




WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PROGRAMME 2024-2050



“Creating a District Rich in Nature”





“WITHOUT NATURE,
WE HAVE NOTHING.
WITHOUT NATURE,
WE ARE NOTHING.”

António Guterres, UN Secretary-General: UN COP15 biodiversity conference in Montreal, Canada in December 2022

Red admiral butterfly, taken by Cecily

Acknowledgements

Warwick District Council is grateful to the organisations that supported the development of the Biodiversity Action Programme, in particular Waterman Infrastructure and Environment for their help in preparing this document and providing the ecological expertise to shape the programme of work.

We would also like to thank everyone who took part in Warwick District Council's Biodiversity Photography Competition in 2023. This provided us with some wonderful photos of local biodiversity, many of which have been used in this document.

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FOREWORD

Welcome to Warwick District Council's first Biodiversity Action Programme which has been developed following our Ecological Emergency declaration in October 2022.

Warwick District's wildlife, habitats and ecosystems are vitally important, from the services they provide in terms of clean air, water and food, through to climate regulation and access to nature for health, wellbeing and recreation. Sadly, biodiversity is being lost at an alarming rate and Warwick District Council is determined to help by delivering local action. We need to stop destroying habitats, restore and extend what remains and create new spaces for nature. We should also ensure that wildlife can move between these habitats by establishing a connected ecological network.

Our Biodiversity Action Programme sets out our strategic approach to 2050 to help create a district that is rich in nature by halting biodiversity loss and putting nature on a path to recovery. It also plays an important role in the delivery of our plans for climate change mitigation and adaptation which were developed following the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

A key focus of the programme is the Council's own land and assets. We are extremely proud of our wonderful parks and open spaces and we seek to maximise the benefits for nature and people through the way we manage and maintain them.

In our role as the Local Planning Authority, we will strive to help nature by setting local planning policies that protect and prioritise wildlife and habitats in construction projects – another key focus of the programme.

We cannot deliver this ambitious programme alone - people and partnerships are at the very heart of it and will determine its success. We want to work with individuals, communities, partner organisations, businesses and landowners to capitalise on local action for nature.

We are determined that our Biodiversity Action Programme prioritises action and have therefore created a detailed action plan to 2030. This sets out numerous, specific actions and we will monitor progress against these.

We're excited to put biodiversity at the heart of what the Council does by launching this ambitious Biodiversity Action Programme and helping to make Warwick District a place that is rich in nature, delivering multiple benefits for wildlife and people.

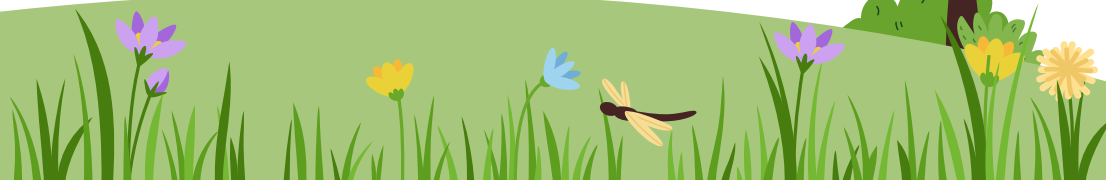


Cllr Ian Davison
**Leader of
the Council**



Cllr Chris King
**Deputy Leader of
the Council**

April 2024



I. INTRODUCTION



Biodiversity and Why It Matters

Biodiversity (or biological diversity) can be defined as the variety of life on Earth. It includes all species of plants, animals, fungi and microorganisms like bacteria and their interrelationships. Each of these species and organisms work together in ecosystems, like an intricate web, to maintain balance and support life.

Biodiversity is essential for the processes that support all life on Earth, including humans. Without a wide range of plants, animals, fungi and microorganisms, we cannot have the healthy ecosystems that we rely on to provide us with oxygen, clean water, food, medicine and shelter (often referred to as 'Ecosystem Services').

Biodiversity also provides other benefits and services including climate regulation; natural flood management; crop pollination, raw materials for industry and agriculture, tourism assets, access to nature for health, wellbeing and recreation and much more.

The biodiversity of Warwick District is a tremendous asset. It gives the district its special character, supports farming, tourism and other economic opportunities and provides a wonderful environment for peoples' mental and physical wellbeing. Therefore, it is vitally important that we protect, conserve and enhance biodiversity in the district.



Radford Road allotments, taken by Leah



Common blue butterfly (female), taken by Stephen



The Climate and Biodiversity Emergency: A Joined-up Approach

Biodiversity and climate change are interconnected. Habitats and species are affected by climate change with some being degraded or extinguished as a result. But nature also plays a vital role in climate change mitigation and adaptation through the ecosystem services it supports, most notably by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, reducing air temperatures, improving air quality and providing natural flood management.

A joined-up approach is needed! Protecting, conserving and enhancing biodiversity is crucial to addressing climate change and helping us to adapt to the more extreme weather we're already experiencing, which is only set to worsen. At the same time, doing all we can to prevent further changes in our climate will help to support nature's recovery and survival.



The Need for a Biodiversity Action Programme

National Context

The UK is now considered to be one of the most nature-depleted countries on Earth.

Agricultural management, inappropriate development, climate change, hydrological change, urbanisation, pollution, woodland management and invasive non-native species are all putting significant pressures on nature and leading to biodiversity loss.

Key statistics from the State of Nature report (2023) show that since 1970:

More species have seen their populations **decrease** than **increase**.



The abundance of **753** **terrestrial** and **freshwater species** has on average **fallen** by **19%**



Pollinators, such as bees, hoverflies and moths, have on average decreased by **18%**



The distributions of invertebrates have on average **deceased** by **13%** across the UK



16% of species are now **threatened** with **extinction** from Great Britain and **151** of **10,008** species assessed have already become **extinct**



The distributions of **over half** of **flowering plant species** have **decreased** across Great Britain



Predatory insects, like the 2-spot Ladybird which help control crop pests, have **declined by more than a third** **34%**



Local Context

On a local scale, Warwick District is home to numerous habitats which have been identified nationally as being most at threat and requiring conservation and enhancement (under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006). These habitats are also known as Habitats of Principle Importance (HoPI).

The Habitats of Principle Importance (HoPI) found in Warwick District are described as follows:



Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland (including Ancient Woodland):

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland was the dominant habitat of lowland Britain. It is now much reduced in area and severely fragmented with a consequential loss of species diversity at many sites. Approximately 11% of Ancient Woodland (530 hectares) in Warwickshire was destroyed between 1925 and 1988, and a further 38% (1797 hectares) was converted to plantation (Warwickshire AWI, 1989). Neglect, through a cessation of coppicing, has been an equally significant factor in the loss of woodland biodiversity since the mid-1900s. Some examples of bluebell-rich ancient woods in Warwick District include Thickthorn, Crackley, Oakley, Chase, Poor, Cubbington, Hay, Bubbenhall, Wappenbury, Bullimore, Weston-Waverley plus some smaller examples. These contain good numbers of scarce plants and insects as well as the largest Raven roost in the Midlands.



Wood Pasture and Parkland: Warwick District has an unusually high coverage of Wood Pasture and Parkland (WPP) habitat compared to other areas, covering over 1000 hectares! WPP sites are often made up of a mixture of habitats, from densely wooded groves to more open areas. Some examples of Wood-Pasture and Parkland in the district include Stoneleigh, Wroxhall, Wedgenock, Warwick Castle Park, Kenilworth Chase, Packwood and Baddesley Clinton. Ancient wood pasture and parklands have accumulated the 'old-growth' characteristics that are missing from many enclosed woodlands and make an important contribution to the local character of the district (and 'Shakespeare's County').



Rivers: Watercourses are among the most important wildlife corridors within the intensively farmed local landscapes and within urban areas. They also contribute much to local landscape character. Within Warwick District the largest river is the Avon which extends for more than 102km and its tributaries account for 205km. The river is an integral part of the district's Avon Valley (Shakespeare's Avon) character with a varied river channel which, in places, retains a more natural profile where features such as gravel banks, riffles and beds of vegetation still exist. These are important for biodiversity and can provide homes for species such as otter.



Hedgerows: Hedgerows usually form boundary features to enclose fields, run along roads and properties. They provide an important network of wildlife corridors and are characteristic of the English countryside. These wildlife corridors also have the potential to support hundreds of species of plants and animals if managed correctly. Within Warwick District there is over 914km of hedgerows.



Arable Field Margins: Arable Field Margins are strips along the perimeter of farmed land often sown with wildflowers for pollinators, to provide seed for birds or left as unmanaged grassland and herbs. As well as providing an important refuge for wildflowers, field margins also provide buffer strips between farming operations and sensitive habitats such as woodlands, hedgerows, watercourses and ditches. The extent of arable field margins in Warwick District is currently unknown, however there is estimated to be approximately 818 hectares across Warwickshire.



Lowland Meadow: Lowland meadows are important for wildlife as the vast majority of this habitat has been lost and is now considered a rare sight. They are species-rich habitats with a wide range of plants and grasses, which generally occur in a relatively small area. Within Warwick District, Lowland Meadow currently occupies approximately 27 hectares.



Floodplain Grazing Marsh: Floodplain Grazing Marsh is usually found following the floodplains of rivers and streams. It is characterised by having a water table at or above ground level (flooding) for some part of the year. Ditches are an important feature of this habitat and can support a variety of marginal and aquatic plant species, boosting the botanical value of this habitat type. Away from the importance for plant species, grazing marshes are of major importance to birds and can be home to a number of rare species. Within Warwick District, Floodplain Grazing Marsh occupies approximately 241 hectares.

In addition to these nationally important habitats, Warwick District is also home to several other habitat types, along with numerous nationally important species that rely on those habitats for shelter, food and commuting pathways. The decline and degradation of habitats has a knock-on effect on these species, with many populations also in decline.

Warwick District Council has an important role to play locally in protecting, conserving and enhancing biodiversity to halt the decline in these habitats and species and help nature to recover.

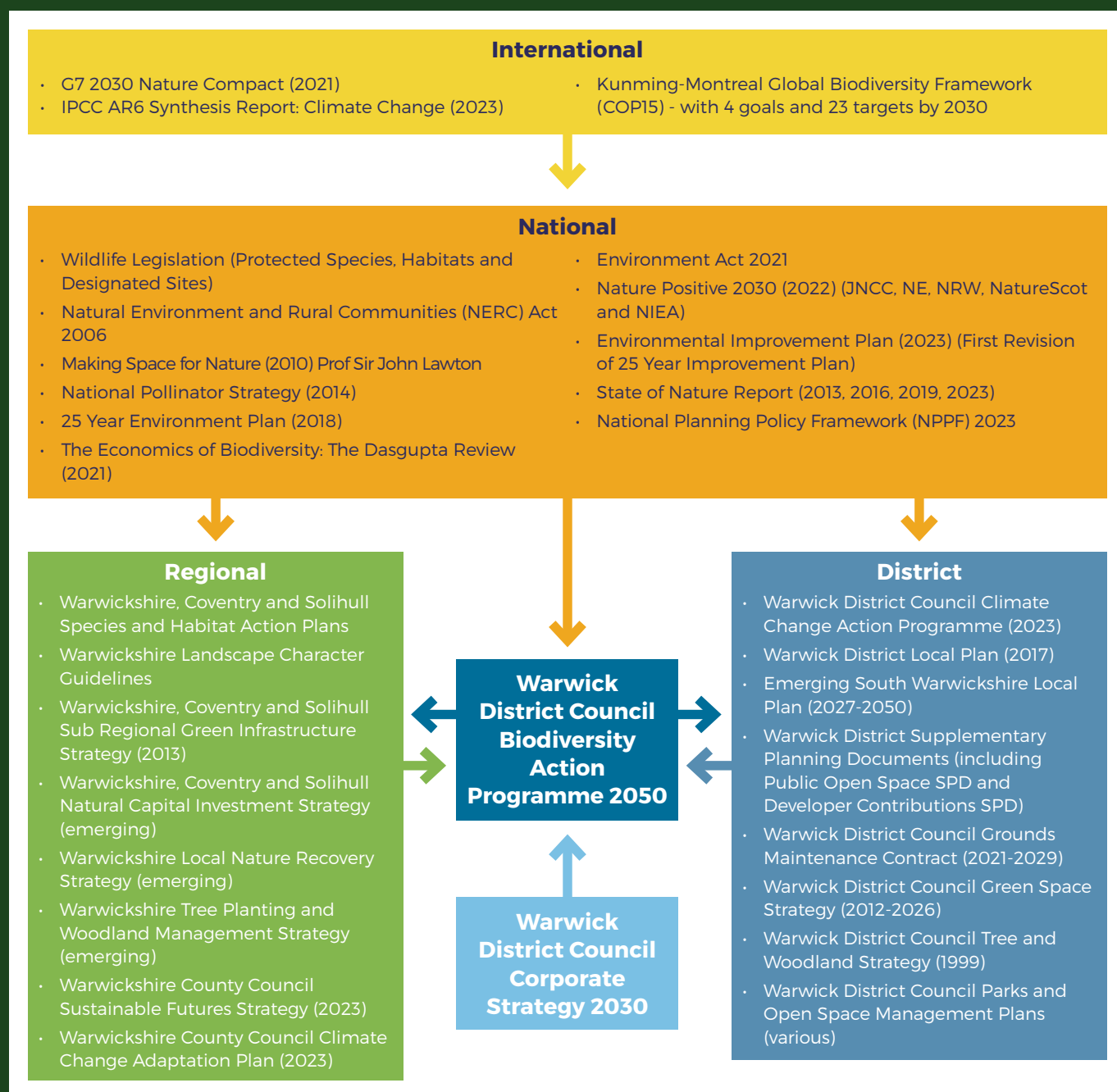
2. POLICIES, STRATEGIES AND DRIVERS

It is important to see the bigger picture strategically when planning for biodiversity. There is a wide range of international, national, regional and local legislation, policy and guidance which has a bearing on biodiversity conservation, and it is important to understand how these interrelate to each other, as well as to this Biodiversity Action Programme.

