

South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan

Our vision, aims and high level ambition to conserve and enhance biodiversity in our District



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Our Biodiversity Duty



Biodiversity, or biological diversity, refers to the variety of life on Earth, in all its complex forms and interactions. This term encompasses all plants, animals, their habitats and the natural systems that support them, the collective interactions between each being known as an ecosystem. Healthy ecosystems form an intricate web that maintain and support life.

South Kesteven's wildlife, habitats and ecosystems are vitally important, from the services they provide, through to their role in climate regulation and access to nature for health, wellbeing and recreation. Biodiversity can be subtle but its associated ecosystem services are critical to human well-being, fundamental to both planet and people. These key functions include:

- **Provisioning** services (the provision of food, water, timber and fibre)
- **Regulating** services (helping to regulate climate change and carbon storage, air and water quality, flood management and disease control)
- **Cultural** services (providing recreational, aesthetic and cultural benefits, such as a sense of place and supporting human wellbeing)
- **Supporting** services (providing space for wildlife to flourish through pollination, photosynthesis, soil formation and nutrient cycling)

However, we have witnessed a startling decline in the biodiversity that underpins our natural world. Driven by the destruction, degradation and fragmentation of habitats, biodiversity has deteriorated at an alarming rate. The effects of which have been observed worldwide. 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.

The 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 at the most prominent contributing factors.

In September 2019, South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) formally declared a climate emergency, reflecting the urgent need to accelerate carbon emission reductions. To overcome the ongoing degradation of our environment, the importance of integrating green infrastructure into urban environments has been 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. This report reflects on the action that SKDC has taken to support biodiversity across the district as part of its wider Biodiversity Duty.



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.”

The Environment Act 2021 subsequently amended Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 to strengthen this ‘biodiversity duty’ which now places a legal obligation on public authorities to:

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

This legislation covers SKDC in both its duties as a local authority, as well as a local planning authority (LPA).

In December 2023, SKDC published a ‘first consideration’ report which set out its initial consideration of what action can and is to 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 report, the Council must 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.

The aim of this Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) 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. It is the vision of the Council to:

- Conserve and enhance habitats that create better, and more interconnected places for wildlife across South Kesteven
- Increase awareness of biodiversity and encourage more people to connect with nature and by doing so take positive actions that benefit biodiversity in South Kesteven

Timeframe

The timeframe for actions state when each is intended to be implemented:

- Short term- 2025 to 2027
- Medium term – to 2030
- Long term – 2030 and beyond

This BAP 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



Greater Lincolnshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) are a new system of spatial strategies for nature recovery, legislated for in the Environment Act 2021. The Defra Secretary of State appointed 48 responsible authorities (in most cases county or combined authorities) to lead the preparation of the strategies. Each strategy will agree priorities for nature recovery and the wider environment and propose actions in the locations where they would have the most impact in helping to deliver those priorities. The current rollout of LNRSs across England presents an opportunity for all local authorities to help shape and implement the vision for nature in their area.

As place leaders for their area, all local authorities have a key role to play in preparing and delivering LNRSs. As a supporting authority for the Greater Lincolnshire LNRS, SKDC has the opportunity to:

- Work closely with Lincolnshire County Council (the responsible authority) and other supporting authorities in the area to help shape the LNRS, ensuring it aligns with the Council's needs, existing strategies and priorities.
- Provide local data and input information from other relevant strategies, such as South Kesteven's Trees and Woodland Strategy. This will assist in mapping 'areas of particular importance for biodiversity'.
- Periodically review and agree drafts of the LNRS. The Regulations provide all supporting authorities with the opportunity to review and agree drafts ahead of public consultation and publication to ensure widespread agreement on the content and approach.

The LNRS legislation requires that responsible authorities involve all Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in the preparation process. This includes SKDC within its role as LPA.

