



**Melton  
Borough  
Council**

# **Biodiversity Duty Plan 2026 - First Consideration and Action Plan**

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## Approach

The UK's biodiversity is declining with 15% of species threatened with extinction. Since 1970 more species have seen their populations decrease than increase. Habitat loss, overexploitation, climate change, pollution and invasive species are the primary drivers of biodiversity declines.

The actions the Council takes on biodiversity will contribute to the achievement of national goals and targets including by 2030, the government has committed to halt the decline in species abundance and protect 30% of UK land.

The Biodiversity Duty Plan includes a 'first consideration' on the Council's approach to biodiversity and following this an action plan to further this agenda. The document shows how the Council is, and will continue to, meet the biodiversity duty including actions, strategies and policies that deliver and support conservation and enhancement of biodiversity.

# 1 First Consideration

## 1.1 Introduction

When originally enacted, Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 required that ‘every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, as far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity’.

The Environment Act 2021 then amended Section 40 of the NERC, to further strengthen the ‘duty’ placed on local authorities. Planning Practice Guidance for complying with the biodiversity duty, sets out that:

*‘public authorities who operate in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This is the strengthened ‘biodiversity duty’ that the Environment Act 2021 introduces.*

*This means that, as a public authority, you must:*

- *Consider what you can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.*
- *Agree policies and specific objectives based on your consideration.*
- *Act to deliver your policies and achieve your objectives’.*

To meet its biodiversity duty public authorities should have completed a ‘first consideration’ of what action to take for biodiversity by 1st January 2024 and then agree policies and objectives as soon as possible after this date. Agreed actions should then be reconsidered within five years of completion of this ‘first consideration’ with subsequent rolling reconsiderations at a frequency of no longer than every five years.

Local authorities (excluding parish councils) and local planning authorities must publish a biodiversity report which documents the policies and actions carried out to comply with the biodiversity duty. The end date of your first reporting period should be no later than 1 January 2026. After this, the end date of each reporting period must be within 5 years of the end date of the previous reporting period

## 1.2 Initiatives, strategies and policies

Whilst the strengthened biodiversity duty is a relatively new requirement, the Council has a number of existing initiatives, strategies and policies that show how it is, and will continue to, meet the biodiversity duty

The full list of initiatives, strategies and policies are set out in **Table 1**, however a summary list of the overarching documents are set out below:

- Corporate Strategy (2024-2036) sets out the Council's long-term ambitions for the next 12 years and includes the vision statement to be recognised as clean, green, and attractive; well on our way to becoming a net zero borough, to be delivered through specific objectives and actions in the Corporate Delivery Plan (2024-2028).
- The Melton Local Plan (2011-2036), adopted October 2018, includes a number of objectives and policies that seek to protect and enhance the natural environment and biodiversity within the borough. A partial Local Plan review is underway, including updates to some of these environmental policies.
- Climate Change Strategy (2024-2036), adopted June 2024, supports tackling climate change alongside protecting and enhancing the natural environment; these issues are co-dependent given biodiversity will suffer from the impacts of climate change, but also has a mitigating effect.

In addition to the above, the Council has an agreement with Leicestershire County Council to provide ecology and biodiversity advice for all relevant development proposals, which includes advice to the Council on Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in accordance with mandatory requirements. Furthermore, in collaboration with the Council, the County Council is producing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, which will identify the most valuable areas and priorities for nature recovery alongside wider environmental goals.

The Council manages some parks and green spaces and is delivering a number of key actions to meet the biodiversity duty including tree planting programmes; adopting management and maintenance regimes for our parks and open spaces that are beneficial to biodiversity. Whilst we are planning areas for improving biodiversity in our parks and open spaces it is important to consider what else can be done in order to fulfil the Biodiversity Duty and make Melton Borough more ecologically resilient and wildlife rich.

## **Table 1**

### Corporate Strategy 2024 - 2027

<b>Relevant initiatives / strategies / policies already in place</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Vision '36	Cherish and celebrate our villages and rural heritage, delivering on the Rural Capital of Food and maximising investment in our waterways, canals, walkways and green infrastructure
Vision '36	Be recognised as clean, green, and attractive; well on our way to becoming a net zero borough

