

Biodiversity Duty Report

July 2026

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Kirklees Council

Kirklees spans approximately 40,860 hectares in West Yorkshire. In 2024, the district's resident population was estimated at 447,847, and this figure is projected to increase to around 472,955 by 2047. The area benefits from strong road and rail connections to nearby cities including Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, and Sheffield, with wider national links provided by the M62 and M1 motorways.

Kirklees has a varied character, with major urban areas in the north and west particularly around Huddersfield, contrasted by vast Green Belt land to the south.

Extensive areas and a large number of sites are designated and protected in Kirklees for their biodiversity and geodiversity importance. At an international level, the South Pennine Moors Special Protection Area (SPA) has the highest level of statutory protection, being of European importance for several upland breeding bird species. It is also designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which provides protection for blanket bog and upland heath habitats. At national level, there are 3 designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), covering 4,845 hectares, which include the South Pennine Moors SPA/SAC, Park Clough in Marsden, and Honley Station Cutting in Honley. In addition, the Kirklees Local Plan adopted in 2019 identifies a broad network of locally important sites, including 88 Local Wildlife Sites, 19 Local Geological Sites, 1,083 hectares of Ancient Woodland, Local Nature Reserves and the district-wide Wildlife Habitat Network. Collectively, these designations and habitats create an interconnected network that supports biodiversity, enhances ecological connectivity, and contributes to the district's environmental resilience.

This varied and environmentally significant context provides both opportunities and responsibilities for the district in delivering its biodiversity duty. The following sections of this report outline how the authority is working to protect, restore and enhance biodiversity across Kirklees in line with statutory requirements and wider environmental commitments.

The Biodiversity Duty

It is a legal requirement for public authorities who operate in England to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

The original duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (as amended) required public authorities to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their functions. This duty was strengthened by the Environment Act 2021, which amended Section 40 to require public authorities not only to conserve but also to enhance biodiversity.

Section 40(3) of the NERC Act 2006 (as amended) states that the action which may be taken by the authority to further the general biodiversity objective includes, in particular, action taken for the purpose of:

- a) Conserving, restoring or otherwise enhancing a population of a particular species, and
- b) Conserving, restoring or otherwise enhancing a particular type of habitat.

Although the NERC Act allows public authorities to determine that no further action is necessary to advance the general biodiversity objective, where additional measures are required, Section 40(1A) places a duty on authorities to:

- a) Determine such policies and specific objectives as it considers appropriate for taking action to further the general biodiversity objective, and
- b) Take such action as it considers appropriate, in the light of those policies and objectives, to further that objective.

Section 40(1B) allows for Section 40(1A)(a) to be satisfied through the revision of existing policies and objectives. Section 40(1E) states that a determination required by subsection (1A)(a) must be made as soon as practicable after the completion of the consideration to which it relates.

Guidance from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in regard to 'Reporting your Biodiversity Duty Actions' sets out that:

- The end date of the first reporting period should be no later than 1 January 2026.
- After this, the end date of each reporting period must be within 5 years of the end date of the previous reporting period.
- Start and end dates of the reporting period must be included in each report.
- All reports must be published within 12 weeks of the reporting period end date.

By law, the report must include:

- a summary of the action taken to comply with the biodiversity duty,
- how the public authority plans to comply with the biodiversity duty in the next reporting period,
- any other information considered appropriate.

Reports from local planning authorities must also include the following biodiversity net gain (BNG) information:

- the actions carried out to meet BNG obligations,
- details of BNG resulting, or expected to result, from biodiversity gain plans approved,
- how BNG obligations will be met in the next reporting period.

Reporting the Biodiversity Duty

This first report covers actions taken by Kirklees Council from 12th February 2024 to 1st January 2026 to comply with the Biodiversity Duty. The report will also set out future actions that will be taken to conserve and enhance biodiversity across Kirklees over the next 5-year period until 2031.

In accordance with the aforementioned DEFRA guidance, the report is structured as follows:

Section 1: Policies, objectives and actions

- The policies and objectives set to meet the Biodiversity Duty.
- The actions completed, either alone or in partnership with others, that benefit biodiversity.