There is a strong nested policy and legislative hierarchy that provides support and guidance for enhancing biodiversity in the district, from global campaigns, national legislation and standards to county-level strategies and local planning policy.

Legislation is the Law. Local Plan policies are requirements that apply the legislation within a local context. Strategies provide the mandate for targeted action in order to deliver the policy.

The chart below helps to show how key policies, strategies and drivers relate to this Biodiversity Action Programme, with further detail provided in [Appendix 1](#). The Environment Act is particularly relevant and is described in more detail on the next page.



The Environment Act 2021

The Environment Act 2021 is one of the most important pieces of legislation ever produced in this country on the natural environment. It marks an important paradigm shift in natural environment law in England from nature conservation (protection) to nature recovery. It also means that the UK government will be directly responsible for environmental law and policy for the first time in decades. Key elements of The Environment Act 2021 which are particularly relevant to this Biodiversity Action Programme are described below.

Nature Recovery Network

The Nature Recovery Network (NRN) will be a single, national ecological network of wildlife-rich places. It will benefit people and wildlife by increasing, improving and joining-up these places across England, stretching from our cities to countryside, mountains to coast. Local Authorities will help to deliver the Nature Recovery Network through the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) which will identify and map the best locations to create, enhance and restore nature and provide wider environmental benefits. Warwickshire County Council will lead the development of Warwickshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy, drawing on knowledge, expertise, information and data from local partners and organisations, including Warwick District Council.

Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is an approach to development and land management that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than before. Under the Environment Act 2021, all Town and Country planning permissions granted in England (with a few exemptions) will legally have to deliver 10% biodiversity net gain. This can be delivered on-site (within the development site), off-site or through a combination of both. Warwick District Council, as the Local Planning Authority, has responsibility for assessing and approving planning applications and ensuring compliance with biodiversity net gain regulations.

Strengthened Biodiversity Duty for Public Authorities

The Environment Act 2021 includes a strengthened biodiversity duty for all public authorities in England, including Warwick District Council, which requires them to:

- a) Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- b) Agree policies and specific objectives based on this consideration.
- c) Act to deliver those policies and achieve those objectives.

As part of the duty, Warwick District Council is required to produce a biodiversity report every 5 years to demonstrate how it is helping to improve the environment and show the positive changes being made.





3. VISION, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES



Our vision

“To make Warwick District a place that is rich in nature, delivering multiple benefits for wildlife and people.”

Aims

The Biodiversity Action Programme sets the strategic direction to 2050 for how Warwick District Council will respond to the need to protect, conserve and enhance biodiversity in the district, with a particular focus on the Council's own land and operations.

It is intended to set an example for others by targeting the Council's resources for the greatest benefit and demonstrating what can be done independently and in collaboration with partners to implement positive change on the ground.

The key aims of the Biodiversity Action Programme are as follows:

1.

A delivery plan for the Council to take action to address the Ecological Emergency.

2.

A mechanism to involve people and form partnerships to help achieve biodiversity improvements in the district.

3.

A key document to inform the local planning system and help comply with the Council's statutory biodiversity duty.



Themes

The following 'Themes' have been created to correlate with the aims of the Biodiversity Action Programme and help provide focus to the objectives and actions:

Theme 1: Nature Recovery and Management

Theme 2: People and Partnerships

Theme 3: Legal, Planning, Policy and Funding Commitments

Objectives

Theme 1: Nature Recovery and Management

Objectives:

- In line with national and international '30by30' biodiversity commitments, support and enable 30% of land owned by Warwick District Council to be effectively conserved and managed for the purpose of nature's recovery by 2030 and commit to support any superseding goals for biodiversity. This includes Protected Areas and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures.
- As part of the Local Nature Recovery Network, identify opportunities to create, restore and enhance target habitats on Council land to provide opportunities for connectivity and for target species to thrive.
- Maximise opportunities for biodiversity to flourish in the way we manage and maintain Warwick District Council land and assets, with a specific focus on improving our grounds maintenance practices.

Theme 2: People and Partnerships

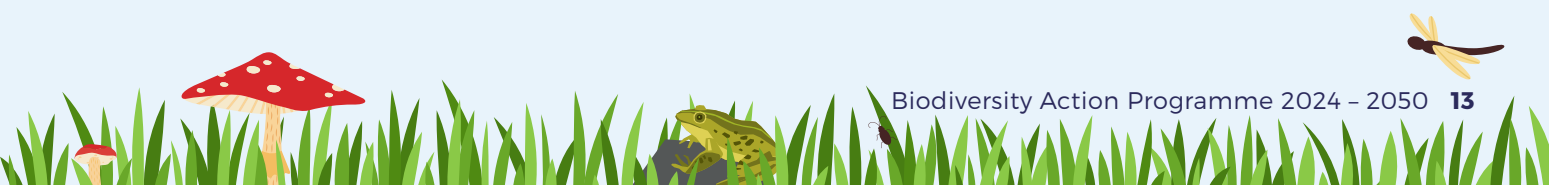
Objectives:

- Find ways to engage, connect, involve, inspire and support individuals, communities and landowners including town and parish councils, to take action for nature in their local area.
- Establish strong working relationships with partners delivering on nature recovery, as well as those targeting climate change, health and wellbeing, and air quality to ensure effective collaboration across the district.
- Strive to be an exemplar in the management of our own estate, helping to inspire others to do the same.

Theme 3: Legal, Planning, Policy and Funding Commitments

Objectives:

- Embed biodiversity into Warwick District Council's policies and operations to help protect, conserve and enhance biodiversity and comply with the Council's statutory biodiversity duty.
- Ensure Warwick District Council is best placed to secure long-term funding opportunities to help the recovery of nature, including opportunities around biodiversity net gain (BNG) and other nature markets.
- Draw on best practice to develop ambitious local planning policies which maximise opportunities to protect and enhance nature through the planning system.



4. HOW WE WILL DELIVER THE BIODIVERSITY ACTION PROGRAMME

Existing Work

Warwick District Council has already taken significant steps to halt decline, support recovery, and manage biodiversity in Warwick District including:

- Supporting Plantlife's annual No Mow May campaign by suspending grass cutting in parts of the District throughout May to allow grass and wild plants to grow naturally and support insects and other wildlife.
- Actively managing our open spaces for the benefit of wildlife including 11 Local Nature Reserves and 6 Local Wildlife Sites.
- Creating a new Country Park, which will be one of the largest green spaces in the district.
- Provision of over 600 bird boxes in our parks, open spaces and cemeteries to provide shelter, food and nesting opportunities for lots of wildlife, including birds, bats, wasps, hornets, mice and a myriad of insects.
- Creation of floating nest rafts in some of the lakes in our open spaces – made from old wheeled bins and popular with Moorhens and Coots.
- Provision of a peregrine falcon nest box at Leamington Town Hall with 24/7 live webcams during the breeding season to see activity from egg laying to feeding and fledging, working in partnership with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.
- Bird feeding stations and sowing of wild bird feeding crops in some of our parks and open spaces to provide seed and nectar sources for a range of birds.
- Spring bulb planting to create displays of crocus and daffodil in early spring and provide early sources of food and nectar to a range of insect species as they emerge from hibernation.
- Introduction of meadows - flower-rich grasslands left to grow long – into some of our parks and open spaces for the benefit of insects, as well as visual amenity benefits through their displays of colour.
- Creation of habitats for a range of insects from traditional bug boxes and log piles to 'tree poles' with holes for solitary insects and even the conversion of an old derelict toilet block at Warwick Cemetery into a 'bog' bug house.
- Annual tree planting programme to ensure that trees lost on Council land are replaced and to encourage additional tree planting where appropriate.
- Member of the sub-regional Natural Capital Assessment Partnership (formerly Habitat Biodiversity Audit) since 1995 supporting the collation of baseline habitat data throughout the district.
- Working with Warwickshire County Council to be a national leader in biodiversity net gain (previously known as biodiversity offsetting) through the local planning system.
- Commitment to enhance the biodiversity of Warwick District as part of the Council's Corporate Strategy 2030, alongside climate and sustainability commitments.



Bird feeders at Jephson Gardens

Cinnabar caterpillar near Warwick Gates, taken by Sue



Delivery Mechanisms

To deliver the work identified in the Biodiversity Action Programme, Warwick District Council will use the following mechanisms:

- Focus on delivering work which benefits the target species and habitats identified in this plan (see section 6 and standalone Habitat and Species Fact Sheets).
- Use of statutory functions such as planning (including the emerging South Warwickshire Local Plan), biodiversity net gain, hedgerow regulations and tree protection.
- Ensuring the Council is compliant with relevant legislation, including the statutory biodiversity duty.
- Embedding biodiversity into Council policy and operations.
- Across team working within the Council to increase awareness of the importance of biodiversity, including training and knowledge sharing opportunities.
- Identifying and securing funding opportunities, including opportunities around biodiversity net gain and other emerging local nature markets.
- Partnership work including working with Warwickshire County Council on the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy, working with town and parish councils on emerging Local Nature Action Plans, and supporting other relevant partnerships as and when required.
- Making further modifications to the way Warwick District Council land is managed through the grounds maintenance contract to benefit biodiversity.
- Ecological surveys at key sites to enable funding streams and to assess whether actions taken are being effective.
- Supporting and enabling community led initiatives and/or volunteering.
- Wider engagement and communications (e.g. events, social media, etc.)

Bug hotel at Jephson Gardens, taken by Isaac



Jephson Gardens, taken by Andy





Ryton Pools Country Park, taken by Craig



Wren at Crabtree Meadow, taken by Colleen

Action Plan

To deliver the first phase of the Biodiversity Action Programme, an [action plan to 2030](#) has been developed (section 8).

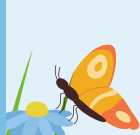
Actions are grouped according to the themes described in section 3 to show how they help deliver the aims and objectives of the Biodiversity Action Programme.

Each action has a start and end date and identifies partners who will be important in helping to deliver the action.

Some actions are discrete tasks that can be ticked off when completed, whilst others require regular monitoring against a baseline, and in some cases an action relates to establishing this baseline. Given fast-moving changes in environmental policy and legislation, it may be that actions become out-dated and require an update to reflect such changes.

Actions are numerous and ambitious to adequately address the aims and objectives of the Biodiversity Action Programme over the 7-year period of the action plan (2024-2030 inclusive). As such, progress on all actions every year is not anticipated, and targeting this would be unrealistic. However, progress on each action is expected by 2030 (subject to the regular reviews to confirm if actions remain applicable within the context of prevailing legislation, policy and best practice).

A substantial review of the action plan will be carried out in 2027, mid-way through its lifespan, and again in 2030, before being replaced by a new action plan to deliver the next phase of the programme.





5. FUNDING

A key factor influencing the delivery of this plan is funding.

The vision of the Biodiversity Action Programme will only be delivered through appropriate policy context, political will, strong partnerships and sufficient resources. Financial resources are needed to deliver the work identified in the programme and to sustain the benefits arising from these actions.

Having declared an Ecological Emergency, Warwick District Council is committed to exploring all reasonable funding options to deliver the ambitions of the Biodiversity Action Programme and fulfil strategic goals in the Council's Corporate Strategy to enhance biodiversity in the district. We recognise that enhancing biodiversity on our land and across the district will require the right staff resources and skills, as well as direct investment in habitats. We will therefore look to increase direct Council spend for biodiversity by utilising and refocusing existing budgets and resources to support biodiversity improvements (for example delivering further biodiversity benefits through the grounds maintenance contract), and by prioritising biodiversity in our financial strategy and in our annual budget setting processes.

We recognise that direct Council funding alone cannot support all areas of work required to deliver the Biodiversity Action Programme. It is therefore critical that different funding avenues are explored and secured through partnerships with public and private sector partners and through grant funding opportunities.

