

South Norfolk Council

Biodiversity monitoring report 1

Jan 2023 – Jan 2026



Setting the scene

Delivering and monitoring our commitment to nature

In 2025, South Norfolk Council adopted the updated [Climate Change, Environment and Biodiversity Delivery Plan 2025 – 2028](#), which addresses climate change, climate action, biodiversity and broader matters regarding environmental quality and protection.

The [Environment Act 2021](#) provides a legal foundation for reversing nature's decline. A change in this legislation introduced a statutory target to halt species loss by 2030 and place a stronger duty on local authorities to drive action. In response to this change, we have published our [Biodiversity Strategy](#), which outlines the long-term plan for how we will embed biodiversity in planning, investment, and community action to support thriving landscapes and wildlife across the district. The structured approach provides us with a framework for restoring and enhancing biodiversity across the district, while ensuring compliance with the legal requirements as set out within the Environment Act 2021, as well as within local

policy drivers, such as our [Climate Change, Environment and Biodiversity Delivery Plan 2025 – 2028](#), [Norfolk's Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#) and the [Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy](#).

The Environment Act 2021 also requires local authorities to publish biodiversity reports to summarise the actions they have taken to comply with these new duties under the act. We will therefore monitor and annually report on the actions taken against our commitments to nature, as well as against wider strategic objectives, as outlined within the Biodiversity Strategy. The long-term approach for delivering and monitoring these commitments can be found within the Strategy document, which we recommend reading alongside this monitoring report.



Our biodiversity priorities



The Biodiversity Strategy outlines our three key Biodiversity Priorities for supporting biodiversity and enhancing nature. The annual monitoring reports will measure progress against each of these priority areas, including our key achievements, as well as specific actions taken against each priority.

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 our boundaries



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.

Further detail on our Biodiversity Priorities are included within our [Biodiversity Strategy](#).

Priority one: Enhancing biodiversity on land we manage

P1

Biodiversity improvements we have delivered on our own land

In 2025, biodiversity baseline surveys were conducted on 11 of our council-owned sites. These sites consisted of a mixture of woodland and amenity areas.

From these baseline surveys, biodiversity improvement regimes were created for each site, which recommend actions to be carried out annually on the sites to achieve a 10% biodiversity uplift by 2030. Biodiversity enhancement measures for each of the Sites considered the existing habitats present, the recreational usage of each Site and the constraints this may present to which habitat enhancements are likely to be achievable, and the priorities for habitat enhancement as provided in the LNRS for Norfolk. The individual improvement regimes from each site can be found on our [website](#).

Initial recommendations from the regimes are starting to be implemented across the sites where practical, with longer-term recommendations integrated into the sites' management plans. All interventions on site are being monitored on an annual basis.

