



Report to: Cabinet Meeting - 24 March 2026

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Simon Forde, Climate and the Environment

Director Leads: Matt Lamb – Planning and Growth  
Matthew Finch – Communities and Environment

Lead Officer: Nick Law – Biodiversity & Ecology Lead Officer. Ext. 5333

Report Summary	
<b>Type of Report</b>	Open Report / Key Decision
<b>Report Title</b>	Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity Report
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To present a proposed Biodiversity Strategy and to present the statutorily required Biodiversity Report 2024-2025
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>That Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) approve the proposed amended First Consideration Proposed Future Actions and Monitoring as the Council’s Biodiversity Strategy;</li> <li>(b) approve publication of the proposed Biodiversity Report 2024-2025; and</li> <li>(c) approve that future Biodiversity Reports will be published annually.</li> </ul>
<b>Alternative Options Considered</b>	<p>None, as there is a statutory requirement to have agreed actions within a First Consideration report and the proposed Biodiversity Strategy provides a mechanism for that.</p> <p>The statutory requirement can be no more than 5-year reporting intervals but given imminent changes to mandatory BNG and impending Local Government Reform, and a Council fully engaged with biodiversity matters, annual reporting was considered appropriate.</p>

<b>Reason for Recommendations</b>	As set out above in the summary for Alternative Options Considered. Some of the proposed actions align with Ambition 6 of the Community Plan, particularly ‘Play an active role in biodiversity net gain for the district, including the potential to own our own biodiversity offset sites, as well as looking at how our own developments can contribute.’
-----------------------------------	--

**1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The Cabinet approved publication of the *Biodiversity Report – First Consideration* on 4 June 2024 with finalised agreed actions to be brought back to the Cabinet for approval within 3 months of publication of the First Consideration report.
- 1.2 Whilst the Report was effectively published through this process, finalised agreed actions were never brought back to Cabinet for approval.
- 1.3 The Council has a statutory obligation to publish a Biodiversity Report and the end date of the first reporting period should be no later than 1 January 2026 and reports should be published within 12 weeks of the reporting period end date.

**2.0 Proposal/Options Considered**

- 2.1 **Proposal (1)** Is for the First Consideration Proposed Future Actions and Proposed Monitoring set out in Section 2 of the First Consideration report to be amended to account for the current situation, as recommended in the review table below, and for the amended Section 2 (Appendix A of this report) to then be adopted as the Council’s Biodiversity Strategy.

2.2

Item	Proposed Future Action	Comment	Recommendation
Community Plan 2023-2027	Develop a Biodiversity Strategy	It was considered that the First Consideration Report represented a framework for the Biodiversity Strategy	Guided by the review in this table remove actions no longer considered achievable or relevant and then adopt an amended version of the table in Section 2 of the First Consideration Report as the Biodiversity Strategy.
	Engage with the LNRS process	This has been actioned. Can be continued in the next Biodiversity Reporting Period.	Can and will be reported on in the Biodiversity Report 2024-2025.

	Review Council's landholding for 'habitat banking'.	This has been actioned. Can be continued in the next Biodiversity Reporting Period.	Can and will be reported on in the Biodiversity Report 2024-2025.
	Reporting against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals	Not aware of any action.	Research further before deciding to keep or remove.
Green Infrastructure Strategy for Newark and Sherwood (2010)	Review at the next round of plan making	Still relevant.	Keep in strategy and report on.
Amended Core Strategy Development Plan Document (ACSDPD)	Appraisal to consider whether development should provide more than the mandatory minimum 10% BNG, to align with the next round of plan making	Consultation on the draft NPPF indicates that Government will not support this.	No longer deliverable. Remove from strategy.
	Inclusion of biodiversity within a Design Code to align with the next round of plan making	Still relevant.	Keep in strategy and report on.
Supporting studies	To review and update where appropriate as part of the next round of plan making the following: Strategic Flood Risk Assessments Newark & Sherwood Water Cycle Study; and Habitat Regulations Assessments.	Still relevant.	Keep in strategy and report on.
Local Wildlife Sites System	To discuss with the Nottinghamshire Biological and	Not actioned, but still relevant and achievable.	Keep in strategy and report on.

	Geological Records Centre the potential for the NSDC Ecology Team to have a direct supporting involvement with the Local Wildlife Sites system.		
Planning Applications	Consider effects of biodiversity during planning determinations.	Has been actioned.	Can and will be reported on in the Biodiversity Report 2024-2025.
	Planning Committee members to receive BNG training.	Has been actioned.	Can and will be reported on in the Biodiversity Report 2024-2025.
Biodiversity Net Gain	Creation of a new second permanent post to support the Biodiversity and Ecology Officer.	Has been actioned.	Can and will be reported on in the Biodiversity Report 2024-2025.
Land Management	Highlight opportunities where management could provide biodiversity benefits.	Not actioned, but still relevant and achievable.	Keep in strategy and report on.
Housing Stock Management	Prepare 'information sheets' to raise awareness of biodiversity issues for Council's housing stock maintenance.	Not actioned, but still relevant and achievable.	Keep in strategy and report on.
Asset Management	Feasibility study to appraise the potential to purchase land for the specific purpose of selling biodiversity units.	Not been actioned. Officers are aware that the 'habitat bank' market has developed significantly and price cutting is already occurring. Officer advice would be that given the cost of	Recommend removal from the strategy

		purchase of suitable land this would likely carry a high financial risk.	
Working with partner organisations	Raise additional awareness through running one or two high profile public engagement services	Not actioned, but still relevant and achievable.	Keep in strategy and report on.
	Undertake a review of the provision of Local Nature Reserves within the District	Not actioned, but still relevant and achievable.	Keep in strategy and report on.
Raising Awareness	Create and continually refresh biodiversity content for the Council's website	Not actioned, but still relevant and achievable.	Keep in strategy and report on.
	Investigate ways to raise general awareness of biodiversity issues amongst NSDC Staff	Not actioned, but still relevant and achievable.	Keep in strategy and report on.