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) and other emerging nature markets provide key opportunities for investment in nature and for delivering parts of the programme. A number of actions in the action plan to 2030 have been developed to ensure that Warwick District Council maximises these opportunities.

Fortunately, we're already in a strong position on generating funding through nature markets having proactively worked with Warwickshire County Council to be a national leader in biodiversity offsetting (and more latterly biodiversity net gain) through the planning system. This early engagement into natural capital investment has unlocked the realisation that some markets are limited and therefore a suite of potential funding streams is required. Alongside this we will seek to embed biodiversity as a key criterion in the assessment of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) schemes to maximise the biodiversity benefits that those projects can bring.

[Appendix 2](#) provides an overview of previous and ongoing work undertaken by Warwick District in collaboration with partners to access nature markets for the purpose of biodiversity enhancement. It is anticipated that this appendix will be updated regularly as new guidance associated with the Environment Act 2021, biodiversity net gain (BNG), 'stacking' and other Natural Capital Investment strategies is published.



Horse Chestnuts in Leek Wootten, taken by Lizzy



Bee nest at Newbold Comyn, taken by David



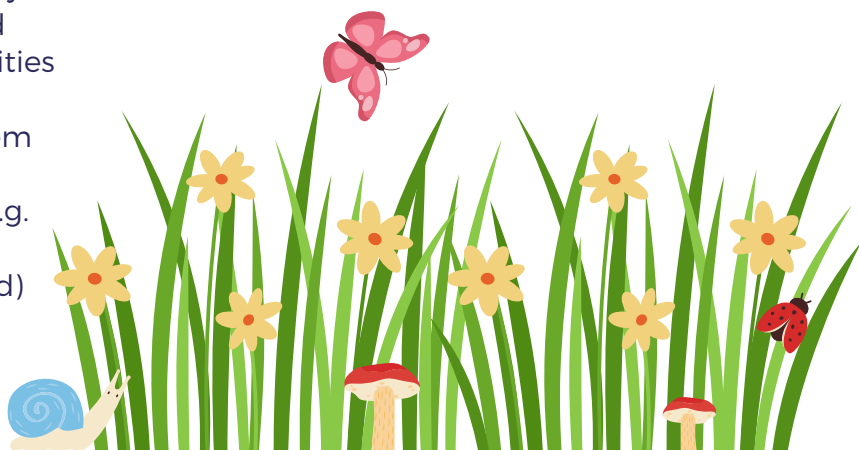
Abbey Fields, taken by Bob



Jephson Gardens, taken by Louise

Key funding streams to implement the Biodiversity Action Programme are expected to include:

- Direct Council spending where value for money and delivery of corporate priorities can be achieved
- Utilisation of existing service budgets by reframing the way these are used to take account of impacts on biodiversity and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement
- Identification of Warwick District Council owned land that could be taken forward for biodiversity enhancement through developer-funded biodiversity net gain (BNG) as a funding mechanism
- Warwickshire County Council led biodiversity credits (developer funded annual or one-off payments for generating biodiversity units at off-site locations)
- Warwickshire Local Authority Natural Capital Investment
- Warwickshire Ecosystem Service Markets (existing and emerging) such as carbon, air quality, water quality, water neutrality, nutrient neutrality, flood alleviation and social prescribing. To include opportunities for 'stacking' where multiple types of credit can be sold for different ecosystem services on the same piece of land to produce multiple streams of income (e.g. selling both carbon and water quality credits from the same area of woodland)
- Other public grants (e.g. Defra, Heritage Lottery Fund, etc. where applicable)
- Partnerships (e.g. funding streams available to Warwickshire County Council and town and parish councils to achieve common biodiversity goals in the district)
- Corporate Social Responsibility Environmental payments
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – there are many competing demands for CIL but biodiversity should be a key criterion in the assessment of CIL schemes and be given significant weight in decision making
- Section 106 payments
- Charitable organisations (where applicable e.g. Esmée Fairbairn).



6. TARGET HABITATS AND SPECIES



It's not possible to undertake works which benefit all habitats and species in Warwick District, as this would be unrealistic working within the available resources.

Instead, the Biodiversity Action Programme focuses on eight target habitats and twenty target species (or species groups) identified and agreed through stakeholder engagement.

A focus on these target habitats and species also recognises the potential for indirect benefits to a wider range of important species and species groups (e.g. fungus and rare plant groups associated with specific habitats).

The target habitats and species were selected on the following basis:

- Species which have viable/significant populations within Warwick District or priority habitats which are widespread across the district
- Species or priority habitats which can be influenced by Warwick District Council through site management, projects, statutory duties, partnership or engagement.

The selection process then considered at least one of the following additional criteria:

- Species or priority habitats which are rapidly declining throughout Britain and/or Warwickshire and are therefore a conservation priority
- Species and habitats included in the Warwickshire Species/Habitat Action Plans that are present in Warwick District
- Indicator species or species groups which reflect the state of an environment and/or indicate the diversity of other species within an area
- Species or priority habitats which are surveyed regularly on Warwick District Council sites and/or those which there is data available for monitoring on a district or county scale.



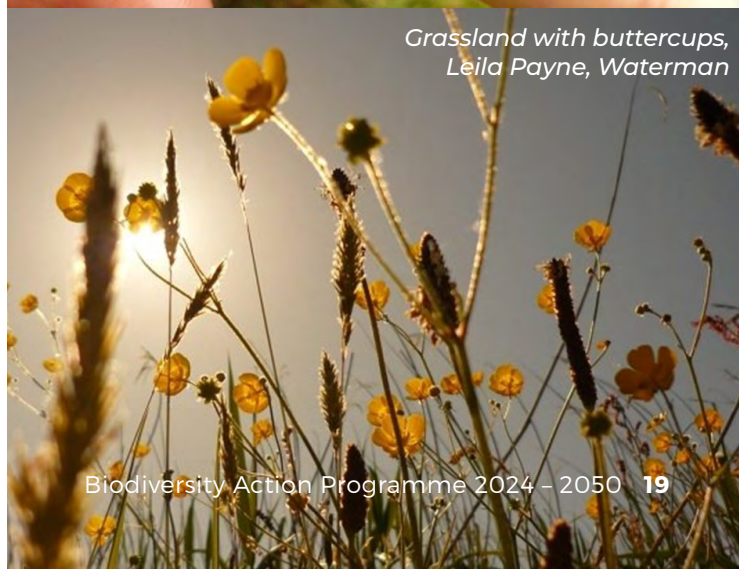
*Warwickshire's Oldest Sweet Chestnut:
The Stoneleigh Deer Park Golf Course, Steven Falk*



*Blue tit at Northleigh House School,
taken by Ted*



*Great Crested Newt in hand,
Leila Payne, Waterman*



*Grassland with buttercups,
Leila Payne, Waterman*

Target Habitats

The following eight habitat types have been identified as target habitats for this Biodiversity Action Programme:



Wood Pasture and Parkland

This habitat type consists of open grassland with trees, tree groups and blocks of woodland, notably ancient and veteran trees with associated deadwood and decay features. This habitat provides a direct link with bygone landscapes and is home to many rare and threatened species.

A key component of what makes this habitat so important is the presence of ancient and veteran trees (see below), which are considered to be irreplaceable, in the same way as ancient woodland.

Priority should be given to protecting and conserving this habitat type, along with enhancement through appropriate management and maintenance practices that deliver biodiversity benefits. Opportunities to expand existing wood pasture and parkland should be explored to help with habitat connectivity.



Trees (including ancient, veteran and important trees)

This habitat type includes ancient and veteran trees which are considered irreplaceable habitats due to their age, the thousands of species they support and the dynamic growing conditions required for them to form. It also includes other trees which are important in providing valuable ecological functions or services.

Trees are listed as a separate habitat type in this Biodiversity Action Programme to wood pasture and parkland and woodland (including ancient woodland) to ensure recognition and protection of trees residing outside of these habitats, including isolated trees, valuable urban trees, trees with Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), and those delivering important climate regulation services, urban greening and stepping stones for wildlife between habitats.

Priority should be given to retaining trees in Warwick District, regardless of their age, size or conservation status, and to the appropriate maintenance of trees to maximise biodiversity benefits.

Tree planting opportunities should be explored where they will deliver multiple benefits including habitat connectivity or stepping stones, continuous canopy cover, climate regulation, natural flood management and health and wellbeing benefits for local people. A strategic approach should be taken to tree planting in line with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Warwickshire and following the 'right tree, right habitat, right place' principle.





Woodland (including Ancient Woodland)

This habitat type includes naturally occurring and historically planted woodland of native species, including ancient woodland, lowland beech and yew woodland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland and wet woodland.

This is one of the most important habitat categories in Warwick District, supporting many species and a variety of benefits such as landscape, public amenity and timber production.

Priority should be given to protecting and effectively managing existing woodlands to deliver biodiversity benefits. Opportunities should be explored for woodland expansion or creation where they will deliver multiple benefits including habitat connectivity, continuous canopy cover, climate regulation, natural flood management and health and wellbeing benefits for local people. A strategic approach should be taken to woodland creation in line with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Warwickshire and following the 'right tree, right habitat, right place' principle.



Grassland (including Habitat of Principal Importance (HoPI) grasslands)

This habitat type comprises all areas of grassland and wildflowers, including those managed for amenity, pasture and hay and those subject to less intensive management (e.g. verges).

They support numerous plants and animals, including many nationally and scarce species.

Priority should be given to improving the botanical diversity of grassland habitats and delivering other biodiversity benefits through changes to grassland maintenance practises.



Priority Watercourses (Main Rivers) and Canals

In Warwick District, this habitat type includes the River Leam and River Avon, along with their network of tributaries, and also the Grand Union Canal. These watercourses and canals provide important green and blue corridors and habitats for a variety of species to move and grow.

Water quality is key to conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of watercourses and opportunities to work with partners to deliver water quality improvements should be prioritised. Priority should also be given to maintaining the riparian zone of watercourses (the strip of land bordering watercourses) to provide suitable habitat and connectivity between habitats for a variety of species.



Native Hedgerows

Hedgerows are defined as boundary lines of trees or shrubs over 20m long and less than 5m wide, with any gaps between the trees and shrubs being less than 20m (Joint Nature Conservation Committee). They are generally made up of 80% woody species.

Hedgerows can support hundreds of species of plants and animals, especially if maintained in a sympathetic way. They provide food and nesting sites and act as important wildlife corridors.

Priority should be given to conserving hedgerows, along with enhancement through appropriate management and maintenance practises that deliver biodiversity benefits. Opportunities to expand, reinstate and create new hedgerows should be explored to help provide habitat connectivity.



Arable Field Margins

Arable field margins are herbaceous strips or blocks around arable fields that are managed to provide benefits for wildlife. This includes margins sown with wildflowers for pollinators, to provide seed for birds or left as unmanaged grassland and herbs. This habitat type is often overlooked in terms of its biodiversity value and has been identified nationally as a Habitat of Principle Importance (HoPI) requiring conservation and enhancement.

Priority should be given to protecting and conserving arable field margins through the local planning system and biodiversity net gain regulations, as well as raising awareness of the importance of this habitat type and supporting partners to expand arable field margins across the district.



Wetlands and Ponds

Wetlands are defined as areas of land either permanently or seasonally inundated with water. They include ditches, reedbeds, wet grassland, and more. Within the context of this biodiversity action programme, they may also include established Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS). Ponds are a familiar feature of many field corners, village greens and gardens.

This habitat type supports a range of species dependent on aquatic and marginal habitats, as well as playing an important role in storing carbon and natural flood management.

Priority should be given to protecting and effectively managing existing wetlands and ponds to deliver biodiversity benefits. Opportunities to expand, reinstate and create new wetlands and ponds should be explored to help provide habitat connectivity, also ensuring appropriate surrounding terrestrial habitat to allow species movement.





Common frog, Waterman



Slug, taken by Sidra



St Nicholas Park, taken by Neil

Target Species

Twenty target species are included in the Biodiversity Action Programme covering a range of taxonomic groups and representative of the various habitat types present in both rural and urban areas of the district. Some species are referenced as groups, including scarce arable plants, bats, urban birds, farmland birds, wading birds, amphibians and pollinators, due to declines across numerous species in these groups and their collective need for conservation and enhancement or for their role as being good indicators of biodiversity in specific habitats (e.g. amphibians and pollinators).

