

# BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORT



PREPARED BY BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

January 2026



Barnsley – the place  
of possibilities.



**BARNSELY**  
Metropolitan Borough Council

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## Introduction

1. This report details the policies and actions the council has undertaken within the first reporting period and those to be taken forward in the following reporting period, January 2026 – December 2030. This is to ensure the council fulfils its obligations under the enhanced biodiversity duty. The policies and actions detailed within this report have been completed, either alone or in partnership with others.
2. The end date of the first reporting period should be no later than 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026; with reports to be published within 12 weeks of the reporting period end date <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reporting-your-biodiversity-duty-actions>. After this, the end date of each reporting period must be within 5 years of the end date of the previous reporting period. The council anticipates that the next report will be published early 2031.
3. The aim of this report is to:
  - I. Help people understand how the council is meeting targets to conserve and enhance biodiversity;
  - II. Showcase actions being undertaken to improve biodiversity; and
  - III. Highlight what can be done to aid nature's recovery and share good practice.
4. There are four compulsory sections which the council are required to complete.
  - I. Policies, objectives and actions
    - Explain the policies and objectives the council has set to meet the biodiversity duty; and
    - Explain the actions the council has completed, either alone or in partnership with others, that benefit biodiversity.
  - II. Explain how the council has considered other strategies e.g.
    - Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS).
    - Protected site strategies; and
    - Species conservation strategies.
  - III. Future actions
    - Explain how the council plans to fulfil its biodiversity duty over the 5 years following the end of the reporting period.

5. Information on Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) must also be included within the report. The following must be included:
  - A summary of the actions carried out to meet BNG obligations.
  - Details of biodiversity gains resulting, or expected to result, from approved biodiversity gain plans.
  - A summary of how the council plans to meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period.
  
6. Quantitative data on biodiversity gains can also be included. This is optional, but it can add useful detail to the report.

## The Biodiversity Duty

7. The Environment Act 2021 introduced a strengthened 'biodiversity duty' which requires all public authorities in England to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
8. As a public authority the council must:
  - I. Consider what we can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity;
  - II. Agree policies and specific objectives based on the consideration of biodiversity; and
  - III. Act to deliver the policies and achieve the objectives.
9. The council was initially required to consider the actions to take for biodiversity. This first consideration was undertaken prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2024.
10. Following the first consideration, the council was required to agree policies and objectives as soon as possible, after the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024<sup>1</sup>.
11. Actions that the council takes will contribute to the achievement of national goals and targets on biodiversity, detailed within the Environmental Improvement Plan.
12. The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP23), published in January 2023, sets out the government's plans for significantly improving the natural environment <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan>.
13. By 2030, the government has committed to:
  - I. Halting the decline in species abundance; and
  - II. Protecting 30% of UK land.

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<sup>1</sup> No timeframe is provided regarding how long after the 1<sup>st</sup> January the policies and objectives should be agreed.

14. By 2042, the government has committed to:

- I. Increasing species abundance by at least 10% from 2030, surpassing 2022 levels.
- II. Restoring or creating at least 500,000 ha of a range of wildlife rich habitats.
- III. Reducing the risk of species extinction; and
- IV. Restoring 75% of our one million hectares of terrestrial and freshwater protected sites to favourable condition, securing their wildlife value for the long term.

## Description of the Area

15. Barnsley lies at the midpoint between the region's two main cities of Leeds to the north and Sheffield to the south, covering an area of 329 square kilometres and home to around 236,600 people (taken from ONS 2012 based population projections).
16. Historically Barnsley was centred around coal mining resulting in the borough's dispersed pattern of small towns and villages. Because people lived where they worked and coal was moved by rail, road links between towns and villages were poor and communities were self-contained.
17. The borough has a varied landscape. The west is predominantly rural in character with open moorland, arable farmland and woodland. It is characterised by attractive hilly countryside, part of which lies in the Peak District National Park and is centred on the rural market town of Penistone. In the centre of the borough is Barnsley itself and the surrounding urban area which is the main shopping, administrative, business and entertainment centre. To the east of the borough stretching from the M1 motorway to the Dearne Valley are the towns of the former Barnsley coalfield which form a dense settlement pattern.
18. The richness of Barnsley's biodiversity owes its existence to the borough's varied geology, giving rise to a range of landscapes – from the open moors in the west, to the lowlands of the Dearne in the east. Each landscape, be it moorland, woodland, grassland, wetland, parks and gardens or neglected former industrial land, support a variety of habitats and species which contribute to local distinctiveness and character. Some of these habitats are recognised as being of national and international importance, while other areas are recognised as important at a local level. They support a countless number of protected and priority species, many of which are rare or threatened in the UK.
19. There are two internationally designated statutory nature conservation sites ('Natura 2000' sites) located to the west of the borough, alongside several nationally-important statutory designated nature conservation sites including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Local Nature Reserves. SSSIs are designated for their biodiversity or (separately) geodiversity value. Non-statutory Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) and Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) have been designated in the borough for their local ecological or geological value, respectively.