- 2.3 In making this recommendation it is the officer's opinion that the proposed Future Actions are such that they are meaningful actions but sufficiently broad in their scope to not impose unrealistic constraints or financial implications for delivery, but with flexibility to enable yet unidentified actions that fit the scope of the action to be reported.
- 2.4 The Future Actions in the Biodiversity Strategy will then be monitored and reported on in the Council's future Biodiversity Reports. This will not be the Biodiversity Report that is the subject of the second proposal (2), but future Biodiversity Reports.
- 2.5 **Proposal (2).** It is proposed that the presented Biodiversity Report 2024-2025 is published as part of the Council's statutory duty to report on its Biodiversity Duty.
- 2.6 As this is a statutory requirement there is no alternative to publishing a report. However, there is a minimum legal requirement regarding the content of the report, and the recommended report contains a lot of optional additional information. It is considered that this should be included as it demonstrates how the Council delivers on many of its core values.

2.7 **Proposal (3).** After the end of the first reporting period, the end date of each subsequent reporting period must be within 5 years of the end date of the previous reporting period. It is proposed that following publication of the Biodiversity Report 2024-2025, that the Council publishes a Biodiversity Report annually. Mandatory biodiversity net gain is likely to be modified during 2026 and preparations for Local Government Reform have the potential to influence proposed actions. Also, the Council is a council that is fully engaged with biodiversity matters and should be keen to evidence this via more frequent reporting. In making this assessment other options for less frequent reporting have been considered, but have then been subsequently dismissed.

**3.0 Implications**

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Implications Considered			
Yes – relevant and included / NA – not applicable			
Financial	Yes	Equality & Diversity	N/A
Human Resources	N/A	Human Rights	N/A
Legal	Yes	Data Protection	N/A
Digital & Cyber Security	N/A	Safeguarding	N/A
Sustainability	N/A	Crime & Disorder	N/A
LGR	Yes	Tenant Consultation	N/A

**Financial Implications – FIN25-26/3719**

3.1 No financial implications have been identified.

**Legal Implications - LEG2526/2135**

3.2 The report outlines the Legal obligations under the Environment Act 2021 in respect of Biodiversity reporting and the requirement for the Council as a local authority and local planning authority to publish the Biodiversity Report. The Biodiversity Report must be published within 12 weeks of the end date of the first reporting period which was on 31 December 2025.

**Local Government Reform**

3.3 Local Government Reform will have taken place on 1 April 2028. This has influenced the decision to recommend annual reporting. Annual reporting has the potential to assist with ensuring that the actions and values for biodiversity currently embedded within the Council are hopefully carried forward into the new Unitary Authority that Newark and Sherwood District will become part of.

**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.

Newark and Sherwood District Council 'Biodiversity Report – First Consideration' approved by Cabinet on 04 June 2024.

**Appendix A: Proposed Newark and Sherwood District Council Biodiversity Strategy**

Theme	Item	Current state	Proposed Future actions	Proposed Monitoring
Council Strategies	Community Plan 2023-2027_Revised April 2025	<p>Biodiversity matters are encompassed within Ambition 6 of the Community Plan; <i>“AMBITION 6 Reduce the impact of climate change and protect and enhance green spaces”</i>.</p> <p><i>“Deliver the Council’s Tree Strategy, enabling the exploration of options to develop new community woodland and wildlife spaces and support the improvement of air quality”</i></p> <p><i>“Play an active role in biodiversity net gain for the district, including the potential to own our own biodiversity offset sites, as well as looking at how our own developments can contribute.”</i></p> <p><i>“Explore coordinating and enhancing open space, including biodiversity and sports provision in the south of Newark. Including by developing plans and costed proposals for the Middle Beck Green Basin”</i></p> <p><i>“Develop a new Local Plan for Newark &amp; Sherwood, promoting action to tackle climate change through sustainable design policies, protecting existing open space and securing new open space as part of development and securing biodiversity improvements through appropriate policies and projects.”</i></p> <p>To date the Council has been proactive in addressing these biodiversity related parts of Ambition 6; the following are key examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It has developed an Ecology Team (two officers) within the Planning Development Team (which is also partially incorporated in the Planning Policy Team);</li> <li>• Two BNG specific documents have been approved and implemented;</li> <li>• Ecology officers have been proactively engaged with emerging commercial habitat banks in the District;</li> <li>• Following a comprehensive review of the Council’s land holding, Cabinet approval has been granted to develop 5 land parcels for the purpose of biodiversity net gain to principally support the Council’s own development proposals;</li> <li>• Officers have proactively engaged with the development of the Nottinghamshire and Nottingham Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) which was published in November 2025 and the Biodiversity Net Gain Framework for Nottinghamshire and Nottingham;</li> <li>• Environmental Services Officers have planted or supported the planting of over 30ha of trees through the Trees for Climate scheme, given away over 2,000 trees to residents through our annual free tree giveaway and financially supported the creation of 2 new woodlands (Little Carlton and Thorney Abbey), where around 14,000 new trees have been planted in return for 30% of the carbon credits.</li> <li>• Declared a ‘Motion for the Ocean’ to champion good stewardship by the relevant authorities of the River Trent and its tributaries.</li> </ul>	<p>Continue to stimulate and where feasible, support the development of Biodiversity Gain Sites (<b>Habitat Banks</b>) within the District and publish a local register of such sites and record the delivery of BNG within the District, both on and off site.</p> <p>Continue current ongoing engagement with the implementation and future development of the <b>Nottinghamshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy</b>, and the <b>Biodiversity Net Gain Framework for Nottinghamshire and Nottingham</b>.</p> <p>Establish operating Habitat Banks on the five land parcels approved by Cabinet to be used for that purpose.</p> <p>Reporting against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals provides a potential opportunity to monitor some aspects of how well the Council is meeting its biodiversity duty, along with other measures that have wider environmental benefits. Therefore, a proposed action is to <b>consider inclusion of reporting against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals</b> as part of the Council’s wider corporate recording functions.</p>	<p>Via:</p> <p>(i) Existing ongoing quarterly reporting structure for the Community Plan.</p> <p>(ii) Annual statutory Biodiversity Report</p>