The target species are:

- Black Poplar
- Scarce Arable Plants
- Water Vole
- Otter
- Hazel dormouse
- Bats (all locally occurring species)
- Hedgehog
- Barn Owl
- Urban Birds (including key species - swifts, starlings and house sparrow)
- Farmland Birds (including key species - skylark, lapwing, yellowhammer, corn bunting, linnet, grey partridge, tree sparrow and turtle dove)
- Wading Birds (including key species – sandpiper (common and green), snipe, ringed plover and oystercatcher)
- Amphibians (all locally occurring species including key species – great crested newt)
- Grass Snake
- Common Lizard
- Slow Worm
- Pollinators
- Wood White Butterfly
- Dingy Skipper Butterfly
- Agent and Sable Moth
- White Letter Hairstreak Butterfly



It should be noted that whilst some important species groups such as fungi, bryophytes and other rare plants are not a specific target species in this Biodiversity Action Programme, they are closely associated with one or more of the target habitats, and will flourish subject to sensitive and appropriate habitat management/enhancement (e.g. Saprophytic fungi benefitting from ancient and veteran tree conservation and enhancement in wood pasture and parkland, trees and woodland habitats).

Factsheets providing further detail on the conservation status, distribution, threats and possible conservation initiatives for these target habitats and species are included as an accompanying standalone document to this Biodiversity Action Programme entitled 'Target Habitat and Species Factsheets'.



7. MONITORING AND REPORTING



Monitoring and reporting are essential processes to check that the aims and objectives of the Biodiversity Action Programme are being realised, and to enable Warwick District Council to comply with its statutory biodiversity duty.

The action plan to 2030 will act as a tracker to help internally monitor progress against each action. Actions are set to start at different times throughout the action plan, with some actions already in progress, some being time-bound due to external influences, and others being short-term or long-term pieces of work. Actions will be monitored internally on an ongoing basis and there will be an annual review of the action plan to ensure delivery against key timescales. A more substantial review will be carried out in 2027, mid-way through the action plan lifespan, to confirm if actions remain applicable within the context of prevailing legislation, policy and best practice and that delivery of the plan is on target.

Progress against the action plan will be reported on a regular basis to the relevant Programme Board, comprising of Senior Council Officers and relevant Portfolio Holders (Councillors), and the Council's Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee. [Appendix 4](#) includes a set of measures as a suggested format for reporting, however more detailed reports will be provided upon request from the Programme Board and/or O&S Committee.



8. BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN TO 2030

Theme 1: Nature Recovery and Management

Objective 1: In line with national and international '30by30' biodiversity commitments, support and enable 30% of land owned by Warwick District Council to be effectively conserved and managed for the purpose of nature's recovery by 2030 and commit to support any superseding goals for biodiversity. This includes Protected Areas and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures.

Ref.	Actions to 2030	Start date	End date	Suggested partners
1.1.1	Understand what proportion (%) of Warwick District Council land is currently under active management for biodiversity in Year 1 of this action plan and then continue to maintain a log to inform progress against the 30% target by 2030.	2024 (with annual review)	2030	GMC, HBA, WCC, WWT
1.1.2	Review all existing Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) on Warwick District Council land and ensure that management/maintenance plans are in place, implemented and reviewed at appropriate intervals to ensure effective active management for biodiversity.	2025	2026	GMC, HBA, WCC, WWT
1.1.3	Review existing Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) on Warwick District Council land and implement measures that allow them to transition to Local Nature Reserve (LNR) status to afford them more formal statutory protection.	2027	2030	GMC, HBA, WCC, WWT
1.1.4	Identify suitable sites to expand existing or create new Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) on Warwick District Council land. Develop and deliver a programme of work to implement measures to enable these sites to receive designated status.	2026	2030	GMC, HBA, WCC, WWT
1.1.5	Identify other suitable sites on Warwick District Council land (including Council housing estates) and implement measures to restore or create wildlife rich habitat in order for them to be recognised as Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measures, in line with the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan.	2026	2030	GMC, HBA, WCC, WWT

Objective 2: As part of the Local Nature Recovery Network, identify opportunities to create, restore and enhance target habitats on Council land to provide opportunities for connectivity and for target species to thrive.

Ref.	Actions to 2030	Start date	End date	Suggested partners
1.2.1	Support and influence the development of Warwickshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy, working strategically and collaboratively with partners and stakeholders within Warwick District.	2024	2025	All
1.2.2	Use the Warwickshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy to help target work on Warwick District Council land with the greatest potential for restoring and enhancing ecological networks.	2025	2030	HBA, LBCG, LNP, WCC, WWT
1.2.3	In collaboration with partners, support and influence the development of other emerging concepts and plans which promote nature's recovery and connectivity of ecological networks in Warwick District.	2024	2030	All

Objective 3: Maximise opportunities for biodiversity to flourish in the way we manage and maintain Warwick District Council land and assets, with a specific focus on improving our grounds maintenance practices.

Ref.	Actions to 2030	Start date	End date	Suggested partners
Focus on Target Habitats: Woodland, Wood Pasture and Parkland habitats (including Ancient Woodland, Scrub and hedgerows), Trees (including ancient, veteran and other important trees) and associated target species (dormice, bats, hedgehog, farmland/urban birds, pollinators, amphibians, slow worm, common lizard, barn owl, dingy skipper, wood white butterfly, argent and sable moth, white letter hairstreak, black poplar and grass snake)				
1.3.1	Review all woodland, wood pasture and parkland habitats on Warwick District Council land and ensure that management plans are in place, implemented and reviewed at appropriate intervals to maximise all opportunities for biodiversity. To include appropriate invasive non-native species (INNS) treatment and eradication.	2026	2029	EC, FC, FE, HBA, LBCG, LNP, WCC, WT, WWT
1.3.2	Review sites on Warwick District Council land with significant tree collections (also known as Arboretums) and ensure that management/succession plans are in place, implemented and reviewed at appropriate intervals to maintain these locally important collections.	2027	2028	EC, FC, FE, HBA, LBCG, LNP, WCC, WT, WWT
1.3.3	Identify suitable trees on Warwick District Council land to carry out veteranisation (in line with best practice) to help improve biodiversity. <i>NB Veteranisation is a tried and tested process to recreate valuable micro-habitats within younger living trees through careful controlled 'damage' such as the creation of hollows to mimic naturally occurring decay features that would otherwise only be found on ancient and veteran or other old trees. These micro-habitats within living trees can be hotspots for biodiversity in particular fungi, lichen, invertebrates, bats and birds.</i>	2027	2028	FC, FE, LBCG, LNP, WBRC, WCC, WT, WWT
1.3.4	Where individual trees are felled for safety reasons on Warwick District Council land, retain a significant portion of the trunk (where safe to do so) to create 'standing monoliths' with bat crevices and solitary bee holes to provide new opportunities for biodiversity.	2024	2030	WCC
1.3.5	Taking account of the Warwickshire County Council Tree and Woodland Strategy, review Warwick District Council's 'Trees for our Future' project with a view to developing a woodland enhancement and management strategy to enhance the biodiversity of the Council's existing woodlands, increase canopy cover and determine where and how to enhance woodland habitats by delivering "the right tree, right habitat, right place" principles.	2024	2025	EC, FC, FE, HBA, LBCG, LNP, WCC, WT, WWT
1.3.6	Identify and implement opportunities where they arise for tree planting, woodland expansion and/or woodland creation on existing Warwick District Council land.	2024	2030	FC, FE, HBA, LBCG, WCC, WT, WWT
1.3.7	Actively explore the potential to bring forward additional land/sites which have the potential to expand woodland habitats in the district and increase tree canopy cover towards the Government's national target of 16.5% by 2050 (as detailed in the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023).	2024	2030	EC, FC, FE, HBA, LBCG, LNP, WCC, WT, WWT
1.3.8	Review Warwick District Council's hedgerow management/maintenance programme and implement measures to benefit biodiversity, including reduced cutting frequencies, appropriate timing of cutting to ensure provision of important food sources for target species at key times of year (Spring and Winter), and the introduction of native hedgerow ground flora and climbing species into hedge laying works.	2025	2026	GMC, LBCG, WCC, WWT

Objective 3: Maximise opportunities for biodiversity to flourish in the way we manage and maintain Warwick District Council land and assets, with a specific focus on improving our grounds maintenance practices.

Ref.	Actions to 2030	Start date	End date	Suggested partners
1.3.9	Identify suitable sites on Warwick District Council land to implement hedgerow reinstatement or new hedgerow planting to enhance biodiversity and create/restore connectivity, with consideration given to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and/or other green infrastructure policies. Develop and deliver a programme of work to implement these changes.	2025	2027	GMC, LBCC, WCC, WWT
<p>Focus on Target Habitats: Grassland habitats (including all Habitats of Principal Importance (HoPI), roadside verges, public open space and arable field margins) and associated target species (hedgehog, farmland birds, wading birds, urban birds, barn owl, amphibians, slow worm, grass snake, common lizard, dingy skipper, wood white butterfly, argent & sable moth, white letter hairstreak, all pollinators.)</p>				
1.3.10	Identify a minimum of 6 grass verges in Warwick District to act as trial plots for improving roadside biodiversity. Reduce mowing frequency to 2 cuts per year (Spring and Autumn) and remove grass arisings from site to prevent nutrient enrichment. Include overseeding with tolerant native flowering species for invertebrates (including pollinators) once a year. Carry out baseline ecological surveys before the trial and then 2-3 years following start of the trial to help inform future expansion to other grass verges.	2025	2028	GMC, HBA, LBCC, TPC, WBRC, WCC, WWT
1.3.11	Continue to support Plant life's No Mow May initiative by suspending grass cutting throughout May in suitable areas on Warwick District Council land and helping to inspire local action for nature. Consider conflicting land use requirements in the selection of sites.	2024	2030	GMC, TPC, WCC
1.3.12	Identify suitable sites on Warwick District Council land to transition to good example grassland habitats through changes to current grassland management/maintenance practices including appropriate scarification, a continuous programme of overseeding with suitable species, changes to cutting frequencies where appropriate, maintaining and increasing the height of cut, and the introduction of buffer zones where appropriate. Develop and deliver a programme of work to implement these changes.	2025	2030	GMC, HBA, LBCC, WWT
1.3.13	Restrict the use of pesticides and herbicides in Warwick District Council parks and open spaces for essential pest and invasive species control in order to reduce impacts on the target habitats and species listed identified in this plan. Maximise the use of horticultural management methods for the control of pernicious weeds instead.	2024	2030	GMC
1.3.14	Identify 6 wards in Warwick District to act as trial areas for reducing herbicide (i.e. glyphosate) use in street cleansing operations for the control of weeds on hardstanding areas of the public highway (e.g. public pavements, road junctions, etc.) to reduce impacts on biodiversity. Reduce to 1 application of herbicide per year in these trial areas, from the current starting point of 2 applications per year. Carry out an annual review of the trial to help inform future expansion to other areas.	2024 (with annual review)	2030	GMC, WCC
1.3.15	Identify additional sites on Warwick District Council land suitable for wild bird feeding crops and implement a programme of work to seed 1 new site every 2-3 years for the duration of this plan, as well as reseeding all bird crop sites every year.	2025	2030	GMC, HBA, LBCC, WWT

Objective 3: Maximise opportunities for biodiversity to flourish in the way we manage and maintain Warwick District Council land and assets, with a specific focus on improving our grounds maintenance practices.

Ref.	Actions to 2030	Start date	End date	Suggested partners
1.3.16	Identify suitable sites on Warwick District Council land for rewilding (the process of allowing land to naturally repair, restore and regenerate itself through non-intervention) and implement a programme of work to rewild 1 new site every 2-3 years for the duration of this action plan.	2025	2030	GMC, HBA, LBCG, WWT
1.3.17	Identify additional sites on Warwick District Council land suitable for spring bulb planting and introduce an annual programme of work for new bulb planting, as well as the overplanting of existing bulb sites.	2024	2030	GMC
1.3.18	Review those areas of Warwick District Council land currently left unmaintained to determine the site specific management practices required to improve biodiversity, including tree management programmes, provision of deadwood habitats, planting and overseeding, introduction of appropriate habitat boosts (e.g. invertebrate homes, hedgehog houses, etc.). Develop and deliver a programme of work to implement these changes.	2025	2030	GMC, LBCG
1.3.19	Review the current grounds maintenance contract and build flexibility into future contracts to enable reduced grass cutting frequencies during periods of adverse weather (e.g. hot, dry periods).	2026	2029	GMC
Focus on Target Habitats: Rivers, Canals, Wetlands and Ponds and associated target species (otter, water vole, grass snake, amphibians, wading birds, bats, barn owl and pollinators)				
1.3.20	Review wetlands, ponds, ditches and other water habitats on Warwick District Council land and ensure that management/maintenance plans are in place, implemented and reviewed at appropriate intervals to ensure active management for biodiversity. To include appropriate tree management, reed cutting, reed stacking, wet grassland management, other nature-based solutions, and the effective management of inlets and outlets.	2026	2027	CP, CRT, EA, GMC, LBCG, WCC, WWT
1.3.21	Identify and implement opportunities where they arise for wetland expansion and the restoration or creation of ponds, swales, scrapes, ditches and rain gardens on Warwick District Council land.	2024	2030	CP, CRT, EA, GMC, LBCG, WCC, WWT
1.3.22	Review maintenance programmes for Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) on Warwick District Council land to ensure they are being effectively managed for biodiversity. To include appropriate tree management and the effective maintenance of all channels and inlets/outlets.	2024	2030	EC, GMC, LBCG, WCC, WWT
1.3.23	Where Warwick District Council is riparian owner, effectively manage invasive species (e.g. giant hogweed, knotweed, etc.) and introduce appropriate habitat improvements based on individual site assessment and recommendations (e.g. otter holts, overplanting with native friendly plants and reeds, providing shelter for fish, etc.).	2024	2030	CP, CRT, EA, GMC, LBCG, WCC, WWT

Objective 3: Maximise opportunities for biodiversity to flourish in the way we manage and maintain Warwick District Council land and assets, with a specific focus on improving our grounds maintenance practices.