### Corporate Delivery Plan 2024 - 2028

<b>Relevant initiatives / strategies / policies already in place</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Making the borough cleaner, safer and greener	Develop and implement Country Park Masterplan secure Green Flag Award
Making the borough cleaner, safer and greener	Establish 'Pride in Place' group to improve environmental quality
Improving the town centre	Develop and implement a design guide to improve the design, aesthetics and environment of the town centre
Securing the right infrastructure to enable sustainable growth	Explore opportunities with partners to support investment in waterways and green infrastructure
Ensuring Planning Policy and Development support sustainable growth	Complete Local Plan Review and respond to updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Delivering a net zero borough	Adopt Climate Change Strategy

Local Plan (2011-2036)

<b>Relevant initiatives / strategies / policies already in place</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Strategic Objective 19	Reduce the risk of flooding and avoid development in areas prone to flooding.
Strategic Objective 20	Protect and enhance the natural environment and biodiversity.
Strategic Objective 22	Protect and manage the use of natural resources and mitigate activities that cause their loss or degradation.
Strategic Objective 23	Prepare for, limit, and adapt to climate change and promote low carbon development.
Policy SS3 – Sustainable Communities (unallocated sites)	In rural settlements outside the main urban area, the Council will seek to protect and enhance existing services and facilities and will support sustainable development proposals. Specific criteria requires development proposals to respect ecological, heritage and biodiversity features and where appropriate provide mitigation to prevent any potential harm.
Policy SS4 – Melton South Sustainable Neighbourhood (Strategic Development Location)	Strategic site policy which requires the protection and enhancement of important areas of biodiversity (habitats and species).
Policy SS5 – Melton North Sustainable Neighbourhood	Strategic site policy which seeks to retain and mitigate any potential harm to biodiversity areas and provide a coherent biodiversity and green infrastructure network.
Policy EN2 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity	Policy seeks to achieve net gains for nature and proactively seek habitat creation as part of new development proposals. Development proposals will protect and enhance biodiversity, ecological networks and geological conservation interests throughout the borough and beyond its boundaries.
Policy EN3 – The Melton Green Infrastructure Network	Strategic approach to the delivery, protection and enhancement of green infrastructure within the borough. New or enhanced green infrastructure corridors and assets should make provision for biodiversity opportunities, including incorporating trees, shrubs and other natural features within new developments.
Policy EN4 – Areas of Separation	Policy to protect areas of separation to avoid coalescence, retain highly tranquil landscapes and safeguard settlement character.

<b>Relevant initiatives / strategies / policies already in place</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Policy EN5 – Local Green Space	Policy to protect designated Local Green Space, to avoid harm to key features, value and functionality, and to protect character.
Policy EN7 – Open Space, Sport and Recreation	Seeks to protect existing open space, sport and recreation provision within the borough, and provide new or enhanced facilities to meet the needs associated with new development.
Policy EN8 – Climate Change	Overarching policy requiring development proposals to demonstrate how mitigating and adapting to climate change has been considered.
Policy EN9 – Ensuring Energy Efficient and Low Carbon Development	Major new development is required to demonstrate how the need to reduce carbon emissions has influenced the design, layout and energy source used, including how the design incorporates opportunities for cooling through tree planting and landscaping.
EN10 – Energy Generation from Renewable and Low Carbon Sources	Consideration of renewable and low carbon energy proposals in the context of sustainable development and climate change. Criteria takes account of designated nature conservation, geodiversity or biodiversity assets, including potential impact on ancient woodland and veteran trees.
EN11 – Minimizing the Risk of Flooding	Policy to ensure development does not increase the risk of flooding and seek to reduce flood risk to other areas. Where appropriate, measures to reduce flood risk should provide local amenity and biodiversity benefits.
EN12 – Sustainable Drainage Systems	Policy to achieve surface water management through incorporation of SuDS, including through provision of green infrastructure and native tree planting.
IN3 – Infrastructure Contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy	Policy to secure necessary infrastructure and/or developer contributions to local infrastructure to deliver sustainable communities. Provision of SuDs should aim to create amenity space, enhance biodiversity and contribute to a network of green and blue spaces.
D1 – Raising the Standard of Design	Policy requires all new development to be of high quality design. Specific criteria relates to existing trees, hedges and landscaping, and references Building for Life 12 requirements and principles of ‘Active Design’, which consider biodiversity impacts and opportunities for enhancement.

