

Broadland District Council Biodiversity Strategy

2025 - 2030



Setting the scene

Why biodiversity matters

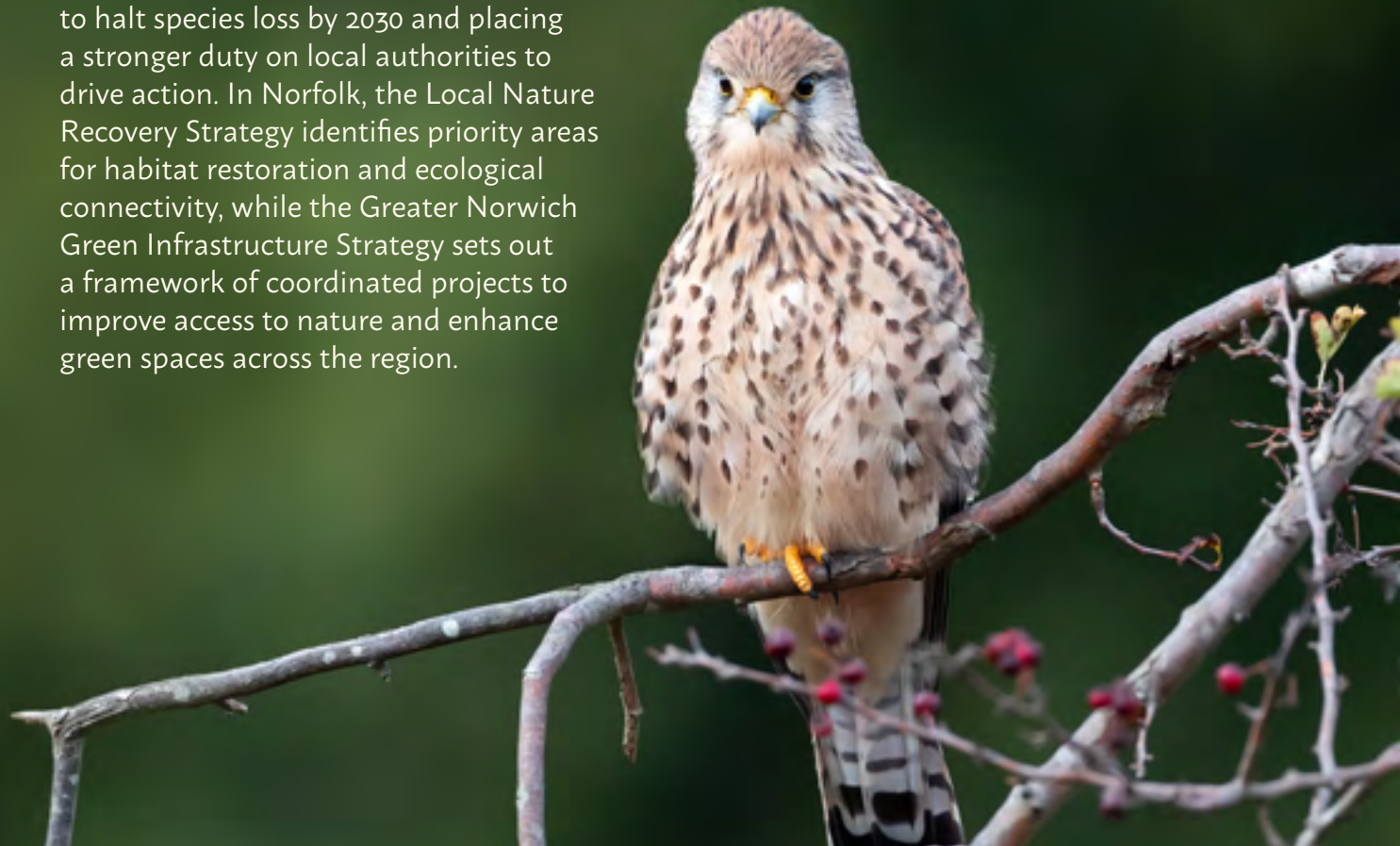
Biodiversity is the variety of all living things, from plants and animals to fungi and microorganisms, and the ecosystems they form. It is the foundation of healthy natural systems that provide essential services: clean air and water, climate regulation, flood protection, food production, and human wellbeing. But biodiversity is under pressure and therefore protecting and restoring nature is not just an environmental issue, it is essential for the long-term health, resilience, and prosperity of our communities.