Queens Hills Community Park, Costessey

Council-owned sites for biodiversity enhancement

Site 1 – Kynevett Green, Ashwellthorpe

Site 2 – Whispering Oaks, Wymondham

Site 3 – Scholars Walk, Diss

Site 4 – Oakfield Road, Long Stratton

Site 5 – Carr Lane Shotesham Road, Poringland

Site 6 – Chaffinch Mews, Harleston

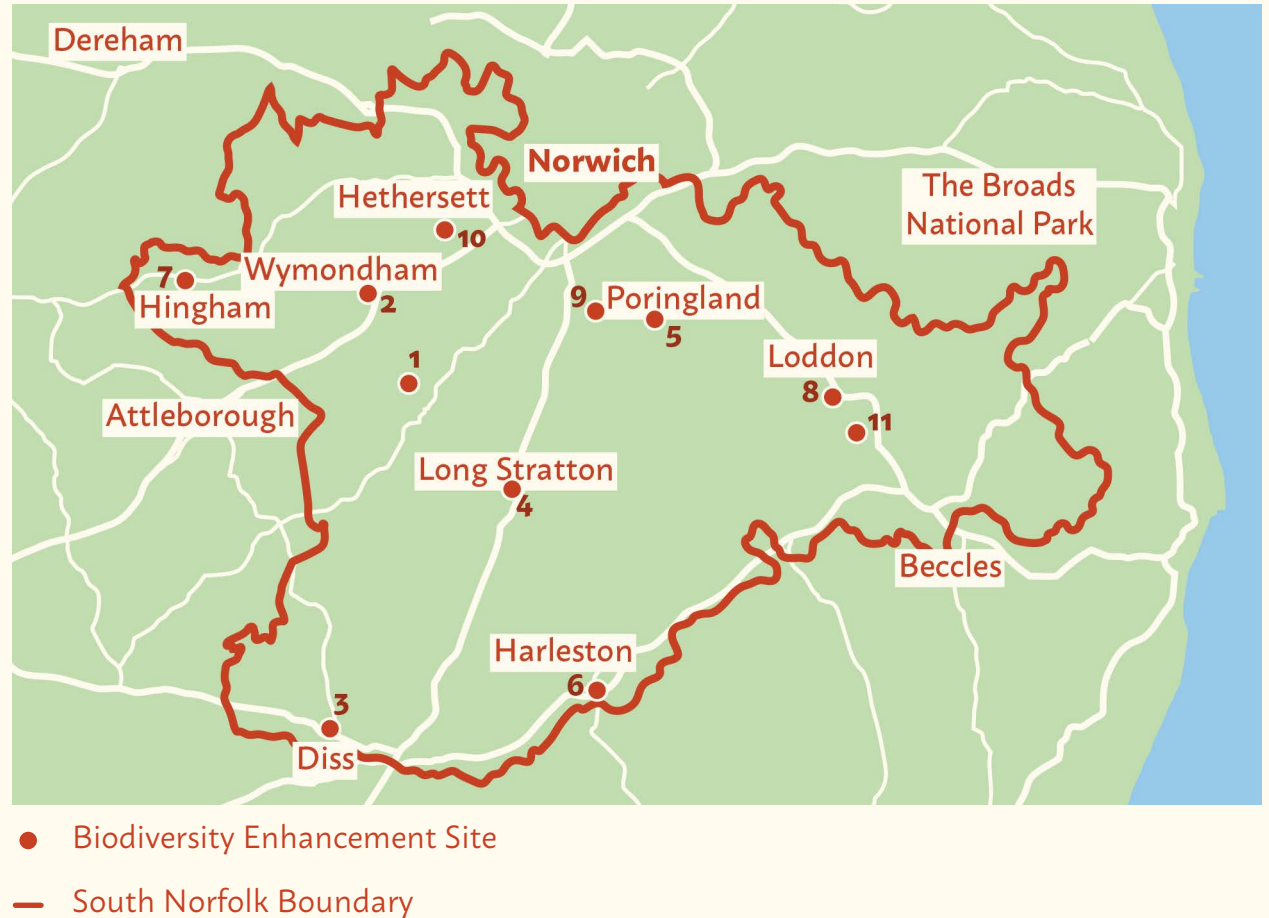
Site 7 – Malsters Drive, Hingham

Site 8 – Gunton Road, Loddon

Site 9 – Five Acres, Stoke Holy Cross

Site 10 – Ullswater Drive, Hethersett

Site 11 – Hales Green Common, Hales



Priority one: Progress pathway

Achieving long-term biodiversity uplift on our own land

This graph to the right provides an overview of the existing baseline Habitat Units present at each of the chosen sites and how the proposed habitat enhancement and creation measures within the biodiversity improvement regimes would uplift the BNG value of each Site.

The graph shows that a minimum uplift of 10% in Habitat Units is possible for seven of the 11 Sites with two further sites (Scholars Walk, Diss (Site 3) and Ullswater Drive, Hethersett (Site 10)) close to achieving a 10% uplift in BNG.

