

Biodiversity Duty Legal Requirements and Actions Worcestershire County Council

Purpose of this Document

This is Worcestershire County Council's (WCC) 'first consideration' of relevant functions which contribute towards our statutory Biodiversity Duty.

Background

The Environment Act 2021 introduced a strengthened 'Biodiversity Duty', which means that public authorities in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. [Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act S.41 'Biodiversity Duty'](#) (opens in separate window):

“An amendment to the original Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act) section 40 duty, provided for in the Environment Act 2021, extends the biodiversity duty on public authorities to include the enhancement of biodiversity alongside conservation by way of creating “*the general biodiversity objective*”. “

Click here to view the full wording of [part 6 of the Environment Act 2021 - Biodiversity objective and reporting](#) (opens in a separate window).

Compliance with the Biodiversity Duty

To comply with the Biodiversity Duty, Worcestershire County Council (WCC) as a public authority, must:

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.

There is a need to consider the actions WCC intends to take for biodiversity **no later than 1 January 2024**. As soon as possible after this initial consideration, WCC must agree policies and objectives to deliver the actions. Any subsequent consideration of actions must be completed no more than five years after the completion of the authority's previous consideration.

WCC must produce reports detailing, amongst other things, actions that have conserved and enhanced biodiversity and plans for future actions. The first formal Biodiversity Report should be prepared no later than 1 January 2026, thereafter, being repeated within five years of the end date of the previous reporting period.

Links to National Targets

Action that WCC takes for biodiversity will contribute to the achievement of national goals and targets on biodiversity. The [Environmental Improvement Plan \(EIP23\)](#) (link opens in a separate window), published in January 2023, sets out government plans for significantly improving the natural environment.

By 2030, the government has committed to:

- Halt the decline in species' abundance.
- Protect 30% of UK land.

By 2042, the government has committed to:

- Increase species' abundance by at least 10% from 2030, surpassing 2022 levels.
- Restore or create at least 500,000 ha of a range of wildlife rich habitats.
- Reduce the risk of species' extinction.
- Restore 75% of our one million hectares of terrestrial and freshwater protected sites to favourable condition, securing their wildlife value for the long term.

Biodiversity Report

Local authorities (excluding parish councils) must write and publish a biodiversity report. For local authorities and local planning authorities, the end date of the first reporting period should be no later than 1 January 2026. After this, the end date of each reporting period must be within 5 years of the end date of the previous reporting period. Each report must include the start and end dates of the reporting period. WCC must publish all reports within 12 weeks of the reporting period end date. We will update this document as further guidance becomes available on Biodiversity Reporting requirements.

Biodiversity Report Contents – Mandatory Information

By law, the biodiversity report must include:

- A summary of the action WCC has taken to comply with the Biodiversity Duty.
- The policies and objectives WCC has set to meet our Biodiversity Duty.
- The actions WCC has completed, either alone or in partnership with others, that benefit biodiversity.
- An explanation as to how WCC has taken account of the Local Nature Recovery Strategies, protected site strategies and species conservation strategies.
- Set out how WCC plans to comply with the Biodiversity Duty in the next reporting period (five years).
- Set out the actions WCC has carried out to meet biodiversity net gain (BNG) obligations.
- Provide details of BNG resulting, or expected to result, from biodiversity gain plans WCC have approved.
- Detail how WCC plans to meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period.
- Any other information WCC considers appropriate.

The required information can be provided in any way that WCC deems appropriate – Defra have provided [a template report structure for reporting biodiversity duty actions](#) (link opens in a separate window).

Biodiversity Report Contents – Optional Information

Defra provides within [the template for biodiversity duty reporting](#) (link opens in separate window) a suggestion of the optional additional information that a local authority could include. Examples of some of the suggestions include:

- A summary of how the authority can affect biodiversity, both positively and negatively.
- A summary of what the local authority, has achieved in the reporting period:
 - Actions WCC has taken to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
 - Achievements resulting from WCC’s actions.
 - Actions WCC plan to take in the next reporting period.
- Expand on mandatory reporting by explaining how WCC policies, objectives and actions have contributed to conserving, restoring or enhancing biodiversity.
- Information on involvement in partnerships that benefit biodiversity.
- Actions addressing the main causes of biodiversity loss.
- WCC can also include any action taken within National Landscapes (formerly Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)) in the biodiversity report.
- WCC can include information on how complying with the BNG obligations relates to other obligations.
- WCC can add quantitative data to the report which can help to monitor and evaluate the results of our actions, examples of quantitative data are provided in the template.
- Describe if land WCC own or manage is identified in Local Nature Recovery strategies (LNRS).
- Boundary data can be included to show areas where action is taking place.
- Describe what WCC has done to raise awareness, educate and promote biodiversity action.
- Explain how WCC has measured, monitored and evaluated actions and how WCC has assessed our effects on biodiversity – [further detail is available in the biodiversity duty example report structure](#) (link opens in a separate window).
- Any relevant environmental assessments WCC are responsible for, such as the strategic environmental assessment of minerals or waste local plans, or local transport plans.
- Report on any significant trends or areas of concern WCC has found.
- Explain WCC’s main achievements for biodiversity over the reporting period.
- Explain what we think the main challenges will be over the next 5 years.