Our commitment to nature

In 2023, Broadland District Council declared a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency, committing to place nature at the centre of local decision-making. This strategy outlines how we will respond, by embedding biodiversity in planning, investment, and community action to support thriving landscapes and wildlife across the district.

A changing landscape

The Environment Act 2021 provides a legal foundation for reversing nature's decline, introducing a statutory target to halt species loss by 2030 and placing a stronger duty on local authorities to drive action. In Norfolk, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy identifies priority areas for habitat restoration and ecological connectivity, while the Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy sets out a framework of coordinated projects to improve access to nature and enhance green spaces across the region.



Alongside these strategic commitments, there is a growing legal and policy shift towards market-based approaches for securing environmental outcomes. Mechanisms such as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Nutrient Neutrality (NN) are now being embedded in national legislation, often requiring developers to fund mitigation through credit-based schemes. These approaches are creating enforceable obligations, and new funding streams, that can be channelled into locally-led, nature-based solutions. As a council, we have a critical role in shaping how these mechanisms are implemented to ensure they deliver genuine ecological benefits for Broadland's landscapes and communities.



The value of biodiversity: Why it matters to us all

Biodiversity is more than just wildlife; it underpins the natural systems that support our lives. Through what are known as ecosystem services, nature delivers vital benefits to people, communities and the economy.



Clean air and water

Woodlands and wetlands filter pollution and improve the quality of the air we breathe and the water we use.



Climate regulation

Trees and soils store carbon and cool our towns and cities, helping us adapt to climate change.



Flood protection

Natural landscapes absorb rain and reduce flood risk, protecting homes and infrastructure.



Health and wellbeing

Access to nature-rich spaces boosts physical and mental health, reduces stress and supports active lifestyles.



Food and pollination

Pollinators like bees thrive in biodiverse environments and are essential for crops and food security.



Culture and learning

Nature inspires, educates and connects us to our sense of place, heritage and community.

The call to action

Why we must act now

The UK has seen a dramatic decline in biodiversity over the past 50 years and is now among the most nature-depleted countries in the world (State of Nature Report 2023). Species loss continues to be driven by intensive agriculture, urban development, pollution and the growing impacts of climate change. Without urgent intervention, we risk losing many species and habitats. There is consensus that we have reached a tipping point, with only a decade to reverse this decline. The actions we take now will determine the future health of our landscapes and the wildlife they support.

What this means for Broadland

Broadland is home to some of the UK's rarest and most threatened habitats, including reedbeds, fens, wet woodlands, lowland heath, and ancient woodland. Since 1945, the UK has lost around 40% of its reedbeds, with similar declines affecting other key habitats across the district.

Unique habitats within Broadland include internationally protected sites such as The Broads Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA). These special habitats are safeguarded under the Habitats Regulations, which require planning authorities, like Broadland District Council to assess the ecological impact of new development and prevent harm to these sites through a Habitats Regulations Assessment.



Climate change and biodiversity

The climate crisis and biodiversity loss are intrinsically linked. Rising global temperatures, altered rainfall patterns, and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, including drought, flooding, wildfires, and outbreaks of pests and diseases, are all placing mounting pressure on the UK's wildlife. These climate impacts are accelerating biodiversity decline and disrupting ecosystems already weakened by habitat loss and fragmentation.