Supporting authorities are expected to be key users of LNRSs. As such, the Greater Lincolnshire LNRS will be instrumental in directing and delivering on nature-based objectives in the future. For example, the LNRS will:

- Inform the rollout of Biodiversity Net Gain, by helping to guide where offsite habitat is created and enhanced.
- Provide important evidence that will need to be considered in the making of Local Plans.
- Be considered as part of the Council's statutory duty to take action, consistent with its functions, to conserve and enhance biodiversity
- Inform how future funding and investment in nature recovery is targeted, e.g. via initiatives like the Water Restoration Fund.



Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is an approach to development. In England, BNG became mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021) and ensures that habitats for wildlife are left in a measurably better state than they were before the development.

Unless exempt, developers in England are required to provide 10% BNG on all habitats within the redline boundary of their development, whether they are impacted or not. This means a development will result in more or better-quality natural habitat than there was before development. Separate arrangements apply to on-site irreplaceable habitat.

For the purposes of BNG, biodiversity value is measured in standardised biodiversity units. A habitat will contain a number of biodiversity units, depending on factors such as its size, quality, location or type. Biodiversity units can be lost through development or generated through work to create and enhance habitats.

An ecologist can be consulted to assess the biodiversity value of an existing habitat and advise on suitable habitat creation or enhancement for the land. There is a statutory (official) biodiversity metric tool, which is used to measure how many units a habitat contains before development, and how many units are needed to replace the units of habitat lost and to achieve 10% net gain.

There are 3 ways a developer can achieve BNG.

- They can create biodiversity on-site (within the red line boundary of a development site).
- If developers cannot achieve all their BNG on-site, they can deliver through a mixture of on-site and off-site. Developers can either make off-site biodiversity gains on their own land outside the development site or buy off-site biodiversity units on the market.
- If developers cannot achieve on-site or off-site BNG, they must buy statutory biodiversity credits from the government. This should be a last resort. The government will use the revenue to invest in habitat creation in England.

The landowner is legally responsible for creating or enhancing a habitat for BNG. A detailed habitat management and monitoring plan (HMMP) will be required to outline how the land will be managed for at least 30 years to achieve the target condition. This applies if you make on-site gains or sell off-site gains on a site you own. If you buy off-site units, you are paying the land manager to manage the land for 30 years to achieve the target condition. If anything is changed on the land, a new base line would need to be produced with a new HMMP so that monitoring can be maintained by the Council and developer in question.

Once published, the LNRS will be used to guide BNG offsite habitat creation and enhancement into strategic locations for nature. Specifically, the BNG metric includes a 15% “strategic significance” uplift in biodiversity units per hectare for delivering proposals in the locations mapped by the LNRS.





Biodiversity in South Kesteven

South Kesteven is a largely rural landscape, populated by only a very small urban area. The district is divided into four National Character Areas (NCAs) by Natural England; The Fens, Kesteven Uplands, Trent and Belvoir Vales, and the Southern Lincolnshire Edge. These are further subdivided into seven Landscape Areas, each with its own distinctive characteristics.

The Kesteven Uplands, the largest and central part of the district, contains a high proportion of ancient woodlands, both semi-natural and replanted, and is abundant with species-rich calcareous grassland. Rivers Witham, East Glen and West Glen dissect the area, their valleys containing species-rich meadows, grazing marsh and woodlands.

In accordance with established practice, landscape character assessment is used as the basis for determining landscape sensitivity and capacity. SKDC commissioned FPCR to prepare the [South Kesteven Landscape Character Assessment](#) (SKLCA) in January 2007, which builds upon the previously described NCAs at a finer grain of assessment. The SKLCA has since been used by the Council to inform its Landscape Policy.

South Kesteven has a variety of nature reserves and protected sites. These sites should be seen as part of an ecological network, managing, restoring and creating habitat in the right places helps rebuild a resilient network and enables species to thrive not just in one place but across wider landscapes. There are two Natura 2000 Special Area of Conservation (SAC) sites in the district: Baston Fen and Grimsthorpe Park. A summary of nature sites present in the South Kesteven District can be seen below (*Figure 1*).

Designation	Number of Sites
Natura 2000 (Special Areas of Conservation)	2
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	27
National Nature Reserves (NNRs)	None
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	228
Sites of Nature Conservation Interests (SNCI)	64
Local Geological Sites (LGS)	15
Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological sites (RIGs)	4



Planning and Policy

Adopted Local Plan

The South Kesteven Local Plan sets out the vision, objectives, spatial strategy and policies for the future development of the district up to 2036. Whilst it must be noted that the Plan was adopted before BNG was implemented, Chapter 10 is dedicated to 'Protecting and Enhancing the Natural and Built Environments' of South Kesteven.

Policy EN2: Protecting Biodiversity and Geodiversity seeks to protect internationally, nationally and locally designated sites for their biodiversity and geodiversity importance.

The EN2 policy also seeks to enhance ecological networks and to deliver a net gain on all proposals, where possible. It is important to note that the language used here does not mandate delivery of net gain but seeks it, where possible.

Policy EN3: Green Infrastructure requires development proposals to enrich biodiversity habitats

The EN3 policy stipulates that 'the green infrastructure network in the district will be maintained and improved by enhancing, creating and managing green space within and around settlements. Development proposals should ensure that existing and new green infrastructure is considered and integrated into the scheme design, taking opportunities to enrich biodiversity and habitats, enable greater connectivity and provide sustainable access for all. Proposals which may result in recreational and visitor pressure on designated biodiversity sites will be particularly expected to provide such green infrastructure.' By improving existing and requiring new residential proposals to provide green infrastructure, the policy makes a key contribution towards providing a more extensive inventory of nature destinations in the proximity to new homes. This will be a key driver in deflecting recreational pressure from habitat sites.

Emerging Local Plan

The emerging Local Plan, the most recent published draft of which was the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan up to 2041, includes a revised environment chapter. The revised chapter was written in consultation with the Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, Natural England and Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership. The Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping and Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping and the associated policies and appendices were produced by the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership.

The revised environment chapter not only includes a reviewed and strengthened policy EN2: Protecting Biodiversity and Geodiversity, but also includes a new policy: Biodiversity Opportunity and Delivering Measurable Net Gains. The Green Infrastructure policy has also been strengthened to include reference to Green Infrastructure Mapping.



A Report for Habitats Regulations Assessment, prepared in July 2025 for SKDC, concluded that the wording within Policy EN2 (Protecting Biodiversity and Geodiversity) and Policy EN3 (Green Infrastructure) protects habitats sites and strengthens South Kesteven's green infrastructure network.

Co-benefits of tackling the biodiversity crisis

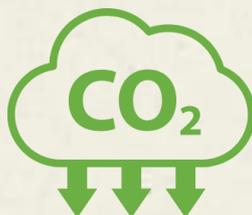
Through our three identified themes, we outline the multiple co-benefits of supporting biodiversity action for each area. We recognise that, beyond conserving and enhancing biodiversity, many of the actions needed will also provide wider benefits for people, climate adaptation and the environment.

By altering our approach to the management of our open space, we can ensure better habitats for wildlife, provide quality green space, and increase amenity value. By developing and protecting existing habitats, we will build towards a more resilient landscape that is better positioned to adapt to the effects of climate change, helping to improve the wellbeing of our residents.

We have mapped out six key co-benefits of enhancing biodiversity:



Community Resilience & Adaptation



Carbon Sequestration & Mitigation



Climate Regulation



Health and Wellbeing



Healthy Environment (air, water and soil)



