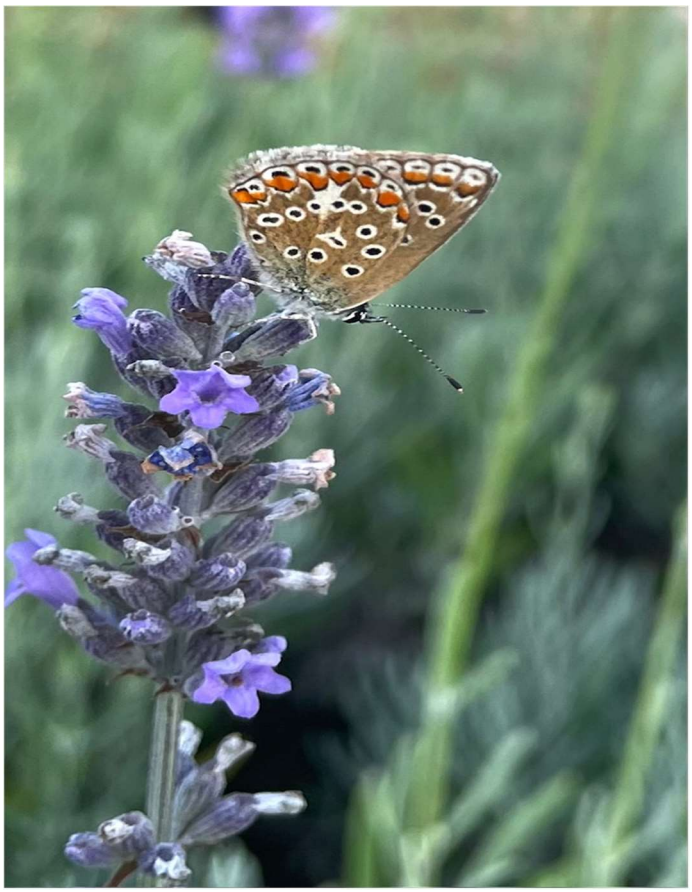
Borough Council of
King's Lynn &
West Norfolk



King`s Lynn and West Norfolk Biodiversity Report 2024 - 2025

King`s Lynn and West Norfolk Borough council

Abstract

The first Biodiversity Duty Report provides information about the Council's approach to conserving and enhancing biodiversity (2022-2025), including the actions carried out to meet statutory duty and details of biodiversity net gains resulting from biodiversity gain plans that have been approved between 01 January 2024 – 31 December 2025.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Biodiversity Duty & Section 40(A) reporting

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (the NERC Act) placed a duty on local authorities and other public bodies in the exercise of their functions to "conserve biodiversity" (section 40A), this is referred to as the Biodiversity Duty. The Act as originally enacted did not impose any reporting of implementation obligations upon public bodies. The Environment Act 2021 changed this position by:

- Amending the biodiversity duty to include the enhancement of biodiversity in England.
- Expanding the definition of "public authority" to specifically include a Local Planning Authority (LPA).
- Placing legal obligations on the public authorities in terms of implementation and reporting.

The legal obligations to report on implementation of Section 40 of the NERC Act is contained within Section 40(A) of the NERC Act. This document, hereafter referred to as the Biodiversity Report, constitutes the first formal reporting of the Statutory Biodiversity Duty and covers the reporting period 01 January 2024 until 31st December 2025. This report builds on the following overarching policies and objectives which were set out under the Council`s first consideration of the Biodiversity Duty in January 2024:

1. Seek to protect habitats and promote biodiversity
2. Use our ability to influence others and encourage all partners to operate in the most sustainable way they can
3. Continue to implement biodiversity policies through planning
4. Implement recommendations from the Biodiversity Task group
5. Create a Pollinator Action Plan.

2. Policies, Objectives and Actions

2.1 Relevant Policies and Objectives

The importance of conserving and enhancing biodiversity has been recognised and incorporated across numerous corporate strategies, policies, partnerships, and actions during the first reporting period (2024-2025).

Corporate Strategy 2023-2027

Protecting our environment is outlined as one of four overarching themes within the Council Cooperate Strategy which sets out key priorities. The aim of this theme is to create a cleaner, greener, and better protected West Norfolk by considering environmental issues in all we do and by encouraging residents and businesses to do the same. The strategy commits the Council to:

- lead by example by reducing our own carbon emissions and considering our impact on the climate with all our projects and initiatives,
- work with partners, locally and across Norfolk, to minimise carbon emissions from new and existing properties, housing and other developments,
- support others to minimise carbon emissions by promoting good practice, providing information and highlighting available grants from Government,
- encourage active travel by reducing barriers to walking and cycling. In addition, improve EV (electric vehicle) infrastructure when appropriate grants permit,
- minimise domestic and corporate waste by encouraging reuse, recycling and responsible disposal,
- take timely and proportionate planning and environmental enforcement action to protect West Norfolk,
- increase biodiversity where we can and create wildflower and pollinator opportunities,
- work with other agencies to manage and protect our coastline, rivers and streams and to improve sea water quality.