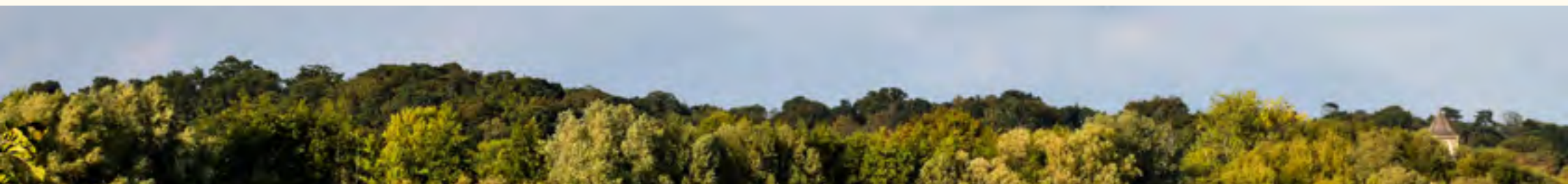
Given these risks, it is crucial that we embed climate resilience into our approach to biodiversity, both across our managed sites, and the wider district.

While continuing to prioritise UK native species, we also recognise the need to adapt our management to future conditions. This includes the careful introduction of species that are more tolerant of the climate extremes we anticipate. For instance, tree species such as Norway maple and sweet chestnut are being considered for their greater drought tolerance and adaptability to projected climate conditions.



When planting on our own sites, we will consider:

- Selecting drought-tolerant and wildfire-resistant species to enhance long-term resilience.
- Where appropriate, creating diverse, species-rich hedgerows that provide habitat connectivity.
- Using species mixes tailored to local soil types ensuring that plantings are both sustainable and ecologically appropriate.



The mission

To enrich biodiversity on the land we own, shape the greenspaces of tomorrow, and leverage our influence to create thriving ecosystems that increase species abundance and improve access to nature for all.

We recognise that our responsibility extends beyond council land. Protecting biodiversity requires action across the whole district. By working in partnership with local organisations, stakeholders, and communities, we can drive change at a broader scale and support nature recovery across connected landscapes.

This strategy is guided by the principles of the Lawton Review (2010), which called for "bigger, better and more joined-up" natural spaces. By committing to this strategy, we aim to take meaningful, lasting action, restoring habitats, supporting wildlife, and creating a thriving natural environment for future generations to enjoy.





Our biodiversity priorities

Priority one: Enhancing biodiversity on land we manage



We will survey and improve council-owned sites through tailored 5-year enhancement plans and regular monitoring. This includes habitat creation, species recording, and transparent reporting to demonstrate measurable progress.

Priority two: Supporting biodiversity beyond the land we own



We will deliver projects on land not owned by the Council but still within our influence. We will do this by leveraging funding for green infrastructure to deliver co-benefits: enhanced biodiversity, improved climate resilience, and more attractive, usable public spaces, i.e. “bigger, better and more joined up”.

Priority three: Inspiring and influencing wider action



Through collaboration with site managers, community partners, and local stakeholders, we will embed biodiversity thinking into land use practices.

What guides our Biodiversity Strategy?

The key national and local strategies that shape Broadland District Council's approach to biodiversity are:



Environment Act 2021

This national law sets the direction for protecting and restoring nature. It includes a legal target to halt species decline by 2030, requires a 10% biodiversity net gain in new developments, and calls on councils to create Local Nature Recovery Strategies and report on biodiversity progress.



Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy

This plan links green spaces across Norwich, South Norfolk and Broadland. It promotes nature-rich places that support wildlife, help us adapt to climate change, reduce recreational impacts on Norfolk's most vulnerable sites and improve public access to green spaces.



Broadland's Climate Change and Environment Plans

Our delivery plans commit the Council to achieving net zero carbon emissions and enhancing biodiversity. They include clear actions on decarbonisation, green-infrastructure, air quality and pollution, and waste reduction.



