

Biodiversity Duty Report

March 2026

WIRRAL

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Introduction

Biodiversity is important. It provides ecosystem services that are essential for human well-being. These services include the provision of food, clean water, air purification, climate regulation, and natural resources. Without these services, our economies and societies would struggle to function. Biodiversity is important for the resilience of these ecosystems, as it allows them to adapt to changing conditions and maintain their functioning over time.

However, biodiversity is under threat from a range of human activities, including habitat destruction, pollution, overexploitation of natural resources, and climate change. The rate of species extinction is currently estimated to be 100-1,000 times higher than the natural rate, and up to one million species are at risk of extinction in the coming decades. If too many species are lost from an ecosystem, then those ecosystems cease to function.

The UK is one the world's most nature-depleted countries, ranking bottom 10% globally, and ranks last of the G7 nations for biodiversity losses. Protecting biodiversity is therefore a crucial priority, and one that requires urgent action. We need to take immediate steps to address the drivers of biodiversity loss, and to protect and restore biodiversity through a range of conservation and restoration measures.

Public bodies who operate in England must consider what they can do to enhance and conserve biodiversity in England. This was introduced as the 'Biodiversity Duty' in the Environment Act 2021. This means as a public authority, we must:

1. Consider what you can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
2. Agree policies and specific objectives based on your consideration.
3. Act to deliver your policies and achieve your objectives.

Wirral Council adopted our Biodiversity and Net Gain (B&NG) Strategy in November 2023 as our 'first considerations' as part of our Biodiversity Duty. This report presents our first review of the actions taken since the publication of our first considerations and looks ahead to the next few years.

Wirral Council, March 2026



Wirral is home to a wide variety of habitats, wildlife, protected sites, as well as passionate communities working hard to protect them in all their glory. Without the dedication of volunteers, schools and community groups, Wirral would not be as biodiverse as it is today.

Section 1: Our policies, objectives and actions

Environment and Climate Emergency Declaration and Action Plan

Wirral Council declared an Environment and Climate Emergency at a meeting of full council on 15 July 2019, and through this committed to action to address the ecological and climate crisis that we face. The commitment to action aims to:

- Cut climate damaging pollution locally in line with global targets, whilst developing resilience to more extreme weather patterns and rising sea levels that impact Wirral.
- Protect and enhance biodiversity.

The council committed to a wide range of actions, several of which relate directly to biodiversity. These are:

- identify risks and prioritise nature- based solutions to build resilience to climate change
- manage at least 30% of land in Wirral for the benefit of wildlife by 2030 (in line with Government commitments)
- apply the minimum government-set target for biodiversity net gain through the planning system (currently at 10%), and commit to exceed this minimum for council-led projects where practicable
- increase tree planting and support natural regeneration to help double Wirral's tree canopy cover

The declaration of the emergency resulted in the development of the Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan (ECEAP). Through the establishment and delivery of the ECEAP the Council is committing to achieve net carbon neutrality by 2030. This is an ambitious but achievable target, and it will have fundamental benefit for Wirral's environment and residents.



Wirral Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy 2020 – 2030

In response to the declaration of the Environment and Climate Emergency, Wirral Council developed the Wirral Tree, Hegderow and Woodland Strategy 2020-2030, together with local organisations under the umbrella group of Wirral Initiative of Trees (WiT). The strategy was the first of its kind in the UK to be developed through partnership with a wide range of community groups and full consultation with the public.

The four overarching aims of the strategy are:

- To protect, regenerate and care for Wirral's existing trees, hedgerows and woodlands
- To plant more trees on the principle of the 'right tree for the right place' and encourage appropriate natural regeneration
- To plant, restore and maintain hedgerows in rural and urban landscapes
- To provide a framework for decision making and establishing a prioritised action plan for 2020-2030 and a model for many years beyond that

In 2024 the strategy was revised after four years of implementation, integrating findings and recommendations from an I-Tree Eco study, conducted in collaboration with Forest Research in March 2023.

The aims of the strategy have not changed, but the vision has now extended beyond numerical targets for new treeplanting, to embracing natural regeneration alongside strategic planting efforts. It adopts the principle of 'the right tree at the right place' to ensure the most resilient tree population possible.

