



Biodiversity Duty Report 2024 - 2026

March 2026



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Environment Act 2021 amends the Natural Environmental and Rural Communities Act 2006 and strengthens the duty placed on public authorities to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. The amended Natural Environmental and Rural Communities Act 2006 requires us to produce a report that covers:
- A summary of our actions taken to comply with the biodiversity duty
 - How we have considered relevant strategies
 - Our forward plan for continuing to comply with the biodiversity duty over the next five years.
- 1.2 This is our first report for the period from 12 February 2024 when the statutory biodiversity requirement first came into effect until 01 January 2026, the end of the first reporting period.
- 1.3 This report highlights the work that we as a Council have done over the past two years to deliver consistent, strategic and enforceable improvements for biodiversity across our administrative area. We have worked with developers to deliver a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain is delivered on all planning applications in this time period (with some exemptions) – ensuring that new developments either provide space for nature on site, or help to deliver improvements elsewhere in the district.
- 1.4 In 2018 the Government published the 25 Year Environment Plan (25 YEP) which indicated how the Biodiversity Duty would be strengthened and that a mandatory system for Biodiversity Net Gain would be introduced, which would require new development to leave the environment in a measurably better state than before it took place.
- 1.5 In January 2023, the Government published the Environmental Improvement Plan which was the first revision of the 25 YEP. It builds upon the 25 YEP vision with a new plan setting out how the Government will work with landowners, communities and businesses to deliver the goals for improving the environment, using interim targets to measure progress. By 2030, the Government has committed to:
- Halt the decline in species abundance
 - Protect 30% of UK land.
- 1.6 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 hectares 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.
- 1.7 As a Planning Authority, reporting on our biodiversity duty is a statutory requirement. Our first consideration is checking on the actions we have taken to improve biodiversity and identify what has been achieved so far. The report sets out the actions the Council will take going forward; however, it is likely that the scope of the report will evolve over the coming years as our plans, projects and procedures are formulated. The end date of the first reporting period should be no later than 1st 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.

Information about Lichfield District Council

- 1.8 Lichfield District is located south-east Staffordshire abutting the West Midlands conurbation and covers an area of approximately 33,130 hectares. The district has two main settlements – Lichfield and Burntwood – as well as many villages set within a varied and attractive rural landscape. Parts of the district also abut larger settlements in neighbouring areas including Little Aston, which adjoins Sutton Coldfield and Streetly, and Fazeley, which adjoins Tamworth. The town of Rugeley, which lies Cannock Chase district, sits on the north-western boundary of the district.
- 1.9 The district is home to 106,436 residents. Of this total, approximately 27,900 people live in Burntwood and 32,600 live in Lichfield City.
- 1.10 Key environmental features include:
- Statutory Protected sites; including the River Mease Special Area of Conservation (SACs) and various Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).
 - Non-statutory sites such as Sites of Biological Interest (SBIs) and Biodiversity Alert Sites (BAS’)
 - Green spaces and urban parks providing biodiversity opportunities.
- 1.11 The Council’s influence on biodiversity extends across planning decisions, estate management, public engagement and regional partnerships.

2. Our Policies, Objectives and Actions

Policies and Objectives

Adopted Local Plan 2008 – 2029 (2015)¹

- 2.1 This suite of local plan policies are policies that seek to protect existing open spaces or encourage more open spaces, as well as linking open spaces, which will protect existing wildlife habitats and promote movement between them.
- Core Policy 13: Our Natural Resources
 - Policy NR3: Biodiversity, Protected Species & their Habitats
 - Policy NR4: Trees, Woodland & Hedgerows
 - Policy NR6: Linked Habitat Corridors & Multi-functional Greenspaces
 - Development Management Policy HSC1: Open Space Standards
- 2.2 This suite of policies will help biodiversity by tackling climate change through promoting development in existing locations well served by public transport which should reduce vehicle emissions and/ or promotion of energy efficiency to reduce building emissions.
- Core Policy 1: The Spatial Strategy
 - Core Policy 3: Delivering Sustainable Development
 - Core Policy 5: Sustainable Transport
- 2.3 These policies are used to guide development proposals that are received by us as a Local Planning Authority on an ongoing basis.