The Habitats Regulations (2017)

This requires any development likely to affect a protected site to undergo an Appropriate Assessment. If harm is identified, the project can only proceed if effective mitigation prevents adverse impacts on the site's integrity. Off-site measures, such as habitat improvements or visitor management, are often secured through legal agreements with the local planning authority, in Norfolk this is done via the [GI-RAMS](#)

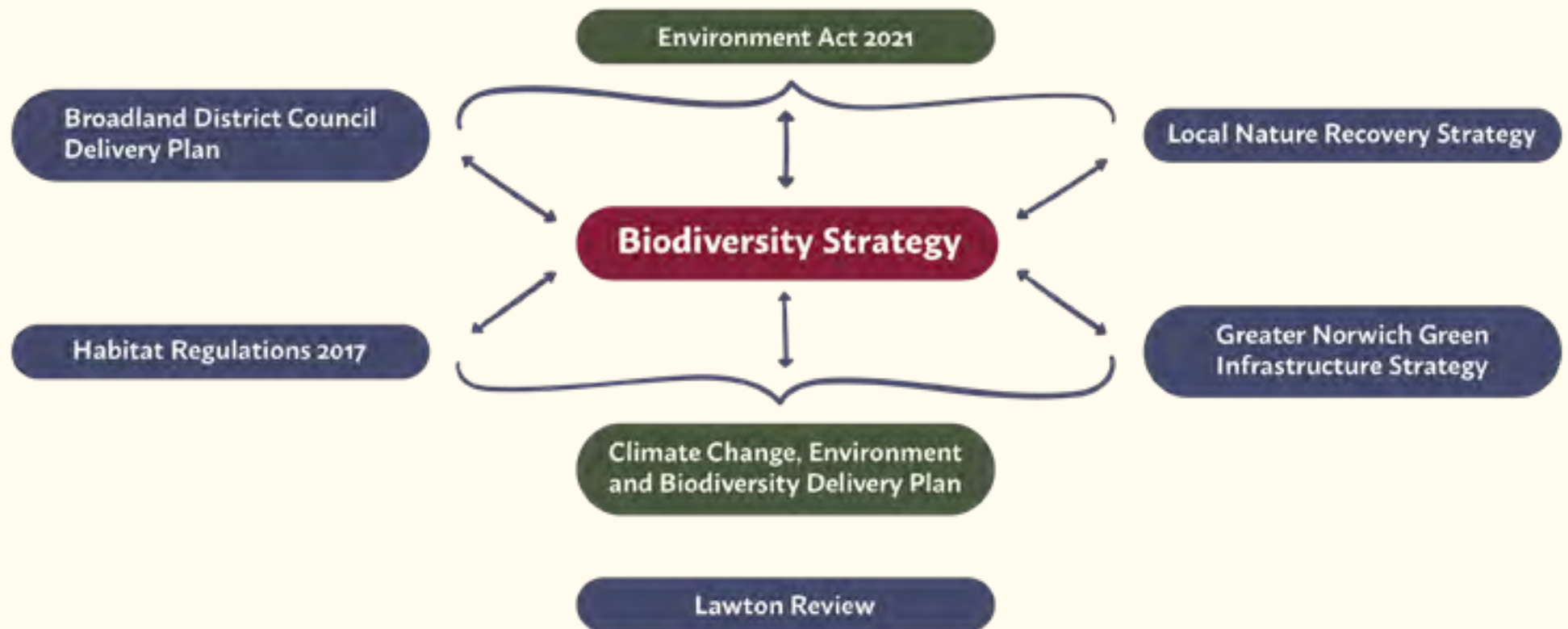


Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

The LNRS identifies the most valuable areas for nature and sets out how we can restore and connect habitats across Norfolk. It supports nature recovery by guiding where we should focus conservation efforts in Broadland.

Links with our other key policies

As already highlighted, our efforts to enhance biodiversity are part of a wider, joined-up approach. This strategy aligns with national, regional, and local policies that shape and guide how we restore nature in Broadland.



Turning priorities into actions



Priority one: Enhancing biodiversity on the land we manage

P1



Our role as a landowner

Broadland District Council manages a wide and varied portfolio of public green spaces, giving us a valuable opportunity to contribute meaningfully to nature recovery across the district.

This includes 106 amenity sites, 34 wooded areas, 15 equipped play areas, 3 commons, 1 country park, the Bure Valley Railway Path and a section of the Marriott's Way.

Together, these sites form a diverse mosaic of habitats, providing the flexibility to take a creative and tailored approach to enhancing biodiversity.