Wirral pollinator strategy 2022 – 2030

As part of the above commitments to address the Environment and Climate Emergency, the council published a Pollinator strategy in 2022, to sit alongside the Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy to enhance biodiversity locally.

The five broad aims are:

- Ensure the needs of pollinators are represented in local plans, policy, and guidance for regeneration and economic development.
- Protect, increase, and enhance the amount of pollinator habitat in Wirral to prevent extinctions and improve the status of any locally threatened species
- Increase awareness of pollinators and their habitat needs across local residents, community and voluntary

groups, businesses, and other landowners

- Increase the contribution to pollinator conservation of all land under the ownership of, or managed by the Council
- Improve our knowledge and understanding of pollinators in our local area

The Wirral Pollinator Strategy has been developed to raise awareness of the plight of pollinators and to ensure the Council and its local residents, community and voluntary groups, businesses and landowners are provided with information to help us all protect and increase our pollinator populations.



Wirral Biodiversity & Net Gain Strategy 2023 – 2028

The Biodiversity and Net Gain (B&NG) Strategy was written to set out a framework that will help fulfil the Biodiversity Duty that was implemented by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in the Environment Act (202). The Act requires public authorities to have regard to conservation and enhancement of biodiversity when carrying out their functions. Wirral Council therefore has a legal duty to consider biodiversity when making decisions or taking actions that could affect the natural environment. This means biodiversity needs to be a consideration in anything we do. The B&NG Strategy was published and adopted in November 2023, as our 'first considerations' as part of our Biodiversity Duty.

The overarching aims of the strategy are:

- Establishing a robust Biodiversity Action Plan for Wirral
- Outlining compliance with Biodiversity Net Gain Legislation
- Engaging our residents and communities to take action for biodiversity in Wirral
- Embedding biodiversity considerations in everything we do in Wirral Council
- Harnessing local knowledge, expertise and data in our decision making and action.

Wirral Local Plan 2022 - 2040

Wirral Council resolved to formally adopt the Wirral Local Plan 2022-2040 on 31st March 2025. Biodiversity is embedded in the Local Plan, and as part of the 2040 Vision it reads:

"The rich natural environment of Wirral is protected, enhanced and well connected. Nature is in recovery thanks to the provision of a measurable net gain in biodiversity across the peninsula. The Borough's ability to provide nature-based solutions to manage climate change is increased through a network of high-quality open spaces. Its valued landscapes and coastline are protected and there is a 50% increase in the tree canopy compared to 2020."

The plan includes Policy WS5 Strategy for Green and Blue Infrastructure, Biodiversity and Landscape Protection, which includes Green and Blue Infrastructure Networks and Ecological Networks. It also includes Policy WD 3 Biodiversity and Geodiversity which sets out how biodiversity will be dealt with in planning applications.





Liverpool City Region Local Nature Recovery Strategy

The Environment Act (2021) also introduced Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS). An LNRS is evidence-based, locally-led, spatial strategy designed to provide a joined-up, regional approach to nature recovery.

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority was appointed by the Department of Environment, Food and Rurral Affairs (DEFRA) to be the Responsible Authority to develop the Liverpool City Region LNRS. At the time of writing it is awaiting final approval by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, and it is expected to be fully adopted by the end of March 2026.

The LNRS identifies and maps opportunities for habitat enhancement, restoration and creation, where the biggest benefit will be felt to both nature and people.

Once the LNRS is in place, this will determine the ‘Strategic Significance’ in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool.



The Liverpool City Region's post-industrial legacy has left its biodiversity in a state of decline, with a 5% loss of all habitats since the 1980s, including 10% of its most biodiverse grasslands.

Our actions

The progress of the actions in the Biodiversity & Net Gain Strategy gets reviewed annually and presented at the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee to note and approve the recommended actions for the following year.

The B&NG Strategy has a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Framework to monitor progress, and activity delivered through both the Pollinator Strategy and the Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy is also captured within this framework.

However, not all components of these two latter strategies are captured within the KPI Framework. For the purpose of reviewing our actions under the Biodiversity Duty, we have based our assessment on the B&NG Strategy, which was published as our 'first considerations'.

The KPIs are grouped together by theme, and discussed in the next few chapters reflecting our actions since November 2023 until January 2026. Our actions and data on Biodiversity Net Gain will be reported in a separate chapter. All of this information has previously been reported in our annual progress reports of the individual strategies.