Section 2: Future actions

- How Kirklees Council plans to fulfil the biodiversity duty over the next 5 years following the end of this reporting period.

Section 3: Biodiversity net gain information

- Actions carried out to meet BNG obligations.
- Details of BNG resulting, or expected to result, from approved BNG plans.
- How Kirklees Council intends to fulfil BNG obligations over the next five years.

Section 1: Policies, Objectives and Actions

Table 1: Policies, Objectives and Actions required under Section 1 of the Biodiversity Duty Report.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Current Position	Teams Responsible	Date of Next Review
Our Council Plan 2026/27 to 2028/29.	'Our Council Plan' published in 2026 sets out a series of priorities and goals that Kirklees Council will work towards, in order to achieve the overall vision for Kirklees to be a district which combines a strong, sustainable economy with a great quality of life. The goal centred on ensuring "a more sustainable environment with a focus on low carbon energy sources and warm homes as well as care for our natural environment" provides a clear link to environmental and ecological outcomes. Under this priority, the Council has identified a number of actions to be delivered. Those of particular relevance to biodiversity include: <u>Year 1 (2026/27)</u> - Continue to support White Rose Forest and Landscapes for Water projects in flood-prone areas, including continuing the £76,000 investment in the Dewsbury Country Park scheme. - Progress towards 21% canopy cover target for 2050. - Continue to support community led tree planting projects. <u>Year 2 (2027/28)</u> - Increase woodland connectivity; monitor biodiversity gains. <u>Year 3 (2028/29)</u> - Manage woodlands sustainably; expand nature recovery zones.	Leader of the Council. Chief Executive.	2028/29.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Current Position	Teams Responsible	Date of Next Review
Kirklees Local Plan (adopted 2019): - <u>Strategic Objective 6</u> (Protect and improve green infrastructure...), - <u>Strategic Objective 8</u> (Protect and enhance the characteristics of the built, natural and historic environment...), - <u>Policy LP24</u> (Design), - <u>Policy LP26</u> (Renewable and Low Carbon Energy), - <u>Policy LP29</u> (Management of Water Bodies), - <u>Policy LP30</u> (Biodiversity and Geodiversity), - <u>Policy LP31</u> (Strategic Green Infrastructure Network), - <u>Policy LP37</u> (Site Restoration and Aftercare), - <u>Policy LP44</u> (New Waste Management Facilities), - <u>Policy LP61</u> (Urban Green Space).	The Kirklees Local Plan (adopted 2019) is the statutory development plan for the district. Its purpose is to set out the policies needed to deliver the overall strategy, including how much new development is required and where it should be located. Strategic objective 6 (Protect and improve green infrastructure to support health and well-being, giving residents access to good quality open spaces, sport and recreation opportunities, and to support habitats, allowing wildlife to flourish) and objective 8, (Protect and enhance the characteristics of the built, natural and historic environment, and local distinctiveness which contribute to the character of Kirklees, including the South Pennine Moors, Moorland fringe and the area's industrial heritage) and policies LP24 (Design), LP26 (Renewable and Low Carbon Energy), LP29 (Management of Water Bodies), LP30 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity), LP31 (Strategic Green Infrastructure Network), LP37 (Site Restoration and Aftercare), LP44 (New Waste Management Facilities) and LP61 (Urban Green Space) in the Kirklees Local Plan, either directly or indirectly support biodiversity conservation and enhancement, habitat protection, or the wider natural environment. The Local Plan (2019) will continue to be applied in the determination of planning applications across Kirklees until a new Local Plan is formally adopted.	Planning Policy Team.	Kirklees Local Plan adopted in February 2019. Update currently underway.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Current Position	Teams Responsible	Date of Next Review