Flood Protection



Strategic Objective	Reference	Priority Actions	Action Owner	Timescale	Co-Benefits
Theme 1: Nature Recovery and Management					
Within areas of direct influence, the Council will seek to enhance the natural environment and support the sustained delivery of ecosystem services.	BAP1	Develop a 'biodiversity hierarchy' to outline best practice for maintaining Council-owned or managed grassland areas with each step designed to increase biodiversity and environmental resilience.	Sustainability and Climate Change Manager Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste	Short term	
	BAP2	Prioritise quick wins by improving biodiversity around council sites, such as installing bird boxes and insect holes.			
	BAP3	Develop a process to support the delivery of measures which improve biodiversity and climate adaptation in social housing communal open spaces. This will be based on tenant engagement outcomes, with a focus on co-benefits and ensuring a balance with the existing recreational use of the space.			
	BAP4	Conduct a survey or audit of selectively identified SKDC owned open space to help assess district wide potential to improve biodiversity. This will combine trial sites identified across the wider portfolio with resident-led suggestions.			
	BAP5	Existing data about wildlife and habitats in the local area should be reviewed before the commencement of new projects.			
	BAP6	Consult the Greater Lincolnshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy once published to identify what actions will benefit specific areas.			
The Council's actions and decisions should seek to support and protect pollinators (including bees, moths, butterflies, and other insects) and their associated habitats as they are vital to the resilience of a healthy and biodiverse ecosystem.	BAP7	Endeavour to plant pollinator friendly plants where possible and include a diversity of species, colours, shapes, and flowering times to support a variety of pollinators.	Sustainability and Climate Change Manager Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture	Medium term	Carbon Sequestration Climate Regulation Healthy Environment
	BAP8	Support existing wildflower projects and develop new opportunities with the focus on 'feeding, breeding and sheltering' local wildlife.			

<p>The Council will include measures to reduce and/or prevent environmental damage resulting from our operations.</p> <p><i>Environmental damage can arise from activities which disrupt natural processes or negatively impact the natural environment (land, air, and water), habitats or living species. Sources of environmental damage include Greenhouse Gas emissions, chemical pollution, air pollution, land degradation, nitrogen and phosphorous loading, and the exploitation of natural resources.</i></p>	<p>BAP9</p>	<p>In recognition of the critical role peatlands play in carbon storage, biodiversity, and water regulation, the Council will avoid the direct use of peat in its operations, using only peat-free compost for planting initiatives and ornamental bedding displays.</p>	<p>Street Scene Manager</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</p>	<p>Short term</p>	<p>Healthy Environment</p>
<p>BAP10</p>	<p>The Council acknowledges that peat-free composts are not yet universally viable in all settings or for all applications, including nursery tree production. Where viable, the Council will prioritise nursery suppliers who use certified peat-free alternatives, with a view of phasing out to those using sustainable alternatives as they become available.</p>				
<p>BAP11</p>	<p>Within the Council's wider operations, plant protection products (PPP) will be used with care and only as a last resort on land where it is safe to do so and does not present a health and safety concern or impact of the aesthetics of an area. The Council will actively seek to further reduce PPP use where safe to do so.</p> <p>Licensed pesticides may still be used where there is a strong public health justification. For example, on areas of hardstanding or justified applications against pests e.g. Oak Processionary Moth.</p> <p>Herbicides remain the most cost-effective way of managing competing vegetation around amenity trees and preventing unwanted regrowth on tree stumps. Herbicides may also still be used on invasive species such as Japanese knotweed.</p>				
<p>Ensure the Council's local tree planting programmes contribute to climate adaptation objectives in line with SKDC's Trees and Woodland Strategy.</p>	<p>BAP12</p>	<p>Educate residents on the positive impact trees have on biodiversity and their role in alleviating the effects of climate change.</p>	<p>Tree Project Officer</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste</p>	<p>Short term</p>	<p>Climate Regulation</p> <p>Flood Protection</p>
<p>BAP13</p>	<p>To minimise and control the spread of diseases and pests, the Council will only source new trees from suppliers that can demonstrate adherence to the Plant Health Management Standard, the gold standard for biosecurity.</p>				
<p>BAP14</p>	<p>The Council will diversify its tree population to support resilience against pests, disease and the adverse impacts of climate change, helping to support biodiversity where possible. Trees species will be chosen to match the site conditions and constraints and may include a mixture of native and non-native species.</p>				

	BAP15	The Council plans to support and further encourage local bat populations by providing bat boxes and identifying trees where they can roost.			
Ensure the ongoing monitoring of the impact rewilding measures have on local biodiversity.	BAP16	The Council will monitor and report on its actions to meet the biodiversity duty by collecting data on specific performance indicators and including a specific section within the Council's Annual Environment Key Performance Indicator Report.	Sustainability and Climate Change Manager Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste	Medium term	
	BAP17	<p>A range of indicators will be developed to monitor the Council's action on biodiversity, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of native tree species planted • Number of instances of pruning practices to promote biodiversity (veteranisation, preservation of cavities and deadwood). • Number of habitat piles created (e.g. from arboricultural arisings) • 25-year projected canopy cover from newly planted amenity trees. • Species diversity of newly planted trees (number of families, genera, and species) • Area restored for natural flood management • Metres of hedges planted • Area of wetland created or restored 			



Theme 2: People, Partnerships and Funding

Continue to engage with residents to understand how they would like public Council-owned land to be best managed to support green infrastructure, increased opportunities for biodiversity in open spaces, and to facilitate climate adaptation.	BAP18	Provide regular updates across the SKDC website and supporting communications e.g., social media.	Sustainability and Climate Change Manager Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste	Ongoing	
Support small enhancement projects across the district through the development of a funding matrix.	BAP19	To enable the delivery of community focused nature improvement and regeneration projects which maximise co-benefits for residents, the Council will continue to actively explore potential streams of grant funding which can be filtered down to support local biodiversity initiatives.	Sustainability and Climate Change Manager Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste	Ongoing	All
Facilitate Council-led community engagement events to foster a culture of biodiversity stewardship among residents, schools, and businesses.	BAP20	Annual participation in Great Big Green Week with supporting biodiversity consultation.	Sustainability and Climate Change Manager Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste	Ongoing	Community Resilience
	BAP21	The Council will explore hosting Citizen Science projects and BioBlitz events.			
	BAP22	Seek to involve staff and local communities in tree planting events and accompanying nature-based processes.			
	BAP23	Signpost residents and local businesses to best practice advice.			
Be committed to partnership working with neighbouring local authorities and organisations to maximise wildlife benefit.	BAP24	Share data and best practices with other local authorities.	Sustainability and Climate Change Manager Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste	Medium term	Healthy Environment
	BAP25	Apply jointly for biodiversity funding opportunities e.g., DEFRA, Natural England, National Lottery Heritage Fund.			
	BAP26	Encourage the adoption of sustainable food production methods and raise awareness of biodiversity in agricultural landscapes.			

Theme 3: Planning and Policy

The Council will review its commitment to enhance the natural environment linked to Housing Revenue Account (HRA) properties.	BAP27	Conduct a review of the Council's approach to Biodiversity Net Gain in relation to its new build properties and future affordable housing developments.	Sustainability and Climate Change Manager Cabinet Member for Planning	Short term	
The Council will work to ensure the promotion of green infrastructure, prioritising proposals that contribute to biodiversity net gain and enhancement of green infrastructure, in particular Priority habitats and species, in line with an increasing level of mandatory action.	BAP28	Ensure developments in South Kesteven minimise their environmental impacts and deliver a measurable net gain in biodiversity of at least 10% in line with existing policy and statutory legislation.	Planning Policy Manager Cabinet Member for Planning	Medium term	Climate Regulation Flood Protection Health and Wellbeing
	BAP29	Promote as standard the guidance on biodiversity in new housing developments: creating wildlife-friendly communities produced by the National House Building Council (NHBC) Foundation, ensuring landscaping schemes are complied with following completion, and undertaking enforcement action where required.			
	BAP30	Promote the mandatory requirements of the forthcoming Design Code, once published, to enhance the uptake of green infrastructure and ecologically friendly measures.			
	BAP31	Adhere to the national standards for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to ensure new developments include biodiversity features such as wetlands, swales, and ponds to support aquatic and terrestrial species where appropriate.			
	BAP32	Continue to improve the biodiversity value of new build development in line with the adopted Design Guide and existing Supplementary Planning Document.			
Work with the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership to embed the Local Nature Recovery Strategy into site allocation, priority habitat creation, and BNG offset location decisions.	BAP33	Leverage the GLNP's Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping to guide site allocations and planning decisions using key Geographic Information System (GIS) outputs.	Planning Policy Manager	Medium term	Climate Regulation
	BAP34	Prioritise the protection of high-quality ecological network zones, buffer Priority habitats, and target creation areas for new habitat enhancement.	Cabinet Member for Planning		Carbon Sequestration

