with partners annually to form the basis of a bidding document to be used by partners for grant aid for specific projects as they emerge and form part of an annual report to the Council's Executive.

The Strategy for the Selby District covers five key themes which mirror the strategy's aims, the first aim of this strategy to promote a partnership approach is implicit. The reason for each theme will be explained followed by outcome objectives that clearly state the intentions of the Council in collaboration with its partners. The five key themes areas are:

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Theme One -   | Landscape and Nature Conservation and Enhancement |
| Theme Two -   | Access and Recreation                             |
| Theme Three - | Environmental Awareness and Education             |
| Theme Four -  | Community Involvement                             |
| Theme Five -  | Economy and Land Management                       |

### **THEME ONE: Landscape and Nature Conservation and Enhancement**

A healthy environment is important to everyone; it is essential for our well-being and our quality of life. Landscape and nature conservation and its enhancement is a major part of this. Ultimately, biodiversity is lost or conserved at the local level and the wildlife habitats need to be in keeping with the character of the landscape. Such conservation and enhancement can only be achieved if it is actively managed. The Council will work with partners and communities to ensure the following outcome objectives are achieved:

- **Outcome Objectives** - Landscape and Nature Conservation and Enhancement

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- **Conserve and enhance biodiversity:** work with landowners and local communities to map and manage green spaces and local nature reserves across the district to ensure species and habitats will be sustained enhanced and better connected. For example, road verges are managed to encourage wildflowers and strengthen wildlife corridors, by community groups where possible, with seeding of native flowers considered where the current biodiversity interest is low.
- **Identify Green Infrastructure:** spatially identify priorities for the creation of multi-functional green space across the district so that opportunities for access, landscape and biodiversity are a core part of the planning process. For example, work with developers to ensure new developments contribute to additional recreational facilities and enhance biodiversity.
- **Protect existing sites:** work with landowners and partners to protect existing sites with international, national and local designations. Also, with its partners, the Council will endeavour to protect the district's cultural and natural heritage including archaeology and conservation of the historic landscape.
- **Support public and private open spaces within settlements:** work with local communities and landowners to maintain and develop these often small open spaces that are often the most valued by people and provide that vital link between partners and the public that this strategy relies on. This includes parks, cemeteries, churchyards and allotments.
- **Promote positive management of degraded land:** work with landowners to help restore brown field sites so they can support local wildlife. This will prevent further degradation and enhance the local landscape and increase biodiversity.

### **THEME TWO: Access and Recreation**

Improving access for everyone to the countryside and green space, and increasing recreational opportunities is important to the Council as it helps to increase the number of people who are able to enjoy the outdoors. Getting out and about in the countryside also benefits people's physical health and mental wellbeing. Providing appropriate access to the countryside and recreational opportunities for all including people with disabilities, first time visitors from urban areas or regular walkers and countryside volunteers is an important part of countryside management. This helps

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people to experience and enjoy the natural world at close hand, encouraging people to be happy and healthy; 'living well' by being active in the countryside and green spaces. To achieve this, the Council with its partners, has identified the following outcome objectives:

- **Outcome Objectives:** Access and Recreation
- **Get people out and about:** work with our partners to offer a range of different services to promote appropriate access to the countryside and green space. This will include people being able to use different modes of transport to get to, and then get around in the countryside and nature reserves, wherever possible. It will involve public transport, community transport, cycle routes, bridleways and footpaths including mobility access.
- **Get people active in the countryside:** Working with our partners to develop and expand a range of activities including guided walks and guided walk leaflets, nature trails and healthy living programmes. People will also be encouraged to participate in schemes to develop the landscape, creating footpaths and, where possible, access furniture that enhances people's experience and encourages use by disabled people.
- **Controlling illegal access:** Working with our partners and community links, do all that is practical to prevent illegal access through positive engagement, education and as a last resort, legal enforcement.

### **THEME THREE: Environmental Awareness and Education**

Environmental awareness and education is important as it helps people understand the countryside around them and how they interact with, and impact upon the biodiversity of an area, and how, over time, the landscape has been shaped . The Council will encourage partners to use its assets to support the work of schools, youth groups and adult education so people are aware that the district has a rich and varied diversity of natural habitat. Education is a useful doorway into communities and can reinforce environmental messages and encourage positive action. By raising awareness through environmental educational projects, children, adults and community groups will be encouraged to adopt a sense of ownership of their local environment and a responsibility to care for it. Action can be taken in a variety of areas to increase environmental awareness and education most beyond the scope of

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the Council. However, through the Council's commitment to partnering the following outcome objectives have been identified:

- **Outcome Objectives:** Environmental Awareness and Education
- **Open access for schools:** The Council will work with partners to maximise access to education for schools on Council owned countryside and green space. This will allow basic education and awareness programmes across a range of environmental topics, linked to the National Curriculum, to be delivered. This will mean more children are aware of the countryside and nature reserves around them and increase the likelihood of them getting involved.
- **Encourage adult education:** The Council will encourage partners to use its available assets to educate and train adults in a variety of environmental topics and countryside management skills. Increasingly adults, for vocational or professional reasons, want a greater environmental awareness, education and training. Once educated, people are more likely to get involved, wanting to enhance their local green spaces and countryside.
- **More opportunities for community education:** The Council will work with partners to increase the number of awareness, education and training sessions available to community groups and after-school clubs (e.g. Beavers, Cubs, Rainbows and Brownies). Again to do so may lead to more people being active and involved helping them to enjoy the countryside and green space and help maintain and enhance it.