Kirklees Local Plan update.	A full update of the Kirklees Local Plan (2019) was approved by Full Council on 15 November 2023 under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. New requirements for statutory plan-making formalised in regulations: Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 (Statutory Instrument 2026 No. 186) required further approval from Cabinet (24 March 2026) to formally commence the Local Plan update under the new plan-making regulations. The Local Plan will be updated to reflect national guidance and any new requirements arising from the latest evidence base. Preparation of the plan will be supported by the necessary environmental assessments to ensure that emerging proposals minimise environmental impacts and deliver positive outcomes for biodiversity. The current local policy context will be reviewed in the light of updated national planning policy. Revised draft NPPF (December 2025) was published for consultation which includes 133 plan-making and decision-making policies, with policies specifically relating to biodiversity: CC1: Planning for Climate Change F8: Sustainable drainage systems and watercourses N1: Identifying environmental opportunities and safeguards N2: Improving the natural environment N3: Trees in new development N6: Areas of particular importance for biodiversity	Planning Policy Team.	Kirklees Local Plan update currently underway. At this moment in time, it is expected that an updated Local Plan will be adopted in April 2029.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Current Position	Teams Responsible	Date of Next Review
West Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).	Kirklees is actively involved in and has contributed to the shaping of the West Yorkshire LNRS in partnership with West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) and the neighbouring local planning authorities. West Yorkshire's LNRS is one of 48 strategies across England designed to help deliver national and international environmental targets. It directs nature recovery efforts to the places where they will have the greatest long-term impact and is supported by national legislation and funding frameworks. The strategy sets out the county's ambition for nature recovery and will guide future decisions on investment and funding opportunities. Its overarching aim is "for West Yorkshire to pioneer post-industrial nature recovery and forge a just, blue-green, revolution from moor to forest, peak to valley, river to city-a bigger, better more joined-up nature network". The three key objectives of the West Yorkshire LNRS are: • <u>Objective 1-Wildlife & Habitats</u> To enhance, expand, create and connect habitats to boost the abundance of different animals, fungi and plants in West Yorkshire. • <u>Objective 2-Ecosystem Services</u> To regenerate and support natural systems such as clean water, healthy soil, urban cooling and climate regulation. • <u>Objective 3-People</u> To build on West Yorkshire's distinctive landscape, unique heritage and cultural strengths for a fairer, greener, nature-rich future.	WYCA.	Approved by the Combined Authority 12 March 2026. LNRS must be reviewed every 3 to 10 years.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Current Position	Teams Responsible	Date of Next Review
Kirklees Environment Strategy.	The Kirklees Environment Strategy, published in 2024, provides an important framework for supporting biodiversity across the district, with “Nurturing Nature” identified as a core theme supporting nature recovery. It highlights progress already underway, including the planting of 59ha of new trees, the extensive work of third-sector organisations to create new woodlands and deliver landscape recovery projects, and the provision of nature-based educational activities. The Strategy also sets out a series of targets and objectives to support biodiversity, which include: • Nature in recovery by 2030 • All degraded peatland to be in restoration by 2038 • Increase Kirklees tree canopy cover to 21% by 2050 • All people who live work and study in Kirklees to have access to high quality green and blue space within 5-10 minutes / 500m walk by 2038 • Prioritising green and blue infrastructure and nature-based solutions in all projects to restore and enhance the natural environment. • Conserving and improving biodiversity through habitat restoration, invasive species management, pollution reduction, and better land-management practices. • Supporting the White Rose Forest partnership to increase tree planting as part of the wider Northern Forest. • Taking a biodiversity-first approach to development that promotes nature recovery and delivers biodiversity net gain. • Encouraging regenerative agriculture as a standard approach to farming and land management.	Environmental Strategy and Climate Change Team.	Annual data collection and subsequent reporting against the ambition of this strategy (targets and objectives).