WCC Actions Relevant to the Biodiversity Duty

[DEFRA’s Guidance on Complying with the Biodiversity Duty](#) (link opens in a separate window) suggests a number of actions which can be taken by local authorities to contribute towards the Strengthened Biodiversity Duty. A summary of recommendations provided by

DEFRA are outlined below. WCC already undertakes many of these actions, more details on these actions and functions follow in the provided table.

DEFRA's recommended actions have been grouped into overarching themes which include public estate assets and functions where actions which contribute towards the general biodiversity objective can be delivered.

Land

Where practicable, and available, land which WCC owns and manages which is not already leased, promotes opportunities for biodiversity. This includes green and blue spaces such as:

- Amenity spaces and communal gardens.
- Roadside verges.
- Field margins and hedgerows.
- Rights of way and access routes.
- Woodlands and nature reserves.
- Waterbodies.

These areas are valuable to biodiversity as they create habitats for wildlife and 'nature corridors' that connect existing habitats. This allows species to move between habitats, maintain or increase populations and be more resilient to climate change.

Examples of actions which WCC undertake to improve habitats for biodiversity include:

- Using native and sustainably sourced trees when planting.
- Creating dedicated spaces for wildlife
- Leaving dead wood in woodlands to provide additional habitat.
- Maintaining planted trees to give them the best chance of survival.
- Minimising the use of herbicides and pesticides.
- Using water sparingly.
- Minimising the use of peat (e.g. use peat-free compost).
- Implementing measures to prevent the spread of invasive species and plant diseases.

As-and-when WCC management plans or tenancy agreements are reviewed and, where appropriate, WCC will introduce terms to set out actions for the tenants to carry out. This could include encouraging tenant farmers to apply for agri-environment schemes and use pesticides, herbicides and fungicides appropriately and to share knowledge around farmland soil health, water use and waste management.

WCC has delivered Natural Flood Management (NFM) schemes to help hold back water in upstream areas through use of attenuation, infiltration, and natural physical barriers such as leaky dams or large trees to reduce flood risks as part of a catchment-based approach. This nature-based solution approach promotes and facilitates the restoration of natural processes and landscape recovery at catchment-scales.

Natural England has published the [Green Infrastructure Framework - Principles and Standards for England](#) (opens in a separate window). This includes planning, design and

process guides, which has informed the review of Worcestershire's Green Infrastructure Strategy (due for publication winter 2023/24)

Protected Sites

Sites that WCC owns or manages may be protected by other legislation. For example:

- Sites of special scientific interest (SSSI)
- Local nature reserves (LNR)

WCC will periodically review biodiversity opportunities and constraints within designated nature conservation sites in its ownership where WCC have management responsibility and will ensure management plans are in place to conserve and enhance biodiversity within these protected sites. This will exclude the let estate where WCC have no rights under the terms of the agreement.

In line with the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan, WCC has management plans in place to support the protected sites we own to reach favourable status.

Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are designated locally by the Worcestershire Local Sites Partnership and hold significant value for wildlife. LWS are afforded consideration through the local development plan, policy and development management processes. Protecting and enhancing these as part of the Biodiversity Duty will benefit biodiversity in strategic places and likely contribute to the LNRS.

Buildings

Where practicable, WCC will continue to create dedicated spaces on or within the sites of buildings WCC own and manage to attract wildlife and enhance biodiversity. It is important these measures are appropriate to each location. Example actions could include:

- Building and installing nest boxes for birds, bats and other animals.
- Nesting sites for solitary bees.
- Adding green walls or roofs to existing or new buildings.
- Plant native trees and shrubs.
- Plant wildflowers for pollinators.

WCC may periodically work with schools in WCC's ownership and assist with the creation of school gardens, ponds, meadows or woodlands which improve biodiversity and aid education.

Planning Services and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

BNG is an approach to development or land management that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. Some local plans contain BNG policies; WCC may consider if a BNG policy would be suitable to be included in plans and strategies such as a future Waste and/or Minerals Local Plans, Local Transport Plan (LTP), Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS), or whether it would be a standalone document.

Future development projects (apart from exempt developments) will need to achieve a minimum of 10% BNG. This will be on a phased rollout, with major developments being mandatory from February 2024, minor developments from April 2024 and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) being brought into the system no later than November 2025, although some NSIPs are already voluntarily committing to BNG.

