



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Cabinet

Tuesday, 10 March 2026

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

Biodiversity Duty and Biodiversity Action Plan for South Kesteven

Report Author

Louise Case, Sustainability Project Support Officer

 louise.case@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

The South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan has been developed in response to the Biodiversity Duty for all public authorities (excluding parish councils). The new Plan will report on the actions South Kesteven District Council will take to conserve and enhance biodiversity across the district as well as deliver Biodiversity Net Gain as the Local Planning Authority.

Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

- 1. Note the biodiversity duty for all public authorities and requirements to report on actions and progress.**
- 2. Approve the adoption of the South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan.**
- 3. Delegate to the Director of Housing and Projects, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste, the approval of minor amendments to the South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan as new Government guidance emerges.**

Decision Information

Is this a Key Decision?	Yes
Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?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.
- 1.3 The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 10 November 2025 recommended the Plan to Cabinet.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

Climate Change

- 1.4 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 (Appendix B) 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 Biodiversity Action Plan and supporting documents were presented to Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10th November 2025. The Committee recommended to Cabinet to approve the adoption of the South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan. Since that date, further information has been included in supporting documentation. The changes to each item are as follows:
- Appendix A, the Progress for Nature Update, has been amended to clearly reflect the reporting period in which actions have been recorded (1st January 2024 to 31st December 2025) and now includes dedicated coverage of the Section 106 agreement between South Kesteven District Council and Boothby Wildland. This agreement is necessary to allow Boothby to sell biodiversity credits on the market to developers. This is a key element to supporting Biodiversity Net Gain.
 - The only notable change to Appendix B, the South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan, has been the reclassification of action BAP37 from a short term to medium term ambition to reflect the scope of works.
 - A summary of Biodiversity Net Gain data has been produced following an update to Government guidance on fulfilling the Biodiversity Duty. This data, which relates to the Council's responsibility as an LPA, has been collated and published on the Council's website ([Biodiversity Duty | South Kesteven District Council](#)). This provides requested detail on the actions that the Council has carried out to meet its Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) obligations as a Local Planning Authority. This includes details of BNG resulting, or expected to result, from biodiversity gain plans approved from relevant planning applications. These biodiversity units have been categorised into their respective distinctive habitat and will be closely monitored under the planning theme of the Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 2.11. 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, to reflect the remits where South Kesteven District Council will have most influence to improve biodiversity:

- Theme 1: Nature Recovery and Management
- Theme 2: People, Partnerships and Funding
- Theme 3: Planning and Policy

2.12. The decided themes were curated to align with the required elements set out in [Government guidance for biodiversity duty reporting](#).

- Section 1 requires the Council to explain the policies and objectives relevant to its biodiversity duty, and any actions taken in the previous reporting period (01 January 2024 to 31 December 2025) to benefit biodiversity.
- Section 2 recommends that organisations explain how they plan to fulfil their biodiversity duty over the next 5-year reporting period. To fulfil this, the Council has summarised its plans for future efforts in a dedicated table of actions.
- 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 (BNG). To fulfil Section 3 of the guidance document, the Progress for Nature Update (Appendix A) details the actions the Council has carried out to meet BNG obligations, including the signing of a Section 106 Agreement with Nattergal's Boothby Wildland. Also provided within this report is a link to the BNG resulting, or expected to result, from biodiversity gain plans that the Council has already approved. To ensure BNG obligations are met in the next reporting period, BNG will be monitored by a dedicated Officer who will annually review ongoing applications once planning permission has been granted.
- Sections 4 to 10 in the provided guidance were optional for all local authorities. The Council's Progress for Nature Update provides an in-depth summary of the actions it has taken to conserve and enhance biodiversity, including how the community has been engaged (Section 4). This report also highlights the top achievements of the Council (Section 5 and Section 10).
- To support Section 6, the South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan details how existing strategies have been considered, with specific reference to the importance of upcoming strategies when informing local policy. 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 (LNRS), to be

delivered by Lincolnshire County Council as a tool designed to guide action for nature recovery.

- To highlight the action that the Council has taken to raise awareness of biodiversity in the community (Section 8) the Update for Nature Report details the level of public engagement held on biodiversity matters to date.
- 2.13. 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.
- 2.14. 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.
- 2.15. 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.
- 2.16. 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 since 01 January 2024.
- 2.17. 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.
- 2.18. 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.

- 2.19. 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.
- 2.20. 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

- 4.1 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. Consultation

- 6.1. The South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan was presented to Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10th November 2025. The Committee recommended to Cabinet to approve the adoption of the South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan.

7. Background Papers

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

7.2. Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 10th November 2025 – [Biodiversity Action Plan for South Kesteven.pdf](#)

8. Appendices

8.1. Appendix A – Progress for Nature Update

8.2. Appendix B – South Kesteven Biodiversity Action Plan