Council Owned Trees and Woodlands - Policy, Risk Framework, Management Standards, Service Standards.	The Kirklees Council-owned Tree and Woodland Management Policy sets out how trees and woodlands on land owned or managed by Kirklees Council (parks, highways, open spaces, cemeteries and woodlands) will be managed. It aims to maintain and increase tree cover, while balancing public safety, legal duties, environmental benefits and climate resilience. The policy commits the Council to: • Protecting and enhancing trees and woodlands as multifunctional assets delivering ecological, social, health and economic benefits. • Maximising ecosystem services, including biodiversity, air quality, carbon storage, climate change adaptation and flood risk reduction. • Supporting the Council's Corporate Plan and the declared Kirklees Climate Emergency (2019) through effective tree and woodland management. Biodiversity and environmental value • Trees and woodlands are explicitly recognised for their biodiversity value, including habitat provision and contribution to green infrastructure. • Retention of trees is the default position, with removal only where justified (e.g. safety or statutory reasons). Risk management and public safety • The policy includes a Tree Risk Framework, inspection regimes and prioritised maintenance to manage risk responsibly. • Legal duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act, Occupiers' Liability Acts, and Highways Act are clearly embedded. Management standards and decision-making • Decisions on pruning, felling or intervention are: ◦ Evidence-based	Woodland Development.	Reviewed on a biennial review cycle.
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Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Current Position	Teams Responsible	Date of Next Review
	○ Proportionate ○ Balanced against the amenity and environmental value of trees • Non-essential works are resisted where they would undermine long-term tree health or biodiversity benefits. Monitoring, review and transparency • The policy includes service standards, defined priorities, and a commitment to review and monitoring, supporting accountability and continual improvement.		

