

Worcestershire County Council's Biodiversity Duty Report 2026



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1. Executive Summary

Since 1st January 2023, all public authorities are legally required to comply with a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity under [Part 6 of the Environment Act](#).

This duty amends the original obligation set out in [Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities \(NERC\) Act 2006](#).

This amendment requires all public authorities to:

1. Consider what can be done to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
2. Agree policies and specific objectives based on this consideration.
3. Act to deliver the policies and achieve these objectives.

Under the duty, public authorities must review the actions they can take to further conserve and enhance biodiversity at least every 5 years. Worcestershire County Council (WCC) published a 'first consideration' of relevant functions that contribute to WCC's statutory Biodiversity Duty in 2024. Further information can be found on page 3 of this document and in [Worcestershire's Biodiversity Duty First Consideration Report](#).

The reporting period of this Biodiversity Duty Report is from the end of the previous First Consideration Report (1st January 2024) until the 1st January 2026 and it must be published by 31st March 2026. Subsequent reports must be published no later than 5 years after the end date of the previous reporting period.

Guided by Defra's recommendations, this 2026 Biodiversity Duty Report summarises all actions, work streams and strategies WCC has undertaken or adheres to, which contribute, directly or indirectly, to biodiversity within Worcestershire. The report also outlines future actions or strategies within the next five years.



Tree planting at Upton Snodsbury © Tanya Feasy & Rob Stevenson, 2024.

2. Introduction

2.1 Links to National Targets

Action that WCC takes for biodiversity will contribute to the achievement of national goals and targets on biodiversity, some of which are listed below. [The national revised Environmental Improvement Plan \(EIP\)](#), published in December 2025, sets out government plans for significantly improving the natural environment.

By 2030, the government has committed to:

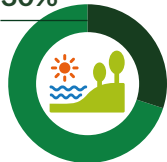


Halt the decline in species' abundance.



Increase tree canopy and woodland cover by 0.33% of land area by December 2030 from the 2022 baseline of 14.9%.

30%

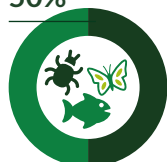


Effectively conserve and manage for nature 30% of the UK's land and seas.



Double the number of farms providing sufficient year-round resources for farm wildlife, compared with 2025.

50%



Reduce the rate of establishment of Invasive non-native species (INNS) by at least 50% compared to 2000 levels.

By 2042, the government has committed to:



Increase species' abundance so that by 2042 it is greater than in 2022 and at least 10% greater than in 2030.



Restore or create a total of 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats outside of protected sites by December 2030 and more than 500,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats outside protected sites by 2042.



Reduce the risk of species' extinction.

Additional relevant EIP commitments include:



Support farmers and land managers to create or restore 48,000km of hedgerows by 2037 and 72,500km of hedgerows by 2050.



Increase the number of trees on farms, with a focus on silvoarable (trees with crops) and silvopastoral (trees with livestock) agroforestry systems.



Take targeted action to conserve and recover threatened species.

2.2 WCC Actions Relevant to the Biodiversity Duty

This 2026 Biodiversity Duty report is a continuation of WCC's 'first consideration' of relevant functions that contribute to WCC's statutory Biodiversity Duty, published in 2024. A detailed summary of how WCC contributes to each of the overarching themes identified in [Defra's Guidance of Complying with the Biodiversity Duty](#) can be found in [WCC's 2024 Biodiversity Duty Report](#).

The tables below set out WCC's current key work areas that support compliance with our Biodiversity Duty.

These have been grouped into the following categories:

[Habitats and Species](#)

[Sustainability](#)

[Flood Risk Management](#)

[Other](#)

[Carbon capture and reduction](#)

[Biodiversity Net Gain](#)

[Education and engagement](#)

Each table summarises the action/work stream/strategy, any links to further information and plans for further relevant work within the next five years.



Heather *Calluna vulgaris* © Tom Ward, 2026.

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3. Current and Future Actions

3.1 Habitats and Species

Habitat and species work focuses on protecting, restoring and enhancing natural environments to support wildlife and improve ecological resilience, whilst simultaneously contributing important ecosystem services. This includes creating new habitats, improving the condition of existing sites, supporting species recovery, and embedding biodiversity considerations into land management and planning decisions. These actions help address habitat fragmentation, support ecosystem functioning, and contribute to local and national nature recovery targets.