20. Of significant note is the Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI. The site comprises 22 compartments scattered throughout the east of the borough. The SSSI is an area of post-industrial urban fringe comprising large areas of wetland, woodland, scrub and other notable habitats located within the Dearne catchment. Its notifiable features include the following;

- Several species of breeding birds including gadwall, shoveler garganey, pochard, bittern, black-headed gull and willow tit;
- Non-breeding gadwall and shoveler; and
- A diverse assemblage of breeding birds of lowland damp grasslands and scrub and a mixed assemblage of lowland open waters and their margins including lowland fen.

## Biodiversity Achievements

21. Over the years, the council, in partnership with others has undertaken work to improve biodiversity within the borough; significant achievements include:

- Barnsley Biological Records Centre: working with partners and established in 2011, the records centre collects and makes available records of local sites, habitats and species, providing an important resource for planning and monitoring.
- Dearne Valley Green Heart Nature Improvement Area: Established in 2012, the initiative focused on restoring and enhancing the ecological networks of the Dearne, its floodplain and links to surrounding habitats.
- Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI: In 2022 the Dearne Valley Wetlands were designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by Natural England for their significant populations of breeding birds, including red and amber listed species.
- The council declared a climate emergency in 2019 with the aim of reducing carbon emissions to help reduce the impacts of climate change.

22. This report focusses on work undertaken during the first reporting period and actions that will be taken forward. During the initial reporting period the council has undertaken biodiversity improvements to provide benefits for nature and people. Top key actions include the following;

- Implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG);
- Updating the Biodiversity and Geodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD);
- Partnership working with a variety of stakeholders; and
- Maintenance of council owned greenspace.

23. Significant achievements from the above actions include;

- Where subject to BNG, all development achieves a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity, either through the delivery of on, or offsite habitats;
- The Biodiversity and Geodiversity SPD was updated in 2024 and requires all new housing developments in the borough to provide a minimum of one integrated bat and bird box per dwelling, alongside the provision of hedgehog highways;
- Preparatory work to secure a council owned habitat bank;
- The percentage of Natural Heritage Sites in positive conservation management increased by 12% in the past 5 years, rising from 18% in 2021 to 30% in 2025.
- Four parks within the borough were awarded Green Flag status in 2025.

## Policies, Objectives & Actions

24. The introduction of the enhanced duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity is a new requirement for the council to undertake, to fulfil its statutory duties. However, the council does have existing policies and objectives in place that highlight how the council, has and will continue to meet the biodiversity duty. These documents help the council to conserve, enhance and shape Barnsley's natural environment, landscape character and local distinctiveness, in addition to helping the council protect wildlife, encourage community involvement and promote parks and green spaces. They help shape the borough to be well designed, accessible and valued for its natural assets; the relevant strategies are detailed below.

- Barnsley Local Plan adopted January 2019 – the Local Plan includes policy BIO1 which states that development in the borough will be expected to conserve and enhance biodiversity and geological features; the Local Plan also includes site specific policies to ensure key ecological features within allocated sites are conserved and enhanced as part of development proposals.
- Our Council Plan 2024 – 2027 - One of the four themes of the plan is “Sustainable Barnsley”. The focus of this theme is to promote heritage and green spaces for people to enjoy and to enable people to feel more connected to and valued within the local community and to replace fossil fuels with carbon neutral forms of energy and promote active travel.
- Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) – Biodiversity & Geodiversity, Trees & Hedgerows – The Biodiversity and Geodiversity SPD (adopted March 24) was updated to include specific actions that are required to be undertaken for biodiversity mitigation e.g. 100% of dwellings to comprise bat and bird boxes, hedgehog highways, invertebrate boxes and no development within 10 m of major rivers.
- Barnsley's Green Space Strategy (updated 2016) sets out the overall strategy for the boroughs green spaces and describes the qualities that are considered important for local greenspace.
- Barnsley Local Plan Annual Monitoring report (updated annually) provides quantitative data on the number of Natural Heritage sites in positive conservation management.
- Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP): The first BAP was produced in 2002, in partnership with Barnsley Biodiversity Trust. The BAP was reviewed and reissued by the Barnsley Biodiversity Trust in 2009 and updated again in 2015 and 2025.
- Barnsley Landscape Character Assessment, 2016 update – the assessments provide a complete statement of landscape character and quality across the borough and to give a better understanding of the landscape types, their quality and character and how they combine with each other. The assessment provides a description of the

landscape, including the Dearne Valley Green Heart Nature Improvement Area located to the south and east of the borough.