Through sensitive and informed management, we can improve the ecological quality and connectivity of these spaces while ensuring they continue to serve their original purpose as accessible, welcoming places for people.

- We will actively manage council-owned land and natural green spaces to enhance biodiversity, focusing on measurable improvements across key sites. This includes implementing tailored biodiversity improvement regimes and establishing baselines to track progress.
- Working closely with internal council teams, we will identify practical, high-impact, and sustainable interventions, such as pollinator planting schemes, habitat creation, and reduced mowing regimes, to deliver visible nature gains on council buildings and open land.
- We will also optimise the use of sites like Broadland Country Park for environmental outreach, transforming these spaces into accessible hubs for nature education, community engagement, and wellbeing. Our greenspaces will not only support nature recovery but also provide welcoming, high-quality environments for residents to enjoy.



What we will do	The key deliverables	Strategic priorities met
Conduct a biodiversity baseline of ten council-owned land in Broadland	A biodiversity baseline study for Broadland. The baseline will focus in on ten key sites in Broadland to understand the current biodiversity status of these areas. The baseline study will also provide some general recommendations for improving 'amenity' grassland sites	BNG1 - Restore and enhance biodiversity in Broadland Environment Act – S102. General duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity
Creation of a biodiversity improvement regime for specific council-owned sites	Ten improvement regimes for key sites owned by Broadland District Council. These regimes will focus on actions to be carried out on the sites annually to achieve a 10% biodiversity uplift by 2030. The work carried out on these sites will be reported on annually and in 2030, the sites will be surveyed to confirm the targeted uplift	BNG8 - Promote biodiversity on council-owned land Environment Act - S102. General duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity



What we will do	The key deliverables	Strategic priorities met
Optimise the use of our land for environmental outreach projects	Delivery of visitor facilities on Broadland Country Park. This includes nature trails, paths and attractions which will increase our residents access and engagement with nature and encourage a generation of people who care about and understand biodiversity	BNG9 - Optimise use of Broadland Country Park for environmental outreach projects
Work with council teams to enhance biodiversity on council buildings and land	Creation of a Sustainable Champion network for council staff to actively improve biodiversity in and around the Council's headquarters building	BNG8 - Promote biodiversity on council-owned land



Case Study P1: Enhancing biodiversity on the land we manage

Silver-studded Blue Butterfly reintroduction at Broadland Country Park

Broadland District Council supported the reintroduction of the rare Silver-studded Blue butterfly at Broadland Country Park in partnership with the Norfolk & Norwich Naturalists' Society. A total of 35 butterflies were translocated from Buxton Heath to re-establish the species in its historic habitat.

This biodiversity-led project enhances the park's ecological value and supports the recovery of a Norfolk-priority species.



Priority two: Supporting biodiversity beyond the land we own

P2

We want to see nature thrive across all of Broadland, not just on land the Council owns. To make that happen, we will work with partners, organisations, and local communities to deliver projects that connect and restore habitats across a wider landscape.

We will use national and local policy drivers, including the GNGB Green Infrastructure Strategy, Local Nature Recovery Strategies, the Environment Act, our own Delivery Plans, and the Habitats Regulations, to help secure and direct funding for nature recovery. This will allow us to support high-quality biodiversity projects on land outside our direct control, extending our impact across the district, and ensuring we embed the Lawton principles of bigger, better and more joined up!

Through the planning system, we will continue to meet our statutory responsibilities, delivering Biodiversity Net Gain and Nutrient Neutrality, to mitigate environmental impacts on all new developments.

Green Infrastructure is central to this approach. As well as enhancing biodiversity and supporting climate adaptation, it provides valuable spaces for people to enjoy. In some cases, such as the delivery of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces it directly supports the Habitats Regulations by reducing pressure on internationally protected sites, while creating new opportunities for wildlife to thrive elsewhere.



Implement and enforce biodiversity net gain requirements in planning

- As the Local Planning Authority, we will ensure all qualifying developments deliver a minimum 10% measurable biodiversity net gain, as mandated by the Environment Act.

