



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee


Monday, 10 November 2025

Report of Councillor Rhys Baker,
Cabinet Member for Environment and
Waste

Biodiversity Action Plan for South Kesteven

Report Author

Louise Case, Sustainability Project Support Officer

 louise.case@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

To present the South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee for review and comments.

Recommendations

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- 1. Note the current content of the South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan and suggest any amendments.**
- 2. Recommend to Cabinet the adoption of the finalised South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication? No

What are the relevant corporate priorities? Sustainable South Kesteven

Which wards are impacted? All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding,

staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 The South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan sets a framework for the Council to respond to the issue of biodiversity loss within the district. The implementation of this proposed Biodiversity Action Plan will need to carefully review the financial implications of all agreed actions, including any sources of external funding support or cost implications to the Council, on a case by case basis.

Completed by: David Scott – Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 As a local authority, South Kesteven District Council has a statutory duty to consider how it will conserve and enhance biodiversity across the district. This report considers the Council's plan to deliver biodiversity improvements to ensure compliance with Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

Climate Change

- 1.3 The South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan sets out the Council's statutory role to conserve and enhance biodiversity across the district of South Kesteven. The Biodiversity Action Plan sets out key opportunities to restore healthy ecosystems, improve biodiversity and help reverse the loss of wildlife.

Completed by: Louise Case, Sustainability Projects Support Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1. Our natural environment is currently facing a triple planetary threat of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. Driven by the destruction, degradation and fragmentation of habitats, biodiversity has deteriorated at an alarming rate. The effects of this biodiversity crisis have been observed worldwide.
- 2.2. England is now widely considered to be one of the most nature depleted countries in the world, given historic and ongoing declines in biodiversity. A recently published analysis by the State of Nature Partnership states that since 1970, UK species have declined, on average, by 19% and that nearly one in six species are

threatened with extinction in Great Britain. Furthermore, a recent study by the Wildlife Trust has suggested that 90% of lowland grassland has been lost in the 20th century. This has contributed to a loss or reduction in insects, wildlife and grassland species which are an integral part of the UK's ecological infrastructure.

- 2.3. The compounding impacts of climate change, pollution and land use change are the principal drivers of the long-term decline in the health of our natural environment. The encroachment of industrial activity and intensified agricultural management have been identified as the most prominent contributing factors.
- 2.4. In recognition of the decline in the nation's biodiversity, Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 required that "every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, as far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity."
- 2.5. The Environment Act 2021, under Section 102, subsequently amended Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 to strengthen this 'biodiversity duty' which now places a legal obligation on public authorities to:
 - Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity
 - Agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration
 - Act to deliver their policies and achieve their objectives.
- 2.6. This legislation covers the Council in both its duties as a local authority, as well as a local planning authority (LPA).
- 2.7. In December 2023, the Council published a '[first consideration](#)' report which set out its initial consideration of what action could be taken to conserve and enhance biodiversity. It was a requirement that policies and objectives would be agreed as soon as possible after this date. Following this, the Council was to report on achievements resulting from its actions, and actions it plans to take in the next reporting period. The end date of the first reporting period should be no later than 01 January 2026 and then reconsidered within five years of the previous reporting period.
- 2.8. The aim of this Biodiversity Action Plan is to produce a set of objectives and actions to assist in delivering and protecting strategic biodiversity networks, taking into consideration both local and national priorities.
- 2.9. The vision of the South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan is to firstly conserve and enhance habitats that create better and more interconnected places for wildlife across South Kesteven. The Council will also seek to increase awareness of biodiversity and encourage more people to connect with nature and by doing so take positive action that benefits biodiversity in South Kesteven.

- 2.10. The proposed Biodiversity Action Plan sets out the strategic approach the Council will take to help reverse biodiversity loss and make space for nature, incorporating three core themes:
- Theme 1: Nature Recovery and Management
 - Theme 2: People, Partnerships and Funding
 - Theme 3: Planning and Policy
- 2.11. Following an introduction to the Council's biodiversity duty as a public authority, the Biodiversity Action Plan sets out its background connection to the upcoming [Greater Lincolnshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#), to be delivered by Lincolnshire County Council as a tool designed to guide action for nature recovery. Also detailed within the Biodiversity Action Plan is the Council's role as a local planning authority in supporting the implementation of green infrastructure under the Local Plan, and its responsibility to enforce Biodiversity Net Gain.
- 2.12. The first of three themes, Nature Recovery and Management, largely focuses on the management of Council-owned open space. The area of South Kesteven covers 365 square miles and the Council delivers the maintenance of all Council owned land through its Street Scene team. In addition to General Fund and Housing Revenue Account open space, this includes the maintenance of three Green Flag accredited parks in Grantham, Grantham Cemetery, closed churchyards and sports pitches. Collectively, this presents significant opportunity to further explore the implementation of new biodiversity and rewilding initiatives.
- 2.13. The second dedicated theme focuses on People, Partnerships and Funding, and considers the responsibility of the Council to engage and educate the community on ways to support biodiversity and nature recovery within the wider South Kesteven environment. Also referenced is the potential for partnership working to deliver higher-value biodiversity initiatives.
- 2.14. Finally, the Planning and Policy theme largely reflects on the current responsibility of the Council, as an LPA, to reinforce the core actions required to support Biodiversity Net Gain, work with the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership to embed the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and promote the incorporation of green infrastructure into more sustainable developments in South Kesteven.
- 2.15. Supplementary to the Biodiversity Action Plan, the Council has produced Appendix A, the 'Our Progress for Nature' report, to provide a comprehensive overview of the actions that have already been taken to support biodiversity in the district.

- 2.16. Many of these actions stem from the Council's formal declaration of a climate emergency in September 2019, which reflected the urgent need to reduce its environmental and climatic impact. To overcome the ongoing degradation of our environment, the importance of integrating green infrastructure into urban environments was identified as a crucial element of nature recovery. As set out in the Climate Action Strategy, it is the Council's vision that wildlife habitats are valued, maintained, enhanced and created in South Kesteven and that biodiversity is restored.
- 2.17. Furthermore, the Council's Corporate Plan (2024 – 2027) sets out the Council's mission to meet the challenge of climate change and ensure a clean, green and healthy natural and built environment for present and future generations. This is under-pinned by an ambition to protect and enhance the natural environment and wildlife habitats, working to actively restore and rehabilitate damaged ecosystems.
- 2.18. When developing the Council's plans for biodiversity it must be recognised that the public open space the Council maintains is used by residents in different ways, including dog walking and for informal leisure and physical activity pursuits. The benefits of implementing biodiversity measures must be balanced with local community need to avoid negative perception and publicity.
- 2.19. This report reflects both on the action that the Council has previously taken and proposes further actions to support biodiversity across the district as part of its wider Biodiversity Duty.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. It is a statutory requirement under the Environment Act 2021 that all local authorities (excluding parish councils) and local planning authorities must publish a biodiversity report.

4. Other Options Considered

- 3.1 It is a statutory requirement under the Environment Act 2021 that all local authorities (excluding parish councils) and local planning authorities must publish a biodiversity report. Therefore, the option to 'do nothing' has been discounted.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1. The Environment Act 2021 has strengthened the Biodiversity Duty of local authorities and as a result, it has become the legal obligation of South Kesteven District Council as a both a public authority and local planning authority to develop and implement a Biodiversity Action Plan.

6. Background Papers

- 6.1. Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 12th December 2023 - [Update on Local Authority Biodiversity duties Report.pdf](#)

7. Appendices

- 7.1. Appendix A – Progress for Nature Update
- 7.2. Appendix B – South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan