

## **CABINET MEMBER DECISION**

**Date of decision – 16 March 2026**

### **Worcestershire County Council's Biodiversity Duty Report 2026**

**Key Decision:** *No*

**Exempt:** *No*

**Decision subject to Call-in:** *Yes*

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#### **Relevant Cabinet Member**

Ian Cresswell Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment and Communities

#### **Relevant Chief Officer**

Rachel Hill Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure

#### **Recommendation**

**1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Environment and Communities is recommended to approve the Biodiversity Duty Report (Appendix 1) for publication.**

#### **Background**

2. The Environment Act 2021 introduced a strengthened Biodiversity Duty, building on the obligations of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. This requires local authorities in England to:

- a) consider what it can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- b) agree policies and specific objectives based on that consideration; and
- c) take action to deliver those policies and achieve those objectives.

3. Additionally, the Environment Act introduces new reporting requirements. Local authorities must publish a Biodiversity Duty Report within the first 12 weeks of 2026. This must be reviewed and republished at regular intervals, no longer than five years apart. The report must summarise any actions, workstreams or strategies undertaken across the authority which complies with the statutory Biodiversity Duty, together with plans for any activities which will contribute to this duty during the next reporting period.

4. For Planning Authorities, the Council's Biodiversity Duty Report must also provide information summarising the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) consented, delivered or expected to be secured through all authorised Biodiversity Gain Plans. A forward

plan for meeting BNG obligations in the next reporting period should also be included.

5. This report covers the period following the publication of Worcestershire's Biodiversity Duty First Consideration Report (Background Paper A), from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025. It therefore considers all workstreams contributing to the statutory Biodiversity duty undertaken between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 and 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026.

6. The appended report provides an overview of the Council's current position in relation to its biodiversity duty, and summarises the actions taken to date and any future actions which ensure ongoing compliance within the next five years.

## **Reasons for decision**

### **Consultation**

7. Consultation has been undertaken with the county council's Sustainability Board, and relevant internal teams and officers across the organisation has been undertaken to collate information presented within this report. This includes officers' responsible for development management, monitoring and enforcement, strategic planning and environmental policy, property and facilities management, highways operation and maintenance, and the major and minor infrastructure projects teams.

### **Options considered**

8. Endorse the biodiversity duty report for publication (recommended). This option enables the Council to comply with its statutory duties and reporting requirements under the Environment Act 2021. Failure to publish to the statutory deadline risks legislative non-compliance and reputational damage.

### **Legal Implications**

9. The Biodiversity Duty Report is required by the Environment Act 2021. It is a reporting requirement rather than setting policy. No specific legal implications are anticipated to arise as a result of the content of the Biodiversity Duty Report.

### **Finance Implications**

10. No new financial implications arise as result of the content of this report. It summarises existing activities and financial commitments of the organisation which contribute towards the Biodiversity Duty all of which are from within existing resources. .

### **Human Resources**

11. No new Human Resources implications arise as result of the content of this report. It summarises existing activities and financial commitments of the organisation which contribute towards the Biodiversity Duty

### **Risk Implications**

12. No new risk implications arise from the content of this report as it summarises existing activities and workstreams undertaken by Worcestershire County Council.

## **Joint Equality, Public Health, Data Protection and Sustainability Impact Assessments**

No Joint Impact Assessment has been undertaken as the Biodiversity Duty Report sets out existing projects, plans and policies which in turn would be subject to their own JIA process.

### **Supporting Information**

- Appendix 1 – Worcestershire County Council’s Biodiversity Duty Report

### **Contact Points**

#### Specific Contact Points for this report

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### **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

*Background Paper A* – Worcestershire’s Biodiversity Duty First Consideration Report, available at [www.worcestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/Biodiversity%20Duty%20Legal%20Requirements%20and%20Actions%20WCC%20%28Final%29.pdf](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/Biodiversity%20Duty%20Legal%20Requirements%20and%20Actions%20WCC%20%28Final%29.pdf)

### **Officer Clearance**

Report Author

On behalf of the Strategic Director

On behalf of the Chief Finance Officer

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Cody Levine

Rachel Hill

Steph Simcox 3 February 2026

Tom Pollock 3 February 2026