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Current Position	Teams Responsible	Date of Next Review
White Rose Forest Strategic Plan (2025-2050).	The White Rose Forest Strategic Plan (2025-2050) is the long-term strategic document governing development of the White Rose Forest, setting out the vision, aspirations and targets for tree and woodland establishment and management in North and West Yorkshire. This Strategic Plan is supported by a series of five-year Action Plans, which will outline the specific funding arrangements, delivery programmes, actions and interim milestones needed to achieve the plan's long-term ambitions. The following local priorities and tree and woodland cover targets for 2050 have been developed for Kirklees: • Increase tree and woodland cover from 11.7% to 17.5% by 2050. • This will increase the area of trees and woodland by approximately 2,400 hectares. • Mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change. By contributing to long-term carbon storage and flood alleviation and increasing resilience to climate impacts. Through targeted planting schemes and woodland restoration. • Contribute to nature recovery, through habitat creation and restoration, to reverse biodiversity decline. • Provide communities access to quality green spaces and contribute to all people in Kirklees having access to high quality green space within 5-10 mins / 500m walk.	White Rose Forest Strategic Board.	Envisaged that Action Plans will be subject to light-touch review annually and re-approval by the White Rose Forest Strategic Board if needed, and more significant review after year 3 or 4 leading to the production of a new Action Plan.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Current Position	Teams Responsible	Date of Next Review
Kirklees Biodiversity Net Gain Technical Advice Note (Pre-Mandatory).	The Kirklees Biodiversity Net Gain Technical Advice Note provides detailed guidance on how development in Kirklees should achieve measurable biodiversity net gain in accordance with Local Plan Policy LP30 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity). Its purpose is to clarify how the Biodiversity Metric should be used, explain the mitigation hierarchy, and ensure that applicants, ecologists and decision-makers follow a consistent and transparent approach to delivering biodiversity enhancements through new development. An up to date technical advice note will be produced to ensure no conflict with future legislation and that guidance remains consistent with national and local policy.	Conservation, Design, Ecology and Trees Team	Reviewed periodically in light of legislative and national policy changes.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Current Position	Teams Responsible	Date of Next Review
Kirklees Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP).	The Kirklees CCAP sets out the district's pathway to achieving its ambition of becoming "Net Zero and Climate Ready by 2038." Its purpose is to provide a coordinated approach to both climate change mitigation and adaptation, building on the council's earlier work following the declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019. The plan outlines actions across key sectors including buildings, energy, transport, the natural environment, waste, water and food systems, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase resilience to climate impacts such as flooding, heatwaves and wildfires. The following objectives were set to help the Natural Environment and Biodiversity sector achieve the overall goal of Net Zero and Climate Ready by 2038: • Objective 1: Conserve, enhance, and invest in our natural environment and biodiversity. • Objective 2: Prioritise green infrastructure and nature-based solutions to restore and improve our natural environment. In total, the CCAP process identified 24 Actions for the Natural Environment and Biodiversity sector. Of which, 2 are mitigation focused, 2 are adaptation focused, with 20 covering both aspects. This includes 15 actions for Kirklees Council, 1 for the Wider Community, 3 for Partners and 5 for collaborative action.	Environmental Strategy and Climate Change Team.	Reviewed on a three-year cycle which will continue until the Net Zero and Climate Ready target is achieved in 2038.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Current Position	Teams Responsible	Date of Next Review
Kirklees Open Space Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2021.	The Kirklees Open Space SPD supports biodiversity by requiring new developments to provide well-designed green spaces, including natural and semi-natural greenspaces that offer important habitats for wildlife. It encourages the integration of biodiverse features such as woodlands, wetlands, grasslands and naturalised planting into housing schemes, helping to conserve and enhance ecological value. The SPD also highlights the role of high-quality open space in delivering Biodiversity Net Gain, supporting habitat creation and ecological connectivity. In light of the replacement of SPDs by supplementary plans – a review of these documents will be undertaken as part of the Local Plan update.	Planning Policy Team.	Will be reviewed as part of Local Plan update.
Kirklees Housebuilder's Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2021.	The Kirklees Housebuilders Design Guide SPD supports biodiversity by requiring new residential development to incorporate biodiversity net gains and embed ecological enhancement from the earliest stages of design. It promotes the protection and enhancement of existing habitats, directs consideration towards the Wildlife Habitat Network, and encourages nature-positive features such as sensitive landscaping and tree planting. Together, these measures help new development contribute positively to ecological connectivity and local wildlife. In light of the replacement of SPDs by supplementary plans – a review of these documents will be undertaken as part of the Local Plan update.	Planning Policy Team.	Will be reviewed as part of Local Plan update.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Current Position	Teams Responsible	Date of Next Review
Kirklees House Extensions and Alterations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2021.	The House Extensions and Alterations SPD supports biodiversity by requiring proposals to consider the natural environment as part of the design process. It encourages applicants to assess existing landscape features, retain mature trees and planting where possible, and incorporate sustainable design measures that reduce environmental impact. The SPD includes specific guidance on responding to local natural character and ensuring that extensions do not harm existing green infrastructure, reinforcing the protection of ecological features within residential areas. In light of the replacement of SPDs by supplementary plans – a review of these documents will be undertaken as part of the Local Plan update.	Planning Policy Team.	Will be reviewed as part of Local Plan update.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Current Position	Teams Responsible	Date of Next Review
Kirklees Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).	The Kirklees AMR includes a series of monitoring indicators designed to assess how effectively the Kirklees Local Plan (2019) is being implemented. The AMR includes specific indicators that track the performance of policies relating to biodiversity and geodiversity, helping the council understand whether planning policies are successfully protecting and enhancing the natural environment over time. Indicators that are of relevance to the protection and enhancement of the natural environment include: • Number of appeals upheld on appeals made against the refusal of planning permission on design grounds. • Number of sites and total area of land designated or protected for biodiversity and geological importance, including international, national and locally designated sites, ancient woodland and habitats of principal importance. • Net amount of new strategic green infrastructure. • Amount of urban green space (hectares) lost to development and protected through the refusal of planning permission. • Amount of new or improved open space, sport or recreation facilities secured through planning applications.	Planning Policy Team.	Updated annually, published in December.