Ref.	Actions to 2030	Start date	End date	Suggested partners
Focus on Target Habitat: Urban Environment and associated target species (bats, urban birds, hedgehog, pollinators, amphibians, slow worm, grass snake, common lizard)				
1.3.24	Introduce new bird feeding stations in appropriate locations on Warwick District Council land to encourage a range of birds into these areas. Bird feeding stations to include a variety of food sources to support a diversity of birds, receive a monthly clean to reduce spread of disease and be installed within water bodies (e.g. lakes, ponds, etc.) to provide access to clean fresh water and minimise issues with pests (e.g. rats). Once feeding has commenced this must continue year round to avoid impacts on birds which have become dependent on this new food source.	2024	2025	GMC, LBCC
1.3.25	Review, identify and implement additional biodiversity enhancement measures in Warwick District Council cemeteries and closed churchyards (where appropriate), with a particular focus on benefitting the target urban species identified in this plan (e.g. hedgehog boxes/homes, habitat piles, hibernacula, solitary bee homes, wildflowers, planting schemes to provide food, foraging and nesting potential, sources of water, etc.)	2025	2027	GMC, LBCC
1.3.26	Consider the installation of biodiversity enhancement measures as part of repair, maintenance and improvement programmes for Warwick District Council properties/buildings where appropriate, with a particular focus on urban and semi-urban areas. Measures could include swift bricks, bat boxes, peregrine falcon trays/boxes on high rise buildings, hedgehog highways, bug boxes, etc. Support residents who specifically request these measures by determining suitability and assisting with provision and installation.	2025	2030	LBCC, WWT
1.3.27	Create and maintain a register of bat roosts in Warwick District Council properties (buildings, bridges, etc.) and ensure their maintenance and protection.	2027	2027	LBCC, WBRC, WCC, WWT
1.3.28	Consider implementing changes to grounds maintenance practices to reimagine high profile urban landscapes in town centres, for example moving away from traditional short mown grassed areas to landscaping schemes that provide benefits for biodiversity.	2026	2030	GMC, GW, LBCC, LM, TPC, WCC, WWT

Theme 2: Involving People and Partnerships

Objective 1: Find ways to engage, connect, involve, inspire and support individuals, communities and landowners including town and parish councils, to take action for nature in their local area.

Ref.	Actions to 2030	Start date	End date	Suggested partners
2.1.1	Provide guidance to town and parish councils in Warwick District on developing Local Nature Action Plans to help comply with their statutory biodiversity duty, whilst also delivering wider biodiversity benefits and enabling ecological connectivity, particularly where their land adjoins Warwick District Council land.	2025	2030	HBA, LBCC, LNP, TPC, WBRC, WCC, WWT
2.1.2	Encourage and support allotment groups in Warwick District to maximise biodiversity potential in allotments and enable ecological connectivity, particularly where allotments adjoin Warwick District Council land.	2026	2030	AG, LBCC, TPC, WBRC, WCC, WWT
2.1.3	Develop and deliver a seasonal communications plan to inspire local residents to make space for nature at home and in their community as well as informing the public of progress against actions in this plan and sharing success stories.	2024	2030	
2.1.4	Organise or support at least one annual Warwick District event promoting biodiversity (e.g. Ecofest, BioBlitz, etc.).	2024	2030	
2.1.5	Encourage wildlife friendly gardening and herbicide reduction to benefit target species identified in this plan (e.g. mini meadows, wildlife friendly ponds, bug homes, hedgehog highways, etc.) through promotion of Warwick District Council best practice.	2025	2030	
2.1.6	Encourage, support and inspire tenants of Warwick District Council owned homes to enhance biodiversity at home and in their local community through hands on activities, events and projects.	2025	2030	GMC, LBCC, WCC, WWT
2.1.7	Increase awareness of Warwick District Council's green and blue spaces and connecting corridors throughout the district to help reconnect people with nature and use these as a recreational resource, in line with ambitions in the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan for everyone to live within 15 minutes' walk of green or blue spaces.	2026	2027	
2.1.8	Ensure alignment with Warwick District Council's Climate Change Action Programme to deliver actions with shared benefits for biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation.	2024	2030	
2.1.9	Identify and promote partner initiatives through Warwick District Council communication channels to encourage uptake and inspire action (e.g. Incredible Edibles, Bee Friendly Groups/Towns, Woodland Trust seed collection and tree packs, RSPB local initiatives, National Trust 'Helping Communities Blossom' campaign, etc.)	2024	2030	All

Objective 2: Establish strong working relationships with partners delivering on nature recovery, as well as those targeting climate change, health and wellbeing, and air quality to ensure effective collaboration across the district.

Ref.	Actions to 2030	Start date	End date	Suggested partners
2.2.1	Where relevant to Warwick District, and where local authorities are cited as a partner, seek to support ongoing implementation of the Warwickshire Habitat and Species Actions Plans (Proposed Local Actions) that relate to target habitats and species identified in this plan.	2025	2030	LBCG, LNP, WCC, WWT
2.2.2	Create a Warwick District Biodiversity Action Group to link with the Local Nature Partnership for governance support and identify opportunities for networking to help deliver the actions in this plan and achieve maximum benefits for biodiversity in Warwick District.	2025	2026	LBCG, LNP, WCC, WWT
2.2.3	Work with partners to support the delivery of practical conservation/ volunteering activities throughout Warwick District that help to deliver the actions in this plan.	2024	2030	All
2.2.4	Support partners with the delivery of community engagement and awareness raising for biodiversity (e.g. public events, face-to-face or online initiatives, resources for schools, etc.)	2024	2030	All
2.2.5	Form partnerships with and support local specialist biodiversity groups and draw upon their knowledge and expertise to help inform delivery of the actions in this plan (where appropriate).	2024	2030	LBCG, LNP, WCC, WWT
2.2.6	Where opportunities arise, work with partners to deliver water quality improvements which benefit biodiversity in rivers and other water habitats in Warwick District.	2024	2030	CRT, EA, STW
2.2.7	Work with rural hub and local farming groups to understand how to support farmers in maximising biodiversity on their land and through their farming practices.	2026	2030	AEP

Objective 3: Strive to be an exemplar in the management of our own estate, helping to inspire others to do the same.

Ref.	Actions to 2030	Start date	End date	Suggested partners
2.3.1	Through the implementation of actions identified in Theme 1, set an exemplar standard within council owned land to promote landowners and land managers to follow suit. Provide advice and awareness on improving biodiversity.	2027	2030	
2.3.2	Engage with relevant educational establishments to provide research opportunities for monitoring and measuring changes in biodiversity arising from the actions in this plan.	2027	2030	WU

Theme 3: Legal, Planning, Policy and Funding Commitments

Objective 1: Embed biodiversity into Warwick District Council's policies and operations to help protect, conserve and enhance biodiversity and comply with the Council's statutory biodiversity duty.

Ref.	Actions to 2030	Start date	End date	Suggested partners
3.1.1	Maintain access to live and accurate habitat data for Warwick District through continued funding for the Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Natural Capital Assessment Partnership (formerly Habitat Biodiversity Audit).	2024	2030	HBA, LNP, WCC, WWT
3.1.2	Mainstream biodiversity into Warwick District Council project planning and prioritisation processes - introduce a biodiversity impact tracker into the project design stage to consider the measures needed to protect, conserve and enhance biodiversity.	2024	2025	
3.1.3	Embed consideration of biodiversity impacts into all Council operations and services through inclusion in Service Area Plans, Risk Registers, Cabinet Reports, etc.	2024	2030	
3.1.4	Embed biodiversity considerations within criteria for assessing Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) projects.	2024	2025	
3.1.5	Inform and engage Warwick District Council officers, Councillors and grounds maintenance contractor staff in the delivery of this plan using activities such as workshops, annual biodiversity days, activity days (e.g. tree planting, etc.), lunchtime nature walks, infographics to report on progress, sharing success stories, etc.	2025	2030	GMC, LBCG, WCC, WWT
3.1.6	Provide training to relevant Warwick District Council officers on changes or updates to legal/policy requirements relating to Council duties on biodiversity.	2025	2030	EC, WCC, WWT
3.1.7	In light of increasing responsibilities associated with biodiversity and the delivery of this plan, review staffing requirements to complete actions, monitor measures and support on biodiversity duty reporting to Government.	2024	2030	

Objective 2: Ensure Warwick District Council is best placed to secure long-term funding opportunities to help the recovery of nature, including opportunities around biodiversity net gain and other nature markets.

Ref.	Actions to 2030	Start date	End date	Suggested partners
3.2.1	Identify and apply (where appropriate) for external funding opportunities that will help deliver the actions in this plan.	2024	2030	All
3.2.2	Conduct a high-level review of Warwick District Council land to identify sites that could be taken forward for biodiversity enhancement using biodiversity net gain as a funding mechanism.	2024	2025	HBA, WCC, WWT
3.2.3	Conduct baseline habitat surveys and biodiversity net gain (BNG) feasibility assessments on key Warwick District Council sites to confirm selection for potential BNG funding.	2024	2025	EC
3.2.4	In line with biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirements, produce Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans (HMMP) for Warwick District Council sites to be put forward for BNG funding to demonstrate how target habitats will be created, maintained and managed on these sites for 30 years.	2024	2030	EC

Objective 2: Ensure Warwick District Council is best placed to secure long-term funding opportunities to help the recovery of nature, including opportunities around biodiversity net gain and other nature markets.

Ref.	Actions to 2030	Start date	End date	Suggested partners
3.2.5	Support and influence the development of a Warwickshire Local Authority Natural Capital Investment Strategy and Implementation Plan to determine how income streams from nature markets should be invested, thereby creating potential funding routes to deliver the actions in this plan.	2024	2025	WCC
3.2.6	Support the development and operation of high-integrity nature markets in Warwick District through the Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Ecosystems Services Trading Protocol.	2024	2030	WCC

Objective 3: Draw on best practice to develop ambitious local planning policies which maximise opportunities to protect and enhance nature through the planning system.

Ref.	Actions to 2030	Start date	End date	Suggested partners
3.3.1	Produce a biodiversity net gain (BNG) implementation plan to ensure that Warwick District Council has appropriate planning policies and processes in place to support and maximise delivery of BNG, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compliance with the mitigation hierarchy (avoid loss [particularly irreplaceable habitat], minimise loss, adequate mitigation, and compensation as a last resort) • implementation of a spatial hierarchy which prioritises on-site delivery of BNG (delivered in the most appropriate way), followed by local off-site delivery and then the national credit system as a last resort • identification of appropriate policies/strategies that will be used to demonstrate 'strategic significance' and 'spatial risk' in the biodiversity metric • decisions on how active Warwick District Council wants to be in the BNG market • a communications plan for staff, Councillors, partners, developers, etc. • a training plan for staff and Councillors • reference to relevant local strategies including the Warwickshire Local Authority Natural Capital Investment Strategy and Implementation Plan, and the Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Ecosystems Services Trading Protocol. 	2024	2025	WCC
3.3.2	Ensure Warwick District Council's planning service has the appropriate capacity, capability and skills to monitor and enforce delivery of biodiversity net gain (BNG) agreements in Warwick District (where required).	2024	2025	WCC
3.3.3	Support the development of a Warwickshire environmental net gain (ENG) policy and consider its implementation in Warwick District through the South Warwickshire Local Plan to provide additional funding opportunities for nature's recovery.	2024	2025	WCC
3.3.4	Explore any aspiration to go above and beyond the statutory requirement for 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) and obtain the evidence needed to enshrine this into local planning policy. Consider in line with wider work associated with environmental net gain (ENG).	2024	2025	WCC

Objective 3: Draw on best practice to develop ambitious local planning policies which maximise opportunities to protect and enhance nature through the planning system.