25. In collaboration with officers across a variety of service areas, a list of current policies and actions with regards to biodiversity was developed. Following this, future policies and actions were agreed with the aim of conserving and enhancing biodiversity within the borough. The following service areas involved comprised.

- I. Planning services (planning policy and development management)
- II. Sustainability and climate change
- III. Communications and Marketing
- IV. Environment and Transport
- V. Procurement
- VI. Parks services
- VII. Trans Pennine Trail
- VIII. Heritage and Culture
- IX. Safer communities
- X. Libraries
- XI. Waste, recycling and neighbourhood services
- XII. Children's services

26. Partnership working is key to the delivery of positive outcomes for biodiversity. Many achievements across the borough would not be possible without the support from partners and key stakeholders. The list below is not exhaustive, however, key partners and stakeholders in addition to internal directorates and groups, currently include;

- South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and constituent Authorities in South Yorkshire,
- Environment Agency, Natural England, Forestry Commission
- Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust
- RSPB, Garganey Trust, Barnsley Biodiversity Trust, South Yorkshire Woodland Partnership
- Don Catchment Rivers Trust, The Land Trust, National Trust,
- Friends of Groups, Conservation Volunteers.

27. In addition to the strategies detailed in paragraph 24, additional actions undertaken within the first reporting period are detailed within Table 1.

Table1: Actions Undertaken Within the First Reporting Period

Directorate	Service area	Department	Actions undertaken (either alone or in partnership)	Status
		<b>Council wide</b>	The Health & Sustainability Impact Assessment tool is used at the commencement of workstreams, project initiation and the commissioning of significant goods & services and in Cabinet reports. The tool prompts users to consider and maximise the positive impact that they can have on the environment; including biodiversity, green infrastructure and green spaces. The tool also encourages users to take steps to mitigate negative impacts.	Ongoing
<b>Core services</b>				
	<b>Customer, Information and Digital Services</b>			
		<b>Comms and marketing</b>	An extensive communications campaign that promotes activities that result in a positive impact on the economy, environment and society.	Ongoing
		<b>Procurement</b>	A Health and Safety Impact Assessment is undertaken to inform the scope, performance measures and added value of tenderers in any procurement exercise over £100,000 for goods and services and £250,000 for works, to ensure biodiversity is considered.	Ongoing
<b>Children's Services</b>				
	<b>Education, Early Start and Prevention</b>			
		<b>Schools</b>	Targeted schools' programmes support children and young people to learn about the environment and other associated topics.	Ongoing

Directorate	Service area	Department	Actions undertaken (either alone or in partnership)	Status
		<b>Libraries</b>	<p>Bees in Barnsley - a month-long festival (October 2022) celebrating bees and highlighting their importance to ecosystems. Promoting educational awareness of the environmental challenges facing declining bee populations and what can be done to address this. Partnership working was undertaken to deliver sessions to complement sessions delivered by library staff. Workshops included, wildflower seed bomb making, bee water station making, an evening with Barnsley Beekeepers Association and building a VR for a bee with Bright box.</p> <p><i>Change is Coming</i> a film that tackled climate anxiety and turns it into positive climate action. The film was co-produced by Barnsley Libraries, Fly Girl Films and young people in Barnsley for Green Libraries Week 2024.</p> <p>The council worked with a panel from Barnsley Youth Council to write a brief, score and select a project of interest for Green Libraries Week. A film which opened new experiences to the young people involved and new creative ways to explore climate anxieties as well as educate peers on what can be done do to combat these issues was chosen.</p> <p>Funding was received from Pride of Place Barnsley to transform a section of Darfield Library into a community garden. The funding allowed the council to acquire equipment to create the garden. A gardening club with volunteers has also been established as part of the project.</p> <p>Green Libraries Week 2025 - Artist Lousie Wright was commissioned to further the work to create a library garden and engage with communities in Darfield on connecting with people with nature.</p>	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Achieved</p>

Directorate	Service area	Department	Actions undertaken (either alone or in partnership)	Status
<b>Growth and Sustainability</b>				
<b>Environment and Transport</b>				
		<b>Strategic Resilience and the emissions monitoring</b>	<p><b>Barnsley Net Zero and Low Carbon Programme</b> Enterprise Barnsley in conjunction with Barnsley Business and Innovation Centre delivered a £108k programme of work to proactively encourage carbon reduction from small medium enterprises and guide business owners through appropriate training. Associated match funding was also provided to help business owners invest in energy efficient technologies to reduce energy costs.</p> <p><b>Phytomining Test Site (Barnsley Main)</b> A programme of work including the use of plants to extract precious metals and elements from contaminated land. Partners involve Barnsley Council (S&amp;CCT &amp; Asset Management), Brunel University and Barnsley Main Heritage Group.</p>	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<b>Regeneration and Culture</b>				
		<b>Planning Policy</b>	<p>Working with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) and a range of stakeholders to deliver the South Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The strategy will identify biodiversity priorities and opportunities for creating and enhancing habitats to provide benefits for nature and the wider environment.</p> <p>Barnsley is covered by the District Level Licencing (DLL) Scheme managed by Natural England. DLL aims to increase the number of GCN by providing new or better habitats in targeted areas to benefit their wider population. Council officers are members of the</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