Section 2: Future Actions

Table 2: Future Actions required under Section 2 of the Biodiversity Duty Report. Actions to be delivered as resources and priorities allow.

Activity	Future Action	Teams Responsible
Strategic Plans and Programmes.	Our Council Plan <u>Year 1 (2026/27)</u> - Continue to support White Rose Forest and Landscapes for Water projects in flood-prone areas, including continuing the £76,000 investment in the Dewsbury Country Park scheme. - Progress towards 21% canopy cover target for 2050. - Continue to support community led tree planting projects. <u>Year 2 (2027/28)</u> - Increase woodland connectivity; monitor biodiversity gains. <u>Year 3 (2028/29)</u> - Manage woodlands sustainably; expand nature recovery zones.	Leader of the Council. Chief Executive.

Activity	Future Action	Teams Responsible
Strategic Plans and Programmes.	Kirklees Environment Strategy • Nature in recovery by 2030. • All degraded peatland to be in restoration by 2038. • Increase Kirklees tree canopy cover to 21% by 2050. • All people who live work and study in Kirklees to have access to high quality green and blue space within 5-10 minutes / 500m walk by 2038. • Prioritising green and blue infrastructure and nature-based solutions in all projects to restore and enhance the natural environment. • Conserving and improving biodiversity through habitat restoration, invasive species management, pollution reduction, and better land-management practices. • Supporting the White Rose Forest partnership to increase tree planting as part of the wider Northern Forest. • Taking a biodiversity-first approach to development that promotes nature recovery and delivers biodiversity net gain. • Encouraging regenerative agriculture as a standard approach to farming and land management.	Environmental Strategy and Climate Change Team.
Strategic Plans and Programmes.	Kirklees Trees and Habitat Programmes • Protect, enhance and increase trees and woodland, as key elements of 'Green Infrastructure' supporting regeneration and economic growth across Kirklees through development of management plans for priority woodlands and continued development of tree planting programmes • Achieve improved biodiversity for the Kirklees district through a range of appropriate habitat development on the council's land portfolio.	Woodland Development.

Activity	Future Action	Teams Responsible
Strategic Plans and Programmes.	White Rose Forest Strategic Plan <u>Strategic Objectives and Targets for 2050</u> • Expand the area of trees and woodland and improve connectivity. • Protect and restore more trees and woodland. • Engage more people, communities and businesses in the planning, designing, planting, management and use of trees and woodland. • Promote the transformative role of trees and woodland. • Grow the impact and sustainability of the White Rose Forest partnership. <u>District Priorities and Targets for 2050</u> • Increase tree and woodland cover from 11.7% to 17.5% by 2050. • This will increase the area of trees and woodland by approximately 2,400 hectares. • Mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change. By contributing to long-term carbon storage and flood alleviation and increasing resilience to climate impacts. Through targeted planting schemes and woodland restoration. • Contribute to nature recovery, through habitat creation and restoration, to reverse biodiversity decline. • Provide communities access to quality green spaces and contribute to all people in Kirklees having access to high quality green space within 5-10 mins / 500m walk.	White Rose Forest Strategic Board / Woodland Development.

Activity	Future Action	Teams Responsible
Local Planning Policy.	The current Kirklees Local Plan will continue to be used alongside the NPPF as the policy framework to: • Safeguard and enhance the natural environment, including setting out a hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites. • Conserve and enhance habitats and species of principal importance. • Identify, safeguard and enhance the existing Kirklees Wildlife Habitat Network and wider green networks. The Local Plan update will identify amendments and additions to the existing Wildlife Habitat Network in Kirklees, including designated sites and links. The Local Plan update will rescope the policy coverage in the light of updated National Planning Policy Framework. New requirements include: • Taking into account the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) that relates to the local planning authority area in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 and seeking to maximise opportunities for habitat creation and nature recovery within Kirklees in line with the LNRS. • Consideration of revisions that seek to ensure new developments in Kirklees, including any public realm and supporting infrastructure, shall achieve the highest standards of design for the natural environment and local biodiversity, seeking to ensure that the development enhances Kirklees natural capital and provides ecosystem services through green infrastructure and nature-based solutions.	Planning Policy Team.

Activity	Future Action	Teams Responsible
Improving Biodiversity Management.	• Consider declaring an ecological emergency for Kirklees and/or equivalent policy measures to address the wider environmental challenges faced by the district. • Review all Green Infrastructure and publicly owned land in terms of climate resilience. • Explore opportunities for small-scale woodland creation across Kirklees. • Establish a rewilding programme for appropriate areas of Kirklees Council controlled and managed land. • Create a mandate within the council to dedicate appropriate officers to focus on work required around protecting and enhancing the natural environment. • Evolve how council-owned and managed land e.g., parks and open spaces, is managed, with a focus to increase biodiversity and restore habits, including through reduced pesticide use and increased rewilding programmes. • Develop internal Council policy to ensure all works undertaken on Council-owned and managed land, assets and infrastructure, that are not bound by planning policy, adhere to the highest standards of design for the natural environment and local biodiversity. • Seek to ensure that new commercial and residential developments achieve the highest standards of design for our natural environment and biodiversity.	Environmental Strategy and Climate Change Team / Woodland Development / Planning Service.
Collaborative and Partnership Working.	• Working with the White Rose Forest, assess and research innovative ways to meet sapling and bulb demand more locally, i.e., sustainably harvesting saplings from existing mature forests and replanting in a nursery. • Through Moors for the Future Partnership and other regional partners and statutory agencies, begin to jointly develop detailed peatland management/restoration plans for Kirklees in coordination with ongoing restoration efforts.	Environmental Strategy and Climate Change Team / Woodland Development.