Ref.	Actions to 2030	Start date	End date	Suggested partners
3.3.5	Strengthen existing planning policies around the protection of important habitats and species when developing the new South Warwickshire Local Plan to include consideration for the target species and habitats identified in this plan, alongside those included in the Warwickshire Habitat and Species Action Plans. Include additional requirements for protection, enhancement and/or mitigation measures (where impacts cannot be avoided). This is in addition to statutory protection afforded by legally protected species.	2024	2025	HBA, LBCG, LNP, WBRC, WCC, WWT
3.3.6	Enhance existing planning policies around tree protection when developing the new South Warwickshire Local Plan to include the retention of ancient, veteran and important trees (a target habitat in this Biodiversity Action Programme). Include requirements for a tree mitigation hierarchy (e.g. avoiding tree damage, minimising loss, adequate mitigation, and compensation as a last resort).	2024	2025	FC, FE, HBA, LBCG, LNP, WBRC, WCC, WT, WWT
3.3.7	Drawing on the evidence base provided by the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy and other related studies, ensure that the new South Warwickshire Local Plan provides the planning framework to protect and enhance areas of existing and potential ecological value and connectivity.	2024	2025	HBA, LBCG, LNP, WBRC, WCC, WWT
3.3.8	Consider the inclusion of tree planting, establishment or canopy cover targets in the South Warwickshire Local Plan that would require developers to plant and establish a defined number of trees per household or per size of development.	2024	2025	FC, FE, HBA, LBCG, LNP, WCC, WT, WWT
3.3.9	Review existing or create a new Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to set out how developers can enable wildlife-friendly developments and space for nature, with a specific focus on urban areas, in line with South Warwickshire Local Plan policies. To include guidance on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> landscaping schemes which maximise biodiversity benefits nature-based solutions including SuDs, green roofs, etc. protection and enhancement measures for target habitats and species included in this plan requirements for planting and establishing trees appropriate tree species selection (with consideration for future changes in climate) and use of native species with local provenance (where possible) consideration of biodiversity net gain (BNG) principles and implementation of the mitigation hierarchy reference to Natural England's 'Urban Greening Factor for England' - a standard for the provision of green infrastructure within development sites. 	2024	2026	AG, EC, FC, FE, GMC, HBA, LBCG, LM, TPC, WCC, WT, WWT
3.3.10	Review existing or create a new Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the provision of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) in new developments to provide greater clarity on developer obligations for the design, construction, management and maintenance of SuDS, with a particular focus on biodiversity. Guidance to also consider the inclusion of rain gardens, swales, scrapes, ditches, etc.	2024	2026	EC, GMC, LBCG, LM, TPC, WCC, WWT

Key for suggested partners

Abbreviation	Partner
AEP	Agri-Environmental Partners (NFU, Warwickshire Farming Clusters (Arden Farm Wildlife Network), Farming Representatives, Sustainable Farming Warwickshire Rural Hub)
AG	Local Allotment Groups
CP	Warwickshire Avon Catchment Partnership
CRT	Canals and Rivers Trust
EA	Environment Agency
EC	External Consultants
FC	Forestry Commission
FE	Forestry England (currently manage Hay Wood and Waverley Wood)
GMC	Grounds Maintenance Contractor
GW	Groundwork
HBA	Natural Capital Assessment Partnership (formerly Habitat Biodiversity Audit)
LBCG	Local Biodiversity Conservation Groups
LM	Land Managers/ Landowners
LNP	Local Nature Partnership
NT	National Trust
STW	Severn Trent Water
SWAN	South Warwickshire Area Network for Wildlife
TPC	Town and Parish Councils (including WALC)
WBRC	Warwickshire Biological Records Centre
WCC	Warwickshire County Council
WT	Woodland Trust
WU	Warwick University
WWT	Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

Local Biodiversity Conservation Groups include (but are not limited to):

Coventry and Warwickshire RSPB Local Group
 Warwick Natural History Society
 Warwickshire Amphibian and Reptile Group (WART)
 Warwickshire Badger Group
 Warwickshire Bat Group
 Warwickshire Butterfly Conservation
 Dormouse Conservation Warwickshire
 Warwickshire Dragonfly Group
 Warwickshire Flora Group
 Warwickshire Fungus Group
 Warwickshire Mammal Group
 West Midland Bird Club
 Warwickshire Beekeepers Association
 Warwick and Leamington Beekeepers
 Local Bee Friendly Groups (Cubbington, Kenilworth, Leamington and Warwick)

APPENDIX I: POLICIES, STRATEGIES AND DRIVERS

International

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (COP15)

The United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15) ended in Montreal, Canada, on 19 December 2022 with a landmark agreement to guide global action on nature through to 2030, represented by 188 governments including the UK.

COP15 resulted in the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) with a package of measures deemed critical to addressing the dangerous loss of biodiversity and restoring natural ecosystems. This includes four goals and 23 targets for achievement by 2030. Notably this includes:

- Effective conservation and management of at least 30% of the world's lands, inland waters, coastal areas and oceans, with emphasis on areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functioning and services.
- Have restoration completed or underway on at least 30% of degraded terrestrial, inland waters, and coastal and marine ecosystems.

[COP15: Final text of Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework | Convention on Biological Diversity \(cbd.int\)](#)

G7 2030 Compact (2021)

Held in Cornwall in May 2021, eight G7 Environment and Climate ministers shared a G7 Nature Compact, a key agreement to address the most urgent international and interconnected challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change. This compact agreed to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030.

[G7 2030 Nature Compact \(PDF, 120KB, 4 pages\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

IPCC AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023

The IPCC finalized the Synthesis Report for the Sixth Assessment Report during the Panel's 58th Session held in Interlaken, Switzerland from 13 - 19 March 2023.

This provides an overview of the state of knowledge on the science of climate change, emphasizing new results since the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) in 2014, confirming human-caused climate change is already affecting many weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe, and has led to widespread adverse impacts and related losses and damages to nature and people.

[AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023 \(ipcc.ch\)](#)

National

The Environment Act (2021) and Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain

Key elements of the Environment Act are described in section 2 of this Biodiversity Action Programme. Biodiversity net gain (BNG) became mandatory on 12th February 2024 and introduced the following requirements of local authorities:

- Process and determine planning applications to ensure they meet the legislative requirements, including an accompanying BNG statement.
- Assess and approve biodiversity gain plans to ensure they meet legislative requirements.
- Secure obligations through legal agreements linked to the grant of planning permission for offsite BNG delivery.
- Monitor compliance with planning conditions and legal agreements in relation to BNG; and
- Report on BNG delivery and plans in their authority area.

In addition, guidance has identified recommended action beyond statutory requirements to enable delivery of BNG and to achieve wider benefits for the local authority.

Planning

- Developing and adopting biodiversity net gain planning policies, setting out local circumstances and requirements, for example, on delivery of offsite biodiversity net gain.
- A strategic approach to BNG, linking into the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), once available; considering site allocations for development, as well as potential site allocations for nature recovery; and how BNG links to other plans, strategies and objectives.
- Establishing a biodiversity evidence base - a reasonably up-to-date understanding of the quality and quantity of habitats in their area - this will act as a baseline from which biodiversity gain can be measured.
- Pre-application advice service - BNG needs to be embedded early in planning for a development and this should speed up decision-making at application stage; plus providing pre-application advice is an income-generation opportunity for the local authority.
- Changes to the planning application validation process to factor in BNG information requirements.
- Monitoring of BNG delivery in the long-term.
- Enforcement of non-compliance.

Corporate

- Corporate embedding of BNG to deliver wider public benefits (Section 3.3 of the CIEEM, CIRIA and IEMA BNG Practical Guide highlights the benefits to this).
- Providing opportunities for BNG offset on the council estate, including parks - another income-generation opportunity.
- Setting up or facilitating a scheme for local offsite BNG delivery or habitat bank.

[The Biodiversity Net Gain Statutory Instruments - explained - Environment \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

[Resourcing biodiversity net gain for local authorities | Local Government Association](#)

[Complying with the biodiversity duty - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Government response and summary of responses - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (2018)

The 25 Year Environment Plan has 10 themes:

- Enhancing biosecurity.
- Managing exposure to chemicals.
- Minimising waste.
- Mitigating and adapting to climate change.
- Enhancing beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment.
- Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently.
- Reducing the risks of harm from environmental hazards.
- Thriving plants and wildlife.
- Clean and plentiful water.
- Clean air.

[25 Year Environment Plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The Dasgupta Review on the Economics of Biodiversity (2021)

The fundamental benefits of our natural environment were highlighted in The Dasgupta Review on the Economics of Biodiversity, a landmark report commissioned by HM Treasury and released in February 2021. It calls for urgent and transformative change in how we think, act and measure economic success to protect and enhance our prosperity and the natural world and puts forward ways in which we should account for nature in economics and decision-making. Its headline messages serve as a critical reminder of the importance of nature:

- Our economies, livelihoods and well-being all depend on our most precious asset: Nature.
- We have collectively failed to engage with nature sustainably, to the extent that our demands far exceed its capacity to supply us with the goods and services we all rely on.
- Our unsustainable engagement with nature is endangering the prosperity of current and future generations.
- The solution starts with understanding and accepting a simple truth: our economies are embedded within nature, not external to it. Recognising the many co-benefits from investing time, energy and resources into the natural environment, this plan will also support delivery against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 which have been developed to help ensure that we act as an international community to help to make the world more sustainable.

[Final Report - The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/102222/final-report-the-economics-of-biodiversity.pdf)

National Pollinator Strategy (2014)

The Government is committed to taking action to improve the state of our bees and other pollinating insects and to build up our understanding of current populations and of the causes of decline. The actions outlined in this strategy build on existing policies and initiatives in Government and in many other organisations. We want to draw on the skills, experience and enthusiasm that already exist among organisations and individuals across the country to put in place a united effort to make positive changes for our pollinators. The overarching vision is to see pollinators thrive, so they can carry out their essential service to people of pollinating flowers and crops, while providing other benefits for our native plants, the wider environment, food production and all of us.

[The National Pollinator Strategy: for bees and other pollinators in England \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/102222/national-pollinator-strategy-for-bees-and-other-pollinators-in-england.pdf)

State of Nature 2023

The State of Nature 2023 was published on 28 September 2023, providing a benchmark for the status of wildlife in the UK and the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. Production of the report involved a partnership of over 60 organisations that are directly involved with nature conservation evidence and/or delivery. The report uses the latest and best available evidence, generated from monitoring schemes and biological recording, many of which are supported by thousands of skilled volunteers.

- The report reveals one in six species are at risk of becoming extinct in Great Britain, while widespread animals and plants such as starlings, swifts, hedgehogs and chamomile are becoming rarer.
- Losses of insects, fish and plants can trigger chain reactions affecting other species in the food chain.
- The report also reveals that while UK nature is in crisis, some species have managed to thrive and we have the solutions to restore nature.

- Conservation projects and strong environmental protections through legislation can have a positive impact on nature, human wellbeing and the natural resources we rely on.

[State of Nature 2023 - report on the UK's current biodiversity](#)

Legislation

Specific habitats and species relevant to this BAP receive legal protection in the UK under various pieces of legislation, including:

- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 Section 41 requires the Secretary of State to publish and maintain a list of habitats and species which are of Principal Importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England (i.e. Habitats of Principal Importance (HoPI) and Species of Principal Importance (SoPI)). Public authorities have a responsibility to give specific consideration to the S41 list when exercising their normal functions. This is in addition to statutory protection afforded to those habitats and species by the additional legislation outlined above.

The Environmental Improvement Plan

The Environmental Improvement Plan published in January 2023 (shortly after the Kunming-Montreal GBF) is the first 5-year review of the 25 Year Environmental Plan and 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 31 January 2028 restore or create 140,000 ha of a range of wildlife-rich habitats outside protected sites, compared to 2022 levels (interim target).

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.

[Environmental Improvement Plan \(EIP23\)](#),

Making Space for Nature (2010)

An independent review for DEFRA, The Lawton Review published in 2010, aimed to review how England's wildlife and ecological network could be improved to help nature thrive in the face of climate change and other pressures. The review concluded that England's wildlife sites, despite their diversity, did not comprise a coherent and resilient ecological network even today, let alone one capable of coping with the challenge of climate change and other pressures. To address this, a step change is needed in nature conservation. The review fed into production of the Natural Environment White Paper, published in 2011, which ensured a Government commitment to implementing the principles set out. The report made the following key points for establishing a strong and connected natural environment:

- That we better protect and manage our designated wildlife sites.
- That we establish new Ecological Restoration Zones.
- That we better protect our non-designated wildlife sites.

[Making Space for Nature: \(nationalarchives.gov.uk\)](#)

Nature Positive 2030

Nature Positive 2030 was produced by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, NatureScot and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. In response to the crisis of biodiversity loss, many Heads of State around the World made significant commitments for nature, notably through the Leaders' Pledge for Nature launched at the United Nations General Assembly in 2020, and the '30by30' commitment to protect 30% of our land and seas for nature by 2030. These commitments are far reaching, requiring transformational change across sectors in the way we protect, value, use and engage with nature. Through Nature Positive 2030, the five statutory nature conservation bodies of the UK came together to identify how the UK could succeed in achieving these commitments along with ensuring that nature recovery plays its critical role in achieving net zero. It consists of two reports – a Summary Report and an Evidence Report. Nature Positive 2030 was published in September 2021 to mark the first anniversary of the Leaders' Pledge for Nature.