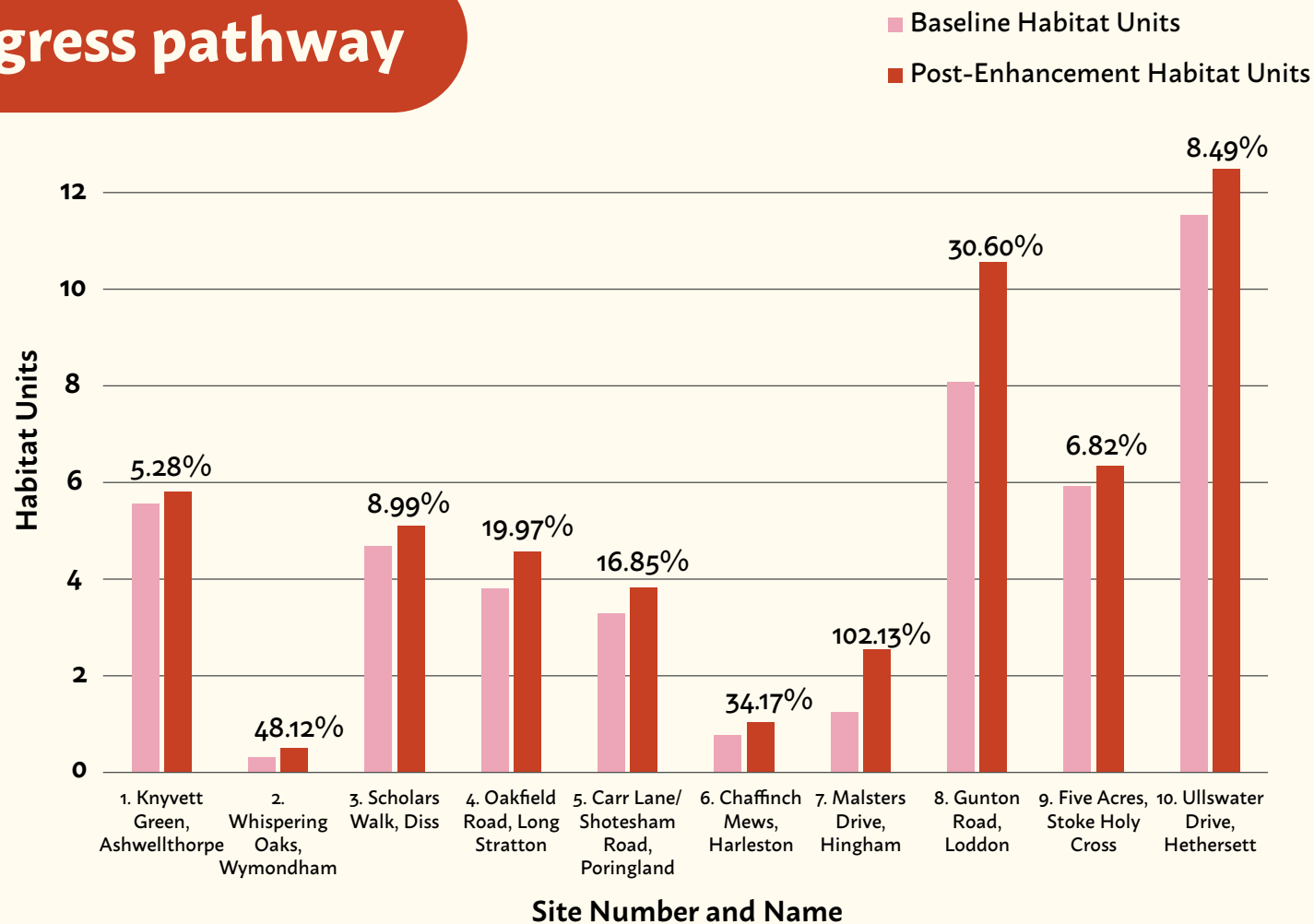


Figure 2 above shows the existing value of the habitats on sites 1-10 (excluding Hedgerow Units) in pink. The post-enhancement value of the habitats on site is shown in orange. The data label above the post-enhancement value shows the percentage BNG uplift in Habitat Units for each site. It should be noted that a higher number of Habitat Units on a site not only reflects the biodiversity value of the habitats on the site but also the size of the site.



Priority one: Progress to date

Optimising our land for environmental outreach

We have long-standing and positive working relationships with many volunteer groups across South Norfolk, who support the day-to-day management and maintenance of some of our owned greenspaces.

Greening Wymondham are an active volunteer group at Friarscroft Wood in Wymondham, who have helped to restore the site, provide improved public access and plant a community orchard. The Council supports the group with their activities on site by supplying any necessary kit and equipment, collecting and disposing the waste created on site, funding training opportunities for the volunteers, and other major works such as extending the pond and the installation of a pond dipping platform.