As a County Planning Authority, WCC will:

- Demonstrate how we have achieved BNG throughout each reporting period.
- Consider areas that are appropriate for BNG, including locally significant areas identified in the LNRS.
- Consider how existing planning advice and strategies can protect and enhance biodiversity.

Reviews of the WCC Waste and Minerals Plans have and will provide opportunities to ensure that policies are in place to conserve and enhance biodiversity, and link with other WCC objectives including climate change, green infrastructure, health and wellbeing and flood management.

Protected Landscapes

WCC will consider its role in relation to designated areas such as National Landscapes (formerly called Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)) as part of the Biodiversity Duty. This is important as WCC has functions within the settings of National Landscapes. Improving nature in National Landscapes is an action that can enhance and conserve biodiversity. WCC has and will continue to contribute to the Biodiversity Duty by:

- Helping to develop and implement management plans and nature recovery plans for AONBs (now named National Landscapes).
- Working with the management teams for the National Landscapes to make improvements for nature in these areas.

Educate, Advise and Raise Awareness

Increasing understanding of biodiversity and why it is important to conserve and enhance it can form part of the duty. This can encourage land managers, businesses, and the general public to take action to benefit biodiversity.

Policies, objectives and actions that have and will continue to contribute to the Biodiversity Duty include:

- Including the public in projects that improve biodiversity.
- Feature biodiversity in public or internal communications.
- Use libraries and museums to raise awareness of biodiversity.
- Putting information boards in green spaces or offering guided walks.
- Including biodiversity considerations in advice for internal and external clients and service users.
- Educating staff on the biodiversity actions and why they are important.
- Raising public awareness of how gardens can support biodiversity.

Review Internal Policies and Processes

Local authorities have internal policies and processes for staff and facilities that could affect biodiversity. WCC has and will continue to periodically consider how our policies effect biodiversity and we will seek to review and improve these outcomes. Examples of relevant policies and processes that currently contribute to biodiversity include:

- Transport – promoting a range of travel options including sustainable travel.
- Procurement – buy sustainable materials and supplies to reduce the demand on natural resources.
- Light – the Environmental Policy team works with the Street Lighting team and the Highways and Major Infrastructure projects teams to ensure artificial lighting designs minimise effects on nature.

Ecological Data - Local Environmental Record Centre

The Local Environmental Record Centre covering Worcestershire is Worcestershire Biological Records Centre (WBRC). WBRC has an important role in assisting WCC in meeting both its statutory duties in relation to environmental data, but also holds much of the data needed to understand our duty, monitor change, and provide data for the purposes of the Biodiversity Duty report. This includes protected and notable species records and, in collaboration with Worcestershire’s Local Sites Partnership, WBRC curates datasets of Worcestershire’s designated nature conservation sites.

WCC will periodically review whether other sources of environmental data may be required in relation to the Biodiversity Duty.

Current WCC Position

By 1st January 2024, WCC is required to assess which policies, objectives and actions are in place which contribute towards the general biodiversity objective. WCC also needs to assess how best to report on current and future actions and ensure measures are in place to capture this information and streamline the statutory reporting process.

The table below sets out some of WCC’s current key work areas with clear links to the Biodiversity Duty. It includes a summary of the work stream and its current position, the policy, strategy, or plan that it relates to, potential further work needed and any links to further information on the work stream.

Summary of Current Work/Actions that Contribute to the Biodiversity Duty

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Work stream	Current Position	Initial Assessment of Further Work / Action Needed	Hyperlinks	Further Hyperlinks
Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP)	The EIP is a WCC-wide plan bringing together all policies that contribute to delivery of the Corporate Plan objective. This is led by Directorate of Economy & Infrastructure (DE&I).	A corporate EIP has been drafted, this demonstrates WCC's work towards the Corporate Plan Objective of Protecting the Environment. This will raise awareness and share information about WCC's positive contributions towards the general biodiversity objectives.	Publication of the EIP.		
Sustainability Policy 2021	Joint Impact Assessment (JIA).	A JIA is filled out by project managers prior to commencement of projects within WCC. These are broad ranging. Currently the JIA asks about impacts on the natural environment.	Reassess biodiversity / environment question on the JIA in light of the strengthened biodiversity duty and BNG.	WCC Sustainability Policy 2021 (opens in a separate window)	
Corporate Plan Objective	The Corporate Plan underpins WCC's work. It provides the blueprint for the organisation, setting out the Council's core priorities and guiding how the organisation will operate, both internally and with partners across Worcestershire and beyond.	One of the four priorities is 'the environment'; as well as the Net Zero plan, WCC will continue to invest in environmental measures that protect our natural environment, enhance our biodiversity and reduce our carbon footprint. All of the actions within this table comply with this priority in the Corporate Plan. Current measures include reducing waste, improving road and pavement condition, increasing flood protection for homes and businesses and reducing carbon emissions.	Continue to invest in environmental measures that protect our natural environment, enhance biodiversity and reduce our carbon footprint.	Shaping Worcestershire's Future is Worcestershire County Council's corporate plan (opens in a separate window)	