## Climate Change Strategy (2024-2036)

<b>Relevant initiatives / strategies / policies already in place</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Key Area for Action Natural Environment and Farming	Support Leicestershire County Council to develop and adopt a Local Nature Recovery Strategy and action plan
	Explore opportunities to work with the local community to develop a plan to ‘green’ Melton Mowbray town centre and key settlements in the borough; to reduce emissions, be more climate resilient and explore a community suggestion to become a ‘bee friendly’ town
	Encourage all landowners to adopt more nature and climate friendly land management practices. Including actions that can be done at small scales, in local parks and green spaces, in streets, gardens and around workplaces, such as creating new wildflower habitats.
	Promote natural water management measures that can benefit nature and improve climate resilience by reducing flood and summer drought risks.
	Ensure new development works well with its natural environment and that it delivers biodiversity net gains. Ensure local planning approaches also work well to support farm building modernisation and retrofitting which can help farmers reduce their environmental impacts.

## Local Nature Recovery Strategy

<b>Relevant initiatives / strategies / policies already in place</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)	Leicestershire County Council and partners are developing a LNRS to co-ordinate a response to biodiversity loss across Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. It will identify existing priorities and plans from across core sectors to agree priorities and measures that can be delivered alongside or in support of existing measures

## Environmental Services

<b>Relevant initiatives / strategies / policies already in place</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Tree felling	When a council owned tree becomes dead, diseased or dangerous, we may have to fell the tree. Where possible, we try to leave dead wood safely in place in wooded areas to provide an additional habitat.
Tree inspection	We are strengthening our tree inspection and maintenance schedule to ensure we give them the best chance of surviving for as long as possible
Pesticides	We have reduced the use of pesticides by no longer using them as part of our general maintenance schedule in Melton Country Park or our cemeteries.
Invasive species	We are currently reviewing measures to treat and remove an invasive plant located in one of our parks which is contributing to the erosion of a river bank.
Wildflower planting	We are in the process of creating a wildflower meadow at Melton Country Park to create an additional habitat.
Open spaces and play area policy/strategy	We are in the process of drafting an open spaces and play area policy/strategy to help prioritise a scheduled programme of improvements and replacement of equipment across the borough of Melton.
Community action	Developing a programme of environmental community clean up days; developing and implementing the Country Park Masterplan to secure Green Flag Award & establishing a 'Pride in Place' group to improve environmental quality.

## Partners

<b>Relevant initiatives / strategies / policies already in place</b>	<b>Summary</b>
	We work in partnership with Friends of the Melton Country Park
	We work in partnership with Melton in Bloom to create planted areas around the town centre.

## Corporate Assets

<b>Relevant initiatives / strategies / policies already in place</b>	<b>Summary</b>
	Acquiring and disposal of land

### 1.3 Further Action

A Biodiversity Duty Plan will be required to:

- Outline across all functions of the Council, what we are doing and planning to do to conserve and enhance biodiversity
- Form the basis for the Biodiversity Duty Reporting.
- Ensure that we are able to demonstrate how we are meeting the Biodiversity Duty from the policy level through to strategy, processes and practices
- Describe any specific projects that contribute to meeting the Biodiversity Duty

## 2 Biodiversity Duty Action Plan

Following the First Consideration this section sets out what we have done and will do to further the biodiversity agenda. including an action plan to cover the next 5 years.

### 2.1 Development Statement

To establish a robust action plan, we have talked to teams across the council to establish current biodiversity actions and co-ordinate future actions that are as ambitious as possible. Key teams from across the council have been involved in the creation of this action plan and will take ownership of the relevant actions and targets to conserve and enhance biodiversity. This also includes support on monitoring and reporting our progress

It is crucial to avoid the perception that responsibility or knowledge for this agenda rests with a single individual or team. The Biodiversity Duty is a collective, corporate responsibility. Every department and staff member has a valuable contribution to make, and our success depends on fostering a culture of shared ownership and partnership across the Council.

#### Key Teams

- Corporate Assets
- Communications
- Environmental Services
- Housing and Communities
- Planning Policy

Furthermore, we have incorporated government guidance on the biodiversity duty in the plan and considered existing local authority Action Plans and approaches.

### 2.2 Key Objectives

- Updating internal policies, frameworks and processes to better conserve and enhance biodiversity
- Managing land to conserve and enhance biodiversity
- Educating, advising and raising awareness of biodiversity
- Meeting biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirements as a local planning authority

## 2.3 Action Plan

The Action Plan covers current and future action on biodiversity over a five-year period which aligns with government reporting cycles