Type	Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
Creation, Enhancement and Maintenance	<p><u>Environmental Policy - Local Nature Recovery Strategy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Worcestershire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy</u> (LNRS) will be published on 2nd March 2026. The LNRS sets out the local priorities to create and enhance habitats and recover populations of species. It is accompanied by a <u>Local Habitat Map</u>, which shows existing Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity and where the best gains for nature recovery can be achieved through the targeted delivery of Potential Measures. The recently published <u>Worcestershire State of Nature Report</u> was used as a principle evidence base for development of the LNRS. 	<p><u>Environmental Policy - Local Nature Recovery Strategy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of mapped and unmapped measures in the LNRS will create new and improve existing habitats across Worcestershire, which in turn will provide more habitat for species, thereby helping to reverse national and local habitat and species loss and expand their range across the landscape. The Ecology team will convene and co-ordinate an LNRS Delivery Group formed of key internal and external partners to promote collaborative working and delivery of LNRS measures.

Type	Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
Creation	<p><u>Sustainability - Natural Networks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural Networks is a partnership between WCC and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust (WWT) that offers grants and advice to projects which aim to create or restore publicly accessible wildlife-rich habitats. Headline figures from June 2023 to March 2025 reporting period: advised land management on 678 ha, enhanced habitat on 65 ha, planted 7,904 shrubs, 1,337 m hedgerow, 227,771 bulbs, created 17 ponds/wetland, installed 20 hibernacula/log piles, 11 bee banks/posts and 348 wildlife boxes. Total spend of grant funding: £253,550 funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Funds (UKSPF). 	<p><u>Sustainability - Natural Networks</u></p> <p>Shared Prosperity funding due to end March 2026 but project will continue on an advice only basis, run by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. Collaborative working between WWT and WCC will continue via the LNRS Delivery Group and work will continue to identify alternative funding streams.</p>
Creation	<p><u>Commercial</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donated 2 bee colonies and a poly tunnel cover to Worcester Community Gardens. Facilitated suppliers and partners attending tree planting with the Countryside team. 	
Creation	<p><u>Corporate Landlord</u></p> <p>The rural/smallholdings estate has assisted with identifying land which may be suitable for any County Council requirements for biodiversity purposes such as large-scale tree planting.</p>	<p><u>Corporate Landlord</u></p> <p>The rural/smallholdings estate has assisted with identifying 188 acres to be managed by Countryside Service in a nature-positive approach.</p>
Creation	<p><u>Countryside Greenspace</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 32 community orchards have been successfully planted across Worcestershire (funded by Coronation Living Heritage Fund). 10 mini forests planted across Worcestershire, working with housing associations, schools, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and Parish Councils (funded by Coronation Living Heritage Fund). 	

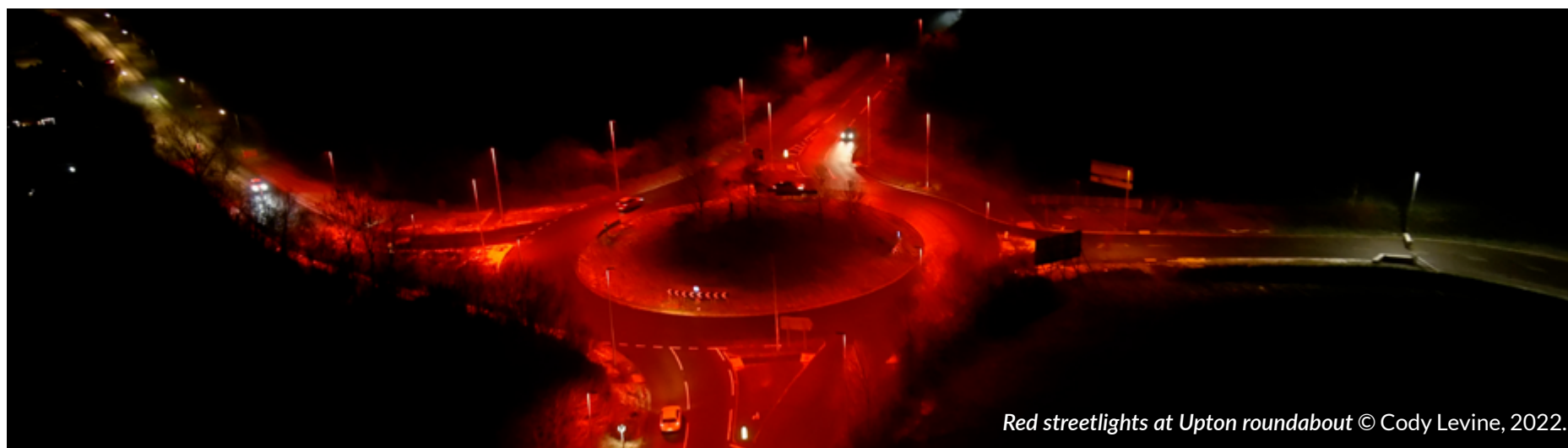
Type	Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
Creation	<p><u>Countryside Greenspace</u></p> <p>3 of WCC's sites have recently benefited from largescale native broadleaved woodland planting, as well as other new habitat creation including orchards, hedgerows, wetlands and species rich grassland. In total, 21, 680 trees have been planted during the reporting period.</p>	<p><u>Countryside Greenspace</u></p> <p>Continued management of newly created wildlife-rich habitats and planting of new trees.</p>
Creation	<p><u>Highways Operations</u></p> <p>Grant-funded tree planting has enabled 514 standard sized trees planted on the highway. This was in part to offset highway trees lost due to health and safety reasons.</p>	
Creation	<p><u>Minor Infrastructure Projects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Installed 1 bat box, 3 bird boxes and 1 hedgehog box (as part of works on Westlands in Droitwich). ● Continued use of sensitive management practices such as avoiding vegetation clearance during the bird nesting season. If habitat removal cannot be avoided, restoration measures are employed, such as tree planting, installation of animal boxes and wildflower planting. 	<p><u>Minor Infrastructure Projects</u></p> <p>Will contribute 7 Hornbeam trees at Westwood Open Space to be planted by local young people in 2026.</p>
Creation	<p><u>Property Projects - Education Capital Programme</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adhered to DfE Good Estate Management for Schools (GEMS) guidance which references biodiversity within its sustainability guidance, indicating that GEMS not only recognises the importance of biodiversity but also sets an expectation for schools to actively include it in their estate planning and operational strategies. ● DfE BB103 and BB104 guidance incorporates biodiversity through designated habitat areas. ● Technical Guidance for New School sites (to be shared with housing developers) contains technical information for developers when considering school sites and section 106 developer contributions, which refers to biodiversity. 	<p><u>Property Projects - Education Capital Programme</u></p> <p>Continuation of the same.</p>