Theme 1: Biodiversity Action Plan

Key Performace Indicators:

The establishment of a Biodiversity Action Working Group including local stakeholders, representatives, and experts.

The development of a Biodiversity Action plan within 12 months of the Biodiversity & Net Gain Strategy being agreed and published.

A Biodiversity Action Working Group has been revived as the Wirral Biodiversity Forum, with a large variety of stakeholders and experts from across 14 different local groups and organisations. These include in no particular order: Wirral Wildlife, Merseyside and West Lancs Bat Group, Record Local Environmental Record Centre, Wirral and Cheshire Badger Group, Buttercly Conservation Wirral Group, Wirral Reptile Group, Cheshire & Wirral Raptor Study Group, Environment Agency, Wirral Council Parks & Countryside, Cheshire Wildlife Trust and the County Bird Recorder. These all provide the technical expertise to develop a new Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The previous BAP was published over 20 years ago, and in need of a review. Other stakeholders such as Wirral Environmental Network and the Rotary Club Environment Group and others are part of a wider group of stakeholders ready to commit to action once the new BAP is adopted.

The first meeting took place in autumn 2024, and have been ongoing ever since. The group is hopeful to have a first draft published by the end of the summer of 2026.



The number of new wildlife habitats created or enhanced, such as woodlands, meadows, or wetlands.

Pollinator sites

Parks & Countryside had been allocated £300,000 from the Wirral Council's Neighbourhood Investment Fund for their Pollinator Project in 2024-2025. During summer 2024 botanical surveys took place of suitable areas, and a total of 73,000m^2 of new pollinator areas were created using both the Neighbourhoods Investiment Fund and a UKSPF Grant.

The creation of these additional pollinator areas has brought benefits beyond the sites themselves , with a number of community organisations and private landowners noting the efforts of Wirral Council and replicating these in other areas. Examples include a wildflower area created by volunteers at the Captains Pit and another in Birkenhead Park. Residents have shown overwhelming support for this initiative which bodes well for the future.

Council-owned habitat banks

In 2024 the council instructed Cheshire Wildlife Trust to undertake BNG assessments of a shortlist of potential BNG Habitat Bank sites. One of the sites was chosen to develop a full 30-year Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP), and Cheshire Wildlife Trust undertook some additional Watercourse surveys this summer season to add into the BNG report. Once the council received the final report for this potential habitat bank, a business case will be written to outline how to operate and finance the habitat bank. The establishment of BNG Habitat Banks is ongoing work that will also continue in future years. By creating our own habitat banks, the council can secure the income generated by the sale of Biodiversity Units from these habitat banks to fund the management and maintenance of these sites for a minimum of 30 years

Natural Flood Management Scheme

The Meols Natural Flood Management (NFM) Scheme, also locally known as the Hoylake Carrs, was officially awarded the NFM grant of £340k by the Environment Agency at the end of 2024, which was presented and approved at the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport committee on 27 January 2025 to implement the scheme. Since the acceptance of the award, Cheshire Wildlife Trust have started monitoring baseline data on-site, and started to engage with stakeholders like the Liverpool John Moores University, and setting up a volunteering group to help deliver the project.

The capital works for the project is scheduled for the summer of 2026, with a deadline of no later than March 2027. The funding aims to deliver a project that uses natural processes to reduce the risk of flooding, with the primary goal to create an enhanced wetland on



the site. This project will deliver multiple benefits. The envisioned wetland Nature Reserve will reduce downstream flood risk, support carbon sequestration, and create valuable habitat for wintering waders and wildfowl. Collectively, these outcomes will establish and an area of significant biodiversity value.

Tree planting

In the 2023-2024 season, a total of 16,164 new trees were planted, and an additional 2,517 trees planted to replace those lost in previous planting seasons. In 2024 the Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy was revised to target focus on canopy cover rather than numeric targets for treeplanting, and an estimated 52,000m^2 of future canopy cover planting was added in the 2024-25 season. This expansion includes individual trees, newly established woodlands, and hedgerows. Conservation efforts were a key focus, with disease resistant elms planted at Dawpool Nature Reserve to support habitat restoration for the White-letter Hairstreak butterfly, and 220 Alder Buckthorn trees distributed to 33 schools as part of the Brimstone butterfly initiative. Five micro woodlands were created through the Local Authority Treescapes Fund, while 34 street tree pits were reinstated across nine wards. Strategic planting also addressed areas along key transport corridors impacted by Ash Dieback.