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District Local Plans	DE&I Strategic Planning and Environmental Policy (SPEP) support the preparation of new district local plans.	Engage with district colleagues concerning the natural environment (ecology and landscape) as they revise and update their local plans and share supporting data sets.	Continuation of the same.	Click here to open WCC's Environmental Policy webpages (opens in a separate window)	
Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)	WCC is the responsible authority for preparation of Worcestershire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). This falls within the DE&I SPEP and is led by Environmental Policy team.	Appointed a LNRS Officer and commenced development in collaboration with Worcestershire's Local Nature Partnership and key stakeholders.	Continue with the development of the LNRS in partnership; LNRS will consist of a statement of biodiversity priorities and habitat and opportunities maps. To be adopted 2025.	Click here to find out more and link to the Worcestershire Habitat Inventory (opens in a separate window)	
Minerals and Local Plan and Waste Core Strategy	DE&I SPEP carry out reviews of minerals and waste local plans, this work is led by the Minerals and Waste Planning Policy team.	Minerals Local Plan (MLP, adopted in 2022), policies MLP 7-12 and 31 will secure biodiversity betterment through the planning application processes for future mineral developments. A green infrastructure and biodiversity evidence base underpins the MLP. Waste Core Strategy (WCS) (adopted 2012) 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. The Council's Local Development Scheme recognises the need for review and revision of the WCS, and this will offer an opportunity to consider the biodiversity duty.	Continuation of the same. Review of Waste Core Strategy and Minerals Local Plan.	Click to view the webpage for Worcestershire County Council's Minerals and Waste Planning Policy (opens in a separate window)	

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Current wildlife legislation and local policy and strategy in relation to minerals and waste and Regulation 3 planning applications	DE&I – the Planning Development Management (DM) team, with support from the Environmental Policy team, determine planning applications in accordance with current wildlife legislation and policy.	WCC are the county’s mineral and waste planning authority (above), and also determines County Council’s own developments, falling under Regulation 3 of The Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 (as amended) (below). Regular ecology input into WCC’s regulatory and planning functions includes pre-application advice, advice to Planning and Regulatory Committee, condition discharge, monitoring and enforcement.	Continuation of the same. Particular consideration for the Biodiversity Duty should be given when complying with requirements under Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA), Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRA).	Click here to learn more about WCC Planning and developments (opens in a separate window)	
Current wildlife legislation and local policy and strategy in relation Regulation 3 projects	DE&I – Major Infrastructure Projects team oversees the County Council’s own developments, falling under Regulation 3 of The Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 (as amended), major infrastructure eg: schools and highways schemes. These need to be carried out in a way that complies with wildlife legislation and deliver any mitigation accordingly.	Major infrastructure projects incorporate biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures, as per legislative and planning policy requirements. Recent examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A38 Upton Roundabout - significant net gains in wildlife habitats for amphibians, reptiles and pollinators which include new areas of woodland and wildflowers. • Hoobrook Link Road - new riparian grazing management schemes, new bird boxes (including kingfisher tunnels) and bat boxes (including hibernation and maternity boxes), creation of an artificial otter holt and wildlife tunnel crossings which reduce risks of traffic mortalities. • Worcestershire Parkway rail station – creation of wildflower habitats across the flood alleviation area, installation of new 	Continuation of the same.	Click here to open Regulation 3 of The Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 (opens in a separate window) Click to link to Lighting - Threats to bats by Bat Conservation Trust (opens in separate window) Click to link to a press release	

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		<p>bat boxes and built enhancement measures for wildlife including green roofs and sensitive lighting scheme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southern Link Road (A4440) phase 4 (SLR4) delivered a c.4ha wetland area providing a compensation flood attenuation feature which is now a valuable wildlife habitat and used by scarce migratory wetland birds. • Street lighting mitigation is built into new schemes to reduce severance effects of highway and streetlighting. Conventional LED streetlighting contains significant amounts of blue light which deters light-sensitive bats and contributes to the decline of insects. Examples of schemes which have included wildlife-sensitive lighting designs include the A38 Upton Roundabout scheme. 		<p>about a study into insect decline due to LED streetlights (opens in a separate window)</p>	
<p>Environment Act (2021)</p> <p>Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)</p>	<p>As part of the planning application process, new developments will be required to deliver at least 10% BNG. The implications are WCC – wide, but this work stream is led by DE&I SPEP, Environmental Policy team.</p>	<p>Work in preparation for 10% BNG requirement which is expected to become mandatory on 12th February 2024. Awaiting further government guidance. Have completed modelling of existing strategic development site's BNG requirements - with the south Worcestershire councils - to estimate the demand for offsite BNG, produced a draft BNG handbook for the planning team, recruited a BNG officer and conducted feasibility studies on WCC's own BNG requirements for future planned capital schemes.</p>	<p>Compile and work through a BNG readiness checklist. We are developing new processes to implement BNG this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying BNG requirements for WCC's own development for highways and education - Exploring how BNG will work along other environmental 		

