

# Winchester City Council Biodiversity Duty Report

Actions taken for Biodiversity between 1st January 2024 – 31st December 2025

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# Introduction

The Environment Act 2021 places a strengthened 'biodiversity duty' on local authorities to consider biodiversity in all functions of the council from service delivery and planning, through to estate management. The Act also requires public authorities to produce a report on actions taken to meet the biodiversity objective, ensuring transparency and accountability.

This report sets out Winchester City Council's approach to embedding the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity within its functions and decision-making processes. It provides an account of measures implemented and progress made for strengthening biodiversity outcomes across the council's operations for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025 and outlines future priorities for the next reporting period.

Appendix 1 provides the reporting on Biodiversity Net Gain. However, the overall figures and outcomes are presented in the main body of this report.

## Section 1: Policies, Objectives and Completed Actions

This section details the relevant policies and objectives the council have contributed towards or set to meet the biodiversity duty. It also details the actions the council has completed or has undertaken with regards to biodiversity from the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025.

The Council declared a Climate Emergency in June 2019 and a Nature Emergency in September 2023. As a result, it had already begun taking action to support biodiversity prior to the start of this biodiversity duty reporting period.

### 1.1 Policies and Objectives

#### Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

On 8th December 2025 the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Hampshire was published. The LNRS is a new framework for nature recovery in Hampshire and is a key thread of the Environment Act 2021. The LNRS must be taken into consideration in planning decisions and more widely. The council's new Local Plan and its natural environment policies are closely aligned to the LNRS.

The council, alongside other local planning authorities, the County Council, statutory agencies, non-governmental bodies, and community partners, was involved in shaping the LNRS. Through regular workshops, meetings and consultations the council's Ecology team and other colleagues were involved in drafting the LNRS, providing technical input, ensuring that Winchester City Council's natural assets were given due prominence, and securing meaningful and deliverable actions for nature recovery across the district and beyond.

## Winchester District Nature Improvement Plan 2025 - 2030

Following on from the council's published Biodiversity Action Plan<sup>1</sup>, the council produced and published a new Nature Improvement Plan (NIP) in November 2025<sup>2</sup>. The NIP outlines a new approach to ensuring the delivery of nature improvement across the district replacing the existing Biodiversity Action Plan. The NIP establishes a guiding set of principles for council functions in relation to biodiversity and sets measures to be achieved for the next five years. The principles and measures are presented in figure 1 and tables 1 and 2 below. The NIP itself should be consulted for further information.

The NIP sets out how the council meets and continues to meet the biodiversity duty and will provide future evidence and data to feed into the 5-yearly Biodiversity Reporting under the strengthened Biodiversity Duty.

### Nature Improvement Plan Principles

The principles in the NIP which the council has committed to adopt and will encourage others to follow are presented in figure 1 below.



Figure 1 Principles for Biodiversity as contained in the Nature Improvement Plan 2025- 2030

<sup>1</sup> [Biodiversity Action Plan - Winchester City Council](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Nature Improvement Plan - Winchester City Council](#)

## Nature Improvement Plan Measures

The measures in the NIP are split into two sets, one for council-based actions on council owned and managed land, and one for district wide actions. These measures have been selected in order to help contribute to the delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hampshire.

*Table 1 Council Land Biodiversity Measures as contained in the Nature Improvement Plan 2025- 2030*

<b>Council Land 2030 Measures</b>			<b>Measure Achieved?</b>
1	Protect and manage land for nature	1.1 100% of SSSI units achieving favourable/unfavourable-recovering condition	✓
		1.2 100% SINC's in favourable management	✓
		1.3 Achieve a minimum of 27.61% of WCC land managed for nature	✓
2	Create new spaces for nature	2.1 1 ha new green or blue habitat created or improved for nature	Ongoing
		2.2 500m hedgerow planted for nature	
		2.3 250 swift boxes and 50 bat roost features installed on council properties	Ongoing
3	Deliver more nature-based solutions	3.1 Additional carbon sequestered on 3 sites	
4	Prevent and control pollution better	4.1 10 Wastewater Treatment Works on council land upgraded to reduce nitrogen and phosphorous loading	Ongoing
5	Connect more people to nature	5.1 10,000 volunteer hours of nature conservation activities on our land	Ongoing
		5.2 20 events on WCC land which promote connection with nature (health and wellbeing)	Ongoing

*Table 2 District Biodiversity Measures as contained in the Nature Improvement Plan 2025- 2030*