Goat Willow is Wirral's top tree species for insects, supporting approximately 450 species, yet it represents only 1% of the tree population

Theme 2: Engagement and Investment

Key Performance Indicators:

The number of people engaged in biodiversity conservation activities, such as volunteering, education, or awareness-raising.

Since the publication of the strategy, a large number of people, both within the council as well as externally, have been involved in biodiversity activities.

Council staff

In the 2023-24 tree planting season, there were 6 council staff tree planting sessions, with around 70 members of staff helping over the course of the season.

The Biodiversity Net Gain Coordinator in the Climate Emergency Team has provided training on Biodiversity Net Gain for members and different services, such as Regeneration, Forward Planning, Planning Case Officers, Corporate Property Board and the Managers Network.

Tree planting and Tree Warden Network

Volunteering groups that were involved in tree planting in the 2023-2024 season were 190 volunteers, across 13 community planting events and 5 school planting sessions.

Since October 2023, 105 people have signed up to become Tree Wardens as part of the Wirral Tree Warden Network run by the Tree Management team.

In the 2024-2025 season, the programme of activities has included regular workshops on trees and the law, tree biology, tree threats and challenges, a book club, planting events, tree walks, community tree nursery sessions and a member newsletter. In total 155 volunteers and 34 schools were involved in tree planting activities.

Parks & Countryside

There are currently 33 ‘Friends groups’ supporting Parks and Countryside areas and providing volunteer support. As part of the creation of new Pollinator Areas in 2025, schools, volunteers and Friends groups were actively involved in sowing seeds, planting and watering. Friends and volunteers, taking the lead from Wirral Council’s Pollinator work, have also created several more Pollinator areas this last year.

Climate Emergency Team – Wild About Nature Campaign

A work-placement student within the Climate Emergency Team wrote a seasonal resident-focused biodiversity toolkit, to be launched by the end of 2024 as the Wild About Nature

Campaign. This aim of this toolkit was to encourage residents to take positive action for biodiversity through different seasonal activities they can participate in. This was be a year-long campaign throughout 2025 and early 2026.

We launched the Wild About Nature campaign in Spring 2025, with a printed booklet, Have Your Say website and a minimum of 3 workshops each season to participate in.

During Spring 2025, there were 3 different events, newspaper seed pot making, a pollinator workshop and the City Nature Challenge with one training session and 5 organised biodiversity-recording sessions. The events were organised with both internal and external partners; Biobank (the Local Environmental Record Centre for Merseyside), Birkenhead Park Rangers, Wirral Country Park Rangers, Callister Trust and New Ferry Butterfly Park. Across all events we saw a total of 132 participants in Spring.





The City Nature Challenge was a very successful event. Wirral took part in this global bioblitz under the umbrella of the Liverpool City Region (LCR). Across the LCR, we broke all previous records from the seven years the LCR have taken part, recording more observations, more species and achieveing the highest number of participants to date. Planning is already underway for the City Nature Challenge in 2026, with the hope that we can build on last year's success.







During Summer, there were 4 different workshops, meadow sweeping with rock painting, butterfly feeder creation with 5 sessions across different libraries within Wirral and several bat walks. The workshops were hosted with both internal and external partners; Wirral Environmental Network, Wirral Libraries, Wirral Country Park and local bat group volunteers. Across all Summer events there were 96 participants across all age groups. The autumn and winter workshops will be reviewed in April 2026.

Eco-schools Programme

The Eco-schools programme is incredibly successful within Wirral. In the 2024-2025 school year there were 126 registered schools actively taking part in the eco school programme. The eco programme is child-led environmental action with students from all school years taking part. We support schools through teacher CPD, network meetings and funded projects.

Sixty-nine schools have been Green Flag accredited, of which 11 with Merit and 27 with Distinction. This increased the total number of Green Flag accredited schools by six compared to the previous year.

There are now 29 certified Hedgehog Friendly Campus schools.