Theme	Item	Current state	Proposed Future actions	Proposed Monitoring
	<b>Climate Emergency Declaration – “Greening Newark and Sherwood Action Plan”</b>	Item 11 Biodiversity of the <a href="#">Greening Newark and Sherwood Action Plan</a> states: <i>“Promote opportunities for biodiversity net gains where appropriate within the planning system and process”.</i>	Covered by actions relating to planning policy.	Covered elsewhere
	<b>Green Infrastructure Strategy for Newark and Sherwood (2010)</b>	The objective of the <a href="#">Green Infrastructure Strategy</a> was to provide a reference document that would then <i>“...form the basis for conserving, enhancing and extending the green infrastructure of the District and provide an evidence baseline for incorporating into the Draft Core Strategy. This would then be an integral element of planning for the sustainable development of the District”.</i> Because biodiversity is an inherent, integral aspect of green infrastructure this formed a key document for informing the development of local planning policies with regards to biodiversity matters.	Fifteen years on it is still of relevance, but should be considered for <b>review</b> given the many changes that have inevitably taken place in the intervening period. If a review is considered necessary, the timing should align with the next round of plan making as discussed below.	To align with the agreed timescales for the next round of plan making.
<b>Planning Policy</b>	<b>Amended Allocations &amp; Development Management Plan Document (AADMDPD)</b>	Currently under <a href="#">review</a> and at an advanced stage of independent examination following submission to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whereby consultation has been carried out on a range of ‘main modifications’ to the submitted DPD. The protection and enhancement of biodiversity within the District forms a key theme through the Plan policies, but with the focal point being Policy DM7 Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure which considers the designated sites network, priority habitats at national and local level, protected and priority species, measurable biodiversity net gain and the green infrastructure that contains the varied habitats needed to support species.	Because the AADMPDP is at an advanced stage of review there is little scope for any significant amendment.	Not applicable

Theme	Item	Current state	Proposed Future actions	Proposed Monitoring
Planning Policy	Amended Core Strategy Development Plan Document (ACSDPD)	<p>Adopted in March 2019 the <a href="#">Amended Core Strategy</a> sets out the main issues that the Council and its associated partners need to address and sets out a Vision and series of Objectives and associated Policies to deliver these. Like the AADMPDP, the protection and enhancement of biodiversity is a key theme.</p> <p>The Vision includes the statement: <i>“The natural environment will be safeguarded and enhanced, green infrastructure will be strengthened, new green and woodland spaces will increase ecology, biodiversity and nature conservation, providing a resource for local people and encouraging personal wellbeing and health.”</i></p> <p>This vision is then translated into the following objective, <i>“To protect and enhance the built and natural environment, heritage, biodiversity and landscape, giving additional protection to those areas and buildings of recognised importance.”</i></p> <p>Like the AADMPDP, protection and enhancement of biodiversity features in many of the policies but Core Policy 12 Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure forms the focus.</p>	<p>The next round of plan making will provide an opportunity to review and if necessary, amend/update how biodiversity should be considered in local policy.</p> <p>The objective of Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) was to ensure that development proposals do not result in a measurable net loss of biodiversity but provide a minimum net gain of at least 10%. It is now two years since mandatory BNG came into force and alongside other proposed planning reforms Government is considering how this is working.</p> <p>The Biodiversity Net Gain Framework for Nottinghamshire and Nottingham has an aspiration for more than the mandatory minimum 10% BNG to be delivered by developments – an aspiration shared by some Council members. However, the draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) currently under consultation states that <i>“Although development proposals may incorporate biodiversity enhancements which exceed the statutory objective for biodiversity net gain, this should only be a requirement where it is set out in up-to-date development plan policies for specific site allocations. Decision makers should not give weight to other development plan policies which require biodiversity gains which go beyond the statutory framework, including for development proposals which are exempt.”</i>. Opportunities for securing more than the mandatory minimum 10% net gain are therefore likely to be very limited in in the next round of plan-making.</p> <p>However, biodiversity net gain is not a panacea for biodiversity issues within the District and it has its strengths and weaknesses. It is habitat based and acts as a proxy for species and there is a risk of opportunities for innovative habitat creation/enhancement schemes being lost if they don’t fall into the ‘box’ structure of the statutory Biodiversity Metric used to calculate net gain. Until recently a Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) would have been the obvious vehicle to ensure delivery of biodiversity enhancements falling outside the scope of mandatory BNG, but current national planning reforms will see SPDs phased out. Consequently, the most appropriate mechanism for securing these wider biodiversity benefits within the development process will be <b>inclusion of biodiversity within a Design Code</b> and the development of such a code will potentially form part of the next round of plan making.</p>	To align with agreed timescales for the next round of plan making.
	Supporting studies	<p>Other strategies undertaken as part of the Local Development Framework which have consideration of biodiversity matters, or which provide important evidence bases for future decision-making regarding biodiversity matters include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Strategic Flood Risk Assessments</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Newark &amp; Sherwood Water Cycle Study</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Habitats Regulations Assessments</a></li> </ul>	To review and update where appropriate as part of the next round of plan making.	To align with agreed timescales for the next round of plan making.