Type	Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
Creation	<p><u>Property Services - Facilities Management Service</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Installation of bat boxes, bird boxes, bee posts, and green roofs/walls. ● Left deadwood and brash piles to support invertebrates and fungi. ● Used native and sustainably sourced plants and trees. ● Assisted with Countryside Greenspace Team tree planting. ● Conducted ecological due diligence for new builds and refurbishments. 	<p><u>Property Services - Facilities Management Service</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Expand wildflower meadow creation. ● Build and install a number of Hedgehog and owl nesting boxes from timber offcuts. ● Include Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessments in project planning. ● Incorporate biodiversity features into design briefs.
Creation	<p><u>Public Health</u></p> <p>Supported community organisations in creating allotments and sensory gardens.</p>	
Creation		<p><u>Skills & Employability Service - Learning Services</u></p> <p>The County Council Fairfield Learning Centre will continue to develop their outdoor space. Current considerations include a sensory garden and allotment space.</p>
Enhancement	<p><u>Countryside Greenspace</u></p> <p>Continued management of 21 country parks, nature reserves and picnic places in line with agri-environment scheme options and/or management plans. All these sites are managed for biodiversity and include important habitats such as heathland, orchard, woodland and species-rich grassland. The Team has also erected bird/bat boxes, constructed otter holts and adjusted mowing regimes to enhance biodiversity across all sites.</p>	<p><u>Countryside Greenspace</u></p> <p>Continued management of country parks, nature reserves and picnic places as per scheme/management plans.</p>

Type	Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
Enhancement	<p><u>Countryside Greenspace</u></p> <p>Identified, protected, managed and surveyed verges of significant conservation interest, known as Roadside Verge Nature Reserves (RVNRs). Worcestershire RVNRs are important strongholds for several rare species such as Deptford Pink and Tower Mustard. There are currently 39 designated verges across Worcestershire, all of which are monitored and most of which are in active management (some are non-intervention), bespoke to their species assemblage.</p>	<p><u>Countryside Greenspace</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Investigate the designation of multiple candidate RVNRs (cRVNRs) with a view to increasing the number of designated RVNRs from this inventory and increase the proportion of designated RVNRs in 'good' ecological condition. ● Environmental Policy team to continue annual monitoring and reporting of designated RVNR condition.
Enhancement	<p><u>Highways Operations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continued sensitive management of dual carriageway verges. Since 2022 the width of the Spring cut has been reduced to 1m back from carriageway edge of central reservations. This has resulted in large swards of grassland in central reservations enhancing local biodiversity, by providing habitat for foraging and shelter. ● Management has involved topsoil stripping for the purpose of increasing biodiversity by reducing nutrient capacity making soil more favourable for low competing flora. ● Utilised a Chlorophyll sensor technology application method to reduce overspray when spraying weeds on the Highway network. ● Hedge cutting program delayed until late January / early February to ensure winter food source availability, whilst not affecting bird nesting season. 	<p><u>Highways Operations</u></p> <p>Identify more areas to reduce cutting allowing for biodiversity and more locations for soil stripping. Use opportunity of new Term maintenance contract to secure biodiversity improvements.</p>