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		<p>Examples of recent WCC schemes which evaluated their contribution towards Biodiversity Net Gain prior to the implementation of the national requirement include: 4th Phase of the Southern Link (A4440 Road (SLR4)).</p>	<p>workstreams including LNRS, and potentially also natural capital and carbon offsetting.</p>		
<p>Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2015-2021</p>	<p>Land drainage consents and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) approval. Production of strategy and policy on flooding and surface water drainage. This falls within the DE&I - Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) – led by Flood Risk and Highways Drainage team.</p>	<p>The Worcestershire Local flood risk management strategy 2015-2021 has an objective to protect, enhance and conserve Worcestershire’s built and natural environment. There is also a section on Environmental Objectives.</p> <p>Sustainable Drainage Design and Evaluation Guide is a comprehensive document detailing how developments can achieve the best possible SuDS design.</p> <p>The Corporate Plan has 'Protecting the Environment' as a key priority.</p>	<p>Proposals to introduce Sustainable Drainage Approval Bodies, expected in 2024. These are expected to provide opportunities to secure biodiversity betterment.</p>	<p>Click to view the Worcestershire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (opens in a separate window)</p> <p>Click to view Worcestershire SuDS Design and Evaluation Guide (opens in a separate window)</p> <p>The Corporate Plan Shaping Worcestershire's Future - Our Plan for Worcestershire</p>	

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				(opens in a separate window) Shaping Worcestershire's Future is Worcestershire County Council's corporate plan (opens in a separate window)	
WCC Corporate Plan Countryside and Rights of Way Act (1981)	The County Council is responsible for some elements of the operations and management upkeep of Public Rights of Way. This work is carried out by DE&I - Highways Operations and Public Rights of Way team.	Ecological oversight of sensitive operations. A number of officers and contractors have a background in conservation work so there is a good general awareness. During works, several measures are undertaken to minimise impacts on wildlife and, where possible provide benefits, these include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timber/brush, where appropriate, is left on site for habitat piles. • Timber used is sustainably sourced. • Much of the work is done by hand (i.e. volunteers) or with smaller plant to reduce ground impact etc. • We minimise the use of material such as tarmac and cement, recycled material is often used. 	Continuation of the same.	Click here to learn more about Public Rights of Way (opens in a separate window)	

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NERC Act - Biodiversity Duty	Biodiversity Duty Reporting is overseen in the DE&I SPEP - led by Environmental Policy team.	Currently collating and reviewing actions that WCC can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity - deadline 1st January 2024.	Periodically review approaches with the Cabinet Member for Environment. Act to deliver these. First report due 1st January 2026 at the latest, further five-yearly reports.		
Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2015-2021 Environment Agency (EA) Flood Risk Management Plan EA's River Basin Management Plan Defra funded NFM pilot programme	Natural Flood Management (NFM). This work stream falls within the DE&I - led by Highways and Transport, Flood Risk and Highways Drainage team.	NFM are being adopted on the upper River Severn, River Avon, River Teme and River Stour. Working with Water project - a five-year NFM project. This builds upon a successful pilot project implementing hundreds of interventions working with landowners including farmers and communities.	WCC's ecological monitoring of NFM sites will measure the biodiversity benefits achieved post-installation.	Click to open 'Natural Flood Management' by Worcestershire County Council (opens in a separate window)	Flood risk management plans 2021 to 2027 on gov.uk (opens in a separate window) River basin management plans: updated 2022 on gov.uk (opens in a separate window)
Current wildlife legislation and local policy and strategy in	Capital schemes carried out by DE&I – Major Projects & Waste.	Environmental Policy team regularly assist in undertaking ecological surveys in support of new capital schemes and provide ecological advice to project board where required	Continuation of the same.	Click here to learn more about WCC major infrastructure	Click here to learn more about WCC waste management

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relation Regulation 3 projects		throughout project life. In addition, major projects commission ecological surveys for capital schemes.		improvements (opens in a separate window)	(opens in a separate window)
Highways Asset Management Policy, Highways Maintenance Policy, Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Policy NERC – biodiversity duty and wildlife policy and legislation	Maintenance of assets carried out by the DE&I – Highways Operations.	Environmental Policy team support and provide advice for routine and cyclical maintenance operations such as bridge inspections, road repairs and drainage maintenance. Highways Green Team undertake periodic surveys and, together with the WCC Highways contractor Ringway, maintain the WCC Highways soft estate. Opportunities for pollinators and wildflowers are promoted where practical, cost effective and safe for highway users.	Continuation of the same.	Click here to learn more about WCC highways and maintenance (opens in a separate window)	How we manage the highway network - Worcestershire County Council (opens in a separate window)
WCC Sustainability Policy 2021 NERC – biodiversity duty	Updating existing street lighting carried out by the DE&I - Highways and Transport, Lighting team.	Updating existing streetlighting; an example is the 'Rapid LED Roll-out' which upgraded c.21,000 streetlights to modern energy-efficient LED, bringing the authorities total streetlights (circa 58,000) to 99.8% LED. In ecologically sensitive locations these are bat-friendly lights which should reduce the severance effects of artificial lighting on light-sensitive wildlife and avoid the effect of blue light attracting insects.	Continue to roll out with regular maintenance.	Click here to view Worcestershire's LED streetlight plans rolled out (opens in separate window)	