Activity	Future Action	Teams Responsible
Informing and Educating.	• Encourage communities to rewild gardens; plant trees and wildflowers to encourage and support local wildlife. • Create and share information about the environmental benefits of woodlands through the White Rose Forest partnership and small-scale woodland creation. • In appropriate re-wilding locations across the district, install visible information about what visitors can observe and the benefits that re-wilding generates. • Run a district-wide educational campaign on responsible upland behaviour, focusing on dry conditions and wildfire risk. • Develop internal training to educate and inform council colleagues about the value of biodiversity and actions they can take to enhance local biodiversity. • Work with schools within Kirklees to educate children around the current biodiversity crisis and its links with the climate emergency. • Providing residents with information on individual gardening practices and behaviours that they can adopt. Link to the ecological emergency, cost of living and climate crisis e.g., micro allotments, rewilding, tree planting.	Environmental Strategy and Climate Change Team / Woodland Development.
Decision-Making.	• Continue to embed biodiversity considerations within decision-making processes by ensuring that planning policies and decisions consistently reflect the importance of nature. • Require ecological assessments for relevant planning applications and encourage the use of nature-based solutions wherever possible.	Planning Service.
Monitoring and Data Collection.	• Continue to utilise the Exacom software as a core digital tool to support the ongoing monitoring of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) delivery across planning applications. Over the next reporting period, we will refine internal processes to ensure consistent data entry, improve reporting accuracy, and strengthen our ability to identify risks or non-compliance at an early stage.	Planning Service.
Reporting on Biodiversity Actions.	• Publish a biodiversity duty report every 5 years which sets out action Kirklees Council is taking to comply with legal obligations.	Kirklees Council.

Section 3: Biodiversity Net Gain Information

Actions carried out to meet BNG obligations

Since the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements in April 2024, all development proposals have been required to demonstrate a minimum 10% net gain for biodiversity. The Council published a Technical Advice Note in 2021 to support the implementation of pre-mandatory BNG; this document is scheduled for review and update in 2026, following the publication of the West Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

To support monitoring and reporting of BNG secured through the planning process, the Council procured Exacom software in 2024. This is a web-based application which either the DEFRA BNG Metric Excel workbook can be directed imported into, or the Biodiversity Net Gain information can be input directly into the system. This software builds on Exacom's advanced legal agreement monitoring systems and enables entries from the metric to be monitored and reviewed. However, several integration issues remain between Exacom and the current planning document management system, which have limited the Council's ability to report comprehensively on BNG outcomes to date. Following appointment of a replacement permanent biodiversity officer in April 2026, it is expected that the outstanding integration and reporting issues will be resolved ahead of the next reporting period.

The Council is also currently exploring the development of habitat improvements works on Council managed land. This work commenced in 2023 and 6 sites have been subjected to feasibility and opportunity assessments. The works being scoped are across a range of habitats including river restoration works, grassland restoration, woodland management, and creation.

Officer Training

The following external officer training took place during the reporting period

- 4no. places at the CIEEM Spring Conference Training event March 2024
- 2no. places on River Metric Assessment Training March 2024
- Attendance on various PAS & Defra online training webinars-CDTE Team Leader, Biodiversity Officer and Woodland Development Officers throughout the reporting period

- High level BNG overview provided by Head of Planning to SME Agents Forum
- BNG legal training to the Planning Service-Freeths April 2024
- Portfolio holder BNG briefing July 2025

The following internal training took place within the reporting period

- BNG Training sessions delivered to Majors and area Planning teams by Team Leader, C,D,T &E and Biodiversity Officer-May 2024
- BNG training session for planning service delivered by Team Leader,C,D,T &E and Biodiversity Officer-October 2024
- Initial Senior Leadership Team Briefing on requirements of BNG-March 2025