Type	Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
Enhancement	<p data-bbox="371 164 1016 193"><u>Property Services - Facilities Management Service</u></p> <ul data-bbox="371 217 1227 517" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="371 217 1227 245">● Reduced use of herbicides, pesticides, and peat-based products. <li data-bbox="371 269 1227 336">● Implemented sensitive lighting schemes to reduce impact on nocturnal species. <li data-bbox="371 360 1227 427">● Adjusted mowing regimes to support wildflower growth and pollinators. <li data-bbox="371 451 1227 517">● Use of environmentally friendly cleaning products where possible. 	<p data-bbox="1272 164 1912 193"><u>Property Services - Facilities Management Service</u></p> <ul data-bbox="1272 217 1935 1043" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1272 217 1935 284">● Introduce biodiversity-focused maintenance plans. <li data-bbox="1272 308 1935 375">● Collaborate with Ecology team to identify priority habitats and species. <li data-bbox="1272 399 1935 501">● Transition to biodegradable, non-toxic cleaning agents that reduce harm to aquatic and soil ecosystems. <li data-bbox="1272 525 1935 592">● Avoid products containing microplastics or harsh surfactants that can enter water systems. <li data-bbox="1272 616 1935 683">● Implement water-saving cleaning techniques to reduce runoff and protect nearby habitats. <li data-bbox="1272 707 1935 809">● Schedule cleaning activities to avoid disturbing nesting or roosting wildlife (e.g. window cleaning near bird boxes). <li data-bbox="1272 833 1935 900">● Develop biodiversity management plans for all Facilities Management managed sites. <li data-bbox="1272 924 1935 959">● Map biodiversity assets across the estate. <li data-bbox="1272 983 1935 1043">● Align estate management with Local Nature Recovery Strategy priorities.
Enhancement	<p data-bbox="371 1061 1160 1128"><u>Environmental Policy - Worcestershire's Green Infrastructure Partnership</u></p> <ul data-bbox="371 1152 1227 1343" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="371 1152 1227 1219">● Adoption of Worcestershire's Green Infrastructure Strategy in 2024. <li data-bbox="371 1243 1227 1343">● WCC actively contributed to Worcestershire's Green Infrastructure Partnership. Further information can be found at Planning for Green Infrastructure. 	<p data-bbox="1272 1061 1872 1128"><u>Environmental Policy - Worcestershire's Green Infrastructure Partnership</u></p> <p data-bbox="1272 1152 1935 1219">Delivery of the Green Infrastructure strategy through partnership working and awareness raising.</p>

Type	Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
Enhancement	<p><u>Environmental Policy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report in preparation: analysing the effects of Worcestershire's UK-first 'red lighting' mitigation strategies for wildlife. Report expected in Autumn 2026. Ongoing scientific collaborations with academic institutions across the UK: making use of Worcestershire's 'lighting mitigation' datasets to investigate lighting impacts and mitigation solutions for wildlife. 	<p><u>Environmental Policy</u></p> <p>Ongoing scientific collaborations with academic institutions across the UK on 'lighting mitigation' strategies for wildlife.</p>
Enhancement and Maintenance	<p><u>Environmental Policy - Worcestershire Local Site Partnership</u></p> <p>Local sites include both statutory and non-statutory designated sites that are important for wildlife. WCC has contributed to the oversight of the LWS systems including designation, surveys and advice to land managers. Further information can be found at Worcestershire Local Site Partnership.</p>	<p><u>Environmental Policy - Worcestershire Local Site Partnership</u></p> <p>The Ecology team will continue involvement in Local Site Partnership and carry out local site surveys.</p>
Maintenance	<p><u>Highways Operations</u></p> <p>Continued maintenance of planted trees to encourage high survival rate.</p>	<p><u>Highways Operations</u></p> <p>Continued maintenance of planted trees to encourage high survival rate.</p>



Red streetlights at Upton roundabout © Cody Levine, 2022.