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Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Policy Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan Green Infrastructure Strategy	Verge management - Roadside Verge Nature Reserves (RVNR). WCC – wide led by Countryside Services, Countryside Greenspace with Highways, Environmental Policy and AONB partnership teams.	WCC manages 41 RVNRs as per Plantlife's Good Verge Management Guidance. This project identifies, protects and manages verges of significant conservation interest. All 41 verges are monitored, and most are in active management (some are non-intervention). Experimental verge management techniques have been trialled including: - topsoil removal and reseedling in the Malvern Hills AONB - seeding sites with yellow rattle, and, - reseedling urban and peri-urban sites with wildflowers for aesthetic and pollination benefits.	Continuation of the same.	Click here to view Plantlife's Good Verge Guide (opens in separate window)	
Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan	Tree Wardens are a network of parish-based volunteers who plant, look after and protect the trees in their patch. – they are supported by the Countryside Greenspace team.	The County Council has supported the Tree Warden Scheme in Worcestershire for many years. The County Council provides induction and training for new volunteer Tree Wardens.		Click here to visit the Tree Council's webpage about how to become a Tree Warden (page opens in a separate window)	
Net Zero Carbon Plan Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan	Schools (educational estates are managed by individual schools, with support through WCC Corporate Landlord.	Funding such as Local Authority Treescapes Fund (LATF) and ERDF funded Natural Networks has been secured to improve biodiversity in many schools through provision of new orchard trees, hedgerow planting, wildflower meadow			

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Green Infrastructure Strategy	Services) within Commercial and Change	creation and advice provided to eco-committees.			
Net Zero Carbon Plan Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan Green Infrastructure Strategy	Land and buildings owned or managed by WCC Commercial and Change, Corporate Landlord Services, Facilities Management.	Creation of new wildflower meadows at County Hall together with interpretation panels and a long-term management plan. WCC ecology team works closely with the Facilities Management and Property teams to ensure due diligence for new build and maintenance projects is secured. Examples include: - Ecological due diligence for biodiversity in the redevelopment of Worcester City’s Shrub Hill quarter redevelopment. - Creation of new priority habitats and features for protected species at Worcestershire Parkway rail station. - Invasive non-native weed surveys at household waste transfer sites. - Monitoring wildlife translocation receptor sites established across the WCC estates. - Draft Sustainability Design and Estate Principles links buildings and land approach in review and delivery of sustainability and biodiversity improvements.	WCC ecology team will work closely with the Facilities Management and Property teams to ensure due diligence for new build and maintenance projects is secured.		

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<p>Malvern Hills AONB (National Landscape) Strategy</p> <p>Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan</p>	<p>National Landscapes (formerly AONB) Partnership, which includes representation from WCC's Environmental Policy team, provide grants that allow ongoing work including habitat management and creation.</p>	<p>A number of projects benefitting biodiversity are completed within the Malvern Hills National Landscape. These range from interpretation boards educating people about local wildlife sites, to managing roadside verges for wildflowers and restoring and creating habitats including ponds, traditional orchards and wildflower meadows.</p>		<p>Malvern Hills AONB Annual Review 2022/23 (opens in a separate window)</p>	
<p>Sections 89 and 90 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (the CRoW Act) created a statutory responsibility for Local Authorities and Conservation Boards to produce then review AONB Management Plans</p> <p>Malvern Hills AONB (National</p>	<p>Nature Recovery Plans were produced by the National Landscapes (formerly AONB) Partnership with input from the Environmental Policy team.</p>	<p>Supported both Cotswolds National Landscape and Malvern Hills (MH) National Landscapes Partnerships to produce and adopt Nature Recovery Plans, management plans and technical guidance documents where the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity can be achieved.</p>	<p>These plans should work alongside LNRS, BNG and Environment land Management Schemes.</p>	<p>Click here to visit Malvern Hills National Landscape's page about Nature Recovery where you can find a link to the Nature Recovery Plan (opens in a separate window)</p> <p>A report details the first year's progress of the Malvern Hills National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan</p>	<p>Click here to visit the webpage of Cotswold National Landscape's Nature Recovery Plan (opens in a separate window)</p>