Details of BNG resulting, or expected to result, from biodiversity gain plans approved,

The Environment Act (2021) sets out that Significant enhancements for biodiversity must be maintained for a minimum of 30 years after the development is completed. A scheme of monitoring and habitat management must be agreed with the Council, to ensure that the enhancements are fully realised. These schemes are legally secured by planning condition or Section 106 agreement. The Authority currently holds no legal agreements in relation to statutory Biodiversity Net Gain. The Authority has discharged 2 Biodiversity Net Gain Plans in the reporting period. Of these two, both have delivered units through a combination of onsite units, and off-site habitat banks.

Kirklees Council defined habitat strategic significance in their 2021 Technical Advice Note. Habitats are considered to be of high strategic significance when they fall within a statutory designated wildlife site, a Local Wildlife Site, or the Kirklees Wildlife Habitat Network. This category also includes any Habitat of Principal Importance located within its corresponding Biodiversity Opportunity Zone. These areas represent the most valuable ecological assets and therefore carry the greatest strategic weight in planning and conservation decisions. Habitats of medium strategic significance include parcels that are not themselves designated but directly adjoin a high-significance habitat, recognising the important ecological role of buffer areas and habitat connectivity. All other habitat parcels that are neither designated nor adjacent to designated sites are considered to have low strategic significance, reflecting their more limited contribution to the wider ecological network.

It is anticipated that the level of biodiversity net gain achieved will vary according to the location and context of each development. Urban schemes are likely to deliver onsite enhancements primarily through the creation of green spaces, with

modified grassland and urban trees expected to contribute most significantly to measurable gains. Where urban schemes are unable to deliver enhancement on site, off-site enhancements are likely to be secured through the purchase of Biodiversity Units from Habitat Banks. Habitat Banks located just outside the Council's administrative boundary currently support a range of habitats including lowland heath, broadleaved woodland, traditional orchards, mixed scrub, neutral and acid grasslands, lowland meadows, upland acid grassland, ponds, and fens. Many of these habitats are of high distinctiveness and would satisfy the trading rules required to compensate for losses of most urban habitats or modified grassland. It is expected that similar Habitat Banks will emerge within Kirklees over the next five years, resulting in an overall increase in these priority habitats within the district as a direct outcome of Biodiversity Net Gain.

For rural and rural-fringe developments, onsite delivery of BNG is also expected to be achievable through the provision of green space, including urban trees and modified grassland, but with additional opportunities to create or enhance habitats aligned with the Biodiversity Opportunity Zones, and the West Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. For example, onsite enhancements within the Pennine Foothills will likely include mixed scrub, higher distinctiveness grasslands, traditional orchards and rural trees. Development within the floodplain and riverine corridors will likely include reedbeds, deciduous woodlands and other features such as sustainable urban drainage schemes or watercourse enhancements.

How BNG obligations will be met in the next reporting period.

The council has a dedicated Biodiversity officer who will lead on the BNG reporting for the next reporting period. This role will provide crucial support to colleagues across the planning department. The role description specifically references "you will have a strategic role, working with colleagues to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain through the planning system, with particular focus on the requirements included within the Environment Act 2021".

Building on the existing software, the Council will use software, such as Exacom, designed specifically for BNG monitoring and reporting to pull out the relevant information from the BNG Plans approved.

Ensuring that the statutory BNG Condition is effectively enforced will also be important for the next reporting period. The development of robust and effective enforcement mechanisms will be essential to secure developer compliance. Although changes to the implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain are coming forward as part of the Planning and Infrastructure Act, which will increase the number of applications which are exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain, it is expected that the number of approved Biodiversity Net Gain Plans will increase. As the number increases, and the software integration is completed, the council will be

better placed to analyse trends in biodiversity outcomes arising from development. This will enable clearer identification of which habitats are experiencing net gains or losses, as well as where off-site biodiversity enhancements are being delivered.

The council will report on actions to meet BNG obligations and the details of the BNG outcomes on a 5 yearly basis.