Key objective	Current Action and that completed during 2025	Future Action (over the next 5 years)	Lead
Updating internal policies, frameworks and processes to better conserve and enhance biodiversity	When a council owned tree becomes dead, diseased or dangerous, we may have to fell the tree. Where possible, we try to leave dead wood safety in place in wooded areas to provide an additional habitat	To approve a tree management policy that includes a consideration of biodiversity duty for example planting 2 trees for every 1 tree we remove	Environmental Services
Updating internal policies, frameworks and processes to better conserve and enhance biodiversity	Working across departments to maintain green spaces.	Continued action to maintain green spaces	Environmental Services
Updating internal policies, frameworks and processes to better conserve and enhance biodiversity	We have reduced the use of pesticides by no longer using them as part of our general maintenance schedule in Melton Country Park or our cemeteries	Continued action on reduced pesticide use	Environmental Services
Updating internal policies, frameworks and processes to better conserve and enhance biodiversity	Support the provision of allotments across the borough	To review allotment tenancy packs to include information on gardening tips to support wildlife including weed management	Corporate Assets

Key objective	Current Action and that completed during 2025	Future Action (over the next 5 years)	Lead
Updating internal policies, frameworks and processes to better conserve and enhance biodiversity	Tenant garden competition to encourage tenants to look after their gardens. Consideration is given to biodiversity as part of the judging criteria.	To review housing tenancy starter packs providing supplementary information on biodiversity at the start of their tenancies. The information will aim to encourage small, simple actions which support biodiversity, such as wildlife friendly weed management and plants for pollinators	Housing
Updating internal policies, frameworks and processes to better conserve and enhance biodiversity	The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) was completed and published on 1st August 2025. Melton Borough Council is a supporting authority in the preparation of the LNRS with Leicestershire County Council the responsible authority. This is the first LNRS for the area outlining a comprehensive strategic, landscape scale approach for enhancing and restoring biodiversity across the strategy area. The LNRS is accompanied by the Local Habitat Map, which provides a detailed visual representation of the most important existing and potential areas for nature within the strategy area	Implementation of the LNRS by local planning authorities. As the responsible authority Leicestershire County Council, through the LNRS steering group, are preparing guidance for local planning authorities to integrate the LNRS within planning processes. Progress on delivery of the strategy will need to be reported on within 3-8 years and approximately every 5 years thereafter	Leicestershire County Council LNRS steering group

Key objective	Current Action and that completed during 2025	Future Action (over the next 5 years)	Lead
Updating internal policies, frameworks and processes to better conserve and enhance biodiversity	A partial update of the adopted Melton Local Plan (2018) is underway including updates to relevant environmental policies to reflect biodiversity net gain and other environmental requirements. The Council reached the Regulation 19 consultation stage in January 2025 on the Pre-Submission Local Plan Update. It is this version of the Plan that will be submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in 2026.	Examination and adoption of the Melton Local Plan partial update; adoption currently anticipated in July 2027 (LDS, December 2025). Once adopted, these policies will be used in determining planning applications	Planning Policy
Updating internal policies, frameworks and processes to better conserve and enhance biodiversity	The Melton Mowbray Town Centre Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted on 18th September 2025, which includes principles and guidance to encourage development that integrates natural landscapes and supports biodiversity to enhance the ecological value of the area	Implementation of SPD; continue to be used in determining planning applications within Melton Mowbray town centre	Planning/Planning Policy
Updating internal policies, frameworks and processes to better conserve and enhance biodiversity	The Council's Air Quality Strategy has been approved by Cabinet - to provide a broader long-term framework for sustained air quality improvements across the borough	To publish the Air Quality Strategy and raise awareness	Environmental Health

Key objective	Current Action and that completed during 2025	Future Action (over the next 5 years)	Lead
Managing land and buildings to conserve and enhance biodiversity	We are strengthening our tree inspection and maintenance schedule to ensure we give them the best chance of surviving for as long as possible	Continued action on tree inspection and maintenance schedule	Environmental Services
Managing land and buildings to conserve and enhance biodiversity	We work in partnership with Friends of the Melton Country Park (MCP) and Melton in Bloom	To create a Melton Country Park Steering Group which will inform and support on the implementation of the MCP masterplan	Environmental Services
Managing land and buildings to conserve and enhance biodiversity	We work in partnership with Friends of the Melton Country Park (MCP) and Melton in Bloom	To achieve green flag status for Melton Country Park which has significant criteria around biodiversity included	Environmental Services
Managing land and buildings to conserve and enhance biodiversity	Working with Melton Wombles to ensure that litter is collected in a timely manner from litter picks across the borough.	Continued partnership work on litter collection	Environmental Services
Managing land and buildings to conserve and enhance biodiversity	We are currently reviewing measures to treat and remove an invasive plant located in one of our parks which is contributing to the erosion of a riverbank.	Work with key partners and agencies to ensure that Himalayan Balsam is eradicated	Environmental Services
Managing land and buildings to conserve and enhance biodiversity	New wildflower area created in Melton Country Park	Expand the creation of wildflower areas across open spaces, including Melton Country Park	Environmental Services