<b>District 2030 Measures</b>			<b>Measure Achieved?</b>
1	Protect and manage land for nature	1.1 Support the Solent Waders & Brent Goose Strategy and protect the sites included	✓
		1.2 Deliver a minimum of 88% of SSSIs units in the district achieving “favourable/unfavourable-recovering” condition	✓
		1.3 Maintain the achievement of a minimum of 61% SINC's (surveyed in last 10 years) under positive management	✓
		1.4 Achieve a minimum of 12.48% land designated for nature	✓

2	Create new spaces for nature	2.1	Discharge Biodiversity Gain Plans via Development Management to deliver habitat creation and enhancement of 500 biodiversity units.	Ongoing
		2.2	100 biodiversity units secured through signing agreements with habitat banks	
		2.3	10ha of Natural green or blue space created	
3	Deliver more nature-based solutions	3.1	Sustain Tree canopy/woodland cover above 22.991%	✓
4	Prevent and control pollution better	4.1	Continue to deliver the council's nutrient mitigation strategy.	✓
5	Connect more people to nature	5.1	50 farmers and land managers supported with nature-friendly practices	Ongoing
		5.2	5 businesses supported with nature-based projects	Ongoing
		5.3	6 nature events/forums delivered	Ongoing
		5.4	Grants given to nature conservation groups to create spaces for nature and connect people to nature	Ongoing
		5.5	4 partnerships collaborated with to deliver 5 restoration projects	Ongoing
		5.6	10 community groups collaborated with to deliver nature conservation activities	Ongoing
		5.7	10 event/programmes delivered through partners which promote connection with nature (health and wellbeing)	Ongoing

## 1.2 Completed/On-going Actions- split out into council /district actions.

In line with the principles and measures set out in the Nature Improvement Plan (as set out above), the following activities have been undertaken / continue to be undertaken for biodiversity on council owned land and within the district.

The activities are grouped either by "on Council land" or "district and land parcel/topic area". They align with the measures identified in the tables 1 and 2 above.

## Council Land

### 1.2.1 St Faith's Meadow (River Itchen SSSI) and Winnall Moors (River Itchen SSSI)

These two sites form part of the wider River Itchen Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). They continue to be managed by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust in partnership with the council. The condition assessment of these two SSSI units continues to be at Unfavourable- Recovering condition.

### 1.2.2 Whiteshute Ridge Winchester

- Scrub clearance and hay cut followed by conservation grazing by cattle of grassland- preventing scrub, grasses and coarse plants from dominating, keeping space for wildflowers.

### 1.2.3 Topfield Kingsworthy

- Sowing of yellow rattle on meadow areas to reduce grass dominance without heavy mowing, herbicides, or soil stripping.
- Spot treatment for Golden Rod- halting this non-native species from outcompeting native plants and reducing biodiversity.

### 1.2.4 Greenacres Otterbourne

- Scrub clearance – preventing scrub from dominating the grassland and maintaining open space.

### 1.2.5 additional biodiversity management actions

In addition to the specific activities on council owned sites, the council has also undertaken annual biodiversity management actions at the following locations:

- Bramdean Common- cut and collect of grassland
- Magdalen Hill Cemetery- cut and collect of grassland
- Chilcomb Recreation Ground- cut and collect of grassland
- St Gilles Hill- cut and collect of grassland
- West Hill Cemetery - cut and collect of grassland
- Scything of grassland and laying of green hay on the embankment by Winchester Sport and Leisure Park
- Sowing of wildflower meadow at KGV Sports Pavillion.

### 1.2.6 Wildflower Verge Project

The council continues to manage several road verges primarily in Badger Farm Winchester and New Alresford for biodiversity. This involves a reduction in the grass cutting regime at several selected locations where investigation of the existing seed bank has shown there is an opportunity to allow wildflowers to grow and thrive. This provides nectar and habitats for bees, butterflies and other important insects as well as enhancing the public realm by improving aesthetics and creating visual interest, benefiting health and wellbeing.

At present there are 129 verges that are being managed for biodiversity. The council continually reviews the project and looks to expand it where possible.

### 1.2.7 Tree Planting

The Council's tree team has been actively planting trees across the district.

From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 through to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025 the Council's tree team planted 251 new trees. It also planted 41 replacement trees in this period to account for those trees that had to be removed for various reasons (Ash dieback, health and safety etc.)

### 1.2.8 Specific Species Monitoring

#### Reptiles

The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Amphibian and Reptile Group (HIWARG) undertakes monitoring on behalf of the council of the reptile populations at the following locations:

- Whiteshute Ridge
- West Hill Cemetery
- Greenacres

#### Butterflies

The Butterfly Conservation charity monitors the butterfly populations at Magdalen Hill Cemetery.