The Council will review the resource needed to successfully deliver Biodiversity Net Gain in the district.	BAP35	Provide ongoing ecological and biodiversity baseline training for planning staff and decision-makers to improve understanding of ecological issues and BNG implementation.	Planning Policy Manager	Short term	
	BAP36	If required, the Council could seek to engage a planning ecologist to scrutinise planning reports for improvements to biodiversity in new developments, and to support BNG.	Cabinet Member for Planning		
Within its role at local planning authority, the Council will review and enforce the protection of trees across the district.	BAP37	The Council will conduct a review of its Tree Protection Orders (TPOs), of which many trees are in high target low canopy coverage urban areas.	Tree Officer - Planning Cabinet Member for Planning	Medium term	All
	BAP38	Develop an agreed policy for enforcement of unauthorised works to protected trees (TPOs and trees in conservation areas) in accordance with Part VIII of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) as amended and the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012.	Tree Officer – Planning Cabinet Member for Planning	Short term	All
	BAP39	The Council will maintain a record of TPO replants and all 5-day notices issues.	Tree Officer - Planning Cabinet Member for Planning	Short term	All
	BAP40	The Council will have regard to government guidance associated with ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees, as a material planning consideration in decision making.	Planning Policy Manager Cabinet Member for Planning	Ongoing	All

Strategies relevant to the Biodiversity Duty – additional policies to consider

Strategy/ Plan	Current contribution to Biodiversity
Corporate Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Our Corporate Plan commits us to protecting and enhancing biodiversity in South Kesteven. This means actively working to restore and rehabilitate damaged eco-systems, respecting the rural nature of the district to promote green and open spaces where nature and wildlife can thrive.
South Kesteven Local Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The adopted South Kesteven Local Plan serves as a strategic document guiding development and planning decisions within the district. It outlines the vision, objectives, and spatial strategy for the area, including policies to address environmental considerations and the enhancement of green infrastructure to support biodiversity recovery (EN2 and EN3). The plan aims to ensure sustainable growth, meet the needs of the community, and protect the district's character and environment. ○ The emerging Local Plan, the most recent published draft of which was the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan, includes a revised environment chapter. This includes a reviewed and strengthened policy EN2: Protecting Biodiversity and Geodiversity, alongside a new policy: Biodiversity Opportunity and Delivering Measurable Net Gains. The Green Infrastructure policy has been strengthened to include reference to Green Infrastructure Mapping.
Climate Change Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Council published its first Climate Action Strategy, endorsed by Cabinet in November 2023, following an extensive consultation exercise and engagement with Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Strategy was developed to set out South Kesteven District Council's aspirations to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The Strategy set out eight key themes, reflecting the broad scope of work needed to effectively address climate change in South Kesteven. It is the vision under the Natural Environment theme that 'wildlife habitats are valued, maintained, enhanced and created in South Kesteven and biodiversity is restored'.
Climate Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SKDC's Climate Action Plan is in development to support the previously published Climate Action Strategy.
Trees and Woodland Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increasing canopy cover and urban greening will create and enhance habitats providing habitats for pollinators, birds, and other urban wildlife. This will further contribute to regulating services such as carbon sequestration, air and water quality improvement, and flood mitigation, which are vital for maintaining biodiversity. ○ By promoting the value of trees and woodlands, the strategy helps to raise awareness of biodiversity. ○ By focusing on species diversification, the strategy supports a resilient tree population capable of thriving under changing climatic conditions.

