

APPENDIX B

Update on Biodiversity Duty reporting

The Environment Act 2021 includes an enhanced duty for Local Authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity and report on their actions. This links with the Council's own declaration of a climate emergency in October 2023 and our keen involvement in the development of the Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Updates:

In order to report on how BNG is being delivered through the planning process, some necessary software has been procured, and relevant officers have received training. This will enable the latest data to be reported very soon to DEFRA. The Executive Members for Planning and Environment will be briefed in relation to this reporting.

Another aspect of the reporting is the voluntary sharing of actions being taken by the Local Authority in order to enhance biodiversity and, in turn, evidence examples of how we are working to address the climate emergency.

The following table is an update of previous reporting on this matter for 2025 and will be included in our reporting to DEFRA and published on our website on the following page: [Biodiversity and the Natural Environment - West Berkshire Council](#)

Biodiversity Duty - West Berkshire Council actions to conserve and enhance biodiversity (1st January - 31st December 2025)

Action	Policy / Strategy	Evidence of conservation/enhancement
The Council have declared a climate and ecological emergency	Environment Strategy	Council Paper declaring an Ecological Emergency October 2023
Countryside Team		
Partnership with BBOWT to manage nature reserves including triple SSSI locations		See BBOWT Annual Report 2025
Partnership with BBOWT - education programmes run on site at the Nature Discovery Centre and with schools.		See BBOWT Annual Report 2025
Management of open spaces by Grounds Maintenance contractor to enhance biodiversity - reduced cutting regimes, areas left to re-wild, protecting naturally occurring wild flowers.		We are realising the biodiversity enhancement as a result of changing working practices.
Grounds Maintenance contractor uses methods that protect and enhance biodiversity with chemicals only being used when there are no alternative options.		We are using the least amount of pesticides possible - a reduction of at least 75% on previous practice.
Land management practices used by PROW team to encourage biodiversity and sustainability, hedgerow management. Look at improved signage including biodiversity information for the public.	Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan.	We are balancing keeping the PROW accessible with adopting practices to encourage biodiversity. We are using what we have locally at sites for work that is carried out. Budget and resource factors.
Tree and orchard planting using native and non-native species and those that will encourage biodiversity, for example fruit trees for pollinators. Diversity of species and wide variety to cope with climate change challenges.	Environment Strategy	Previous annual urban tree planting programme delivered beneficial projects - e.g. Shaw Park (Almond Avenue) and Greenham. Long term carbon sequestration, habitat creation benefits. Capital budget no longer available for further projects.
Working with volunteers using woodland management techniques (such as coppicing) in areas of copse to encourage biodiversity and wildlife.		Working with CRoW to manage three area of copse in Tilehurst. Possibility to create Habitat Banks within the BNG framework.
Encouraging and facilitating community groups to re-wild and environmentally enhance areas in their communities.		Examples - creation of two 'Lockdown Woods' by Newbury Friends of the Earth. Creation of 'Hickson Hedgerows' in Great Shefford. Planting, habitat creation (bat/bird boxes, bug hotels etc) and education.

Work with local organisations to support the creation of wildlife corridors		Example: Friends of the Earth Newbury project.
Tree surveys, Ash dieback work, species and habitat creation advice.		Tree Inspector role alongside Ecology. Species consideration for climate change.
Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) to protect important species and the habitat they create. Advice on planning applications.		Tree Team
The Council continues to achieve Green Flag status at Linear Park in Calcot and Goldwell and Northcroft Parks in Newbury.		Criteria for Green Flag status include 'Environmental management' and 'Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage'.
Encouraging churches to embrace biodiversity in their church yards and reduce grass cutting		Projects run by Diocese of Oxford and BBOWT and WBC Officers have encouraged this approach.
Members' bids for Environmental projects at the Parish level.		
Environment Delivery		
The Council's refreshed Environment Strategy and Delivery Plan was approved in May 2025 and includes a theme on the Natural Environment and several actions which aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity.	Environment Strategy	Delivery Plan
Continuation of the Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership (NSDP). A partnership set up to develop how to use natural solutions within West Berkshire to enhance biodiversity and capture carbon. We hope to establish a coordinated approach for utilising funding from biodiversity net gain, nutrient neutrality and carbon sequestration. The organisations within the informal partnership have an important role by coming together to plan, support each other, share national and local developments and form a coordinated approach. The partnership consist of the following organisations: West Berkshire Council BioCap Limited North Wessex Downs AONB Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment Thames Valley Environment Records Centre Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust Natural England Action for the River Kennet Landowners	Environment Strategy	Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership - West Berkshire Council

