

East Herts Council Non-Key Decision Report

Date: 16 March 2026

Report by: Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward – Executive Member for Planning and Growth

Report title: East Herts Council Biodiversity Duty Report

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary

- This report seeks approval for the publication of the Council's first statutory Biodiversity Duty Report, prepared in accordance with the Environment Act 2021. The Biodiversity Duty Report sets out how the Council is meeting its responsibility to conserve and enhance biodiversity. It highlights the actions that have been taken, the progress made, and the ways in which biodiversity considerations are now embedded into the Council's policies, decision-making and service delivery.

RECOMMENDATION FOR DECISION: that

- (A) The Council's Biodiversity Duty Report, attached at Appendix A, is approved for publication to the Council's website.**

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Council's Biodiversity Duty Report for approval, ahead of its publication on the Council's website. It outlines how the Council has met its statutory responsibilities under the Environment Act 2021 to conserve and enhance biodiversity through its policies, operations and decision-making processes.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The biodiversity duty is a legal requirement for public authorities in the UK to actively consider, conserve, and enhance biodiversity when exercising their functions. The Environment Act 2021 strengthened this duty for public authorities (excluding parish councils), and requires them to not only conserve biodiversity but to actively enhance it and create a more sustainable and resilient natural environment.

- 2.2 The strengthened biodiversity duty now requires:

- Consideration of what the Council can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agreement of policies and specific objectives to enhance biodiversity, based on those considerations.
- Action to deliver these policies and achieve the objectives.

More detail on complying with the biodiversity duty can be found online at [Complying with the biodiversity duty - GOV.UK](#).

- 2.3 Local authorities must publish a Biodiversity Duty Report, with the first reporting period up to the end of 2025. After this, the end date of each reporting period must be within 5 years of the end date of the previous reporting period.

- 2.4 The purpose of the Biodiversity Duty Report is to:

- Help everyone understand how the Council is meeting shared goals to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Allow the Council to showcase the actions that are being taken to improve biodiversity.

2.5 More detail on the requirements of the biodiversity report can be found online at [Reporting your biodiversity duty actions - GOV.UK](#).

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 The Council's Biodiversity Duty Report is attached at **Appendix A**. The report covers the first reporting period of the duty and is divided into three sections: 1) an introduction and review of the current reporting period to end 2025; 2) a look forward to future actions; and 3) information on biodiversity net gain (BNG).

3.2 The report covers the period 1 January 2024 – 31 December 2025. The next report will be published before the 26 March 2031.

3.3 Key achievements featured within the report include:

1. Pishiobury Park in Sawbridgeworth was declared a local nature reserve in November 2024.
2. Green Flag status for Southern Country Park in Bishop's Stortford and The Ridgeway in Hertford has been retained.
3. Castle Park in Bishop's Stortford has been awarded Green Flag status.
4. Biodiversity and green infrastructure have been assessed and promoted as part of the evidence base work to support the new District Plan.
5. A draft Strategic Vision for the new District Plan has been agreed which will guide sustainable growth, ensuring biodiversity remains a core priority for the district's future.
6. Two Neighbourhood Plans have been progressed during the reporting period (Walkern Neighbourhood Plan First Revision and Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets Neighbourhood Plan), both with a strong focus on environmental protection and biodiversity.
7. The Council has supported Hertfordshire County Council in the development of the Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

8. In 2024 14,495 whips/hedge packs were collected and planted by residents. In 2025 21,544 were claimed and planted.
 9. The Council marked its 50th Anniversary by planting trees in the district's three Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and areas of air pollution, with another 50 planted in locations experiencing traffic congestion and flood risk.
 10. The Council has established an Environment and Climate Forum for residents, businesses, Town and Parish Councils and sustainability groups.
 11. The Council has been working proactively with applicants to secure mandatory biodiversity net gain, with many applicants exceeding the minimum target.
 12. The Council is working with applicants and other stakeholders to progress two habitat banks in the district.
- 3.4 By preparing and publishing its first Biodiversity Duty Report, the Council is fulfilling its legal obligations while also demonstrating transparency and leadership in addressing biodiversity decline. The report forms a key part of the Council's commitment to promoting a healthier, more resilient natural environment and ensuring that biodiversity is considered across all relevant areas of corporate activity.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 The Council has a duty to report biodiversity actions and detail what BNG has been secured.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 Failure to produce a Biodiversity Duty Report would mean that the Council would not be complying with the requirements of the Environment Act 2021.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

- 6.1 None

Community Safety

There are no community safety implications arising from this report.

Data Protection

There are no data protection implications arising from this report.

Equalities

There are no direct equality, diversity, or inclusion implications in this report.

Environmental Sustainability

The Biodiversity Duty Report sets out how biodiversity contributes towards environmental sustainability.

Financial

There are no financial implications arising from this report. Projects identified in the Biodiversity Duty Report are funded from existing budgets, grants and S106 obligations.

Health and Safety

There are no health and safety implications arising from this report.

Human Resources

There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

Human Rights

There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

Legal

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Specific Wards

All

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Appendix A – East Herts Council Biodiversity Duty Report

Contact Members

Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward – Executive Member for Planning and Growth. vicky.glover-ward@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer

Sara Saunders – Director for Place, Tel: 01992 531656.
sara.saunders@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Authors

Jenny Foster- Principal Sustainability Officer, Tel: 01992 531462.

jenny.foster@eastherts.gov.uk

Richard Freeman- Planning Service Improvement Manager, Tel: 01992

531552. richard.freeman@eastherts.gov.uk

Laura Guy- Principal Planning Policy Officer, Tel: 01992 531553.

laura.guy@eastherts.gov.uk