[Nature Positive 2030 | JNCC - Adviser to Government on Nature Conservation](#)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF was first published on 27 March 2012 and updated four times, the most recent being 5 September 2023. This sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. Key requirements of the NPPF, relevant to conserving and enhancing biodiversity are summarised below:

Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity.
 - recognising the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.
 - minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.
- Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.
- To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:
- Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
 - promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.
- When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:
- if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.
 - development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

- development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

[National Planning Policy Framework - 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\).](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/national-planning-policy-framework)

Regional

Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Species and Habitat Action Plans

There are 52 biodiversity action plans for Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull, 27 for vulnerable species and 25 for characteristic habitats, ranging from woodlands and wetlands to urban and rural settlements. These were initially compiled between 2002-2005 and widely consulted amongst conservation specialists and potential partners. Their comments and amendments were incorporated, and the plans adopted by the Steering Group, and have been periodically updated.

The area of Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull has been categorised into 6 broad habitat types: grassland, farmland, woodland, urban, post-industrial and wetland. These broad habitats have been sub-divided into 25 Action Plans, the aim being to give a comprehensive cover of all the land area of the sub-region.

In all, 27 Species Action Plans for Warwickshire Coventry and Solihull were selected on the basis of the criteria outlined below:

- UK Steering Group report listed as internationally or nationally threatened.
- Keystone species for which management action will benefit a number of associated species.

- Cultural value, or locally characteristic. Includes species which are familiar to local people.
- Scarcity. Species which are locally/nationally scarce. Especially if the species “should” be more widespread locally.
- Specific action needed over and above general habitat conservation.
- In rapid decline locally.

Consideration has been given to the County level species and habitat action plans in the selection of target habitats and species for Warwick District Council’s Biodiversity Action Programme. Furthermore, the programme seeks to integrate the Warwickshire actions where relevant to the district and Warwick District Council activities.

[The Species and Habitat Action Plans | Warwickshire Wildlife Trust](#)

Green Infrastructure Strategy (2013)

The Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Green Infrastructure Strategy seeks to create a diverse and well-managed Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Green Infrastructure network that underpins the quality of life for communities.

This will be the result of a well-connected, accessible and biodiversity resilient landscape, supporting economic growth, social health and climate change adaptation.

The purpose of this strategy is to provide evidence for the preparation of plans, policies and strategies relating to Green Infrastructure (GI) at a sub-regional level. It is to be available for adopting as a strategic mechanism to deliver GI enhancements across the partner authorities to meet national, sub-regional and local GI needs. However, it can be applied at a local, parish and field level through partnership and landowner assistance.

The strategy details how landscape, biodiversity and accessibility to the countryside GI assets have been identified and recommendations for their protection

and enhancement. These GI assets are important to strategic spatial planning and Neighbourhood Planning policies and subsequent development proposals. However, as importantly, the strategy is to help landowners integrate biodiversity, accessibility and landscape into their businesses.

[Sub Regional Green Infrastructure Strategy - Publications – Warwickshire County Council](#)

Warwickshire Carbon and Environmental Markets (2022)

This project was supported by the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF) to enable Warwickshire County Council (WCC) to investigate opportunities to develop long-term, sustainable funding mechanisms for its environmental ambitions within the mandatory system of Warwickshire's Local Authority consenting regimes. Although the project was carried out for WCC and the NEIRF, this report has also been written to inform any individuals or organisations that are interested in the application and implementation of a natural capital investment approach and the development of ecosystem services (ES) markets. The findings and recommendations of this report will be applicable throughout the UK and are especially relevant to other local authorities or organisations investigating developing similar mandatory systems or markets. The overall aims of this project were to produce recommendations for the development of a natural capital investment strategy and the establishment of a carbon market and at least one other ES market within Warwickshire. In addition to detailed desk research and interviews, the team worked closely with WCC teams, other consultants, many current researchers and projects (including ongoing NEIRF projects), and specialists in the relevant fields.

Warwickshire Landscape Character Area Guidelines

The Warwickshire County Council landscape team pioneered the landscape character assessment process, which considered the unique and distinctive landscapes of Warwickshire and developed a methodology for landscape assessment of lowland areas. The project culminated in the production of the Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines, which map and describe the special characteristics of each of the county's seven landscape character areas. The guidelines provide invaluable strategies for managing and enhancing these landscapes and underpin work in rural areas.

These guidelines provide a framework upon which to develop biodiversity enhancement and habitat creation proposals whilst also ensuring the local distinctiveness of the rural parts of the district are promoted, especially the Ancient Arden on the west.

[Landscape architecture service - landscape character and guidelines – Warwickshire County Council](#)

District

Warwick District Local Plan

The Local Plan was adopted in September 2017. It is the overarching local policy document for the district and will guide the area's development until 2029.

Policy NE3 covers biodiversity: New development will be permitted provided that it protects, enhances and/or restores habitat biodiversity. Development proposals will be expected to ensure that they:

- a)** lead to no net loss of biodiversity, and where possible a net gain, where appropriate, by means of an approved ecological assessment of existing site features and development impacts;
- b)** protect or enhance biodiversity assets and secure their long-term management and maintenance, and;

- c) avoid negative impacts on existing biodiversity. Where this is not possible, mitigation measures must be identified. If mitigation measures are not possible on site, then compensatory measures involving biodiversity offsetting will be required.

Policy NE2 covers Protecting Designated Biodiversity and Geodiversity Assets: The Council will protect designated areas and species of national and local importance for biodiversity.

Sites of National Importance

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are of national importance; therefore, development will not be permitted which will destroy or adversely affect these unless, in exceptional circumstances, it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value or scientific interest of the site and its contribution to wider biodiversity objectives and connectivity.

Where development is permitted that has an adverse impact on a SSSI, whether direct or indirect, measures to enhance the condition of the site will be required.

Sites of Local Importance

Development will not be permitted that will destroy or adversely affect the following locally important sites and assets unless it can be demonstrated that the benefits of development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value or scientific interest of the site and its contribution to wider biodiversity objectives and connectivity:

- a) Ancient Woodland, aged and veteran trees;
- b) Local Nature Reserves;
- c) Local Wildlife Sites and potential Local Wildlife Sites;

All proposals likely to impact on the above assets will be subject to an ecological assessment. The ecological assessment should include due consideration of the importance of the natural asset, the nature

of the measures proposed (including plans for long term management) and the extent to which they avoid and reduce the impact of the development. Development affecting these sites will only be permitted where: i) the proposal is justified against the above criteria, and ii) where it can be demonstrated that the proposed mitigation or compensatory measures are equivalent to the value assigned to the site/asset in the ecological assessment.

South Warwickshire Local Plan

Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils are working together to prepare a new local plan for South Warwickshire. The plan is expected to replace the strategic policies in the Stratford Core Strategy and the Warwick District Local Plan (above). The South Warwickshire Local Plan will set out a long-term spatial strategy for homes, jobs, infrastructure and climate change across both districts.

Warwick District Council Developer Contributions (Supplementary Planning Document) (2020)

The purpose of this Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is to provide clarity regarding Warwick District Councils approach to seeking developer contributions that are necessary to provide the physical, social and green infrastructure to support high quality development outcomes and sustainable planning objectives.

Warwick District Council Open Space (Supplementary Planning Document)

This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) sets out guidance for the provision, enhancement, adoption and future maintenance of Public Open Spaces (POS) required in conjunction with new residential and commercial development across Warwick District. One of the six primary objectives is to help enhance the environment and ecology/biodiversity in the vicinity of new housing developments.

Warwick District Council Corporate Strategy 2030

This corporate strategy sets our vision for enhancing the district by playing to our strengths without shying away from tough decisions to tackle long-standing issues. It provides the basis to inform, prioritise and shape where the Council will focus its efforts, time and resources to help make the district a great place to live, work and visit by improving lives and our environment.

The delivery of the Corporate Strategy is underpinned by the following seven principles:

- Sustainability will be at the heart of our decision making.
- Plan and invest for the long-term benefit for the people and environment of the district.
- Good governance and transparent decision making.
- Use data, including insight from our customers, residents, businesses, and visitors to help us make the right decisions.
- Social value and inclusive growth will underpin the investments we make throughout the district to help ensure all our communities prosper.
- Consultation and engagement with stakeholders will be used to help inform and shape how we deliver improvements and change.
- We will evaluate how we make the best use of resources to offer the best service at the best value.

A strategic goal is to enhance the biodiversity of the district by:

- Increasing the level of biodiversity on Council owned land and creating a network of accessible linked biodiversity rich spaces.
- Encouraging residents, communities and businesses to enhance the biodiversity of the district using the planning system, the biodiversity net gain legislation and other opportunities.

Warwick District Climate Change Action Programme

In 2019, Warwick District Council declared a Climate Emergency and a Climate Change Action Programme (CCAP) was developed and agreed by Cabinet in November 2021. The CCAP was reviewed and updated in December 2023. The CCAP sets out our three ambitions and how these will be achieved:

- Ambition 1 - Net Zero Carbon Council 2025.
- Ambition 2 - Low Carbon South Warwickshire 2030.
- Ambition 3 - Adaptation 2050.

In 2022, Warwick District Council declared an Ecological Emergency and resolved to prepare this Biodiversity Action Programme. Both ecological and climate emergency work is being led by the Climate Change team, with clear mutual and interrelated benefit between the two work streams.

More details can be found here:

[Climate change action programme - Warwick District Council \(warwickdc.gov.uk\)](https://warwickdc.gov.uk)

APPENDIX 2: FUNDING

A summary of funding opportunities described below are those that are established and available at the time of drafting this Biodiversity Action Programme. It is acknowledged that funding opportunities are likely to change over the next 12 months once biodiversity net gain (BNG) comes into force and a General Election is held.

Biodiversity Credits

Fortunately, Warwick District is already in a strong position on generating funding through nature markets having proactively worked with Warwickshire County Council (WCC) to be a national leader in biodiversity offsetting (and more latterly biodiversity net gain (BNG)) through the planning system. On a county level, the BNG market has generated over £4million in Warwickshire & Coventry since 2015, averaging over £650k a year.

Once credits have been received, in the form of a financial contribution, they are 'committed' (offsets commenced) or 'allocated' (offsets negotiation) to a County-managed offset scheme secured through legal agreements. This provides the assurance that landowner/tenant meet their agreement for the provision of biodiversity units. Offset schemes are currently funded either by 'annual' or 'one-off' payments. This early engagement into natural capital investment has unlocked the realisation that some markets are limited, and this market alone will not support delivery of this Biodiversity Action Programme through to 2050.

Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund

Building on this market establishment knowledge, Warwickshire County Council (WCC) and local authority partners including Warwick District Council (WDC), have been seeking to establish carbon and other ecosystem services markets to enable 'Warwickshire Standard' (high standard and high integrity) carbon credits and other ecosystem services credits to be sold locally and nationally. These will be generated within the mandatory system of Warwickshire's Local Authority consenting regimes.

In March 2022, the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF) supported the research and production of the 'Warwickshire Carbon and Environmental Markets' report. NEIRF is a pioneering fund designed by the Environment Agency, in partnership with Defra and Natural England, to help deliver on commitments in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan to drive private investment in nature and tackle climate change, the importance of which was highlighted by the Dasgupta Review (2021). The Fund will accelerate private investment in nature alongside the best practice derived from ongoing projects being delivered as a result of NEIRF. Funding will enable organisations (for example environmental organisations, local authorities, businesses, and other public and private sector organisations) to acquire specialist advice, engage investors and build capacity to develop their project to a stage where it is investment-ready and has developed suitable revenue streams.

The Warwickshire Carbon and Environmental Markets report sought to build and broaden the scope of the Warwickshire biodiversity net gain (BNG) market, to bring in wider ecosystem benefits including carbon and catchment services. The primary focus was to identify how to expand the BNG market to woodland carbon and blend public funding for tree planting with carbon credits.

Nationally, other NEIF projects have included¹:

- The Wildlife Trusts' Habitat Banking Investment Model (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust) developing a new habitat banking investment model to deliver BNG at scale focusing on three sites for carbon storage, improved flood resilience and visitor well-being. The aim is to monetise potential for revenue generation through biodiversity credits.
- Greater Manchester Environment Fund: Scaling up Natural Capital Investment to restore peatland by modelling revenues from the sale of carbon and biodiversity credits through woodland creation/improved biodiversity.

The Warwickshire Local Authority Natural Capital Investment Strategy (NCIS)

The majority of biodiversity net gain (BNG) offset sites in Warwickshire are funded by annual payments made from Warwickshire County Council (WCC) to the landowner. In these situations, there is an opportunity to 'invest' the committed funding secured for future years' payments. This investment in BNG, or other ecosystem services markets (for example carbon sequestration, air quality or flood risk mitigation), could facilitate the development of these markets, fund vital environmental initiatives, give communities better access to nature and generate additional income.