Key objective	Current Action and that completed during 2025	Future Action (over the next 5 years)	Lead
Educating, advising and raising awareness of biodiversity	MBC website updated to include key biodiversity related information, guidance and links ( <a href="https://www.meltonplan.co.uk/biodiversitynetgain">https://www.meltonplan.co.uk/biodiversitynetgain</a> )	To be kept under review and updated as needed	Planning Policy
Educating, advising and raising awareness of biodiversity	To work with Leicestershire County Council and districts to redesign the 'Sustainability Toolkit' for community groups, which includes a section on biodiversity and nature	To promote the 'Sustainability toolkit' to community groups across the borough	Climate Change
Educating, advising and raising awareness of biodiversity	Workshop held for key departments across the Council to explain the biodiversity duty	Further raise awareness of the biodiversity duty and action across all council departments	Climate Change
Educating, advising and raising awareness of biodiversity	Deliver walks via a Senior Walk at Melton Country Park and an Active Mums Club Buggy walk. There is also a monthly inclusive walk and talk around Play Close and we also deliver a walk at Frisby Lakes	Continued delivery of nature walks	Healthy and Active Communities
Educating, advising and raising awareness of biodiversity		The Stockyard development in Melton seeks to integrate green infrastructure and native planting, along with additional habitat opportunities for birds and insects, to enhance the ecological value of this brownfield site	Capital Program

<b>Key objective</b>	<b>Current Action and that completed during 2025</b>	<b>Future Action (over the next 5 years)</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Educating, advising and raising awareness of biodiversity	Promotion of council's positive actions to improve biodiversity within the borough such as new policies being implemented, work with partners being undertaken or new green spaces being created, including wildflower planting in the country park, planting trees across Melton, working with Melton in Bloom and local businesses	Continue with promotion of council activities to improve biodiversity within the borough. Consider ways to raise residents' awareness of biodiversity and design future communications with education in mind	Communications
<b>Key objective</b>	<b>Current Action and that completed during 2025</b>	<b>Future Action (over the next 5 years)</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Meeting biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirements as a local planning authority	Planning applications are being determined in accordance with mandatory biodiversity net gain requirements in consultation with LCC's ecology and biodiversity team	Oversee the implementation and long-term monitoring of approved BNG measures as detailed within Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans	Planning/Leicestershire County Council Ecology and Biodiversity team

## 2.4 Financial Implications

The actions in the delivery plan are resourced from departmental budgets utilising any external funding that has been awarded. Given the budget constraints of local government, it is not always possible to accelerate biodiversity actions, and the Council will determine biodiversity actions in line with available resources and look to utilise further funding opportunities when they arise.

## **3 Delivering the Plan**

The Action Plan is a working document, it will evolve over time to be amended and updated to reflect changing circumstances such as government and local policy, resource availability, Council priorities and following evaluation of biodiversity initiatives.

### **3.1 Enabling Actions**

It is recommended that further consultation is undertaken with key external stakeholders. This should include engagement with Leicestershire County Council, neighbouring district councils, and relevant environmental organisations. Collaborating with these partners will help ensure alignment with regional biodiversity strategies, facilitate the sharing of best practices, and support coordinated action across local authority boundaries. Such external consultation will also provide valuable insights and expertise, enhancing the effectiveness and credibility of the Council's Biodiversity Duty Plan and reporting process.

### **3.2 Monitoring**

Considering that climate change and biodiversity are particularly interconnected with cross-over actions involving the same departments, it is intended that the Officer group being established for progressing and tracking our climate action and commitments is combined with monitoring biodiversity action and compliance with the duty. This group will meet at least bi-annually with support from senior leaders.

Furthermore, it is intended that Performance Indicators are created to support this progress, with Member oversight provided through the Climate Change Working Group.

### **3.3 Reporting**

A Biodiversity Duty Report which documents the policies and actions carried out to comply with the Biodiversity Duty is to be published within 12 weeks of the reporting period end date.

The end date of the first reporting period should be no later than 1 January 2026. After this, the end date of each reporting period must be within 5 years of the end date of the previous reporting period. Defra intends to include references to the biodiversity reports in the 5-yearly reviews of the Environmental Improvement Plan.