Directorate	Service area	Department	Actions undertaken (either alone or in partnership)	Status
			<p>DLL steering group chaired by Natural England and work with the Habitat Delivery Partner (HDP) for the scheme to create and enhance ponds within the borough.</p> <p>Working with members of the Local Wildlife Site (LWS) partnership to provide advice to LWS owners and landowners to deliver better outcomes for biodiversity and to identify additional sites of biodiversity importance.</p> <p>Membership of the Local Nature Partnership (LNP). The vision of the LNP is to protect and enhance South Yorkshire's natural environment, promoting the coordinated delivery of connected 'landscape-scale' projects as part of a high quality green network, helping to create sustainable jobs and growth and contributing to improved social cohesion.</p> <p>Working with the Dearne Landscape Partnership (DLP) working group to protect, preserve and enhance the heritage and environment of the Dearne Valley.</p> <p>Supporting the development of River Catchment Plans and programmes including Connected by Water.</p> <p>Working with the Environment Agency (EA) and other partners to deliver Natural Flood Management (NFM) projects within the borough.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
		<b>Development Management</b>	Biodiversity is considered through planning consultations, and the provision of pre-application advice and published guidance to mitigate ecological impacts through the development management process, as well as through procedures to manage regulatory services including tree preservation and hedgerow removal.	Ongoing

Directorate	Service area	Department	Actions undertaken (either alone or in partnership)	Status
			<p>The development management process requires ecological surveys to be undertaken (where applicable) in line with the British Standard BS42020 and follow best practice to inform the decision making process.</p> <p>Update the planning validation checklist to include additional detail regarding the level of biodiversity information to be submitted with a planning application which includes a data search with the Local Biological Records Centre (Barnsley Biological Records Centre), Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Ecological Impact Assessment and a BNG Report detailing post development information to be submitted for applicable developments.</p> <p>Secure responsible body status enabling the council to secure conservation covenants for habitat banks within the area.</p> <p>Procure software to assist with ongoing monitoring and reporting aspects of Biodiversity Net Gain.</p> <p>Select a suitable site for a council habitat bank and continue to develop plans for the site.</p> <p>Secure the retention of trees, groups of trees, woodlands and hedgerows on development sites wherever possible, particularly where they are noted to be of high quality or form part of a valuable habitat network. The council also looks to ensure that any retained trees, woodlands or hedgerows are protected during works and that schemes put forward will not result on future pressures or conflicts as far as possible, to ensure they are retained long term.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p> <p>Ongoing</p>



Directorate	Service area	Department	Actions undertaken (either alone or in partnership)	Status
		<b>Neighbourhoods</b>	Works undertaken by neighbourhood services enable a positive impact on the environment, where possible. Including the procurement of vehicles, machinery and equipment and ground works comprising rewilding and tree planting.	Ongoing
		<b>Environment and Transport</b>	<p>25 sites covering approximately 22,000m<sup>2</sup> across the borough have naturalised under the rewilding initiative. The sites are cut at the end of the growing season and arisings removed, with the aim of reducing soil fertility.</p> <p>In 2024 the council trialled three sites covering 10,500m<sup>2</sup> which were overseeded with a grass and wildflower seed mix, with arisings cut and collected in late summer.</p> <p>The council supports the No Mow May campaign.</p>	<p>Achieved</p> <p>Achieved</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
		<b>Trans Pennine Trail (TPT)</b>	<p>Routine vegetation clearance phased to maximise health of glow worm population at Thurgoland and wildflower meadows between Dunford and Penistone.</p> <p>Sensitive ecological works include the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trees are thinned where required for biodiversity reasons rather than residential property requests.</li> <li>- Fallen or thinned trees are retained on site as habitat/log piles or used for dead hedging.</li> <li>- Training opportunities for volunteers and residents in hedge laying and planting where appropriate.</li> <li>- Scrapes and wider drainage ditches with narrow exits to reduce speed of waterflow – creating habitats and reducing flood risk.</li> <li>- Where possible flexipave is used as a surface material which helps reduce rainwater runoff/flood water control.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