The Wirral Wide Eco Council had six activity nature days at the Prenton Dell Claypit, Wirral Country Park, Birkenhead Park and Hilbre Island. This provided sessions on amphibians, bats, owls, bees, hedgehogs, insects, reptiles, wildflowers, and trees with hands on conservation work.

The combined impact of the Eco Schools for the 2024-2025 academic year was as follows:



The level of investment in biodiversity conservation measures, including resources allocated to ongoing management.

Parks & Countryside

There are currently 16.5 FTE Ranger posts (20 members of staff) employed by Wirral Council in Parks & Countryside, their duties involve direct conservation with a range of residents on biodiversity activities, such as volunteering, education or awareness raising.

The total level of investment in Parks & Countryside for biodiversity conservation measures, including resources allocated to ongoing management, was just under £700,000.

Tree Team

The Council employs five permanent staff within the Tree team comprising a senior manager, two tree officers and two tree inspectors.

There is an annual tree maintenance budget of £248,249 for Parks and Countryside tree works and £410,400 for Highways tree works.

In 2024 the council secured £157,598.40 from Round 4 of the Local Authorities Treescape Fund to plant five Micro Woodlands, 50 heavy standards to replace street tree losses and a further 90 heavy standards on transports routes to mitigate to Ash Dieback losses.

Climate Emergency Team

In November 2023 the council employed a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Coordinator as part of the Climate Emergency Team to deliver the B&NG Strategy.

The council received Section 31 Grant Funding from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for ’23-’24 to help deliver the mandatory 10% BNG, which as a Band 1 authority (authorities with 500 or fewer applications a year that fall within the scope of BNG) was set at £26,807. This has been used to pay the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) to conduct a BNG Baseline assessment of different council-owned sites, with completed metrics and GIS data. MEAS also chairs a monthly LCR-wide BNG Planning Policy Managers meeting where experiences and knowledge is shared in relation to BNG.

The Section 31 Grant Funding for 2024-25 was also set at £26,807 and has been allocated to commission Cheshire Wildlife Trust for the further development of BNG Baseline Assessments to inform any decisions on council-owned Habitat Banks to meet our own BNG requirements. The funding has also been used to pay for new BNG specific software, to assist Planning Case Officers and the Biodiversity Net Gain Coordinator with validating,

assessing, and determining planning applications on BNG grounds. This software has been invaluable to help with assessing the BNG requirements, which would otherwise would have been extremely resource intensive. The software has also rolled out monitoring functionality to be able to help the council with the 30-year monitoring requirement in the legislation.

In 2024 the council awarded £86,000 in Green Grants to 25 community groups and CICs towards projects that provide green infrastructure and food growing initiatives. These included many projects to protect and enhance our green spaces and improve biodiversity. These ranged from turning a derelict site into a community led garden, to creating a small community orchard, pollinator flowerbed and others.

The Climate Emergency Team also funded the year-long Wild About Nature Campaign, which started in Spring 2025, which is a resident-focused campaign to encourage residents to adopt nature-positive behaviours. This campaign consists of a Wild About Nature booklet, with suitable activities for each season, for both adults and children, and workshops delivered with stakeholders and colleagues across the borough.



The number of partnerships established or collaborations with stakeholders to support biodiversity conservation and enhancement.

Climate Emergency Team

The Wirral Biodiversity Forum (WBF) has been revived, and local groups, experts and partners are now working together on reviewing the previous Wirral BAP, and writing a new BAP.

Internally in the Council a new working group was established, the BNG Team, which currently consists of Assistant Director – Climate Change & Environment, Assistant Director - Chief Planner, Local Plan Lead, Development Management Manager, Principal Forward Planning Officer, Senior Planning Lawyer, Modernisation Officer, Climate Emergency Team Manager, and the Biodiversity Net Gain Coordinator, who chairs the meetings. These meetings have been vital to streamline workstreams, develop internal policies, and continue to identify areas where improvement or further work is required to deliver biodiversity net gain in Wirral.

Tree Team

The Tree Team continues to work collaboratively with a wide range of partners to support biodiversity and deliver the objectives of Wirral's Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy.

Mersey Forest Partnership: Ongoing membership provides access to funding, expertise, and strategic support for woodland creation and management.