¹ <https://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/performance-efficiency/adopted-local-plan>

Development of new Local Plan 2043

- 2.4 We are in the process of working on our new local plan for Lichfield District, which will take us up to 2043 and is due to be adopted in 2027. Our new Plan will strengthen our commitments to delivering sustainable development, protecting and enhancing habitats for wildlife and ensuring climate resiliency is integrated into all aspects of the planning process.

Lichfield District 2050 Strategy²

- 2.5 Approved in 2024, our Lichfield District 2050 Strategy is a collective commitment to make the district the most confident, prosperous, active and green part of the country by 2050 – a place which other parts of the country aspire to be by delivering four key priorities:
- Confident Communities
 - Prosperous Communities
 - Active Communities
 - Green Communities
- 2.6 As part of our Green Community aspirations, we have made the following commitments:

By 2028, we will:

- Identify and agree the location of two sites suitable to develop new nature reserves
- Introduce a green corridor between Burntwood and Lichfield contributing towards both sustainable and active travel
- Articulate our strong commitment to sustainable housing and development, environmental protection, and enhancement through our new Local Plan
- Introduce a number of green streets, which include additional street trees, bee bricks and bird boxes

By 2038 we will:

- Deliver the first new nature reserve in the district
- Have supported the re-introduction of Lichfield Canal
- Enable more green corridors commuting and travel

By 2050 we will be a district where:

- Housing across the district, both new and old, supports our ambition to be the greenest district in the country
- Nationally, we are renowned for enhancing and protecting our natural environment
- Lowland heathland and associated habitats connecting Cannock Chase to Sutton park are restored
- Two new nature resources, a series of pocket parks and wildlife ponds have been introduced
- Living green spaces on roofs, walls and bus stops have been introduced and increased
- The tree canopy across the district has been extended and more street trees are introduced to our urban areas
- River restoration has been explored and introduced, connecting rivers and waterbodies back to floodplains
- Species with local provenance have been reintroduced i.e., white-clawed crayfish, water voles, other scarce species

Lichfield District Nature Recovery Declaration 2022³

- 2.7 In 2022, the Council acknowledged a nature crisis, and we published our Nature Recovery Declaration. This details how we will support the recovery of nature across the district and commits us to range of biodiversity targets across three broad themes (Nature and Climate, People Health and Wellbeing and Strategic Planning and Development).

² <https://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/performance-efficiency/strategic-plan>

³ <https://lichfield.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s12614/Appendix%20A%20-%20DC%20Nature%20Recovery%20Declaration.pdf>

Staffordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

- 2.8 The draft Staffordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy was issued for private consultation in February 2026 and will be disseminated for public consultation later in the year. It is considered too soon to make any meaningful comment on the implementation of the strategy within the Lichfield district area.

Internal Carbon Reduction Plan (ICRP)⁴

- 2.9 In 2024, we published our Internal Carbon Organisation Reduction Plan. This document details what steps we are taking and will take in future to achieve carbon-neutrality by 2035.

Our Actions

Development of Habitat Banks

- 2.10 We have developed a two-fold strategy for bringing forward Habitat Banks, to allow local development to comply with the statutory net gain requirement.
- 2.11 One part of this approach has been an audit of underutilised local green space under council ownership. Where feasible, these small sites have been secured as biodiversity gain sites, entered onto the Natural England gain sites register and secured by 30-year Habitat Management Plans and legal agreements. At the time of writing, a total of two Habitat Banks have been created on our sites. An additional six similar banks are currently being designed and taken through approval and legal process.
- 2.12 The second aspect of this strategy has been working with local landowners to bring forward larger habitat banks on private land across the district. At March 2026, total two large Habitat Banks have been secured in collaboration with local landowners, with an additional one currently being taken through approval and legal processes.

Management of Green Spaces

- 2.13 Our Parks and Operations Teams work to maintain public green spaces in the district to a high standard, with biodiversity being an integral part of management regimes at all sites. In 2025, two parks that are managed by us (Beacon and Burntwood Parks) received Green Flag Awards⁵. Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage is one of the eight criteria for which eligible sites are judged.