Type	Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
Maintenance	<p data-bbox="371 164 797 196"><u>Libraries Archives & Archaeology</u></p> <ul data-bbox="371 217 1245 887" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="371 217 1245 472">● The department undertook 80-90 projects per year, the large majority of which had a project specific Risk Assessment Method Statement (RAMS). The standard RAMS template includes a section specifically on Environmental Protection. This ensures measures are undertaken to protect potential contamination of watercourses and to protect wildlife from harm due to project activities. <li data-bbox="371 496 1245 600">● Ecologists regularly attended sites to undertake surveys in advance of operations commencing to ensure appropriate provisions were in place. <li data-bbox="371 624 1245 727">● The majority of department field staff have benefitted from a Toolbox Talk on GCNs to raise awareness of the correct procedures to follow if they are unexpectedly encountered. <li data-bbox="371 751 1245 887">● The department also has an active Risk Management policy which makes provision for dealing with any unexpected circumstances arising as a result of project operations on each site. 	<p data-bbox="1272 164 1697 196"><u>Libraries Archives & Archaeology</u></p> <p data-bbox="1272 217 1928 320">The RAMS documentation will continue to be under constant review and will be updated as soon as any new issues or risks are identified.</p>
Maintenance	<p data-bbox="371 909 1014 941"><u>Property Services - Facilities Management Service</u></p> <p data-bbox="371 962 1245 1031">Continued sensitive management of nature reserves, picnic sites, and country parks in line with biodiversity objectives.</p>	<p data-bbox="1272 909 1915 941"><u>Property Services - Facilities Management Service</u></p> <p data-bbox="1272 962 1921 1066">Continued sensitive management of nature reserves, picnic sites, and country parks in line with biodiversity objectives.</p>
Maintenance	<p data-bbox="371 1082 913 1114"><u>Environmental Policy - District Local Plans</u></p> <p data-bbox="371 1134 1245 1278">Environmental Policy contribute to the process of review and update of District Council Local Development Plans through inclusion of biodiversity, Biodiversity Net Gain, landscape and Green Infrastructure advice and guidance.</p>	<p data-bbox="1272 1082 1809 1114"><u>Environmental Policy - District Local Plans</u></p> <p data-bbox="1272 1134 1928 1318">Environmental Policy will continue to contribute to the process of review and update of District Council Local Development Plans through inclusion of biodiversity, Biodiversity Net Gain, landscape and Green Infrastructure advice and guidance.</p>

Type	Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
Maintenance	<p><u>Minerals and Waste</u></p> <p>The Minerals and Waste Planning Policy team carry out reviews of minerals and waste local plans, guided by the Minerals Local Plan (adopted in 2022) and Waste Core Strategy (WCS) (adopted 2012).</p> <p>The WCS policy WCS 9 seeks to protect and enhance environmental assets including designated sites, habitats and species through the planning application process for future waste management developments.</p> <p>View the Minerals Local Plan and Waste Core Strategy.</p> <p>Minerals and waste sites have been regularly monitored by the Environmental Policy team to ensure compliance with aftercare schemes.</p>	<p><u>Minerals and Waste</u></p> <p>Review of relevant plans in line with national planning legislation.</p> <p>Continue regular monitoring of minerals and waste sites by the Environmental Policy team to ensure compliance with aftercare schemes.</p>
Maintenance	<p><u>Environmental Policy - Planning Development Management</u></p> <p>The Planning Development Management team, with support from the Environmental Policy team, determine planning applications in accordance with current wildlife legislation and policy.</p>	<p><u>Environmental Policy - Planning Development Management</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Environmental Policy team to continue to support biodiversity duty compliance through the integration of biodiversity consideration into Development management validation, consultation, condition preparation, monitoring and enforcement activities. Assisting in completion of the Habitat Regulation Assessments of plans and projects as required. ● Future updates planned for WCC's Validation Document and web content to support and advise planning applicants on compliance with biodiversity legislation. ● WCC's workstreams will be updated in due course subject to planned policy and legislation amendments.

Installation of barn owl box at Upton Snodsbury tree planting
 © Tanya Feasy & Rob Stevenson, 2024.



Type	Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
Maintenance	<u>Environmental Policy</u> Launched the Worcestershire Habitat Inventory 3 (WHI3) which builds upon the previous WHI2 with up-to-date national and local datasets. This is a living map which is under constant revision as new records for field parcels are added.	<u>Environmental Policy</u> Continue to update WHI3 with records submitted from the public, surveyors and the Local Sites Partnership.
Maintenance	<u>Environmental Policy</u> Ecological monitoring of WCC’s major infrastructure projects, including the A38 Upton roundabout scheme which successfully recorded great crested newts in 2025 in the GCN mitigation habitats since its completion.	<u>Environmental Policy</u> Continued monitoring of WCC’s major infrastructure projects.

3.2 Flood Risk Management

Natural flood management (NFM) involves working with nature to reduce the risk of flooding. It uses techniques such as leaky dams, creation of new ponds and hedge banks to restore or mimic the natural functions of rivers, floodplains and the wider catchment. It aims to store water in the catchment and slow the rate at which water runs into rivers, reducing flooding downstream.

Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
<p><u>Countryside Greenspace</u></p> <p>Delivery of Worcestershire Working with Water project. Implementing Natural Flood Management projects across Worcestershire, in partnership with the Environment Agency, communities and landowners. This work, whilst primarily aimed at reducing flood risk, is also contributing to enhancing biodiversity through the creation of ponds, wetlands and water retention features, such as leaky dams, scrapes, swales and tree planting.</p> <p>Since January 2024 a total of 41.28km² of the following habitats have been improved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.25 km² woodland 2.2km² wet woodland 30km² grassland 0.43km² ponds and lakes 5.4km² arable land 	<p><u>Countryside Greenspace</u></p> <p>Ongoing until 2027.</p>



Dowles Brook in Wyre Forest © Sam Groves, 2025.