The NCIS would also be a significant funding stream and contributor to the delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) that Defra is asking WCC to prepare as a Responsible Authority with support from Supporting Authorities including Warwick District Council.

Warwickshire Local Authority Natural Capital Investment Strategy will be a top-level strategy to determine, and manage, how the Warwickshire Local Authorities will utilise the nature-based compensation monies, and other income streams, generated through the planning system or other voluntary environmental markets including funding the actions of this Biodiversity Action Programme. It will also give a 'strategic direction of travel' for achieving and implementing investment in Warwickshire's natural capital assets.

Off-site BNG

The off-site biodiversity market offers an opportunity for Warwick District Council (WDC) to gain additional income and help contribute towards the aims of the Biodiversity Action Programme. This could be through being a broker, or through selling to the off-site biodiversity market. This would be in addition to work being done on a County level described above.

As a broker, the Council would be able to connect developers to off-site unit providers. The Council could also identify target sites that would benefit from biodiversity enhancement and sell biodiversity units from enhancements on this land (or via a habitat bank in collaboration with other landowners) into the off-site market. We would need to make sure we don't direct buyers towards our units in preference to other suppliers. The Council could also provide guidance for landowners, to encourage habitat creation in line with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)².

¹ *Innovative nature projects awarded funding to drive private investment - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)*

² *www.gov.uk/guidance/sell-biodiversity-units-as-a-land-manager*

Stacking

Nature markets provide a way for land managers to receive payment for making improvements that benefit nature. If we use our land to undertake environmental projects, we may be able to sell these services as credits or units to different buyers.

Stacking is when multiple credits or units from different nature markets are sold separately from the same or different activities on a piece of land (for example biodiversity units through biodiversity net gain (BNG) and off-site nutrient units).

Defra are currently developing guidelines on stacking including where BNG can be used on a site alongside other funding streams. Warwick District Council will continue to work with our partners including Warwickshire County Council to identify the best way to use our land on the nature market including consideration of carbon, nutrient, and biodiversity off-set credits, where stacking is permissible.

Other Funding Streams

Depending on the specific project details arising from this Biodiversity Action Programme, other funding streams will be reviewed. This will include but not be limited to:

- Public Grants (e.g. NEIRF, Defra, Heritage Lottery Fund)
- Partnerships (e.g. funding streams available to County Council, Town and Parish Councils)
- Corporate Social Responsibility Environmental Payments
- Section 106 payments
- Charitable organisations

APPENDIX 3: CASE STUDIES

Grassland improvements through overseeding

A number of Council owned sites, such as cemeteries, require grass to be managed in a formal way and cut on a regular basis. This can limit the diversity in grassland species and provides little biodiversity value.

To help improve this, we have overseeded areas at a number of these sites to introduce species such as birds-foot trefoil and clover into the grass sward. These species are known to tolerate intensive mowing regimes and add well needed nectar sources for pollinators, alongside increasing the amenity appeal of the area.



Results of overseeding at Kenilworth Cemetery after 5 years

Meadow creation

Making changes to the way we maintain grassed areas can significantly improve the diversity and richness of these habitats and support numerous species.

We have introduced meadow areas into a number of our parks and open spaces creating flower-rich grasslands which benefit insects and add lots of colour throughout the seasons.

The process used to create these meadow areas includes: initial cultivation or scarification; followed by overseeding with a species rich seed mix; then frequent grass cutting in the first year to allow the seed to establish; followed by an annual cut from the second year to allow the meadow to flourish.



Meadow area in front of Jubilee House, Kenilworth



Meadow area at Warwick Cemetery



Meadow area on the former golf course at Abbey Fields, Kenilworth (created by the Friends of Abbey Fields)

Bird seed and nectar areas at Newbold Comyn

As part of ongoing habitat improvements at Newbold Comyn, we have created strips of unmanaged grassland alongside the football pitches, seeding them with insect and bird friendly seed mixes. These areas have been allowed to self-establish and now provide important seed and nectar sources for a range of insects and birds as well as foraging and shelter opportunities for other species such as hedgehogs and reptiles.

These areas also act as important transitional zones connecting the adjacent nature reserve with other habitats.



Bird seed and nectar strips alongside football pitches at Newbold Comyn, Leamington Spa



Thistles at Newbold Comyn, Leamington Spa

Acid grassland restoration at Abbey Fields

An area of rare acid grassland at Abbey Fields has been restored and brought back into appropriate management.

Acid grasslands can support particularly rare plant species and specialist invertebrates not found in other habitats.

The acid grassland at Abbey Fields has been allowed to grow out and is now cut and baled once a year, allowing species such as Harebells to flourish (as shown in this photo).



Harebells on acid grassland at Abbey Fields, Kenilworth



Acid grassland at Abbey Fields, Kenilworth

Bird feeding crops at St Mary's Lands, Warwick

As part of the management plan for St Mary's Lands, we have set aside an area specifically for bird feeding crop. A bird feeding mix has been sown targeting farmland birds as well as also providing enhancement for other (non-bird) target species. These crops are left unharvested over winter providing a reliable food source for seed-eating birds and shelter for birds, insects and mammals. This photo shows a patch of bird food crop, which includes sunflowers.

In addition, we have undisturbed areas at St Mary's Lands to create tussocky grassland for ground nesting birds such as skylark, along with wet/damp areas and ponds to benefit a whole host of species.



Bird food crop, including sunflowers, at St Mary's Lands in Warwick

Spring bulb planting

We have introduced spring bulb planting into some of our parks and open spaces to provide early food and nectar sources for pollinators waking from hibernation. Flowers include crocus and daffodil.

With the decline of certain insect species, particularly bees, and other species waking earlier from hibernation due to a warmer climate, these additional early sources of food and nectar are vital to their survival.

These bulb displays can be seen in many places across the district including: Abbey Fields in Kenilworth; Clarendon Square, Victoria Park and Fords Field in Leamington Spa; and St Nicholas Park in Warwick.



Crocuses at Victoria Park, Leamington Spa

Habitat boosts for invertebrates and other wildlife

An old derelict toilet in Warwick Cemetery has been converted into a giant bug house to provide essential habitat for pollinators and other species.

The bug house is made entirely out of recycled materials, with log piles for roosting insects and holes drilled for solitary bees and wasps. In addition, old hanging baskets have been used to create nesting chambers for hedgehogs, and there is space in the roof and access points to encourage roosting bats and birds.

Another habitat boost we have introduced into many of our parks and open spaces is the 'standing monolith tree'. Where trees are felled for safety reasons, we often leave a significant portion of the trunk in situ and drill holes for solitary insects such as bees and wasps, as well as creating crevices for bats to use.

Similarly, where trees have died or have lost large branches, we will often leave these in situ (where safe and appropriate) to provide important deadwood habitats for a range of species.



'Bug' House at Warwick Cemetery



Standing monolith in Jephson Gardens, Leamington Spa

Sustainable planting

We started the move to more sustainable planting over 11 years ago. Back then we were planting over 160,000 bedding plants every year for summer displays in our parks and open spaces. Over the years we have reduced this to 40,000, instead creating displays of more sustainable plants which require less watering and maintenance and have greater resilience to our changing climate.

Careful thought is put into all schemes to provide benefits for a variety of species, along with seasonal colour and interest.



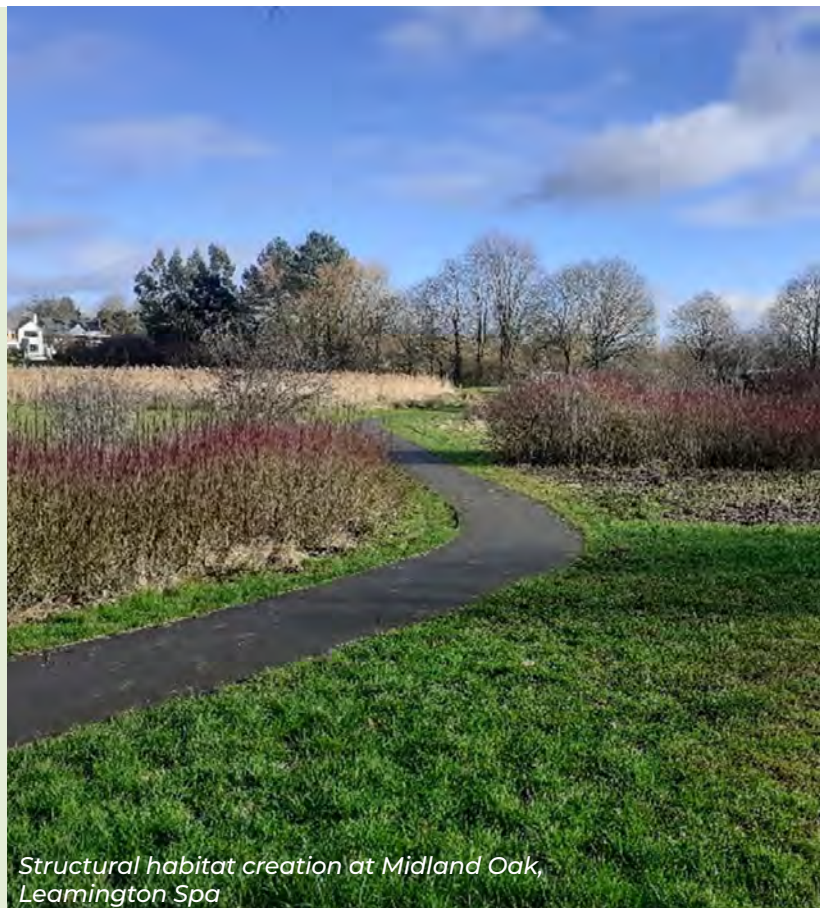
Sustainable planting in Jephson Gardens, Leamington Spa



Sustainable planting outside St Peter's Car Park, Leamington Spa

Structural habitat creation

In a number of our parks and open spaces we have implemented maintenance regimes that help to create different layers of grassland habitat to benefit a range of species. We do this by splitting the site into 5 sections and cutting a different section each year on a rolling 5-year cycle. This photo of Midland Oak in Leamington Spa helps to show the layers of habitat created through this approach - the area to the left is just over a year old, the area to the right at the back is 4 years old and the area just in front has recently been cut and overseeded with teasel and knapweed to provide nectar and seed sources for insects and birds.



Structural habitat creation at Midland Oak, Leamington Spa

APPENDIX 4: MEASURES FOR REPORTING PROGRESS AGAINST THE ACTION PLAN TO 2030

Biodiversity Action Programme Theme	Ref.	Measure	Frequency of reporting
Theme 1: Nature Recovery and Management	1.1	No. of records of target species to identify % increase/trends.	Annual
	1.2	% of Warwick District Council land under active management for biodiversity (to inform progress against 30% by 2030 target).	Annual
	1.3	Increase against baseline in no. of Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) on Warwick District Council land under active management.	Annual
	1.4	Increase against baseline in no. of Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) on Warwick District Council land under active management.	Annual
	1.5	Area (m2 or Ha) or % of woodland on Warwick District Council land in active management.	Annual
	1.6	Area (m2) or % of Warwick District Council land where work has been undertaken to transition it to good or improved condition grassland.	Annual
	1.7	% of tree canopy cover in Warwick District (to inform progress against 16.5% target by 2050).	Annual
	1.8	Quantity (m) of new hedgerow planted in Warwick District either directly by Warwick District Council or where the Council has enabled/supported partners/volunteers to plant new hedgerow.	Annual
	1.9	Quantity (litres) of pesticides and herbicides used by Warwick District Council for grounds maintenance and street cleansing operations (measured against baseline to inform progress of restricting/reducing usage).	Annual
	1.10	Increase against baseline in area (m2) of Warwick District Council land allowed to rewild.	Annual
	1.11	Area (m2) of new pond or wetland created on existing Warwick District Council land (including swales, scrapes, rain gardens, SuDS, etc.)	Annual
Theme 2: Involving People and Partnerships	2.1	No. of Local Nature Action Plans developed and adopted by town and parish councils in Warwick District.	Annual
	2.2	No. of visits to Warwick District Council biodiversity webpages and no. of shares and reactions to social media posts.	Annual
	2.3	No. of practical conservation/volunteering activities supported by Warwick District Council.	Annual
Theme 3: Legal, Planning, Policy and Funding commitments	3.1	Total funds (£) secured through external funding bids (excluding Biodiversity Net Gain, Community Infrastructure Levy or Section 106 funding) and invested in projects that support delivery of the Biodiversity Action Programme.	Annual
	3.2	No. of biodiversity units on Warwick District Council land registered for off-site biodiversity net gain (BNG) funding.	Annual
	3.3	% split of biodiversity net gain delivered (through the planning system): a) on-site within new developments; b) off-site locally and c) through the national credit system.	Annual
	3.4	Amount (£) of natural capital investment spent in Warwick District.	Annual