#### Breeding Birds

The council's ecologists undertake breeding bird surveys on Whiteshute Ridge in Winchester and Topfield in Kingsworthy.

#### Dormice

The council's ecologists undertake breeding bird surveys on Topfield in Kingsworthy and Dean's Copse Knowle.

### 1.2.9 Upgrade of Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW)

Recognising that the Winchester district is in an area where excessive levels of nutrients (particularly Nitrogen and phosphates) is leading to adverse impacts on internationally designated and important wildlife sites, the council has begun a programme of improvements to the Wastewater Treatment Works under its ownership. These WwTWs are for council owned housing sites in areas without access to a public sewer system.

In January 2024, the council completed upgrades to 2 of the WwTWs sites under its ownership at Northington Road near Itchen Abbas and the Goodens plant near Cheriton.

These upgrades have resulted in a reduction of nitrogen output, which has led to the creation of 'nutrient credits' which can be used to offset the excess nutrient load generated by other new residential buildings, ensuring development is "nutrient neutral".

### 1.2.10 Council Housing Reroofing Programme

The council's housing department has a programme of replacing aged/leaking roofs on council owned properties. As part of this process, ecology officers assess the potential for bats and nesting birds to be present within the roofs of these properties. In the period from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025 council officers have assessed 174 properties for their potential to have bat roosts and nesting birds. Of these at least 21 properties were found upon further survey to have roosting bats and appropriate mitigation measures (such as the inclusion of integrate bat access tiles) have been put in place to prevent impacts on bats and provide additional roosting opportunities for them.

The council also offers residents of all properties subject to being reroofed the opportunity to have a swift box installed. For the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025 at least 34 new swift boxes have been installed on properties with a remaining 96 boxes still to be put up. As the reroofing work programme is still ongoing, it is likely that more swift boxes will be recorded as put up in the next reporting period. This is reflected in the council's future actions for biodiversity in section 2.

## District Wide

### 1.2.11 Membership of external organisations and partnerships.

The Council continues to be an active member and provides support to the following organisations and partnerships:

- Bird Aware Solent Partnership Steering Group- providing strategic mitigation to reduce recreational disturbance impacts on the Special Protection Areas and Ramsar wetlands of the Solent coast.
- Solent Wader Brent Goose Steering Group- provides a mitigation strategy to protect and manage the network of sites used by overwintering wading birds and brent geese across the Solent coast, particularly within and around Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar wetlands.

- Test and Itchen Catchment Partnership- discusses and develops plans to address key issues currently affecting the health of the rivers within the catchment.
- East Hampshire Catchment Partnership- discusses and develops plans to address key issues currently affecting the health of the rivers within the catchment.
- Meon Valley Partnership- provides a co-ordinated, strategic approach to conserving and enhancing the Meon Valley
- Partnership for South Hampshire- working together with other local authorities in the area to promote sustainable economic growth, environmental stewardship, and cultural development across South Hampshire. Key areas of environmental focus include water quality and nutrient mitigation.
- Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre- the council financially supports the operation of the local biodiversity record centre.
- District Level Licence (DLL) for great crested newts- The council has joined the DLL which aims to improve species protection while supporting sustainable development.
- Local Authority Biodiversity Forum- a forum where other local authority ecologists in Hampshire meet to share best practice, discuss strategic environmental/ecological issues.

## 1.2.12 Grant Funding and Supporting Local Farmers, Businesses, and Community Groups

Winchester City Council recognises the important role that farmers, businesses and community and voluntary organisations have in delivering benefits and improvements to the natural environment and biodiversity in the Winchester district. The council has different grant funding streams available to support these organisations. Whilst not all of the grants given out relate to biodiversity, the following organisations/projects have received funding from the council and are biodiversity related. These have been split up by the different grants available.

### Community grant funding programme

- Friends of St Giles Hill Graveyard received a small grant which enabled volunteers to clear an area of the graveyard from invasive growth, create gabion seating and plant specialised chalk grassland meadow mix.
- Bishops Waltham North Pond Conservation Group- Funding provided to build an artificial Sand Martin nest site on the Bishops Waltham North Pond.
- Micheldever Parish Council (Rights of Way Volunteers)- funding to support a new community garden area in Micheldever Village.
- Whiteley Town Council- creation of a community garden
- CPRE Hampshire -restoration of five sites containing fragmented habitats of chalk grassland in the Bar End area of Winchester
- Sustainable Droxford Biodiversity Group Union Lane- creation of a wildflower area
- Upper Itchen Restoration CIC - purchase a hand-held device to measure dissolved oxygen levels, monitoring the health of the River Itchen.

### UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund

- Morton Pattison, a landscape services company received support, from both the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Rural England Prosperity Fund, to help with the

purchase of a specialised cut and collect machine allowing them to better manage wildflower meadows for biodiversity.

- Marwell Wildlife have received funding towards their re-breeding programme for White-clawed Crayfish and Sand Lizards this is helping to re-establish wild populations across the south of England.
- Wonderseekers at Winchester Science Centre, in Chilcomb, received Rural England Prosperity funding to install fencing and native climbing plants between a children's play area and a public footpath. It is the first step in creating a sustainable Habitat Playpark.
- River Park path improvements included an area of natural flood mitigation which provides additional benefits for biodiversity
- Stabilisation works at St Giles Hill included native shrub planting on the new bank

## Go Greener Faster grants

Whilst the go greener faster grants are primarily linked to climate change and carbon savings. There were two grants given that had a biodiversity element to them. These were:

- Balancing pond works for flood protection & Wildlife by Colden Common Parish Council
- Hampshire Market Garden CiC Solar Irrigation Project

## 1.2.13 Events

### Carbon Neutrality Open Forum

The Council has hosted two Carbon Neutrality Open Forum events which aims to impart information to attendees to help address aspects of the climate emergency and share the realistic actions that will help the council meet its carbon neutrality goals. These events have a nature focus and included presentations from Campaign to Protect Rural England on the Hampshire Hedge Project and the Hampshire Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.

### Greener Futures Partnership

The greener futures partnership provides a forum for organisations to share and collaborate on projects in support of our ambition of becoming a carbon neutral district by 2030. These also benefit nature and biodiversity in the district.

### Green Fair

In September 2025 the council ran its first ever Green Fair. The fair was put on for residents and their families to come and get ideas and inspiration for living more sustainably which included how to look after and support the natural environment. The event was supported by some of the local species groups in Hampshire such as the Hampshire Bat Group and the Hampshire Swift Group as well as council officers from the Natural Environment team.

### 1.2.14 Volunteer hours

The council has a few local groups who undertake various management tasks on council owned open spaces which benefit the local biodiversity present. The mains volunteer groups are:

- Friends of St Giles Hill
- Friends of St Giles Hill Graveyard
- Friends of Hyde Abbey Gardens

According to council records, approximately 1,000 volunteer hours have been spent in the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025 on managing council owned sites.

## Section 2. Future Actions

The Nature Improvement Plan sets out an annual action plan at both the council and district level to achieve the measures that the council has committed to. The tables (3 and 4) below show the action plans for both council and district level for the period 2025/2026. These actions will help the council achieve/continue to achieve the measures it has set itself by 2030. It is intended that after the 2025/2026 period, a new set of action plans will be developed for the subsequent periods at least up to 2030.

Table 5 provides an indication of the likely future areas to come out of the Nature Improvement Plan up to 2030. These tables demonstrate how the council will continue to comply with biodiversity duty in next reporting period.

The council intends to report back on the progress of each of the action plans for its own purposes and for the purposes of demonstrating its compliance with the biodiversity duty as required by the Environment Act 2021.

Table 3 Council Land Action Plan 2025/2026 taken from the Nature Improvement Plan

<b>Council Land - Nature Improvement Action Plan 2025/2026</b>				
<b>Pathway</b>	<b>2030 Measure</b>	<b>2025/2026 Actions</b>	<b>Delivery</b>	
1 Protect and manage land for nature	1.1	100% of SSSI units achieving favourable/unfavourable-recovering condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver the agreed annual actions within the management plan for SSSI land</li> <li>• Complete an annual report and rapid condition assessment on SSSI land</li> </ul>	Collaborate  Collaborate
	1.2	100% SINCs in favourable management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver the annual actions within the management plans for SINCs</li> </ul>	Deliver
	1.3	Achieve a minimum of 27.61% WCC land managed for nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver the annual actions within the management plans for biodiversity sites</li> <li>• Scope and research the River Management Plan</li> <li>• Continue to deliver biodiversity management of 'non biodiversity open spaces'</li> </ul>	Deliver  Collaborate  Deliver
2 Create new spaces for nature	2.1	1 ha new green or blue habitat created or improved for nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved management of 0.1 ha of council owned verges/grassland</li> <li>• 0.1ha of tree planting (according to BNG metric calculator)</li> </ul>	Deliver  Deliver
	2.2	500m hedgerow planted for nature		
	2.3	250 swift boxes and 50 bat roost features installed on council properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install 50 Swift boxes on council properties</li> <li>• Install 10 bat features on council properties</li> </ul>	Deliver
3 Deliver more nature-based solutions	3.1	Additional carbon sequestered on 3 sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver the Tree Strategy with regards to replacement tree planting</li> </ul>	Deliver
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore potential for woodland management to both sequester more carbon and improve biodiversity</li> </ul>	Collaborate
4 Prevent and control pollution better	4.1	10 WWTWs on council land upgraded to reduce nitrogen and phosphorous loading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade 2 WWTWs</li> </ul>	Collaborate