Our Sustainability Champions

The Council's Sustainability Champions network provides activities for Council staff to actively improve biodiversity in and around the Council's headquarters building. The network is open to all staff, and activities run to date include litter-picking around the Council building and wider business park and visiting some of our owned sites to learn about site management techniques.



Greening Wymondham volunteer group at Friarscroft Wood, Wymondham



Council apprentices taking part in a litter pick



What we will do

Conduct a biodiversity baseline of ten council-owned land in South Norfolk

The key deliverables

A biodiversity baseline study for South Norfolk. The baseline will focus on ten key sites in South Norfolk to understand the current biodiversity status of these areas. The baseline study will also provide some general recommendations for improving 'amenity' grassland sites

Progress to date

Biodiversity baseline studies were conducted across 11 council-owned sites. The surveys found that Several sites contained Priority Habitats of ecological importance



What we will do	The key deliverables	Progress to date
<p>Creation of a biodiversity improvement regime for specific council-owned sites</p>	<p>Ten improvement regimes for key sites owned by South Norfolk Council. These regimes will focus on actions to be carried out on the sites annually to achieve a 10% biodiversity uplift where possible. The work carried out on these sites will be reported on annually and in 2030, the sites will be surveyed to measure progress against the targeted uplift</p>	<p>Biodiversity improvement regimes have been created and recommendations implemented where practical. These regimes are accessible on our website. Longer-term recommendations are being integrated within each site's management plan</p>
<p>Optimise the use of our land for environmental outreach projects</p>	<p>We will create and maintain community spaces on council-owned land that encourage greater participation in nature and outdoor activities. We will develop and support outdoor learning zones in partnership with schools and community groups to promote conservation and environmental awareness. By working closely with local environmental organisations, such as Norfolk Wildlife Trust and The Conservation Volunteers, we will deliver community projects that enhance understanding of environmental management and promote sustainable land use across our sites. We will also ensure that all our community spaces are accessible and inclusive, enabling every resident to engage with and enjoy them</p>	<p>We support multiple volunteer groups across South Norfolk who help to manage and maintain our owned sites. The volunteer groups help to ensure that the community greenspaces are accessible for the public to visit and enjoy. Groups that we support include Greening Wymondham, Frenze Beck volunteer group, Friends of Swardeston Common, Queen's Hills Community Orchard, and many more</p>



What we will do

Work with Council teams to enhance biodiversity on council buildings and land

The key deliverables

Creation of a Sustainable Champion network for Council staff to actively improve biodiversity in and around the Council's headquarters building

Progress to date

The Council's Sustainability Champion network is open to all staff across the council provides sustainability and environmental activities within and around the office building and business park



Council staff creating beeswax food wraps as a sustainable alternative to single-use plastics

Priority two: Supporting biodiversity beyond our boundaries

P2

Projects we fund or support elsewhere in the district

The Nature Conservation Fund has supported biodiversity and nature recovery projects across 11 different locations in South Norfolk, delivered by Town and Parish Councils and community groups. The three key objectives of the grant scheme are to enhance biodiversity, increase carbon sequestration and improve public access to greenspace. We have funded a variety of projects, from Miyawaki (mini) Forests, pond creation and restoration, woodland enhancement, to creating circular walks for people to have better access to nature. These projects are due to be delivered by the end of March 2026 and will be accessible for the public to use and enjoy.

The Council's Communities Team have awarded a further £29,000 to Town and Parish Councils and community groups across South Norfolk since 2023, to fund projects that help to deliver biodiversity improvements and conserve the environment. Projects have been funded through the Member Ward, Community Action Fund, Go For It and Keep It Going grants.



- ★ Locations of projects funded under the Nature Conservation Fund
- South Norfolk boundary