### **THEME FOUR: Community Involvement**

A theme throughout this strategy has been to inspire individuals and communities to take ownership of their local green space and countryside so it is managed and enhanced by the people that use it. Achieving this is fundamental to the success of this strategy's aims and outcome objectives. Environmental projects with the full participation of local communities tend to be more creative, innovative and successful. They also tend to be more sustainable, protecting the countryside and green space for future generations. Whether this is involvement in planning projects, executing them or just joining in, the Council, working with the five Community Engagement Forums and their Partnership Boards and a wide range of voluntary and community partners to support and inspire local people to deliver and take ownership

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of projects that make a positive difference to the biodiversity, to local green spaces and the countryside. Equally as important, is the benefit for those people that get involved, of empowerment and wellbeing. Through participation people gain a greater opportunity to influence and become part of something that improves their local environment. Here the Council's outcome objective is simple:

- **Outcome objective:** Community involvement
- **Increase community involvement and ownership:** The Council, through the five Community Engagement Forums (CEFs) and their Partnership Boards will work with partners to find creative and innovative ways to maximise the number of people involved in managing and enhancing their local green spaces and the countryside. This may be supporting community groups carry out simple maintenance on a village pond or larger, long term partnership led projects to create new local nature reserves or enhancement programmes on the district's existing nature reserves. No matter how little or large the commitment might be, from an individual volunteer, or twenty strong community group, the Council, the CEFs and partners, are committed, and will actively encourage and facilitate proactive community involvement that enhances, gives greater access to, manages or creation of green space or countryside. For example, designating a local green area for community use, as outlined in the Natural Environment White Paper.

### **THEME FIVE: Economy and Land Management**

Nationally, rural countryside areas have significantly higher house prices than the national average while rural wages are significantly lower. Although Selby District does suffer to some degree from this national trend, the district does not suffer in the same way as other parts of North Yorkshire. However, the council recognises the need to balance housing demand whilst preserving aims of this strategy. The Council's efforts to address these issues are covered, in varying ways, through Local Enterprise Partnerships, the Local Plan, the Core Strategy, Sustainable Community Strategy and the Council's Corporate Plan. Where appropriate, the Council will work with partners to ensure effective land management that supports this strategy and the countryside economy. However, in terms of this strategy the Council's aim and outcome focus is to generate business growth from the Council owned countryside, primarily its nature reserve and other countryside or green space assets that through

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effective land management can generate income either in its own right or for a partner organisation. One opportunity already alluded to is education and training. The benefit here is the sustainability and growth of the providing partner combined with the individual skills gained through education and training that could lead to new employment opportunities. Here, the Council's outcome objectives are more aspirational until more work is done to explore the possibilities.

- **Outcome objectives:** Economy and Land Management
- **Find the countryside business opportunities:** The Council will work with its partners to explore and identify realistic opportunities for enterprising business growth from the Council's countryside and green space assets that supports the aims and objectives. For example, working with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and other partners to create and generate nature tourism within the district that benefits both the local economy and the district's biodiversity.
- **Have cost effective land management:** The Council will work with its partners to identify sustainable development projects that support the wider countryside and green infrastructure that help deliver the aims and objectives of this strategy. For example, the Council could encourage businesses to provide wildlife areas within their premises, promoting innovative ideas such as green roofs.
- **Increase developer contributions through the use of Policy Planning Guidance:** Explore opportunities for additional contributions towards enhancement of biodiversity that balances the housing and business development needs with the environment. For example, the Minerals and Waste Plan could allow access to funds for restoration schemes that enhance biodiversity.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Detailed site specific Management Plans will be developed that outline all partner and Council responsibilities and commitments toward delivering the aims and objectives of this strategy. A framework of tangible, qualitative and quantitative measures will be identified that evidence progress toward achieving the outcomes. These measures will form part of the annual review and be used in the completion of grant and other funding applications.

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The annual review will include the progress made toward achieving the aims and outcome objectives as set out above. It will also include recommendations to add or remove any outcome objectives. The review will be reported to the Council's Executive annually.

### **Conclusion**

This strategy clearly outlines the Council's commitment to conserve and enhance biodiversity and landscape character across the district's countryside and green space. This will be achieved by working with a range of partners, residents, communities and where possible, developers and businesses, getting them all actively involved with improving the district's countryside and green space.

The Strategy sets clear outcome objectives, which delivery can be measured against. Doing so will help to deliver the 5 Big Things in the Council's Corporate Plan by having a positive impact on changing the way people see the district; encouraging people to get involved and be active, helping them lead happy and healthy lives. It's also about being switched on to what's happening around us, knowing what's important.

The partnership approach to countryside and green space management and enhancement, described in the Strategy, is in line with "*Biodiversity 2020: England's Biodiversity Strategy*", and follows the emerging guidance and trends. The partners involved in helping the Council develop the strategy have been encouraged by the Council's ambition and innovation. This inclusion and collaboration with partners from the start has ensured the aims and objectives to be a realistic and achievable way of conserving, enhancing and connecting Selby district's biodiversity and the natural and cultural heritage assets within its landscapes.



## **Partners Involved in the Development of the Selby District Countryside and Green Space Strategy**

Natural England

Groundwork North Yorkshire

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

The Wildlife Habitat Protection Trust

North Yorkshire County Council