Theme	Item	Current state	Proposed Future actions	Proposed Monitoring
	<b>Local Wildlife Sites System</b>	<p>Sites within the National Site Network (i.e., Special Conservation Areas (SCA), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)) are afforded legal protection that extends to the way they can and cannot be managed. In contrast the next tier of nature conservation designation Local Sites (which in Nottinghamshire are Local Wildlife Sites) is non-statutory, and whilst they are a material consideration in the planning processes, the designation infers no management obligation on the owners of such sites.</p> <p>Within Nottinghamshire the system is managed by the Nottinghamshire Biological and Geological Records Centre (NBGRC) with the Council providing funding for its district via an annual service level agreement (SLA) payment. Whilst the annual information received by the Council demonstrates that a rolling re-survey of the LWS in the district is being undertaken, there is no evidence of proactive engagement with LWS owners promoting sympathetic management of their sites. This runs the risk of the process simply recording decline on some sites and potential opportunities to establish favourable management of LWS being missed.</p>	<p>The evolution of the management regime for the LWS system within Nottinghamshire mirrors similar practice across much of the country (i.e., a single system operating on a county basis). This evolved at a time when the Council had no in-house ecological expertise, this situation has now changed, and the Council has two experienced in-house ecologists supporting the Planning Development and Planning Policy teams. The current and future level of expertise within this team provides an opportunity to support operation of the LWS within our District, particularly in respect of the all-important engagement with LWS owners and increasing the number of sites surveyed each year. It is therefore proposed that <b>a proposal for NSDC's ecologists to have a direct supporting involvement with the LWS system is discussed with NBGRC</b> and subsequently implemented.</p>	<p>Quarterly internal review of progress of agreed actions</p>
<b>Planning Services</b>	<b>Planning Applications</b>	<p>Planning services deal with many different types of development proposals. Implementation of policies DM7 and Core Policy 12 ensure due consideration is given to protected sites, protected species, and priority habitats and species, in the planning decision process.</p>	<p>Continue to consider effects on biodiversity in relation to adopted planning policies during the determination process.</p>	<p>Existing line-management system.</p>
	<b>Biodiversity Net Gain</b>	<p>Preparations for readiness for mandatory BNG have been outlined above (Community Plan).</p>	<p>As detailed in the Community Plan future actions section.</p>	<p>6-weekly internal review of progress of agreed actions</p>
	<b>In-house expertise</b>	<p>The Council appointed its first in-house ecologist in 2023. Whilst the primary driver for creation of this post was getting ready for, and subsequently managing mandatory biodiversity net gain, the advantages of having this in-house expertise has been acknowledged across many aspects of the Council's work. This has led to further expansion of the Ecology Team to two full time officers.</p>	<p>Having expanded the team to two full time officers, it is evident that the workload will continue to increase as monitoring of 'on-site' BNG starts following completion of approved developments. It is therefore proposed that a <b>feasibility assessment for the creation of a third permanent post to support the current Biodiversity and Ecology Lead Officer</b> will be undertaken. The intention will be to maximise funding of the post through charged services and review of existing ecological work contracted out</p>	<p>6-weekly internal review of progress of agreed actions</p>
<b>Environmental Services</b>	<b>Land Management</b>	<p>The Council owns land, or manages land on behalf of others, across a diverse portfolio of land types, ranging from Birklands and Bilhaugh Special Area of Conservation (and Site of Special Scientific Interest) which is of international nature conservation importance for its old acidic woodland and which supports a rich invertebrate fauna, to areas of species-poor regularly mown amenity grassland which are of low biodiversity value.</p> <p>Management of key sites like the SSSI and other important nature reserves are guided by management plans.</p> <p>As part of its work associated with biodiversity net gain, the Council has started an initial audit of land within its management control to see where there might be opportunities to create biodiversity net gain.</p>	<p>To use the results of the initial audit of land within the Council's management control to not only highlight opportunities for specific biodiversity net gain, but to highlight areas where other management options would have the potential to provide biodiversity benefits, like specific actions to benefit specific species or species groups.</p>	<p>6-monthly internal review of progress of agreed actions</p>