Directorate	Service area	Department	Actions undertaken (either alone or in partnership)	Status
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Management of habitats within and adjacent to the TPT to provide biodiversity enhancements.</li> </ul> <p>Support existing volunteer ranger groups including Dodworth, Wombwell and Dunford and Penistone in their biodiversity work.</p>	
		<b>Parks</b>	<p>The council promotes the use of peat free compost on all sites.</p> <p>9003 trees planted in 2023/2024 in and outside of woodlands as part of ongoing work to increase biodiversity and reduce carbon emissions. In terms of social value, a total of 481 people engaged in the sessions over a period of 754.5 hours.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Achieved</p>
		<b>Bereavement services</b>	Working with local groups to undertake biodiversity improvements within crematorium grounds.	Ongoing
<b>Place Health and Adult Social Care</b>				
	<b>Adult and Wellbeing</b>			
			The Creative Health Partnership uses art and culture to support mental health and reduce social isolation through projects such as Barnsley Cares and AFAB to support neurodivergent people to integrate social prescribing linked to environmental activities.	Ongoing

Directorate	Service area	Department	Actions undertaken (either alone or in partnership)	Status
<b>Public Health and Communities</b>				
	<b>Public Health</b>			
		<b>Safer Communities Service</b>	<p>The environmental enforcement policy is robustly enforced and aimed at addressing littering, fly tipping and other types of environmental crime. Protection of wildlife from the harmful effects of discarded litter and waste is one of the aims of the policy.</p> <p>The council adopts a proactive approach to educating and advising households in areas affected by environmental blight about responsible recycling. Following the endorsement of the litter and environmental crime plan in 2024 this approach is now targeted in residential areas where blighting is most severe.</p> <p>The council lead and coordinate environmental community action days across the borough annually. They are designed to improve the environment and encourage pride and responsible community stewardship.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
	<b>Communities</b>			
			<p>Establishment of the £3.5M 'Love Where You Live' investment programme - a community movement and investment initiative designed to revitalise neighbourhoods through social action, community pride, and resident involvement. The programme supports clean-ups, local projects, and community events, aiming to make Barnsley more vibrant, connected, and welcoming place.</p>	Ongoing

Directorate	Service area	Department	Actions undertaken (either alone or in partnership)	Status
			Signposting Service 'More Money in Your Pocket' includes opportunities to link in with sustainable food systems (Eat Good, Feel Good) and social prescribing linked to environmental outcomes.	Ongoing

## How you have considered other strategies

28. The council were named as a Supporting Authority (SA) for the South Yorkshire LNRS. The South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) were appointed by government to be the Responsible Authority for preparing the South Yorkshire LNRS. The council is continuing to work with SYMCA and other partners to progress the LNRS.
29. As a SA, the council has been involved with the LNRS from inception, with officers from the planning team sitting on the steering and various working groups to ensure Barnsley contributes towards the LNRS. Officers have attended and chaired meetings to assist with the development of the description of the strategy area, inform the priorities and measures for South Yorkshire and develop mappable measures.
30. Relevant officers have attended engagement workshops and inputted into stakeholder engagement activities to help shape the priorities and measures.
31. Barnsley comms team has supported SYMCA comms with publicising the LNRS and the associated public engagement to date.
32. South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) commissioned RSK Environment Ltd. in February 2024 to support the strategy development by delivering a stakeholder engagement programme and producing a foundational evidence base.
33. The foundational evidence base has produced the following:
  - I. Call for evidence process (Mar-Apr 2024) to gain further insights from local expertise
  - II. Draft overarching 'area description' using an evidence review process
  - III. Interactive map identifying 'areas of existing importance' for nature
  - IV. Shortlisted priority species (June 2025)

34. The programme of engagement has delivered the following:
- I. A public survey (Aug-Oct 2024), with over 900 surveys completed and 90 mapped 'pin' comments
  - II. Face-to-face public engagement (Aug-Oct 2024) across 8 events throughout the region with the general public – stalls at shopping centres, shows, and natural spaces
  - III. Group participation with seldom heard communities (BAME, high deprivation, low electoral turnout)
  - IV. Farmer engagement workshops delivered in rural Sheffield and Barnsley (November 2024)
  - V. Expert-led workshops (Sept-Nov 2024) – building consensus around proposed objectives and interventions to deliver nature recovery, using a mix of both in-person and online events.
35. During the first half of 2025 SYMCA worked closely with key stakeholders including its Supporting Authorities, Wildlife Trusts, Defra family and the Don Catchment Rivers Trust to further refine the strategic content. In August 2025, SYMCA led engagement with wider stakeholders to gain further scrutiny. This involved:
- I. Four habitat-based ½ day facilitated workshops with wider partners
  - II. Farmer engagement with Bradfield Farmer Cluster
36. Most recently, SYMCA commissioned Natural Capital Solutions in August 2025 to lead on the final stage in the strategy production process to 'map areas that could become of particular importance' for nature. This builds on the previous work and is the key focus over coming months.
37. SYMCA anticipates continued development and refinement of the LNRS until February 2026. This will be followed by formal approval processes ahead of launching statutory public consultation in May and June 2026. Following the consultation period, allowing time for Supporting Authorities to formally approve the strategy, SYMCA intends to publish the strategy by December 2026. A detailed Timeline is provided within Appendix I.
38. Once published, the council intends to have regards to the LNRS within the Local Plan.
39. There are currently no Protected Sites Strategies for any statutory protected sites within the borough. However, when these are published the council will take into account any relevant strategies.