Priority two: Progress to date

Projects we fund or support elsewhere in the district



Fair Green (Diss)
Neighbourhood Association



Spoooner Row, Sutton and Wattlefield Community Council



Flordon Parish Council

Priority two: Progress to date

Projects we fund or support elsewhere in the district



Hethersett Parish Council



Harleston Greenspace CIC



Easton College

What we will do	The key deliverables	Progress to date
<p>Deliver projects on land in South Norfolk that enhance biodiversity and increase species abundance</p>	<p>Biodiversity improvements on 20 acres of land we do not directly own by 2030</p>	<p>We have partnered with Norwich City Council, Broadland District Council, Norfolk County Council and Norfolk Wildlife Trust on the Nature City Norwich project, which will deliver a biodiversity improvements and nature recovery projects across the Greater Norwich area. This is a three-year project that works with communities, advisors and experts to understand what is needed to protect, connect and celebrate nature, creating lasting change and setting up local community-led projects for the future</p>
<p>To screen and assess all new developments to establish 'likely significant effect' on Protected Sites SACs, SPAs, SSSI</p>	<p>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)</p>	<p>A cumulative total of over £450,000 of GIRAMS was received in 2023/24 and 2024/25, with the 2025/26 figures due to be published in summer 2026</p>



What we will do	The key deliverables	Progress to date
<p>Nature Conservation Fund: provide funding to support community-led nature recovery projects</p>	<p>Five grants of up to £10,000 offered to local communities in South Norfolk to fund biodiversity enhancement projects</p>	<p>The Nature Conservation Fund is delivering biodiversity and nature recovery projects across 11 sites in South Norfolk. These projects are due to be completed at the end of March 2026</p>
<p>Working with the adopted LNRS and Greater Norwich Green infrastructure Strategy to identify key strategic sites for biodiversity increase and nature recovery in South Norfolk</p>	<p>Identification of key strategic areas in South Norfolk for biodiversity increase and nature recovery from LNRS and Greater Norwich Green Infrastructure Strategy</p>	<p>The LNRS and Green Infrastructure Strategy underpins how we identify strategic areas for project delivery and funding, as well as how we consult on planning applications</p>



What we will do	The key deliverables	Progress to date
<p>Delivery of a new Country Park for South Norfolk</p>	<p>Enhance and expand greenspaces by developing new paths, improving access, and exploring opportunities for a new Country Park</p>	<p>The identification of suitable sites for the delivery of a new Country Park is currently being undertaken</p>
<p>Assist in the delivery of Nutrient Neutrality mitigation and Biodiversity Net Gain credit sites</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>Nutrient reduction measures have been delivered through a diverse mix of mitigation approaches, including land reversion projects, septic tank upgrade programmes and other nature-based solutions. These measures demonstrate both continued demand for mitigation and measurable reductions in nutrient pollution. A variety of schemes across Norfolk have contributed temporary and permanent phosphorus (TP) and nitrogen (TN) savings for South Norfolk Council. As of 31 December 2025, applications in South Norfolk have offset 99.21 kg/yr of phosphorus and 1,177.93 kg/yr of nitrogen. Permanent mitigation is secured in perpetuity, with benefits expected to continue for 80–125 years depending on the scheme</p>



P2

What we will do

Ensure delivery of BNG through the planning system

The key deliverables

Implementation of a mandatory 10% BNG requirement for all new qualifying developments

Progress to date

Since being introduced into legislation, 110 planning permissions were granted that require BNG in South Norfolk. Of these, 50% of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period have secured BNG through on-site units only, 44% have secured BNG through off-site units, and 6% have secured BNG through a combination of both on-site and off-site units. All off-site BNG gains have been made within the South Norfolk boundary, through Langley Abbey. The expected gains in biodiversity units, both on-site and off-site, from all plans approved within the reporting period are expected to be above the minimum legal requirement of 10% uplift



Priority three: Inspiring and influencing wider action

P3

Our efforts to inspire and influence wider action

The **Nutrient Mitigation Fund (NMF)** has supported two schemes in South Norfolk, both of which consist of nature-based solutions which will result in biodiversity improvement (feasibility funding for an enhanced drainage ditch which we expect to move onto delivery in 2026, and a completed land reversion delivered by Norfolk Environmental Credits through a capital loan). As well as this, a further four nature-based solution schemes fall across district boundaries, including South Norfolk (two septic tank projects, wetland and land reversion). We have provided feasibility funding for three of these schemes, and a capital loan to a large septic tank project and we expect them all to move onto delivery phase in 2026, with the septic tank scheme already in progress. These schemes will deliver nutrient mitigation activity at a point upstream from the effect of development, with NMF providing financial support to landowners and others to mitigate nutrient discharge within the catchment and unlock stalled housing.