As part of the NSDP, an initial nature-based spatial plan to support the work of the partnership has been developed and built on going forward. The aim of the spatial plan is to assist in identifying what to do and where across the district. This should be particularly useful for project development and decision making.	Environment Strategy	
As part of the NSDP, a feasibility project has been developed to support and enhance the district's natural capital through the development of several pilot projects, for example the creation of a range of habitats at Sulham.	Environment Strategy	
The Council investigated with Consultants BioCap the potential for developing a Local Natural Capital Market for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), Nutrient Neutrality and Carbon Sequestration. The decision was taken to pause this work in the Spring of 2024 until additional resource could be secured to allow the Natural Capital Market to be taken forward effectively.	Environment Strategy	
Eco Schools/trees for schools, creation of forest schools, wildlife gardens etc	Environment Strategy	
Use of Environment newsletter, the Green Hub and the Council's Community Climate forum to share best practice and advice on biodiversity. Attendance at events such as Greenfest and Town/Parish Council meetings to encourage community engagement in protecting the local natural environment.	Environment Strategy	Environment News
Shaw Park wet woodland enhancement and tree buffer zone planting - conserving and encouraging biodiversity in this area	Environment Strategy	
Development of the Sustainability Assessment Tool to assist in shaping Sustainability projects including opportunities for cross cutting habitat creation projects.		
Creation of a Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Framework to guide the Council's activities on its own land and assets.- This work links closely with the Council's Local Plan Review (LPR) and inline with the National Planning Policy Framework. The Council's GBI framework has been informed by Natural England's Green Infrastructure (GI) Framework and will be used in conjunction with the Council's Sustainability Assessment Tool.	Environment Strategy	GBI framework is action NE1 in the Council Strategy Delivery Plan
Nutrient Mitigation - the Council has been awarded £2.4 million from the Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund to deliver Nutrient Mitigation in the River Lambourn Catchment to support unlocking housing development within the catchment.		
Waste Management		

Green waste and food waste collections.		DW - Garden Waste collections continue (opt in, chargeable), still accept garden waste FOC and HWRCs and promote composting at home. Food waste collections have seen increase in participation from 49% to 65% since the change in frequency of black bin collections in September 2025. With tonnage collected up 22%.
Creation of soil improver from food and garden waste collections which is used by the Grounds Maintenance contractor on WBC open space, sold to businesses and given away to residents.		Use on household gardens and allotments. DW - Product retains PAS-100 certification. Resident giveaway events continue.
Promotion of Veolia's environmental grants, for example orchards for schools and sustainability fund.		Shared on social media and resident bulletins when provided by Veolia.
Improvement of biodiversity on site at the Council's waste management facility - Padworth - maintaining the green space, introduction of planters with pollinating plants and planting of one apple tree.		Bee hives introduced. Existing biodiversity maintained.
Carrying out litter picking and street cleaning activities. Loaning out litter picking equipment to volunteer groups to do this in their areas across West Berkshire. This ensures animals do not become entangled in litter, micro plastics do not enter the environment and litter does not enter rivers and streams.		Ongoing. Promoting GBSC. Taking part in local events. Promoting on Social media, resident bulletins.
Planning Policy		
Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Policies are included in the in the new Local Plan adopted in June 2025	Local Plan	Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)
Ecology requirements are included in the Local Plan site allocation policies	Local Plan	AMR
BNG has been included in the Minerals and Waste Local Plan Policy	Minerals and Waste Local Plan	Minerals and Waste Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report
Ecology requirements are included in MWLP site allocations	Minerals and Waste Local Plan	MWLP AMR
Include Biodiversity policy in MWLP, and include biodiversity requirements in MWLP Restoration policy	Minerals and Waste Local Plan	MWLP AMR
Development Management (Planning)		
Focusing on delivering mandatory BNG in line with government targets	Biodiversity and the Natural Environment	Biodiversity Reporting Requirement (NERC Act 2006)
Focusing on delivering nutrient neutrality in line with national requirements	Biodiversity and the Natural Environment	Conservation status of relevant SACs (Natural England monitoring)

Secure biodiversity mitigation/enhancements to comply with national legislation and policy through relevant mechanisms (conditions, s.106 etc.)

[Biodiversity and the Natural Environment](#)

Biodiversity Reporting Requirement (NERC Act 2006)

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