The Tree Council: Engagement through the Wirral Tree Warden Network, which now includes 105 active members, has strengthened community involvement and education around tree care and biodiversity.

Wallasey Tree Planting Group: The Tree Management Team supports this local group in delivering community-led planting projects.

Friends of Groups: Collaboration with various Friends of Parks groups has enabled the co-creation of tree trails, planting schemes, and habitat enhancement projects across multiple sites.

Schools: Through initiatives such as the Brimstone butterfly project, 33 schools received Alder Buckthorn trees, fostering environmental education and habitat creation.

Community Tree Nursery: The Tree Management Team works with local volunteers and community groups to grow and care for young trees, enhancing local stewardship and biodiversity outcomes.

Tree City of the World: Ongoing recognition provides validation of Wirral's commitment to international standards in urban tree care, planning, and community involvement.



Trees and woodlands play a critical role as nature-based solutions, addressing the climate and nature crises while supporting improvements in physical and mental health.

Theme 3: Embedding biodiversity in everything we do

Key performance indicators:

Biodiversity Champions – appointing BCs within relevant departments

Resource limitations mean that the appointment of Biodiversity Champions is scheduled for a later stage, as capacity grows.

Biodiversity Impact Assessments (BIA) – develop and implement BIA into decision-making process in Wirral

The Climate Impact Assessment tool has been incorporated into the project template for capital funding bids. The Climate Impact Assessment recognises biodiversity as one of the six core considerations. The tool is utilised at the first stage of the project so any negative impacts can be mitigated and positive gains for biodiversity can be integrated during planning and delivery phases.



Theme 4: Biodiversity Literacy

Key performance indicators:

Develop Biodiversity Literacy Course which will provide an overview on biodiversity and provide practical guidance on incorporating biodiversity considerations into everyday tasks.

A Biodiversity Literacy Course was developed in 2024 by a work placement student from Liverpool John Moores University, together with the Biodiversity Net Gain Coordinator. It was launched on the council's internal e-learning platform Flo, in March 2025 as a non-mandatory training offer for all officers and members.

Percentage of Council officers completing the 'Biodiversity Literacy' course.

Since launch, 90 have begun the training, with 28 completing the full training module to date.

The level of awareness and understanding of biodiversity issues among council officers and elected members (questionnaire pre and post biodiversity literacy course and/or similar workshop/training).

The results of the pre- and post-course questionnaire showed that those who completed the training felt they had a better understanding of the biodiversity crisis, have a full understanding why biodiversity is important for our planet, our society and future, and for themselves personally. Those actively considering biodiversity in their behaviours and choices day-to-day improved from 38% to 67% after taking part in the course, and those that considered their role for Wirral Council to have an influence on Biodiversity improved from 63% to 79%.



Theme 5: Designated Sites

Key performance indicators:

Proportion of designated sites in unfavourable and favourable condition (declining and recovering).

The area of designated sites taken from unfavourable condition to recovering or favourable condition.

Out of the 12 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) on the Wirral, Wirral owns or partly owns and manages eight sites. The SSSIs are split up in 'units' and 'features' which are assessed for their condition by Natural England. Their condition has not changed from the data reported in the Biodiversity & Net Gain Strategy 2023-2028. A review of the eight Council-managed SSSIs will be carried out to identify the measures required to improve their condition. The resulting actions will inform future management plans and contribute to progress against these KPIs.

The area of land brought into effective conservation management in the reporting period, including the proportion of sites that meet conservation targets (e.g., priority habitats & species etc.).

The proportion of local authority land managed to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

There is ongoing work being undertaken to address the needs for a land asset management system, and a Green Estate Review. This will address the different types of 'need' the council has for land, and how much land is or is not available. This covers the need for playing pitches, pollinator sites, tree planting sites, biodiversity net gain habitat banks, and others. This is a large task, and initial steps have been undertaken to assess how much council land is currently being managed for wildlife and biodiversity using a GIS based system. The methodology for monitoring this metric is currrently under development and will be established as part of the wider land asset work.

The Council is also awaiting the finalilsed criteria to assess our land for the government commitment for 30by30, the objective to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030. As the criteria become available and a metric to assess this gets published, we will aim to assess our land-assets to meet the criteria and develop further goals to achieve this target in line with government guidance and commitments.