5	Connect more people to nature	5.1	10,000 volunteer hours of nature conservation activities on our land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable 2000 volunteer hours on our land</li> </ul>	Collaborate/ Enable
		5.2	20 events on WCC land which promote connection with nature (health and wellbeing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable 2 nature/health and wellbeing events and deliver 2 reoccurring programmes on council land</li> </ul>	Deliver/ Collaborate/ Enable

Table 4 District Level Action Plan 2025/2026 taken from the Nature Improvement Plan

<b>Winchester District - Nature Improvement Action Plan 2025/2026</b>					
<b>Pathway</b>	<b>2030 Measure</b>	<b>2025/2026 Actions</b>	<b>Delivery</b>		
1	Protect and manage land for nature	1.1	Support the SWBG Strategy and protect the sites included	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to apply the SWBG mitigation guidance</li> </ul>	Report
		1.2	Deliver a minimum of 88% of SSSIs units in the district achieving favourable/unfavourable-recovering condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report any degradation concerns to NE and understand when condition assessments will be undertaken</li> </ul>	Report
		1.3	Maintain the achievement of a minimum of 61% SINC (surveyed in last 10 years) under positive management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to deliver SINC survey programme through HBIC</li> </ul>	Collaborate
		1.4	Achieve a minimum of 12.48% land designated for nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain the existing extent of designated land by ensuring that any development impacts to SINC are adequately compensated</li> <li>• Report back on SINC amendments, creation and deletion</li> <li>• Report back on TPO and HRNs served</li> </ul>	Enable Report Report
2	Create new spaces for nature	2.1	Discharge Biodiversity Gain Plans via Development Management to deliver habitat creation and enhancement of 500 biodiversity units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to assess BGPs through Development Management</li> <li>• Report back on discharged Biodiversity Gain Plans</li> </ul>	Enable Report
		2.2	100 biodiversity units secured through signing agreements with habitat banks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine council position to habitat banks. Assess 1 habitat bank proposal</li> <li>• Report back on amphibian habitat delivered through the District Level Licensing scheme</li> </ul>	Deliver Report
		2.3	10ha of natural green or blue space created	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to deliver the Local Plan and assist with land transfers</li> </ul>	Enable

3	Deliver more nature-based solutions	3.1	Sustain Tree canopy/woodland cover above 22.991%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure appropriate replanting plans for development and TPO applications</li> </ul>	Enable
4	Prevent and control pollution better	4.1	Continue to deliver the council's nutrient mitigation strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report back on the number of credits provided through the council scheme</li> </ul>	Enable
5	Connect more people to nature	5.1	50 farmers and land managers supported with nature-friendly practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with 10 farmers and land managers through cluster work</li> </ul>	Deliver
		5.2	5 businesses supported with nature-based projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support 1 business to deliver a nature-based project</li> </ul>	Enable
		5.3	6 nature events/forums delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver NIP launch event</li> </ul>	Deliver
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver nature engagement as part of Green fair</li> </ul>	Collaborate
		5.4	Grants given to nature conservation groups to create spaces for nature and connect people to nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide grants to appropriate nature conservation groups</li> </ul>	Deliver
		5.5	4 partnerships collaborated with to deliver 5 restoration projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver 1 restoration project through a partnership group</li> </ul>	Collaborate
		5.6	10 community groups collaborated with to deliver nature conservation activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support 2 community groups</li> </ul>	Enable
		5.7	10 event/programmes delivered through partners which promote connection with nature (health and wellbeing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable 2 nature/ health and wellbeing event/programmes across district</li> </ul>	Enable

Table 5 Potential Future Work Areas taken from the Nature Improvement Plan

Pathway		Future work area
1	Protect and manage land for nature	Project investigating SINC management and opportunities
2	Create new spaces for nature	Assessment of potential Biodiversity Net Gain habitat banks within the district and on council land. Creation of management plans to deliver BNG on WCC land.
3	Deliver more nature-based solutions	Assessment of potential for creating carbon credits on WCC land. Creation of management plans to deliver CC on WCC land.
		Assess, measure and monitor tree canopy cover to allow continued successful management of existing and new tree stock and woodland.
4	Prevent and control pollution better	Assessment of nutrient neutrality and potential for creating credits on WCC land. Creation of management plans to deliver NN on WCC land.
5	Connect more people to nature	Signpost people to relevant opportunities, groups, advice and campaigns.