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Work stream	Current Position	Initial Assessment of Further Work / Action Needed	Hyperlinks	Further Hyperlinks
Landscape) Strategy Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan Colchester Declaration Statutory Management Plan for the Cotswolds National Landscape				(opens in a separate window)	
AONB Management Plan (2019-2024) policy BDP5	Supplementary Guidance produced National Landscapes (formerly AONB) Partnership and supported by Environmental Policy team.	Supported both Cotswolds National Landscape and Malvern Hills National Landscape Partnerships to produce supplementary guidance including MH National Landscape's guidance on lighting.		Click here to view MH National Landscape's Guidance on Lighting (opens in a separate window)	

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Net Zero Carbon Plan	Carbon Neutral by 2050 target this is WCC wide – led by Sustainability team.	The climate and biodiversity crises are inextricably interlinked and much of the work towards the carbon target will be beneficial to the natural world and biodiversity.		Click here to learn more about WCC Sustainability and carbon reduction (opens in a separate window)	Click here to view the Worcestershire County Council Net Zero Carbon Plan (opens in a separate window)
Local Nature Partnerships are a key Natural Environment White Paper commitment. WLNP Business Plan 2014 - 2016	Representatives from DE&I are part of the Worcestershire Local Nature Partnership (WLNP).	WCC is a board member, and also acts as secretariat for the WLNP and is a key partner in delivering the LNP's priorities and objectives.	Continuation of the same.	Worcestershire Local Nature Partnership page on the Worcestershire County Council website (opens in a separate window)	
NPPF, Local Plans, LNRS – evidence base Biodiversity Duty	Representation of the Environmental Policy team on the Worcestershire Local Site Partnership.	Local sites include both statutory and non-statutory designated sites that are important for wildlife. WCC contributes to the oversight of the LWS systems including designation, surveys, advice to land managers.	Continuation of the same.	Click here to visit the website for the Worcestershire Local Sites Partnership (opens in a separate window)	Local Wildlife Sites webpage on the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust gives information about Local Wildlife Sites (opens in a new window) Defra produced guidance on local sites

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					identification, selection and management (2006) this can be viewed in the national archives as ARCHIVED CONTENT (opens in a new window)
Worcestershire Green Infrastructure Strategy	Representative from the Environmental Policy team is part of Worcestershire's Green Infrastructure (GI) Partnership .	<p>WCC actively contributes to Worcestershire's GI Partnership.</p> <p>WCC led on the review of the county's Green Infrastructure Strategy which is due for adoption in winter 2023/24.</p> <p>WCC compiles evidence base framework documents and leads on preparation of collaborative GI Concept Plans for many of Worcestershire's strategic development sites and development corridors (commercial, residential and energy developments as determined by district LPAs).</p>	Due for adoption in winter 2023/24, after which it will be implemented.	Click here to visit Worcestershire County Council's Planning for Green Infrastructure webpage with links to the GI strategy and map of GI priority areas (opens in a separate window)	
Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan, Worcestershire's Pollinator Strategy	Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership including WCC's Environmental Policy team worked on the production of	Led on production of Worcestershire's Biodiversity Action Plan. Production of Worcestershire's Pollinator Strategy.		Click here to find out more and link to Worcestershire's Biodiversity Action Plan	Click here to find out more and link to the Worcestershire Pollinator Strategy (opens in

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	Worcestershire's BAP and Pollinator Strategy.			(opens in a separate window)	a separate window)
State of Worcestershire's Grasslands report LNRS evidence base	State of Worcestershire's Grasslands report produced by Environmental Policy team.	Worcestershire is believed to contain a nationally important proportion of England's remaining lowland meadows. A joint research project 'State of Worcestershire's Grasslands' was published in March 2023, this updated our understanding of Worcestershire's species-rich grassland sites and refreshed the Worcestershire grassland inventory. Clusters of sites were identified for phase 2 - field surveys.	Phase 2 - field surveys to improve accuracy, develop a complete and up-to-date grassland inventory, increase protection for Worcestershire's semi-natural grasslands and engage people with conservation advice.	Click here to read the State of Worcestershire's Grasslands Report (opens in a separate window)	
LNRS – evidence base	WCC, specifically the Environmental Policy team and the Floodplain Meadows Partnership.	Carried out an assessment of floodplain meadows in Worcestershire and their potential to store soil carbon whilst providing wider environmental benefits. This was to understand how BNG could contribute to the conservation and restoration of this national priority habitat.		Click here to read more about Worcestershire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy evidence base (opens in separate window)	