Develop and deliver council-led green infrastructure projects

- Beyond our planning responsibilities, we will lead on the design and implementation of green infrastructure projects in partnership with local stakeholders.

Support delivery of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces - SANGS

- To reduce recreational pressure on ecologically sensitive protected areas such as the Broads and Buxton Heath, we will help deliver high-quality SANGs that provide alternative, accessible natural areas for residents, balancing biodiversity protection with community access to nature.

Provide grant funding for local biodiversity enhancement projects

- We will continue to offer and promote grant schemes that support community-led biodiversity improvements across Broadland. These include the restoration of ponds, planting of new woodlands, creation of wildflower areas, and habitat improvements on both public and private land.



What we will do	The key deliverables	Strategic priorities met
Deliver projects on land in Broadland that enhance biodiversity and increase species abundance	Biodiversity improvements on 20 acres of land we do not directly own by 2030	BNG1 - Restore and enhance biodiversity in Broadland GI Strategy – Supporting nature recovery LNRS – Enhancing biodiversity
Provide new SANGS to reduce recreational pressure on sensitive sites in Broadland and Norfolk	Acquisition and enhancement of a 114-acre woodland adjacent to Broadland Country Park. Improvements include biodiversity enhancements, upgraded pathways, and improved visitor infrastructure to complement and extend the existing park	The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 BNG9, BNG10 - Continue to promote Broadland Country Park as a Sustainable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)
To screen and assess all new developments to establish 'likely significant effect' on Protected Sites SACs, SPAs, SSI	If a 'likely significant effect' is the outcome of the screening, then a legal agreement is secured with the local planning authority for contributions towards GI (Green Infrastructure) and RAMS (Recreational Avoidance Mitigation)	The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 Norfolk GIRAMS Strategy and Action Plan



What we will do	The key deliverables	Strategic priorities met
Assist in the delivery of Nutrient Neutrality mitigation and Biodiversity Net Gain credit sites	As a local authority, we provide advice and legal mechanisms to enable the sale of nutrient and BNG credits. These credits support the delivery of mitigation schemes, often nature-based, to offset environmental impacts. Deliverables will be measured via reductions in kilograms of nitrogen and phosphorus levels achieved per annum, and the number of BNG credits generated	The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
Ensure delivery of BNG through the planning system	Implementation of a mandatory 10% BNG requirement for all new qualifying developments	Environment Act – S98. Biodiversity gain as condition of planning permission
Provide funding to support community-led nature recovery projects	Ten grants of up to £5,000 offered to local communities in Broadland to fund biodiversity enhancement projects	BNG4 – Encourage communities to take proactive steps to improve biodiversity GI Strategy – Supporting nature recovery



Case Study P2: Supporting biodiversity beyond the land we own

Drayton Drewray – Strategic Green Infrastructure Mitigation

Broadland District Council is progressing Drayton Drewray as a strategic mitigation site aligned with the Habitat Regulations Assessment for the Greater Norwich Local Plan.

The project will offer a country-park-scale green infrastructure site that provides high-quality alternative natural greenspace, reducing pressure on protected habitats. It is uniquely positioned to serve Greater Norwich and offers an effective alternative to piecemeal mitigation approaches.

Priority three: Inspiring and influencing wider action

P3

While we may not lead or directly fund all biodiversity and nature recovery projects in the district, we play an important enabling role. Through our networks, strategic partnerships, convening power, and planning influence, we can support and encourage landowners, farmers, voluntary groups, and other organisations to take action that enhances biodiversity across a broader landscape.



Ways we influence and support wider biodiversity action:

Facilitating partnerships and convening stakeholders

We will collaborate with key partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors, including organisations like the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), Norfolk Wildlife Trust, the Rivers Trust, RSPB, and the Woodland Trust, to identify shared priorities.

Influencing delivery of nutrient neutrality mitigation through nature-based solutions

In our role within the joint venture behind Norfolk Environmental Credits, we will help steer the delivery of nutrient mitigation schemes toward nature-based solutions, such as habitat restoration. This approach allows us to meet legal obligations for nutrient neutrality while also delivering wider ecological benefits.