Theme 6: Carbon

Key performance indicator:

The amount of carbon sequestered or stored by biodiversity-enhancing activities, such as tree planting.

Reliable figures for carbon sequestration and storage from new tree and woodland planting schemes are now being developed through a structured methodology. Baseline data,including tree numbers, survival rates, species composition, planting density and early growth, is being collected to enable accurate long-term sequestration estimates.

Preliminary carbon sequestration calculations have been completed for new woodland creation and individual heavy standard trees planted on council-owned and council-managed land. Woodland sequestration estimates follow the Woodland Carbon Code methodology, while individual tree estimates are derived from i-Tree Eco models.

To support improved reporting in future years, the council is continuing to refine the monitoring approach for sequestration across all biodiversity-enhancing activities.



Section 2: Future actions

The Council has a strong foundation through three overlapping strategies that collectively support biodiversity: the Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy 2020-2030, the Pollinator Strategy 2022 – 2030, and the Biodiversity & Net Gain Strategy 2023 – 2028.

Each strategy sets out targets to be achieved over its lifespan, taking us to 2030. We also recognise that, to maximise biodiversity outcomes and use resources efficiently, it may be beneficial to review these strategies together, to identify overlaps, ensure alignment and highlight opportunities for strengthening our approach.

As the government is finalising details on their proposals for the criteria for the 30by30 commitment, we will ensure to align our actions and policies with those targets and commitments.

The priority actions for the B&NG Strategy that were approved for 2025-2026 are:

- Development of a renewed Biodiversity Action Plan for Wirral with the Wirral Biodiversity Forum stakeholder group and Parks & Countryside rangers.
- Continue the development of the Natural Flood Management project at Hoylake Carrs to create a new wetland Nature Reserve together with Cheshire Wildlife Trust.
- The approval of the final version of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- An ongoing strong internal BNG workgroup with cross-service working relationships to address the mandatory BNG requirements.
- Continue the development of an internal approach to establish BNG Habitat Banks both on council-owned land as well as privately-owned land.

Pollinator Sites

- Our Parks & Countryside service have the intention to increase the number of new pollinator sites further with additional potential Pollinator Areas being identified for planting in March / April 2026, subject to the consent of local Ward Councillors.

The priority actions for the Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy for 2025-2026 are:

- A comprehensive Ash Dieback assessment is taking place in the summer. The results will be used to plan for require risk management works and to apply

for grants for maintenance and restocking.

- A comprehensive audit of carbon sequestration from Council tree and woodland plantings since 2020, with findings integrated into the Council's climate action reporting. A comprehensive review of the tree risk inspection programme will be undertaken to ensure all sites are RAG-rated, enabling more effective prioritisation of resources. The continued tree-planting programme will prioritise the replacement of trees lost during the 2025 drought, helping to strengthen long-term landscape resilience.

Wirral Coastal Management Strategy

Wirral Council has recently signalled its intention to develop a Wirral Coastal Management Strategy. The Coastal Management Strategy would seek to identify the pressures and changing nature of the coast alongside how the coast is used now and will be used in the future. The

Strategy would identify the timing and location of management activities that address the issues and use of all of Wirral coast. The intention is to commission work on this strategy in 2026/27. As a strategic management plan, a Wirral Coastal Management Strategy would need to be supported by a Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment for approval by NE. Once approval is in place however any future application for assent for beach management activities, which align with the Wirral Coastal Management Strategy should have a more straightforward path to assent.



Section 3: Biodiversity net gain information

Wirral Council uses specialised BNG software to support the validation, assessment and monitoring of BNG. Within the reporting period of this first Biodiversity Duty Report (February 2024 – 1 January 2026), four Biodiversity Gain Plans (BGPs) were approved to discharge the deemed biodiversity gain condition.

Across these four BGPs, no proposed habitat enhancements or creation was classified as significant, and as such, none require the statutory 30-year monitoring period.

Detailed quantitative data for each BGPs is included Appendix I.

The Council continues to work proactively with private landowners to establish habitat banks in Wirral and is advancing work on the council's own habitat bank. It is anticipated that a council-owned habitat bank will be formally registered within the next 12 months.



