



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Parks and Leisure Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Consultation: Draft Biodiversity Duty Guidelines</b>
<b>Date:</b>	15 March 2012
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Orla Maguire, Biodiversity Officer

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
	<p>The Department of Environment Northern Ireland (DoENI) has circulated its draft Biodiversity Duty Guidelines and has invited comments from the Council. A copy of the draft guidelines is attached as Appendix 1.</p> <p>The comments received from this initial consultation phase will be used in the development of guidance for all public bodies to enable them to fulfil their Biodiversity Duty under the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. This duty requires every public body in exercising any of its functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity.</p>
<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
	<p>Following consideration by relevant officers across the Council, a response has been completed in draft form for approval by Members. This is provided at Appendix 2.</p> <p>In summary the draft response welcomes the introduction of these draft guidelines and believes it is a useful starting point in the development of clear and concise guidance for public bodies. The draft response provides the Council's overarching comments and officers have requested a meeting with DoENI to discuss the issues in more detail.</p> <p>The draft response also highlights that the guidance is considered to be central government focused and it was felt should include a chapter that is specific to Local Government and that the case studies used should also</p>

	<p>include some that are more relevant to local authorities. It is also suggested that Local Biodiversity Action Plans should be given more prominence in the guidance.</p> <p>Subject to approval by Council, it is proposed that the final response is submitted to DoENI.</p>
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<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
	<p><u>Financial</u> None required at present</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u> None required at present</p> <p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u> None at this stage.</p>

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Implications</b>
	It is anticipated that DoENI will undertake an equality impact screening of the guidelines before they are finalised.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
	<p>Members are asked to –</p> <p>(i) Note the contents of this report; and</p> <p>(ii) Approve submission of a final response to DoENI, subject to any comments or amendment provided.</p>

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
	N/A

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
	DoENI – Department of the Environment Northern Ireland

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Draft guidelines</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Draft response</p>