40. There are currently no Species Conservation Strategies in place within the borough. In 2020, the council joined the District Level Licensing (DLL) Scheme for Great Crested Newts (GCN). Since that time, developments within the borough have had the opportunity to participate in the scheme when there is potential for an impact on GCN at a development site.
  
41. Officers within the council work also with South Yorkshire's Habitat Delivery Body (HDB) for DLL to assist in locating suitable sites for pond creation and enhancement.

## Future Actions

42. Table 2 below summarises the Council’s planned future actions which will be considered going forward. Inclusion of any future actions at this stage does not mean that any commitment has been made to take action, it simply signals that these are areas will be reviewed as part of the process of agreeing an appropriate way forward.

Table 2. Future Actions for Biodiversity

Directorate	Service area	Department	Actions for consideration in the next reporting period
		<b>Council wide</b>	<p>Identify a corporate lead for co-ordinating and monitoring delivery of Biodiversity Duty actions across the council.</p> <p>Explore the possibility of fully integrating Equal Opportunities, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) into the Health &amp; Sustainability Impact Assessment to encourage participation.</p> <p>Review council policies and processes including transport, waste, water, procurement and light to ensure additional consideration of biodiversity.</p> <p>Review council plans, projects, and strategies to ensure consideration of biodiversity, specifically: The South Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Protected Site Strategies and Species Conservation strategies, once published.</p>

Directorate	Service area	Department	Actions for consideration in the next reporting period
		<p>Review internal processes to ensure that there is an appropriate level of biodiversity training for officers and members and that any work is undertaken in accordance with statutory obligations and best practice guidance.</p> <p>Raise general biodiversity awareness, using available guidance and resources. Integrating biodiversity into staff briefings and, where necessary, providing specific training. For example, all staff and members to complete e-training such as the biodiversity e-learning for councils (Local Government Association).</p> <p>Officers to undertake team volunteering days as part of the Employer Supported Volunteering scheme within council owned sites and undertake activities such as Himalayan balsam pulling or other activities focused on improving biodiversity in the brough.</p>	
<b>Core services</b>			
	<b>Customer, Information and Digital Services</b>		
	<b>Comms and marketing</b>	<p>Create an annual forward plan of projects and programmes that have a positive impact on the economy, environment and society.</p> <p>Increase biodiversity awareness by incorporating monthly/quarterly messages into a wide variety of interactions and communications with officers, stakeholders and the public. For example, the importance of avoiding the use of pesticides and artificial grass in gardens, awareness of nesting bird season and leaving piles of log/leaves in gardens for hedgehogs.</p>	

Directorate	Service area	Department	Actions for consideration in the next reporting period
		<b>Procurement</b>	Services to undertake a Health and Safety Impact Assessment to inform the scope, performance measures and added value of tenderers in procurement exercises over £100,000 for goods and services and £250,000 for works, to ensure biodiversity is considered.
<b>Children's Services</b>			
	<b>Education, Early Start and Prevention</b>		
		<b>Libraries</b>	In 2026 the atrium of the Library at the Lightbox will be transformed into a green hub, comprising green positive messages, creative interventions and a dedicated Seed Library, spreading positive messages and enabling community conversations about climate, sustainability and ecosystems.
<b>Growth and Sustainability</b>			
	<b>Environment and Transport</b>		
		<b>Strategic Resilience and the emissions monitoring</b>	Update the sustainability wheel to consider biodiversity in greater detail.  The Strategic Resilience Strategy will replace the Sustainable Energy Action Plan with a view to reducing carbon emissions, supporting climate adaptation, mitigation and nature recovery. The new strategy will be aligned to UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Directorate	Service area	Department	Actions for consideration in the next reporting period
		<p>A supporting action plan beneath the Strategic Resilience Strategy with a range of actions across people, place and partnerships will be developed. The plan will be reported on and reviewed on an annual basis.</p> <p>Strategic Resilience will recruit a dedicated analyst post to map, track and analyse all types of emissions in line with government reporting frameworks.</p>	
	<b>Regeneration and Culture</b>		
	<b>Planning Policy</b>	<p>Once published the council will have regard to the LNRS within the Local Plan and ensure the LNRS is well understood across and complements other relevant plans and strategies.</p> <p>Review council landholding against statutory designated sites and determine if Management Plans (MP) are in place; address any gaps to ensure all sites have MP.</p> <p>Establish a programme of species and habitat surveys to record and monitor the ecological baseline for council owned LWS drawing on previous survey work to identify the requirement for further surveys.</p> <p>Assess the condition and review the management of council owned LWS and where required, prepare and implement management plans working in conjunction with parks services.</p> <p>Undertake positive engagement with landowners of LWS to progress sites into positive conservation management, either through supporting the production of management plans, or funding through delivery partners.</p>	