## Section 3. Biodiversity Net Gain

BNG is an approach to development that ensures habitats for wildlife are left in a measurably better state than beforehand. It is now a mandatory requirement for all development (save for some exemptions) under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Environment Act 2021).

Under this framework, every grant of planning permission is subject to a pre-commencement 'biodiversity gain condition' where the developer is required to submit a 'Biodiversity Gain Plan' (BGP). The BGP must set out certain information including pre- and post-development biodiversity values of the onsite habitat (i.e. within the red line boundary), details of any registered offsite biodiversity gains allocated to the development, and/or biodiversity credits purchased for the development.

### 3.1 Actions taken by the council to meet BNG obligations

The council has taken various measures in order to implement mandatory BNG. This has included making changes to procedures and processes in the planning system, tracking, monitoring and reporting BNG secured by eligible development in the district. This is set out in more detail below.

## Procedural change

The council has implemented changes in the planning system and officer training to ensure BNG is properly assessed and addressed by planning and biodiversity officers in line with the mandatory legislation and government guidance. This includes:

- Validation stage - checking applications against relevant validation criteria including eligibility, minimal information requirements, site degradation and impacts on irreplaceable habitat.
- Application stage – scrutiny of plans, statutory metrics and habitat condition assessment sheets; appropriate response wording/input from internal Biodiversity consultees; addition of the Biodiversity Gain condition to the Decision Notice and any appropriately worded planning condition to secure onsite BNG; consideration and drafting of legal agreement as needed
- Discharge of condition – scrutiny of submitted BGPs and accompanying information including finalised metrics, plans and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans (HMMPs).
- Post-approval stage – monitoring of BNG delivery as per planning condition or S106; updating of recording spreadsheets.

## Monitoring BNG

The council monitors BNG in the district in two ways:

- Tracking expected BNG gains and losses from approved eligible developments using data from approved Biodiversity Gain Plans and statutory metrics, carried out manually using spreadsheets.
- Review of BNG monitoring reports submitted by developers for significant onsite BNG where agreed and secured by a s106 with the council. Monitoring of onsite BNG delivery will commence in line with the relevant planning obligations for each development (generally commencing in the autumn of Year 1 of BNG delivery). The council's ecology officers will review monitoring reports sent in by the developer and will carry out spot checks as necessary. Monitoring is expected to commence in 2026/27. This is funded by a BNG monitoring fee

## Reporting BNG

The data from BNG monitoring informs annual reporting under the council's Nature Improvement Plan as well as the council's 5-yearly Biodiversity Reporting under its strengthened Biodiversity Duty (this report forms the first of these).

## Supporting the local BNG market

The council has also held preliminary discussions with several landowners in the district offering them support and guidance to set up their own habitat banks however, these are yet to come online.

The council has also begun the process of investigating and baselining council land for Biodiversity Net gain provision. This is to assess the potential to set up habitat banks on council land to help facilitate the council's own future development schemes where necessary.

## 3.2 Biodiversity Net Gain data for development in Winchester District covering period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 – 31st December 2025

Appendix 1 sets out data gathered from all approved BGPs in Winchester district for the reporting period February 2024 (since mandatory BNG came into force for major development) to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025. The headline results are detailed below:

- Eligible planning permissions – 6 Biodiversity Gain Plans have been approved over the reporting period. Three of these developments have secured their BNG entirely onsite and three have secured BNG delivery solely through offsite units.
- Overall expected gains and losses- the overall average % net change in biodiversity units onsite is 17.13%. The overall average % net change in biodiversity units offsite is 280%. No developments in the district have secured BNG through the purchase of government statutory credits.
- Impacts on irreplaceable habitat- no BNG-eligible developments in the borough have impacted irreplaceable habitat.
- Location of offsite biodiversity units- no developments have secured BNG delivery solely through offsite units within the LPA boundary. All three developments have sought BNG from a habitat bank outside of the LPA boundary (Isle of Wight, Cambridgeshire and East Sussex).
- Results of monitoring biodiversity gains – no monitoring of reports/spot checking has yet occurred due to the early stage in the process. This is expected to commence in 2026/27.
- Composition of habitat gains (areas)- the gains come mainly from creation and/or enhancement of grassland and individual tree habitat. (Habitat losses come mainly from cropland and urban habitat types.)
- Composition of habitat gains (hedgerows and lines of trees) - gains originate mainly from creation and/or enhancement of species-rich native hedgerow and native hedgerow. (Habitat losses come from non-native ornamental hedgerow.)