Theme	Item	Current state	Proposed Future actions	Proposed Monitoring
Housing Maintenance and Asset Management	Housing Stock Management	The Council has a large housing stock. Management of this resource includes general maintenance, repairs and refurbishment. Where such work falls outside the requirement for planning permission, there is the potential for adverse impacts on protected species like bats and their roosts, and nesting birds like swallow, swift and house martin. In these circumstances ensuring there are no negative effects on biodiversity is dependent on awareness of these potential impacts.	<p>Ensuring there are no negative impacts on biodiversity where work is subject to planning permission will continue to be achieved via planning services as part of the application validation and determination process.</p> <p>For all other works a series of <b>'information sheets'</b> to be produced to <b>raise awareness of biodiversity issues</b> for the Council's housing stock maintenance staff and appointed sub-contractors.</p>	6-monthly internal review of progress of agreed actions
Corporate Property	Asset Management	Management of this resource includes general maintenance, repairs and refurbishment. Where such work falls outside the requirement for planning permission, there is the potential for adverse impacts on protected species like bats and their roosts, and nesting birds like swallow, swift and house martin. In these circumstances ensuring there are no negative effects on biodiversity is dependent on awareness of these potential impacts.	<p>Ensuring there are no negative impacts on biodiversity where work is subject to planning permission will continue to be achieved via planning services as part of the application validation and determination process.</p> <p>For all other works a series of <b>'information sheets'</b> to be produced to <b>raise awareness of biodiversity issues</b> for the Council's housing stock maintenance staff and appointed sub-contractors.</p> <p>To publish a guidance note concerning the provision of bat and bird boxes within developments as required by the National Planning Policy Framework.</p>	6-monthly internal review of progress of agreed actions

Theme	Item	Current state	Proposed Future actions	Proposed Monitoring
Collective	<b>Working with Partner Organisations</b>	<p>The Council has long-standing collaborative working relationships concerning biodiversity matters with a wide range of partner organisations. This encompasses charitable organisations like the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, private estates like Thoresby Estate and many others.</p> <p>The Council's Park Rangers and development officer provide a range of activities enabling children between the ages of 5 and 12 to experience nature in a range of settings, this year this has been supported by the creation of a new classroom space on Sconce and Devon Park.</p> <p>We have been working closely with Notts Wildlife Trust to re-naturalise Vicar Water Stream as it flows through Vicar Water Country Park as part of a wider scheme to target the tributaries of the River Maun.</p> <p>Sherwood Avenue Park in Newark was redeveloped in conjunction with Newark Town Council and opened in May 2025. The site has been developed with biodiversity in mind.</p> <p>On Sherwood Heath (SSSI) we have conducted some work targeting invasive species in conjunction with Nottinghamshire County Council and Sherwood Forest Trust.</p> <p>We have been working closely with the Woodland Trust on a Tree Equity Scheme on the Hawtonville estate. Statistical analysis conducted by the Trust highlighted that Hawtonville has one of the lowest canopy covers of the district so targeted tree planting has been conducted to help address this.</p> <p>Environmental Services officers have also been working closely with members from the REACH charity, YMCA and local residents to encourage them to look after trees and care for them in the long term.</p> <p>Over the summer members of the Environmental Services team worked with local schools, home schooling groups, highways England and local artists to transform the Farndon Road underpass to reflect our 'Motion for the Ocean' messaging.</p>	<p>To continue to work positively and collaboratively with partner organisations (examples include; meetings with Nottinghamshire biodiversity stakeholders, engagement with implementation and future development of the Nottinghamshire and Nottingham LNRS, engagement with Severn Trent and the Environment Agency re- the Motion for the Ocean), but to consider <b>raising additional awareness through one or two high profile public engagement events</b> per annum in conjunction with partner organisations, like hosting a Bioblitz<sup>1</sup> on one of the Council's managed sites, or a 'gardening for wildlife' event.</p> <p>The benefits of having accessible access to nature to the well-being of members of communities is well-documented. Local Nature Reserve status helps to highlight importance of some areas of greenspace, and provides a focal point for community involvement in terms of voluntary activities assisting with management and custodianship of these areas. There are currently 9 LNRS within the district covering 207ha but 78% of that area is formed by four large LNRS; consequently, a significant part of this resource may not be accessible to many people. Therefore, it is proposed that a <b>review of the provision of Local Nature Reserves within the district</b> is undertaken.</p>	6-monthly internal review of progress of agreed actions
Collective	<b>Raising Awareness</b>	<p>(i) There are many sections within the Council's website that raise awareness to biodiversity matters; examples are sections on Trees, Biodiversity, and Gardening for Wildlife. However, there is scope to refresh and developer further the theme of biodiversity.</p> <p>(ii) Our individual actions have the potential to impact biodiversity in both positive and negative ways, both in and outside of the working environment.</p>	<p>(i) (a) To <b>create additional biodiversity content for the Council's website and regularly refresh</b> content.</p> <p>(i) (b) To use the Council's website and other communication channels to provide updates on the recovery of our rivers, and signpost to opportunities and guidance that enable residents to become more ocean literate and to get involved with river and marine citizenship activities and to stop pollution at its source.</p> <p>(ii) To <b>investigate ways of raising general awareness of biodiversity issues amongst NSDC staff</b></p>	6-monthly internal review of progress of agreed actions

Theme	Item	Current state	Proposed Future actions	Proposed Monitoring
<p><sup>1</sup> A Bioblitz is a community event involving members of the public and local naturalists and scientists who attempt to identify as many different species of plants, animals and lower plants (i.e., fungi and mosses and liverworts) within a set location and a set time period which is normally 24 hours. The resulting biological records are then shared with the local Biological Records Centre and the site managers. They are now an established and popular way of highlighting biodiversity and engaging the public with biological recording, which forms a fundamental element of site management.</p>				