Directorate	Service area	Department	Actions for consideration in the next reporting period
			<p>Look to identify additional sites that meet LWS criteria to expand the network of sites.</p> <p>Consider seeking external funding to deliver nature recovery projects on council owned land.</p> <p>Consider creating a 'bat alert' GIS layer to inform the requirement for bat surveys for planning applications.</p> <p>Consider locating and mapping all ancient and veteran trees within the borough.</p>
		<b>Development Management</b>	<p>Consider the need for additional ecological resources and expertise.</p> <p>Ensure all relevant officers working within development management are trained in how to embed BNG within the DM process.</p> <p>Deliver relevant training to members to ensure that planning decisions have regard to BNG statutory guidance.</p> <p>Consider updating the validation checklist requiring applicants submit GIS files for significant habitats created on or offsite for input into strategic plans.</p>
		<b>Assets</b>	<p>Consider completing a review of the council's land holding to identify potentially suitable areas to be managed for the purposes of BNG, either to support the council's own development proposals or to include the site on the Defra sites register.</p>

Directorate	Service area	Department	Actions for consideration in the next reporting period
			Assess the potential for enhancing small scale habitats within council owned land and buildings, including nesting and roosting boxes, green walls and green/brown roofs.
		<b>Culture &amp; Visitor Economy</b>	<p>Understand the environmental impact of tourism and consider adapting procedures so that where possible, they benefit nature and the environment.</p> <p>Explore the potential to recruit a dedicated greenspaces role at Worsbrough Mill and Country Park.</p> <p>Consider installing bat and bird boxes on suitable trees and buildings and work to deliver biodiversity improvements at Worsborough and Cannon Hall.</p>
		<b>Neighbourhoods</b>	Consider developing a biodiversity strategy for roundabouts e.g. the creation of wildflower areas and tree planting with simple maintenance requirements. This could apply to future developments and extend to considering current assets to make them more presentable, manageable and biodiverse.
		<b>Environment and Transport</b>	<p>Consider expanding the number of roadside verges that are exempt from mowing and undertake botanical surveys of verges to quantify biodiversity enhancements from reduced mowing regimes.</p> <p>Considered 're-wilding' additional suitable grassland areas within the borough.</p>
		<b>Trans Pennine Trail (TPT)</b>	Improve existing lowland heath habitats along the TPT between Dunford Bridge and Thurgoland, and where possible create new ones and create a maintenance plan for all lowland heathland sites within the TPT.

Directorate	Service area	Department	Actions for consideration in the next reporting period
			<p>Create a biodiversity management plan for all sections of the TPT including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Dodworth and Wombwell – includes SSSI</li> <li>b. Elsecar Greenway and Old Moor to Old Royston – includes canal sections, proximity to RSPB wetland habitats. (links to parks service and external stakeholders)</li> <li>c. Glow worm protection management plan as part of Penistone to Wortley section</li> <li>d. Oxspring to Dodworth</li> <li>e. Timberland Trail (Wortley to Elsecar) which goes through two areas of council restoration sites and adjacent to Potter Holes plantation.</li> <li>f. Cudworth to Town Centre Spurs</li> </ul> <p>Implement a tree inspection and monitoring schedule.</p> <p>Enforce where possible, the unauthorised felling, thinning, topping of trees within council ownership along the TPT.</p> <p>Where appropriate plant new/infill hedgerow along the TPT boundaries to improve biodiversity and help to reduce trespass by people and dogs onto adjacent farmland.</p>
		<b>Parks</b>	<p>Consider the requirement for additional management and maintenance regimes within parks and green spaces to maximise biodiversity.</p> <p>Consider creating wildflower meadows from low value amenity grasslands across council assets.</p>

Directorate	Service area	Department	Actions for consideration in the next reporting period
		Consider managing council owned single age plantation woodland located on reclamation sites to increase biodiversity.	

## Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

43. The following actions have been undertaken to ensure the council has met obligations with regards to BNG.
- I. Planning applications subject to the BNG condition are reviewed by the council's planning ecologists to ensure they meet the minimal validation requirements. Baseline data is reviewed and cross referenced with aerial images, photographs, site visits (where deemed appropriate) and datasets for statutory and non-statutory sites, to ensure accuracy.
  - II. The council subscribes to Mycelia software to assist in the review of metrics, monitoring and reporting of biodiversity gains.
  - III. The council is currently updating local validation requirements to ensure developers indicate how they intend to meet future BNG requirements.
  - IV. When consulted on proposals where applicants have indicated they are exempt from BNG, the council's planning ecologists interrogate plans to ensure their approach is acceptable, or request further justification, or BNG assessments, where applicable.
  - V. The council's planning ecologists provide pre application advice on BNG within responses.
  - VI. Once developments subject to mandatory BNG are completed the council's planning ecologists will review monitoring reports to ensure compliance with the management plan to ensure habitats are meeting their targets.
44. The council is currently looking to secure a habitat bank on land within its ownership. Creation of a council owned habitat bank will also aim to ensure that biodiversity stays within the borough.
45. The council is a Responsible Body. The council intends to use this status to legally secure habitat banks, where appropriate.
46. 12 Biodiversity Gain Plans (BGP) have been approved in the reporting period. Seven (58.33% of BGP) secured biodiversity gains on site; one (8.33% of BGP) secured offsite gains only; and four (33.33% of BGP) secured a combination of on and offsite gains. 82.26% of offsite gains secured have been through the purchase of units from habitat banks within the LPA boundary or Natural Character Area (NCA). To date, statutory credits have not been used to secure net gains.
47. The total net change in on site biodiversity units is 1.61, a gain of 30.15%. The total net gain in offsite biodiversity units is 0.56, a gain of 212.91%.

48. The total baseline habitat units across the 12 approved BGP is 5.61. The total net change in habitat units is 2.18. The habitat that has contributed the greatest number of units is tree planting, with a net change of 1.11 units.
49. The total baseline hedgerow units across the 12 approved BGP is 0.95. The total net change in hedgerow units is 0.91. The feature that has contributed the greatest number of units is native hedgerow, with a net change of 1.63 units.
50. The total baseline watercourse units across the 12 approved BGP is 0.26. The total net change in watercourse units is 0.03. The feature that has contributed to the change in watercourse units is other rivers and streams.
51. Biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period have not affected irreplaceable habitats.
52. To ensure the council meets its BNG obligations in the next reporting period the points described in paragraph 43 will continue to be undertaken, alongside the monitoring of gain sites when appropriate.

## Appendix 1

SY Local Nature Recovery Strategy Timeline			2025					2026										
			Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
<b>Developing the LNRS</b>																		
Step 1	Mapping	Ensure data sharing agreements in place ahead of publication																
Step 3	Descriptive Chapter	Chapter finalised following comments, as part of preparing LNRS documents																
Step 4	Species priority workstream	Natural England review of species work																
	Priorities and measures	Circulation of refined draft priorities and measures to a wider audience of stakeholders (e.g., major landowners, other partners not engaged via working group / advisory group) + workshops																
	Priorities and measures	SYMCA / working group review feedback and update priorities and measures for validation																
	Priorities and measures	Final workshop with wider partners to validate priorities and measures																
	Priorities and measures	Final version of priorities and measures spreadsheet provided to SYCMA																
Step 5	Step 5 Mapping	Workstream 1: Data review, methodology																
	Step 5 Mapping	Workstream 2: Measures mapping																
	Step 5 Mapping	Workstream 3: Engagement																
	Step 5 Mapping	Workstream 4: Updated mapping, handover, teach-in																
<b>Preparing, consulting on and adopting the LNRS</b>																		
Consultation Draft LNRS	Preparing draft LNRS	Prepare consultation draft LNRS																
	Agreement of Pre-Consultation Draft	Engagement with Supporting Authorities, endorsement by SYMCA Executive Leadership Board, Portfolio Leads and Policy and Strategic Planning																
Reg 7 and 8	Supporting Authorities review	Statutory 28 day period for Supporting Authorities																
	Prepare consultation LNRS	Redraft of Draft LNRS following pre-consultation comments																
	Prepare consultation LNRS	MCA Board approval to publish																
Reg 11 and 12	Consultation	Public consultation period																
Publication Draft LNRS	Prepare Publication LNRS	Prepare final LNRS taking account of comments received																
Reg 13, 14, 17 and 18	Publication LNRS approval and notification	MCA Board approval of final LNRS and inform SoS and supporting authorities of intended date for publication																
Reg 18	Pre-publication stage	28 day pre-publication period (or until all supporting authorities confirm in writing that they are content for the LNRS to be published) / 13 weeks previously agreed with SAs																
Reg 19	LNRS Published	LNRS published in line with Regulations																