Appendix 1 – Quantitative BNG Data

Table 1 – Consented applications requiring net gains

Consented applications requiring net gains	Number	Proportion (%)
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period	4	Not applicable
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG **through on-site units only**	2	50.00
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through **off-site units only**	0	0.00
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through **statutory credits only**	1	25.00
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through **a combination of on-site and off-site units**	1	25.00
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through **a combination of on-site units and statutory credits**	0	0.00
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through **a combination of off-site units and statutory credits**	0	0.00
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through **a combination of on-site, off-site units and statutory credits**	0	0.00

Table 2 - Overall expected gains and losses

Overall expected gains and losses	Area habitat	Hedgerow	Watercourse
Total number of pre-development biodiversity units approved on-site	5.13	0.06	0.00
Total number of post-development biodiversity units approved on-site	5.92	0.68	0.00
Total net unit change in biodiversity units, on-site	0.79	0.63	0.00
Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, on-site	15.40	1144.18	0.00
Total number of baseline biodiversity units approved off-site	0.03	0.00	0.00
Total number of post-intervention biodiversity units approved off-site	0.18	0.00	0.00
Total net unit change in biodiversity units, off-site	0.15	0.00	0.00
Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, off-site	441.29	0.00	0.00
Total number of biodiversity units offset using statutory credits	0.01	0.00	0.00
Total net unit change in biodiversity units (including any units offset using credits)	0.95	0.63	0.00
Average percentage (%) change (including statutory credits)	18.46	1144.18	0.00

Table 3 – Impact on irreplaceable habitat

Impact on irreplaceable habitat	Total	Proportion (%)
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period where the on-site change negatively impacts irreplaceable habitats	0	0.00

Table 4 – Location of off-site biodiversity units

Location of off-site biodiversity units	Total	Proportion (%)
Number of off-site biodiversity units located **inside LPA boundary or NCA of impact site**	0.00	0.00
Number of off-site biodiversity units located **outside LPA or NCA of impact site, but in neighbouring LPA or NCA**	0.18	100.00
Number of off-site biodiversity units located **outside of LPA or NCA of impact site and neighbouring LPA or NCA**	0.00	0.00

Table 5 – Composition of biodiversity gains – areas

Habitat Type - Area	Total biodiversity units at baseline	Total hectares at baseline	Total biodiversity units post - development	Total hectares post - development	Net change in biodiversity units	Net change in hectares
Cropland	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	-0.01	-0.01
Grassland	0.53	0.22	1.13	0.23	0.60	0.01
Heathland and shrub	0.52	0.13	0.58	0.08	0.06	-0.05
Lakes	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sparsely vegetated land	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Urban	0.05	1.39	0.04	1.44	-0.01	0.04
Wetland	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Woodland and forest	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Intertidal sediment	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Coastal saltmarsh	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Rocky shore	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Coastal lagoons	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Intertidal hard structures	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse footprint	Not applicable	0.00	Not applicable	0.00	Not applicable	0.00
Individual trees	4.06	0.52	4.36	0.64	0.31	0.13
Total	5.16	2.27	6.10	2.39	0.94	0.12

Table 6 – Composition of biodiversity gains – hedgerows and lines of trees

Habitat type - hedgerows and lines of trees	Total biodiversity units at baseline	Total kilometres at baseline	Total biodiversity units post - development	Total kilometres post - development	Net change in biodiversity units	Net change in kilometres
Species-rich native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Species-rich native hedgerow with trees	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Species-rich native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Species-rich native hedgerow	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.05	0.33	0.05
Native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Native hedgerow with trees	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Ecologically valuable line of trees	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Ecologically valuable line of trees - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Native hedgerow	0.00	0.00	0.29	0.14	0.29	0.14
Line of trees	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Line of trees - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.00	0.00
Total	0.06	0.06	0.68	0.24	0.63	0.19

Table 7 – Composition of biodiversity gains – watercourses

Habitat type - watercourse	Total biodiversity units at baseline	Total kilometres at baseline	Total biodiversity units post - development	Total kilometres post - development	Net change in biodiversity units	Net change in kilometres
Priority habitat	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other rivers and streams	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Ditches	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Canals	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Culvert	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00



Nature and biodiversity are important, and we care deeply about protecting and enhancing it. It is up to our generation to leave a legacy of leaving our natural world in a better place for future generations.