**Appendix B**

**Biodiversity Report 2024-2025**



NEWARK &  
SHERWOOD  
*DISTRICT COUNCIL*

# **Biodiversity Report 2024-2025**

March 2026

## CONTENTS

<u>1.0</u>	<u>Newark and Sherwood District Council (this information is optional)</u> .....	18
<u>2.0</u>	<u>Our Biodiversity Duty (obligatory information)</u> .....	19
<u>3.0</u>	<u>Biodiversity net gain information (obligatory information)</u> .....	19
	<u>How we have prepared for mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG)</u> .....	19
	<u>Securing In-House Ecological Expertise</u> .....	19
	<u>Software</u> .....	20
	<u>Strategic Significance</u> .....	20
	<u>Significant On-Site Enhancement</u> .....	20
	<u>Local Validation Checklist</u> .....	20
	<u>Fees and Charges</u> .....	20
	<u>How we have ensured proper application of mandatory biodiversity net gain in our Development Management functions.</u> .....	21
	<u>Development Management Process</u> .....	21
	<u>Approved Biodiversity Gain Plans</u> .....	21
	<u>Anticipated Future Biodiversity Gains</u> .....	22
	<u>How we plan to meet our BNG obligations in the next reporting period</u> .....	21
	<u>Proposed Actions</u> .....	21
	<u>Recording</u> .....	21
	<u>Reporting Frequency</u> .....	22
	<u>How we have supported the development of a local BNG market</u> .....	23
	<u>How we have considered use of our own land as a biodiversity gain site</u> .....	23
	<u>Other actions we have taken to facilitate biodiversity net gain</u> .....	24
	<u>In-house Training</u> .....	24
	<u>Ecologists Forum</u> .....	24
<u>4.0</u>	<u>How we have considered other strategies (this information is optional)</u> .....	24
	<u>The Nottinghamshire and Nottingham Local Nature Recovery Strategy</u> .....	24
<u>5.0</u>	<u>How we have raised awareness and educated the community (this information is optional)</u> .....	24

## **1.0 Newark and Sherwood District Council**

- 1.1. The District of Newark occupies 651 km<sup>2</sup> and is home to approximately 123,000 people. It is the largest of the seven local authority areas within Nottinghamshire and is predominantly a rural district; it is the least densely populated local authority area out of 35 in the East Midlands. Consequently, greenspace and the biodiversity this supports is important for the people that live and work there.
- 1.2. The Council is represented by 39 elected members with one member having a portfolio holder responsibility for Climate and the Environment which encompasses biodiversity matters.
- 1.3. The Council's primary objective is to improve the quality of life of people who live and work in the District of Newark & Sherwood. It seeks to achieve its vision 'Serving People, Improving Lives' by its core values, which are to be: 'Ambitious and forward thinking', 'Caring and compassionate', 'Commercial and business-like', 'Professional and trustworthy', and 'Welcoming and responsive'. These values underpin the Council's seven Ambitions that form the heart of the Community Plan 2023-2027.
- 1.4. The Council's landownership extends to circa. 500 ha and includes significant areas of greenspace. It owns or manages four large parks; Sherwood Heath, Sconce and Devon Park, Vicar Country Park, and Newark Castle and Grounds. Sherwood Heath is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (a statutory designation) and Sconce and Devon Park and Vicar Country Park are designated Local Wildlife Sites. In addition to these designations these three sites are also Local Nature reserves and are important areas for the local community to experience the natural world.
- 1.5. Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity forms an important aspect of the Council's Environmental Services Team and sympathetic management of these sites is underpinned by the Council's Ranger Team who undertake important public engagement activities to promote the importance of biodiversity; activities like guided 'wildlife walks and practical task like making bird feeders and 'bug hotels.
- 1.6. The Council's Planning Policy team is responsible for preparing the Local Plan which contains elements within policies to ensure development proposals protect, maintain and enhance biodiversity; principally:
  - Allocations and Development Management Development Plan Document Policy DM5 Design;
  - Allocations and Development Management Development Plan Document Policy DM7 Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure; and
  - Amended Core Strategy Core Policy 12 Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure.
- 1.7. The Council's Development Management Team is responsible for assessing submitted planning applications and progressing these to either a delegated officer decision, or submission of a report and recommendation to the Council's Planning Committee for their consideration and subsequent decision.
- 1.8. Where appropriate officers consult the in-house ecology officers (The Ecology Team) for comments and advice on applications. The Ecology Team comments principally involve advice and recommendations on the following key areas:

- Is the supporting ecological information acceptable to be able to reliably inform the planning decision-making process, and if it isn't, what additional information is required;
- Are assessed impacts on ecology and biodiversity accurate;
- Are proposed mitigation and compensation measures appropriate and acceptable;
- Are proposed enhancement measures appropriate and proportionate;
- With the proposed mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures secured by appropriate planning conditions would the proposed development be compliant with relevant national and local planning policies regarding biodiversity matters; and
- To provide recommended drafts for planning conditions that are considered necessary.

1.9. Within the wider Planning Development Team there is a team of conservation officers who provide similar support to planning officers in respect of heritage matters.

1.10. A team of four planning enforcement officers form part of the wider Planning Development Team, who help to ensure that planning obligations associated with approved developments are met.

## **2.0 Our Biodiversity Duty**

2.1. Officers prepared a report 'Biodiversity Report – First Consideration' and presented this to Cabinet on 04 June 2024 as part of the Council's statutory obligation to publish a First Consideration report. Cabinet approved the report, and it was effectively published through that process, but finalised agreed actions were not brought back to Cabinet for approval. As those agreed actions should have formed the actions against which this report should have been reporting against, this has not been possible. However, nearly all the actions that are reported within this report relate to proposed actions within the First Consideration Report, irrespective of whether they were finalised agreed actions. Therefore, it is considered that this report still demonstrates the Council's commitment to its Biodiversity Duty both in considering what that involves, and effective delivery.