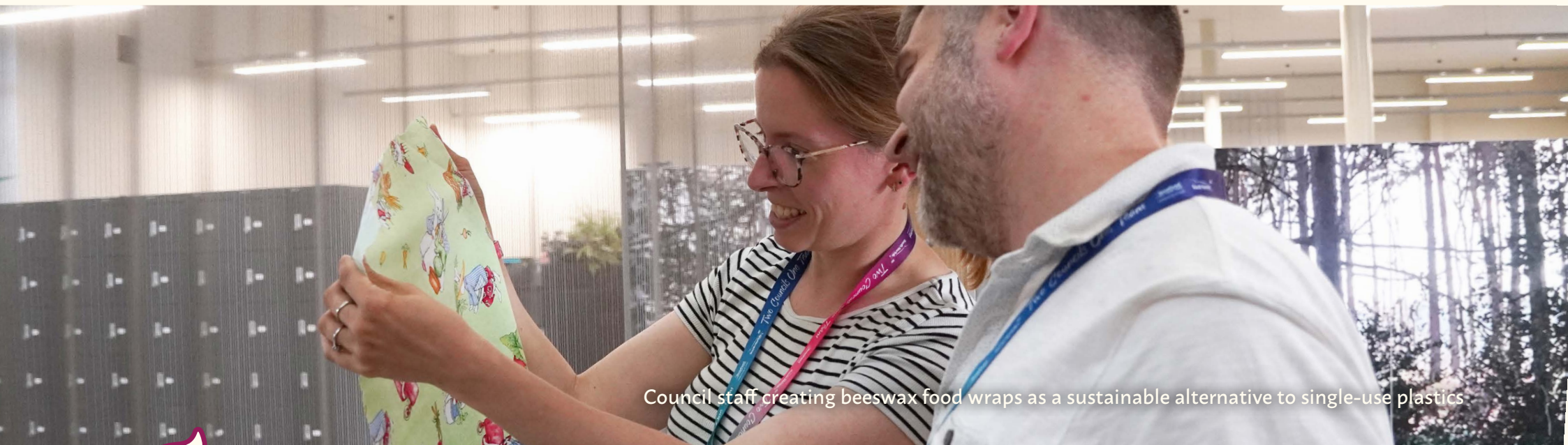
In order to **support and facilitate community-led green infrastructure projects**, we actively signpost available funding schemes and offer advice to our Town and Parish Councils and community groups.



Wendling Beck Environment Project

P3

What we will do	The key deliverables	Progress to date
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	Biodiversity and nature recovery workshops will be delivered to supplement round 2 of the Nature Conservation Fund in 2026/27
Promote and facilitate funding opportunities for community-led green infrastructure projects	Promote and signpost organisations to wider local/national funding in partnership with organisations	We actively signpost available funding schemes to our Town and Parish Councils and community groups to support biodiversity and nature recovery projects



Council staff creating beeswax food wraps as a sustainable alternative to single-use plastics

What we will do	The key deliverables	Progress to date
<p>Influence the delivery of nutrient neutrality mitigation through nature-based solutions</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>The Nutrient Mitigation Fund (NMF) has supported two schemes in South Norfolk, both of which consist of nature-based solutions which will result in biodiversity improvement (feasibility funding for an enhanced drainage ditch which we expect to move onto delivery in 2026, and a completed land reversion delivered by Norfolk Environmental Credits through a capital loan)</p>
<p>Respond to statutory consultations to advocate for strong biodiversity policy, including Biodiversity Net Gain in NSIPs</p>	<p>Submit responses to national consultations (e.g., on NSIP BNG implementation) to ensure local ecological priorities are reflected in national decision-making</p>	<p>On an ongoing basis, the Council will continue to respond to national consultations to advocate for strong biodiversity policy</p>



What we will do

Stay informed and engaged with the evolving landscape of mitigation funding, including the emerging Nature Recovery Fund under the Planning Infrastructure Bill

The key deliverables

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

Progress to date

In March 2026, officers attended Natural England's 'Environmental Delivery Plan Stakeholder Engagement Session'.

We continue to be proactive in this space through our ongoing relationship with a wide range of environmental stakeholders in Norfolk, such as Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Norfolk Environmental Credits, The Wendling Beck Environment Project, and others