3.3 Carbon capture and reduction

Carbon capture and reduction activities aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support climate resilience through sustainable infrastructure, transport and land management practices. Many carbon reduction measures also deliver co-benefits for biodiversity by improving air quality, enhancing green infrastructure, reducing habitat disturbance and supporting more sustainable landscapes.

Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
<p><u>Highways Operations</u></p> <p>Lower Temperature Tarmac is used during the warmer months (April – October). This drastically reduces the energy consumption during the Tarmac mix phase and the Tarmac that is delivered to site is workable enough to lay.</p>	<p><u>Highways Operations</u></p> <p>In the future, it may be possible for Electric Rollers and other electric Tarmac Laying kit that reduce the carbon footprint.</p>
<p><u>Minor Infrastructure Projects</u></p> <p>Developing Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) to facilitate walking, wheeling & cycling. The sustainable schemes are designed to create easy accessibility for members of the public (e.g. dropped kerbs) thereby reducing private motor vehicle usage leading to a reduction in carbon emissions and improving air quality.</p> <p><u>Local cycling and walking infrastructure plans.</u></p>	<p><u>Minor Infrastructure Projects</u></p> <p>Publish and implement Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) to facilitate walking, wheeling & cycling.</p>



Broadway quarry © Cody Levine 2026.

3.4 Education and engagement

Education and engagement actions aim to raise awareness of biodiversity, promote behaviour change and encourage participation in nature recovery. Through training, communications, community projects and stakeholder engagement, these initiatives support individuals, organisations and communities to understand biodiversity issues and take positive action to conserve and enhance the natural environment.

Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
<p><u>Communications</u></p> <p>Delivered communications on Council-run schemes, grants, awards, plans and strategies, including press releases, newsletters, radio and newspaper advertising and social media messaging.</p> <p>Advertised topics included sustainability/Business Energy Advice Service, Home Upgrade and Warm Homes Grants, Natural Networks, Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Energy Efficiency Awards, bus services and Electric Vehicles.</p>	<p><u>Communications</u></p> <p>Ongoing activities to periodically raise awareness of the natural environment as opportunities arise</p>
<p><u>Environmental Policy - Local Nature Recovery Strategy</u></p> <p>To promote awareness and delivery of the LNRS, the Ecology team have organised and hosted a series of engagement events. These include: a farming symposium, webinars for Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils and developers, and public talks (to the RSPB, WWT and National Farmers Union local groups). The team have also work with Local Planning Authorities and briefed their planning teams and produced YouTube videos for target audiences.</p>	<p><u>Environmental Policy - Local Nature Recovery Strategy</u></p> <p>Ongoing stakeholder engagement and awareness raising once the LNRS has been published to include development of guidance materials such as ‘top-tips’ for key stakeholders, and guidance on transition from Biodiversity Action Plans to LNRS for policy and decision-making.</p>
<p><u>Countryside Greenspace</u></p> <p>Co-ordinated a Tree Warden scheme - a parish-based network of volunteers who plant, look after and stand up for the trees in their patch. The County Council provides induction and training for new volunteer Tree Wardens.</p>	<p><u>Countryside Greenspace</u></p> <p>Continuation of Tree Warden Scheme.</p>
<p><u>Countryside Greenspace</u></p> <p>Provided advice to community groups and landowners on how to improve their environment, such as planting or restoring an orchard, planting trees, or creating a pond.</p>	

Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
<p><u>Property Services - Facilities Management Service</u></p> <p>Contributions to biodiversity reporting via project boards and ecological surveys.</p>	<p><u>Property Services - Facilities Management Service</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Train cleaning staff on biodiversity-sensitive practices, including waste disposal and spill management. ● Deliver biodiversity awareness training for Facilities Management (FM) staff, including cleaners and contractors. ● Promote biodiversity through internal communications and site signage. ● Encourage staff-led biodiversity initiatives (e.g. mini forests, community orchards). ● Develop FM-specific biodiversity Key Performance Indicators (KPI's). ● Contribute data to Worcestershire Biological Records Centre (WBRC). ● Integrate biodiversity metrics into FM dashboards and performance reviews.
<p><u>Adult Learning Service - Family Learning Programme</u></p> <p>Ran a programme called “Worms and Wellies” in collaboration with schools which supports education for families around biodiversity. Families make things such as birdfeeders and learn about the importance of pollinators as part of the programme.</p>	
	<p><u>Environmental Policy</u></p> <p>Designing a new Ecology course for Worcestershire County Council’s e-learning programme.</p>
<p><u>Environmental Policy - Signage</u></p> <p><u>Interpretation boards</u> erected to educate people about the environment and ecology on WCC land, such as Kepax bridge.</p>	

3.5 Sustainability

Sustainability enables environmental considerations to be embedded within the County Council’s decision making, procurement and project delivery. By integrating biodiversity into policies, assessments and operational practices, it helps ensure that development and service delivery minimise environmental impacts while contributing to long term ecological resilience.

Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
<p><u>Joint Impact Assessments</u></p> <p>A Joint Impact Assessment (JIA) is completed by project managers prior to commencement of projects within WCC. Currently the JIA asks about impacts on the natural environment and environmental sustainability. This must be signed off by the Ecology and Sustainability Teams prior to the project commencing.</p> <p><u>Worcestershire County Council’s Sustainability Policy 2021.</u></p>	<p><u>Joint Impact Assessments</u></p> <p>The corporate JIA process is currently being reviewed. The updated Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) will review impacts and opportunities across the themes of environmental sustainability, health and wellbeing, equality and data protection. The statutory requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain will now be included as this was legally enacted following the initial launch of the JIA.</p>
<p><u>Public Rights of Way</u></p> <p>FSC certified timber in our procurement.</p>	
<p><u>Property Projects - Education Capital Programme</u></p> <p>The department works to relevant Department for Education (DfE) policies and guidance. These are incorporated into the concept brief templates for school projects and state that schools should undertake a thorough evaluation of all procurement options, including the DfE’s construction framework, for school projects where capital funds are delegated directly to schools to procure projects directly. This construction framework and output specification explicitly addresses biodiversity through its sustainability requirements.</p>	

Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
<p><u>Property Services - Facilities Management Service</u></p> <p>Continued to implement sustainable procurement policies.</p>	<p><u>Property Services - Facilities Management Service</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use reusable cleaning materials (e.g. microfiber cloths) to reduce waste and resource consumption. ● Use sustainable materials and low-impact construction methods. ● Prioritise suppliers with biodiversity credentials. ● Include biodiversity criteria in tender specifications. ● Track and report biodiversity impacts of procured goods and services.
<p><u>Education & Early Years Quality & Improvement Service</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worked to relevant Department for Education (DfE) policies and guidance which are incorporated into the concept brief templates for school projects. ● The brief states that schools should undertake a thorough evaluation of all procurement options, including the DfE's construction framework, for school projects where capital funds are delegated directly to schools to procure projects directly. ● DfE Good Estate Management for Schools (GEMS) guidance references biodiversity within its sustainability guidance, indicating that GEMS not only recognises the importance of biodiversity but also sets an expectation for schools to actively include it in their estate planning and operational strategies. ● DfE BB103 and BB104 guidance incorporates biodiversity through designated habitat areas. 	
<p><u>Commercial</u></p> <p>The Commercial Team's supply chain has donated £10k worth of 235 sustainable hampers to foster carers.</p>	

Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
<p><u>Environmental Policy - Kepax</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Began implementation of the five-year habitat creation and enhancement aftercare period. ● No peat materials were used in the habitat creation. ● All turf and native species were of British provenance. ● Stones and gravel were locally sourced. ● Grasslands have been subject to a sensitive mowing regime which favour species-rich meadows. ● The bridge has encouraged walking and cycling as opposed to driving between parts of Worcester which are now more connected. ● 11 bat boxes, 3 bird boxes, 6 hedgehog houses and 2 reptile hibernacula were installed alongside tree planting and 8000m² of wet grassland creation. 	<p><u>Environmental Policy - Kepax</u></p> <p>Continue to manage the habitats around Kepax bridge until the end of the aftercare period.</p>



Kepax Bridge, Worcester

3.6 Other

This section captures additional actions and strategies that support biodiversity which do not sit within the other themes.

Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
<p><u>Malvern Hills SSSI Protected Sites Strategy</u></p> <p>Natural England (NE) have begun preparations to create a Protected Sites Strategy (PSS) in the Malvern Hills landscape to address issues such as recreational pressure and air quality. The impacts of both are felt across the SSSI, seen in changing species and vegetation cover.</p>	<p><u>Malvern Hills SSSI Protected Sites Strategy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NE plan to form a working group of local organisations to assist with development of the PSS, to include the Malvern Hills Trust, Malvern Hills National Landscape and Worcestershire County Council. ● Delivery of the PSS by all relevant partners once it is written and approved.
<p><u>Major Infrastructure Projects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>Worcestershire’s Streetscape Design Guide 2025</u> was published, which incorporates both national and local planning policy guidance. It emphasises the importance of street trees, Biodiversity Net Gain, wildflower verges, Construction and Environmental Management Plans, good Green Infrastructure practices, Environmental Impact Assessments and Ecological Impact Assessments, and local datasets. The detail of which can be found in Chapter 3 – Wider Environmental Considerations. ● The guidance identifies that providing habitats for ecology and biodiversity is one of six key design principles in providing good streetscape design and also emphasises the biodiversity duty placed upon the County Council. 	<p><u>Major Infrastructure Projects</u></p> <p>The Streetscape Design Guide sets out policy and process which ensure biodiversity duty compliance for future applications for adoption of streetscape by WCC including wildlife-friendly lighting specifications where appropriate and as aligned with objectives set out in Worcestershire’s LNRS.</p>

Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
<p><u>IT Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produced and updated the Local Habitat Map (LHM), a statutory component of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Improved usability, accessibility, and integration of Worcestershire Habitat Inventory 3. This dataset is integral to landscape-scale baseline assessments and directly fed into the LNRS LHM, as well as being a valuable resource for assessing habitat condition and opportunities for enhancement. Maintained and improved the Council’s internal Ecology Application Programming Interface (API) webmap, which brings together national and local ecological datasets. This tool provides a centralised, authoritative evidence base for planning, land management, and policy decisions affecting biodiversity. Maintained accurate spatial datasets, providing analytical support, and ensuring data consistency across departments, the GIS team helps embed biodiversity considerations into all relevant council functions, aligning with statutory expectations to conserve and enhance biodiversity. 	<p><u>IT Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing to support and develop Environmental datasets to ensure they’re readily available for the wider organisation to engage with. Continuing to deliver online GIS evidence base supporting land-management decision making around biodiversity, green infrastructure, landscape and BNG functions.
<p><u>Service Finance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial oversight for ecological and biodiversity-related grant programmes, ensuring that all funding is allocated, monitored, and reported in line with statutory and audit requirements. Supported the development of Cabinet and Committee papers by supplying accurate financial information on biodiversity projects, grant conditions, spending profiles, and future funding commitments. Ensured that all ecological grant funding (e.g. Defra, Natural England) is managed transparently, enabling the Council to demonstrate responsible use of public money in delivering its Biodiversity Duty under the NERC Act (2006) and Environment Act (2021). Continued to work closely with service teams to ensure biodiversity projects are financially viable, compliant with funding rules, and deliver measurable environmental outcomes. 	<p><u>Service Finance</u></p> <p>Continuation of the same.</p>



Barn owl, *Tyto alba*

Action/Work Stream/Policy	Future Action (within next 5 years)
<p><u>Communities & Partnerships</u></p> <p>Updated the Commercial Social Value Charter (under the National Procurement Policy Statement), which encourages potential suppliers to support environmental sustainability and reduce their carbon footprint. Environmental sustainability is one of the 5 categories set out in Worcestershire County Council's Social Value Charter.</p>	<p><u>Communities & Partnerships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Further embed opportunities to conserve and enhance biodiversity in the Social Value Charter. ● Plan to work with VCSE (Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise) organisations to support and raise awareness of their work on biodiversity, including Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Worcestershire Biological Records Centre, Worcester Environmental Group (WEG).
<p><u>Legal and Democratic Services</u></p> <p>Check that the environment and sustainability are appropriately considered in all decision making across the council, e.g. JIA.</p>	
<p><u>Environmental Policy - Local Nature Partnership</u></p> <p>Worcestershire County Council is a board member and secretariat for the Worcestershire LNP and is a key partner in delivering the LNP's priorities and objectives. Further information can be found at Worcestershire Local Nature Partnership.</p>	<p><u>Environmental Policy - Local Nature Partnership</u></p> <p>Continue to contribute to the LNP and set up an LNRS Delivery Group through the LNP.</p>

4. Biodiversity Net Gain

Since Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory for most developments on 12th February 2024, Worcestershire County Council has successfully integrated BNG into the planning process.

A summary is provided Table 1 and 2 below.

Table 1 Biodiversity Net Gain Summary

No. Biodiversity Gain Plans Approved	No. on-site units approved (post-development)	No. off-site units approved (post-development)	Average net gain achieved	No. gain plans which impact irreplaceable habitat
1	0.52	0	0.14 (35.04%)	0

Table 2 Breakdown of BNG unit types

	Habitat	Hedgerow	Watercourse	Total
On-site	0.52	0	0	0.52
Off-site	0	0	0	0

Whilst only one biodiversity gain plan has been approved, the number of planning permissions which will be subject to BNG is anticipated to increase at a faster rate. In anticipation of this and to manage how we as the competent authority will monitor the management of the approved biodiversity gain plans, we have:

- Implemented software which integrates seamlessly across the Council's teams and will allow us to accurately record and monitor BNG accurately, as well as be time and cost-effective as more biodiversity gain plans get approved.
- Published a [BNG fee framework](#), designed to legally secure funding for the 30-year monitoring of each biodiversity gain plan.
- Begun the process of exploring the potential use of using council-owned land for off-setting our own developments.
- Incorporated BNG considerations into the early feasibility checklist for projects that do not require planning permission, ensuring project managers collaborate with the Ecology team where possible from the outset.