2.2. Within the next Biodiversity Report, the Council will demonstrate how it has agreed finalised actions, and these will be reported on within that report.

2.3. The remainder of this report sets out various strategies, objectives and initiatives that have been undertaken as part of our obligations to actively deliver our Biodiversity Duty.

## **3.0 Biodiversity net gain information**

### **How we have prepared for mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG)**

3.1. Where statutory exemptions did not apply, mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG) came into effect on 12 February 2024 for major developments and for non-major developments on 02 April 2024. To ensure that the Council met its BNG obligations it undertook initial preparatory actions.

### **Securing In-House Ecological Expertise**

3.2. This initially involved development of the Biodiversity and Ecology Lead Officer post and then providing full support for that expertise to enable it to grow and integrate with the Council's functions. Government financial support via its 'Biodiversity Net Gain Grant'

scheme has been fully utilised by the Council, and this funding significantly underpinned this important preparatory work.

- 3.3. During the reporting period a second post, Biodiversity and Ecology Officer, was developed and successfully recruited for. The Council now has an Ecology Team of two very experienced officers, both been recruited from the private sector and who have brought considerable depth of experience to their positions.

#### Software

- 3.4. Mindful that both onsite and offsite biodiversity gains will have to be delivered for a period of not less than 30 years, the Council invested in a subscription to utilise specialist software that has been developed to ease administrative burdens and facilitate management of the future monitoring of on-site BNG.

#### Strategic Significance

- 3.5. In the absence of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy covering the District, officers prepared an interim, evidence based, document to define how the Council considered that 'strategic significance' should be applied within Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculations supporting development proposals. This document was subsequently approved by Cabinet in February 2024 and has subsequently been used to inform and guide BNG assessments within the District.

#### Significant On-Site Enhancement

- 3.6. Specific criteria to determine what constitutes 'significant on-site enhancement' is absent both within the relevant legislation and Government guidance. Consequently, officers prepared a document defining what the Council considered 'significant on-site enhancement' should be. The document was subsequently approved by Cabinet in February 2024 and has, and continues, to underpin decisions on development proposals, ensuring that proposed on-site gains are secured via relevant planning conditions.

#### Local Validation Checklist

- 3.7. We have added a specific section to our Local Validation Checklist to ensure that in addition to the statutory minimum requirements for information relating to mandatory biodiversity net gain, sufficient information is provided with development proposals, to ensure that fully informed planning decisions are made.

#### Fees and Charges

- 3.8. We have developed specific fees and charges to assist with ensuring sufficient resources are available to enable us to deliver our statutory duties regarding mandatory BNG and to also provide help and support for developers and landowners. These specifically cover the following services:
- Pre-application advice regarding BNG matters;
  - Advice for landowners developing potential Habitat Banks; and
  - Monitoring delivery of 'significant on-site enhancement'.

**How we have ensured proper application of mandatory biodiversity net gain in our Development Management functions.**

Development Management Process

- 3.9. The functions of the ecology officers have been set out in Paragraph 1.8. For all planning applications that are not exempt from mandatory BNG this has involved:
- Assessing and supporting the Planning Development Team's Technical Support Officers regarding validation of submitted applications;
  - Analysing BNG assessments for accuracy and realistic delivery;
  - Providing recommended planning conditions to secure on-site BNG; and
  - Advising on appropriate fees for monitoring agreed on-site BNG for 30 years to then be secured via an appropriate legal agreement.

Approved Biodiversity Gain Plans

- 3.10. Although this reporting period covers nearly 23 months since mandatory BNG came into force, within this period no approved applications have subsequently progressed to the point of discharging their deemed biodiversity gain condition. This is likely a reflection of the time between validation and approval of applications, the fact that approved applications have three years to implement their approval, and some approved developments are never implemented.
- 3.11. However, officers are aware of three applications that have commenced development within the reporting period having failed get approval of their Biodiversity Gain Plans. This is of concern, and replicates what other officers in other local authority areas have also experienced. A factor considered likely to increase the likelihood of this occurring is the fact that Government guidance is that the deemed biodiversity gain condition should not be included within the list of conditions on a planning decision notice, but be provided as an informative note on the notice amongst other notes. Officers consider that this then fails to convey the importance of the note and need to discharge the condition, it effectively gets lost. In response to this, the format of the Council's decision notices has been amended to provide the note at the start of the notice immediately before the list of conditions, thereby continuing to follow Government guidance by not including it in the list conditions, but bringing it to the immediate attention of the reader.
- 3.12. Because of concerns regarding failures to discharge the deemed condition prior to commencement of approved developments, it is the intention to report on this matter in the next, and future, Biodiversity Reports.

**How we plan to meet our BNG obligations in the next reporting period**

Proposed Actions

- 3.13. Officers will continue to implement the functions and actions outlined above.

Recording

- 3.14. In the anticipation that Biodiversity Gain Plans will be approved in the next reporting period the following information will be recorded:
- The number of biodiversity gain plans approved
  - The split between on-site and off-site gains and statutory credits

- The net gain in number of units and average percentage gain across approved biodiversity gain plans
- The number of and net change in biodiversity units and area split by habitat type, for example, grassland
- The number of approved biodiversity gain plans that impact on irreplaceable habitat
- The location and number of approved offsite biodiversity units
- The results of monitoring activity at a habitat level

Anticipated Future Biodiversity Gains

3.15. Whilst there is nothing to report within this reporting period in respect of biodiversity gains secured through the approval of Biodiversity Gain Plans details of planning applications submitted since the onset of mandatory BNG will provide context for the next Biodiversity Report. The table below summarises details for planning applications subject to mandatory BNG that have been granted approval within the reporting period.