- Composition of habitat gains (watercourses) - gains originate from enhancement of ditch habitats.

Monitoring of onsite BNG delivery will commence in line with the agreed Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) associated with each development. This is generally commencing in the autumn of Year 1 of BNG delivery. The council's ecologists will review monitoring reports sent in by the developer and will carry out spot checks as necessary. Monitoring is expected to commence for the developments who have an approved BNG Plan in 2026/27.

### 3.3 Meeting the BNG obligations in the next reporting period

The council plans to meet BNG obligations over the next reporting period through the following specific actions:

- Continue to track, monitor and report on BNG in the district;
- Adapt processes and procedures as required with any future legislative or national policy changes to the mandatory framework;
- Develop local plan policy to appropriately reflect BNG in line with national policy and where necessary, provide guidance to developers and landowners;
- Encourage the use of the Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy to target offsite BNG in the most ecologically optimal areas of the district;
- Exploring the possibility of delivering habitat bank(s) on council-owned land – habitat baselining;
- Engage with partners and government on BNG guidance and policy development;
- Continue to support where possible, landowners and habitat bank scheme promoters to provide offsite BNG solutions within Winchester district.

## Appendix 1 Biodiversity Net Gain data for development in Winchester District covering period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 – 31st December 2025

Eligible planning permissions granted under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requiring biodiversity net gain

<b>ID</b>	<b>Consented applications requiring net gains</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Proportion</b>
A	Total number of planning permissions granted that require biodiversity net gain in the reporting period	52	not applicable
B	Total number of planning permissions granted in the reporting period where an exemption to the biodiversity net gain condition applies	1729	not applicable
C	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period	6	not applicable
D	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through on-site units only	3	50%
E	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through off-site units only	3	50%
F	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through statutory credits only	0	0%
G	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site and off-site units	0	0%
H	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site units and statutory credits	0	0%
I	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of off-site units and statutory credits	0	0%
J	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site, off-site units and statutory credits	0	0%

Overall expected gains and losses across all biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period

ID	Overall expected gains and losses	Total or Average	Area	Hedgerow	Watercourse
A	Total number of pre-development biodiversity units approved on-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	<b>2.86</b>	2.57	0.29	0
B	Total number of post-development biodiversity units approved on-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	<b>3.34</b>	2.96	0.38	0
C	Total net unit change in biodiversity units, on-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	<b>0.49</b>	0.39	0.1	0
D	Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, on-site	<b>17.13%</b>			
E	Total number of baseline biodiversity units approved off-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	<b>0.89</b>	0.69	0.15	0.05
F	Total number of post-intervention biodiversity units approved off-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	<b>3.4</b>	2.98	0.31	0.11
G	Total net unit change in biodiversity units, off-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	<b>2.5</b>	2.29	0.16	0.05
H	Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, off-site	<b>280.90%</b>			
I	Total number of biodiversity units offset using statutory credits broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	<b>0</b>	0	0	0
J	Total net unit change in biodiversity units (including any units offset using credits)	<b>0</b>	0	0	0
K	Average percentage (%) change (including statutory credits)	<b>0</b>	0	0	0

## Impact on Irreplaceable Habitat

<b>ID</b>	<b>Impact on irreplaceable habitat</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Proportion</b>
A	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period where the on-site change negatively impacts irreplaceable habitats	0	6

## Location of off-site biodiversity units

<b>ID</b>	<b>Location of off-site biodiversity units</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Proportion</b>
A	Number of off-site biodiversity units located inside LPA boundary or NCA of impact site.	0	0
B	Number of off-site biodiversity units located outside LPA or NCA of impact site, but in neighbouring LPA or NCA	2.88	84.71%
C	Number of off-site biodiversity units located outside of LPA or NCA of impact site and neighbouring LPA or NCA	0.52	15.29%

