Nature emergency' set to be declared for Dorset

A ‘NATURE EMERGENCY’ could be declared by Dorset Council this week.

It follows on the from the climate and environment emergency the authority declared five years ago.

The latest proposal comes from council leader Nick Ireland with the support of fellow Lib Dems, Labour and Green Party councillors. The cross-party support means it is almost certain to be approved even if the Conservative group votes against.

The motion, to the Thursday evening full council meeting, says that urgent action must be taken to protect nature in Dorset. It says the UK is now one of the world’s most nature-depleted countries, the worst in the G7 group of wealthy countries.

Said the motion: “A thriving natural environment underpins a healthy, prosperous society, that it benefits our physical and mental health, feeds us, cleans our air, moderates urban heat, alleviates flooding, absorbs carbon, makes counties like Dorset beautiful and that its survival and diversity is essential to human life.”

The effect of the declaration, if approved, will mean that nature’s recovery will have to be considered in all of the council’s strategic planning including the next Dorset Local Plan and that the council will commit to a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Dorset, working with farmers, landowners, businesses, organisation and non-governmental organisations, as well as through the council’s own farms estate and public areas.

Other issues include a ban on the use of glycosulphate-based weed killers, a decision which has caused problems in some other councils where they have struggled to find suitable, alternative, ways of controlling weeds in public areas such as pavements, paths and highways, although the Dorset motion adds the "where possible."

Mention is also made in the motion to planting trees and hedgerows, lowering soil fertility on verges (which encourages wild flowers), and encouraging community orchards and the establishment of allotments.

It also calls for "working with farmers, landowners, town & parish councils and other external partners to improve biodiversity, increase tree cover and woodland, and green our streets."