<b>Planning Applications subject to mandatory BNG determined between 12 February 2024 and 31 December 2025</b>		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Major Developments</b>	<b>Non-major Developments</b>
Total Number Approved		
Total Number of Biodiversity Gain Plans Approved		
Number of approved developments that have commenced without an approved Biodiversity Gain Plan		
BNG Assessment will require final amendments post approval before discharge of the BGP		
BNG Assessment accurate and approved at determination.		
BNG likely to be delivered entirely on-site		
BNG likely to be delivered part on-site and part off-site.		
BNG likely to be delivered entirely off-site		
Statutory Biodiversity Credits likely to be used for part or all the offsite requirement.		
Significant on-site enhancements and have been		

<b>Planning Applications subject to mandatory BNG determined between 12 February 2024 and 31 December 2025</b>		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Major Developments</b>	<b>Non-major Developments</b>
secured via a planning obligation.		
Likely approximate total Habitat Unit gain		
Likely approximate Hedgerow Unit gain		
Likely Watercourse Unit gain		

### Reporting Frequency

- 3.16. Local Government Reform will occur during the 5-year period following this reporting period. This invariably has the potential to impact on our future actions. Following the Governments consultation on BNG during 2025, change to the mandatory BNG process are anticipated. For these reasons a shorter reporting interval is considered appropriate. Consequently, our next reporting period will be between 01 January 2026-31 December 2026, and we will report annually thereafter.
- 3.17. Annual reporting provides an opportunity to showcase the Council’s commitment to delivering BNG within the District.

### **How we have supported the development of a local BNG market**

- 3.18. One element of Ambition 6 of the Council’s Community Action Plan is to *“To play an active role in biodiversity net gain for the district, including the potential to own our own biodiversity offset sites, as well as looking at how our own developments can contribute.”*
- 3.19. The Council undertook a ‘call for sites – expressions of interest’ exercise in the spring of 2024 to raise awareness of the need for commercial ‘habitat banks’ within the district.
- 3.20. Officers have spoken at two ‘local farmers’ groups to raise awareness of potential opportunities for diversification into commercial ‘habitat banking’.
- 3.21. Subsequently, officers have continued to respond to and work with landowners expressing an interest in developing a ‘habitat bank’.
- 3.22. At the end of the reporting period two emerging habitat banks were sufficiently advanced in their plans to be likely to begin to operate early in 2026. Progress on this matter will be provided in the next Biodiversity Report for 2026.

### **How we have considered use of our own land as a biodiversity gain site**

- 3.23. In September 2025 Cabinet approved the use of 11.36 ha of Council owned land for the purpose of creating Habitat Banks to primarily provide offsite biodiversity units for its own developments. Cabinet also approved a budget allocation to support the initial development of this land. Progress on this matter will be provided in the next Biodiversity Report for 2026.

3.24. Proposals are currently being worked up and progress will be reported in the next Biodiversity Duty Report for the Year 2026.

**Other actions we have taken to facilitate biodiversity net gain**

In-house Training

3.25. Officers have:

- Provided in-house training for colleagues and members; and
- Prepared Technical Information Notes for colleagues covering topics like validation, decision notice informative notes and BNG planning conditions and legal agreements.

Ecologists Forum

3.26. Officers organised an Ecologists Forum in February 2025 to which ecologists known to work within the District and other partner groups like neighbouring Local Planning Authority Ecologists and Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust were invited to attend.

3.27. This was attended by 34 ecologists working in the private sector and 35 partners and internal work colleagues. The objective of the day was to promote good practice in ecological assessments by sharing experiences from the perspective of the local planning authority ecologists reviewing assessments, and the professional ecologists who prepare them.

3.28. The forum provided an opportunity to demonstrate the Council's commitment to ensure effective delivery of BNG within the District and to assist and support the important work undertaken by professional ecologists.

3.29. The event was very successful and represented a unique approach being taken by the Council. Therefore, it is being repeated in 2026 and will be reported in the next Biodiversity Report.

**4.0 How we have considered other strategies**

**The Nottinghamshire and Nottingham Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

4.1. NSDC has played an active role as a supporting authority to Nottingham County Council as it fulfilled its role as the 'responsible authority' to produce the Nottinghamshire and Nottingham Local Nature Recovery Strategy. This involved engagement in workshops, commenting on drafts, providing constructive suggestions and finally providing Cabinet endorsement of the LNRS which was then published on 10 November 2025.

**5.0 How we have raised awareness and educated the community**

5.1. During the reporting period the Council's Environmental Services team have undertaken many public engagement activities like guided wildlife walks and 'bee bomb' making and meet the Ranger sessions where nature-based activities were provided. This year this has been supported by the creation of a new classroom space on Sconce and Devon Park.

5.2. Also, via its website, the Council has provided directions to other nature-based activities and to other organisations which promote biodiversity and nature conservation awareness.

- 5.3. In Hawtonville Environmental Services have been working closely with the Woodland Trust on a Tree Equity Scheme. Statistical analysis conducted by the Trust highlighted that Hawtonville has one of the lowest canopy covers of the district so targeted tree planting has been conducted to help address this. We have also been working closely with members from the REACH charity, YMCA and local residents to encourage them to look after trees and care for them in the long term.
- 5.4. Over the summer members of the Environmental Services team worked with local schools, home schooling groups, highways England and local artists to transform the Farndon Road underpass to reflect our 'Motion for the Ocean' messaging.