Habitat Havens Project⁶

- 2.14 Introduced in 2024, the Habitat Havens project has aimed to realise modest biodiversity enhancements across small public spaces, and we currently have eleven across Lichfield and Burntwood. Compared to pre-project baselines, by reducing the frequency of mowing in outlying areas of these spaces, the biodiversity of all eleven sites has been increased while maintaining usable space for recreational use.
- 2.15 Botanical surveys of these sites in 2024 and 2025 confirmed an increase in plant species at all sites. Five of these sites also showed an increase in structural diversity (which is associated with increased invertebrate diversity and numbers).

Working with Partners

⁴ [We've launched a comprehensive new plan to cut our carbon footprint](#)

⁵ [Beacon Park and Burntwood Park awarded the coveted Green Flag Award as they are officially recognised as two of the country's best parks](#)

⁶ [Habitat havens across the district](#)

- 2.16 We work extensively with a range of partners, to deliver positive outcomes for biodiversity at a landscape scale. This work includes local groups such as Transition Lichfield, The Pipe Green Trust and the Lichfield and Hatherton Canal Restoration Trust, to County-scale partnerships such as the River Mease and Cannock Chase SAC technical groups.
- 2.17 We have also inputted into the development of the Staffordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy, as part of both the Steering and Technical groups for this document. In addition, we have worked closely with Natural England on the Purple Horizons project and sit on both the Steering and Technical groups for the project.

3. Our Future Actions

Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

- 3.1 Over the next five years, we will develop an evidence-based Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, which will include short and long-term targets to reverse the decline of nature and increase species abundance by 2030. This document will build upon the conclusions and recommendations of the Staffordshire Local Nature Recovery, once it has been finalised and published.

Habitat Havens

- 3.2 We will continue to maintain and monitor our Habitat Havens sites over the course of the next five years. Where feasibility allows, the extent of these sites will be increased, and new sites will be added to the project.

Habitat Banks

- 3.3 As the local responsible authority, we will monitor existing registered Habitat Banks to ensure they are meeting agreed habitat management milestones and deliver the number of Biodiversity Units stated in the relevant Habitat Management Plans.
- 3.4 We will continue to work internally and externally with landowners to bring forward additional Habitat Banks across the district, to ensure a range of Biodiversity Units are available to support local development.

Nature Towns and Cities Accreditation

- 3.5 We will investigate the feasibility of achieving accreditation through the Nature Towns and Cities scheme.

4. Biodiversity Net Gain Information

- 4.1 **101 Biodiversity Gain Plans** have been approved over the reporting period. This excludes planning applications which are inherently exempt from the Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain Requirement (Householder Applications, for example) and those to which specific exemptions apply (such as those claiming the de minimis exemption).
- 4.2 Of this, the number of sites which delivered the requisite units **on site was 47** (or 46.53% of applications). Conversely, **54 sites** delivered these units **off-site** (or 53.47%). None of these applications required the purchase of Statutory Credits.
- 4.3 For our 101 biodiversity gain plans, the overall gain per unit type for all Biodiversity Units is given below in Table 1. The average net gain is much higher when compared against three other local authorities that have already published their biodiversity duty reports.

Table 1: Average Net Gain Data for Lichfield District Council and 3 other Local Planning Authorities that have published reports to date

Authority	Habitat Units⁷	Habitat Unit %⁷	Hedgerow Units⁷	Hedgerow Unit %⁷	Watercourse Units⁷	Watercourse Unit %⁷
Lichfield District Council	142.47	33.46	67.00	76.31	7.49	36.83
Wiltshire County Council	23.34	13.78	4.56	151.89	0.2	18.94
Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole District Council	1.17	15.56	0.18	55.80	0	0
Staffordshire County Council	0.12	10.74	0.12	325	0	0

4.4 No Biodiversity Gain Plans approved in the reporting period impacted upon irreplaceable habitats.

End

⁷ Average data taken from across all approved biodiversity gain plans.