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	<p>Communications Team oversees communications and engagement workstreams and other teams feed into their work.</p>	<p>The Ecology team work closely with the WCC communications team to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amplify key messages around important dates for biodiversity. - Add information about the natural environment to key WCC comms messages e.g. new developments or initiatives. <p>Recent examples include taking care of hedgehogs in gardening, how to dispose of pumpkins in an environmentally safe manner, and the new features for wildlife in recently constructed roads and bridge schemes.</p>			
<p>Net Zero Carbon Plan</p> <p>Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan</p> <p>Green Infrastructure Strategy</p>	<p>Natural Networks, delivered in partnership with Worcestershire Wildlife Trust (WWT), forms part of the Growth, Investment and Sustainability workstream.</p>	<p>This £1.2m ERDF funded programme, in partnership with WWT, offered free advice and grants to local organisations (including Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Worcestershire. In the first phase 170 projects were supported, with 130 ha of land improvements for biodiversity and improvement plans for 2600 ha. Funded works included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 71,500 bulbs & plug plants planted • 25,700 trees & shrubs planted • 4½ km hedges planted • 1½ km watercourses enhanced • 50 ponds created or enhanced • 620 bird & bat boxes • 30 bee posts • 40 hibernacula 	<p>The team has secured UK Shared Prosperity funding (which replaces the ERDF funding) from four district councils to continue the Natural Networks programme in Wychavon, Malvern, Wyre Forest and Worcester until March 2025.</p>	<p>Click here to find out more about the Natural Networks Programme (opens in a separate window)</p>	

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<p>Site-specific management plan or summary management information plan</p> <p>Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan</p> <p>Green Infrastructure Strategy</p>	<p>WCC owns several Countryside Sites which are managed by WCC's Countryside Greenspace team.</p>	<p>The WCC Countryside Greenspace team manages the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 Country Parks - Waseley Hills Country Park and Worcester Woods Country Park (cafés, toilets, play areas, information/interpretation, on-site waymarked trails), both are in agri-environment schemes and have detailed management plans. Both of these sites have achieved Green Flag status for many years. - 8 Nature Reserves (picnic facilities, information/interpretation and on-site waymarked trails), 2 are in agri-environment schemes, 4 have detailed management plans and 4 have summary management information plans. 1 of these sites, St Wulstan's Nature Reserve, has achieved Green Flag status for many years. - 7 Picnic Places (picnic facilities, information/interpretation and off-site waymarked trails/access to Public Rights of Way network), 1 has a detailed management plan and the other 6 have summary management information plans. <p>All of these sites are managed for biodiversity, from managing habitats such as heathland, orchard, woodland and species rich grassland on the larger sites to having erected bird/bat boxes, constructed otter holts or adjusted mowing regimes to enhance biodiversity on the smaller sites.</p>	<p>Continue to manage sites as per management documents.</p>	<p>Click here to learn more about WCC Countryside and leisure (opens in a separate window)</p>	

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<p>Net Zero Carbon Plan</p> <p>Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan</p> <p>Green Infrastructure Strategy</p>	<p>Tree Planting at WCC Countryside Sites by the Countryside Greenspace team and part of our Sustainability work.</p>	<p>WCC has committed to planting 150,000 trees and has, to date, planted over 50,000 across several of countryside sites and at 2 new sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New and Ashmores Farms, Norton, Evesham (also includes wetland, species rich grassland and community orchard) - An extension to Blackstone Picnic Place, Netherton Lane, Bewdley. 	<p>There is commitment to plant 100,000 more trees. The requirement to meet an 85% survival rate. Currently additional woodland planting sites are being explored for delivery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Double Gates Farm at Upton Snodsbury (also a community orchard) is in development with species rich grassland and hedgerows to be conserved/enhanced). 	<p>Click here to open announcement on county's new woodlands sites (opens in a separate window)</p>	<p>Click here to read about Worcestershire County Council's significant reduction in its own greenhouse gas emissions (opens in a separate window)</p>
<p>Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan</p>	<p>Creation of mini forests and community orchards delivered by the Countryside Greenspace team.</p>	<p>Successful grant application to Defra's Coronation Heritage Fund to plant 10 mini (Miyawaki) forests and 20 community orchards across Worcestershire.</p>	<p>Project delivery.</p>		

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Green Infrastructure Strategy					
Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan Green Infrastructure Strategy	Advice and guidance provided by the Countryside Greenspace team.	Advice is routinely offered to community groups and landowners on how to improve their land for wildlife, such as planting or restoring an orchard, or creating a pond. For example, interpretation panel materials have been supplied to the Worcester Environment Group (WEGs) Wild about Worcester Way.	Continuation of the same.	Click here to view the webpage giving further information about Wild About Worcester Way (opens in a separate window)	
Net Zero Carbon Plan Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan Green Infrastructure Strategy	Tree planting by the Countryside Greenspace team and part of our Sustainability work.	LATF and Woodland Accelerator funds have paid for trees that were planted on Highways land and in public parks in Wyre Forest and Wychavon Districts, and on several Countryside Greenspaces County Park and Picnic Place sites.	Round 2 and 3 funding secured for planting several thousand trees and for a three-year aftercare period.		