## Results of monitoring biodiversity gains

ID	<b>Results of monitoring biodiversity gains where the LPA is part of the legal agreement</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Proportion (%)</b>
A	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans including the delivery of 'significant' on-site gains	0	0
B	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are meeting monitoring requirements and habitat delivery expectations for 'significant' on-site gains	0	0
C	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are meeting monitoring requirements but not meeting habitat delivery expectations for 'significant' on-site gains	0	0
D	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are failing to meet monitoring requirements for 'significant' on-site gains	0	0
E	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans where the status of monitoring requirements is unknown for 'significant' on-site gains	0	0
F	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans including the delivery of off-site gains, where the LPA are responsible for monitoring.	0	0
G	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are meeting monitoring requirements and habitat delivery expectations for offsite gains where the LPA is responsible for monitoring	0	0
H	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are meeting monitoring requirements but not meeting habitat delivery expectations for offsite gains where the LPA is responsible for monitoring	0	0
I	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are failing to meet monitoring requirements for offsite gains where the LPA is responsible for monitoring	0	0
J	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans where the status of monitoring requirements is unknown for offsite gains where the LPA is responsible for monitoring	0	0

ID	Enforcement actions taken in the reporting period	Total	Proportion
L	Number of enforcement actions taken during the reporting period associated with Biodiversity Net Gain policy	0	6

ID	Tracking monitoring of biodiversity gains	Free Text
K	Please describe how you have collected information on monitoring (e.g., use of digital software to collect and analyse monitoring data/ manual checking of monitoring reports/ internal monitoring system etc.	Currently manually recording and checking of BNG however the council is in the process of purchasing Mycelia Software to enable a smoother and quicker monitoring process.

Composition of biodiversity gains - areas

<b>ID</b>	<b>Habitat Type - Area</b>	<b>Total biodiversity units at baseline</b>	<b>Total hectares at baseline</b>	<b>Total biodiversity units post - development</b>	<b>Total hectares post - development</b>	<b>Net change in biodiversity units</b>	<b>Net change in hectares</b>
A	Cropland	0.69	0.32	0.00	0.00	-0.69	-0.32
B	Grassland	8.71	0.81	11.91	1.15	3.20	0.34
C	Heathland and Scrub	0.29	0.07	0.29	0.07	0.00	0.00
D	Lakes						
E	Sparsely Vegetated Land	0.12	0.01	0.12	0.01	0.00	0.00
F	Urban	0.58	0.76	0.2	0.7	-0.38	-0.06
G	Wetland						
H	Woodland and Forest	4.12	0.31	4.12	0.31	0.00	0.00
I	Intertidal sediment						
J	Coastal Saltmarsh						
K	Rocky Shore						
L	Coastal Lagoons						
M	Intertidal Hard Structures						
N	Watercourse footprint	not applicable		not applicable		not applicable	0
O	Individual Trees	1.95	0.49	2.15	0.58	0.2	0.09
	<b>Total</b>	16.46	2.77	18.79	2.82	2.33	0.05

Composition of biodiversity gains - hedgerows and lines of trees

<b>ID</b>	<b>Habitat type - hedgerows and lines of trees</b>	<b>Total biodiversity units at baseline</b>	<b>Total kilometres at baseline</b>	<b>Total biodiversity units post - development</b>	<b>Total kilometres post - development</b>	<b>Net change in biodiversity units</b>	<b>Net change in kilometres</b>
A	Species-rich native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch					0	0
B	Species-rich native hedgerow with trees					0	0
C	Species-rich native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch					0	0
D	Native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch					0	0
E	Species -rich native hedgerow			0.11	0.01	0.11	0.01
F	Native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch					0	0
G	Native hedgerow with trees					0	0
H	Ecologically valuable line of trees					0	0
I	Ecologically valuable line of trees - associated with bank or ditch					0	0
J	Native hedgerow	0.54	0.12	0.68	0.18	0.14	0.06
K	Line of trees					0	0
L	Line of trees associated with bank or ditch					0	0
M	Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	0.05	0.05	0	0	-0.05	-0.05
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>0.79</b>	<b>0.19</b>	<b>0.20</b>	<b>0.02</b>

Composition of biodiversity gains - watercourses

<b>ID</b>	<b>Habitat type - watercourse</b>	<b>Total biodiversity units at baseline</b>	<b>Total kilometres at baseline</b>	<b>Total biodiversity units post - development</b>	<b>Total kilometres post - development</b>	<b>Net change in biodiversity units</b>	<b>Net change in kilometres</b>
A	Priority Habitat					0	0
B	Other Rivers and Streams					0	0
C	Ditches	0.30	0.10	0.40	0.10	0.1	0
D	Canals					0	0
E	Culverts					0	0
	<b>Total</b>	0.30	0.10	0.40	0.10	0.10	0.00