Promoting landscape-scale recovery and connectivity

We will advocate for and help shape strategic, cross-boundary nature recovery projects that improve ecological connectivity, such as wildlife corridors, river restoration schemes, and woodland planting, particularly those aligning with the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

What we will do	The key deliverables	Strategic priorities met
Provide education and training to enable individuals, communities, and land managers to deliver sustainable biodiversity and green infrastructure projects	Deliver a series of workshops, guidance materials, and engagement sessions that encourage biodiversity projects within the district	BNG4 – Encourage communities to take proactive steps to improve biodiversity
Promote and facilitate funding opportunities for community-led green infrastructure projects	Promote and signpost organisations to wider local/national funding in partnership with organisations	BNG4 – Encourage communities to take proactive steps to improve biodiversity
Influence the delivery of nutrient neutrality mitigation through nature-based solutions	Support the delivery of wetlands and other habitat-based solutions via the Nutrient Mitigation Fund and Norfolk Environmental Credits joint venture, ensuring projects deliver both regulatory compliance and ecological benefits	BNG6 – Ensure development supports the natural environment by embedding biodiversity into the planning process



What we will do	The key deliverables	Strategic priorities met
Respond to statutory consultations to advocate for strong biodiversity policy, including Biodiversity Net Gain in NSIPs	Submit responses to national consultations (e.g. on NSIP BNG implementation) to ensure local ecological priorities are reflected in national decision-making	BNG1 – Restore and enhance biodiversity in Broadland through influence and policy engagement
Stay informed and engaged with the evolving landscape of mitigation funding, including the emerging Nature Recovery Fund under the Planning Infrastructure Bill	Monitor policy developments, participate in consultations, and use our position to influence how funds are allocated. Where possible, we will advocate for localised ecological benefits and seek to shape delivery mechanisms that reflect district-level priorities	BNG1, BNG4, BNG6 – Support local biodiversity through strategic influence, community empowerment, and effective mitigation



Case Study P3: Inspiring and influencing wider action

Nature North of Norwich (NNoN) – Partnering with Norfolk FWAG

Through the Nature North of Norwich project, Broadland District Council is working with Norfolk FWAG to support nature recovery on farmland across the district. This collaboration has established a new Farmer Cluster Group, which is delivering initiatives such as pond restoration, bird and bat box installation, wildflower planting, and cover cropping. The partnership enables landscape-scale biodiversity improvements beyond council-owned land.



Monitoring and reporting



Priority	How we will measure progress
Priority one: Enhancing biodiversity on land we manage	We will conduct baseline ecological surveys on ten council-owned sites to record habitats, species (including protected ones), and site conditions. Each site will follow a tailored Five-Year Biodiversity Enhancement Plan, with seasonal actions such as meadow creation, pond restoration or hedgerow planting. Annual monitoring will assess ongoing progress, and all sites will be resurveyed every 5 years to ensure a 10% uplift has been achieved
Priority two: Supporting biodiversity beyond the land we own	For projects on third-party or community-owned land, we will measure success through the number and quality of biodiversity projects delivered. Where feasible, we will support projects with baseline assessments, set clear ecological goals, and monitor progress through partner reporting, grant scheme outcomes, and ongoing engagement with landowners and delivery organisations. As the local planning authority, we will also support the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Nutrient Neutrality (NN) measures and report annually on outcomes, including kilograms of nutrients offset and BNG credits sold or delivered
Priority three: Inspiring and influencing wider action	Impact will be tracked through the reach and uptake of initiatives, such as community training, guidance, and collaborative planning. We will document how biodiversity has been embedded into wider land-use decisions (e.g. consultation responses, partnership projects, strategic GI)

Reporting on all three priorities will be published annually on the Council's website. These reports will cover the full scope of biodiversity-related activities undertaken by the Council. This includes work on our own land, projects we fund or support elsewhere in the district, and efforts to inspire and influence wider action.