Local Plan 2021-2040

During the reporting period King`s Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council (KLWNBC) went through the process of replacing its existing Local Plan with the current Local Plan which covers the period 2021-2040 (adopted 27 March 2025). Within the adopted local plan are a suite of Local Plan policies that support biodiversity through direct protection and enhancement or through design requirements. The Local Plan policies are used to guide development proposals that are received by the authority on an ongoing basis

This suite of policies seeks to protect existing open spaces or encourage more open spaces, as well as linking open spaces, which will protect existing wildlife habitats and promote movement between them:

- LP12 - Disused Rail Trackways (aims to safeguard disused rail corridors for reuse as walking/cycle and bridle routes, which acts as linear habitat networks for wildlife movements)
- LP15 - Coastal Area (aims to protect sensitive coastal habitats and landscapes and requires mitigation for habitat loss and uses)

- LP17 - Management of Development within the Coastal Area (restricts inappropriate development in vulnerable coastal zones and aims to retain open coastal landscapes and habitats)
- LP19 - Environmental Assets: Green Infrastructure, Landscape Character, Biodiversity and Geodiversity (aims to protect and enhance biodiversity, geodiversity, landscape character and green infrastructure. Requires habitat creation and enhancement of 10% BNG)
- LP22 - Provision of Recreational Open Space for Residential Developments (requires new development to provide open space to a set standard and allows for expansion or enhancement of existing open space)
- LP23 - Green Infrastructure (protects existing GI, and requires new to support the development, promotes linking green spaces, supports SANGS delivery to reduce pressure on sensitive habitats)
- LP26 - Protection of Local Open Space (protects identified local open space from loss or harm, loss of open space is only permitted where equivalent or better space is provided)
- LP27 - Habitats Regulation Assessment (protects Stone Curlew and outlines requirement for bespoke HRA).

This suite of policies will help biodiversity by tackling climate change through promoting development in existing locations well served by public transport which should reduce vehicle emissions and/or promotion of energy efficiency to reduce building emissions:

- LP01 - Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy (directs most development to the most sustainable well-connected settlements (KL, DM, Huns, WF), supports reducing car-based travel and encouraging public transport accessibility)
- LP06 - Climate Change (requires development to be in locations that minimise need for travel, has strong emphasis on public transport, walking and cycling, requires going beyond building regulations energy performance, supports tree planting and encourages renewable energy and retrofitting
- LP21 - Environment, Design and Amenity (requires high-quality environmental design, air quality considerations and sustainable drainage, supports improving environmental quality that benefits biodiversity)
- LP24 - Renewable Energy (supports renewable and low-carbon energy generation, supports community scale and larger renewable projects)
- LP25 - Sites in Ares of Flood Risk (required climate resilience, sustainable drainage and water management, encourages adaptation to climate change).

Pollinator Action Plan

The King's Lynn and West Norfolk Pollinator Action Plan was published in October 2025 and has been designed so that it contributes to the National Pollinator Strategy outcomes, which are:

- More, bigger, better, joined-up, diverse and high-quality flower-rich habitats (including nesting places and shelter) supporting our pollinators across the country
- Healthy bees and other pollinators which are more resilient to climate change and severe weather events
- No further extinctions of known threatened pollinator species
- Enhanced awareness across a wide range of businesses, other organisations and the public of the essential needs of pollinators

- Evidence of actions taken to support pollinators.

Our Action Plan broadly aligns with relevant key objectives of the Norfolk County Council Pollinator Action Plan which seeks to:

- Raise awareness and importance of pollinators throughout Norfolk
- Promote, support and encourage pollinator-friendly farming
- Promote, support and encourage pollinator-friendly management of the county's highway verges, and Public Rights of Way (PRoW)
- Manage other County Council assets for the benefit of pollinators
- Encourage the protection and enhancement of Norfolk's pollinators through the planning system.

2.2 Strategic Planning Initiatives

The Council works in collaboration with authorities across the county to work towards nature recovery goals at a strategic level. Actions are summerised below:

- Work has commenced on a Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Participation in the production of the Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy through the Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery working groups
- Participation in the County Wildlife Site Partnership alongside NWT and other Norfolk Local Authorities
- Participation at Norfolk and Suffolk BNG Planning Partnership Group meetings hosted by Natural England
- Participation in Norfolk Green Infrastructure and Recreation Mitigation Strategy steering group and board meetings
- Participation in the Norfolk Tree and Landscape Officers Group to coordinate actions and planning guidance across the county.

The Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) was published in October 2025, and King`s Lynn and West Norfolk will continue to take an active part in working groups to aid effective implementation of the LNRS across planning and policy.

2.3 Action taken to benefit biodiversity

The Council has undertaken several new and ongoing actions in response to the strengthened biodiversity duty.

Action	Details and Outcome
Lynnsport Wildflower Meadow	An area of Council owned land has been put into a new meadow management regime to increase pollinator resources and floral diversity. Parts of the site had previously been seeded with wildflower mix before being allocated for a tree planting project. Any failed trees were removed, and the remaining saplings organised into clusters to allow more effective management of the site as a wildflower meadow. The works were undertaken in collaboration with students from the College of West Anglia under the supervision of the Public Open Spaces Tree Officer to promote practical skill in arboriculture. **Outcome:** Community engagement and increased opportunities for pollinators. The results of the project will not be known until the first year of monitoring in 2026.
The Howdale pollinator pot	The Howdale is a limited area of land with sandy soil. A pollen pot which comprises a concentrated area of wildflower planting was created on the site to increase resources for local pollinators. Slots have also been created within the sandy banks to provide nesting and shelter habitat for solitary bees and wasps. **Outcome:** Community engagement and increased opportunities for invertebrates. Burrowing insects have already been observed using the new habitat.
The Willows County Wildlife Site (CWS)	The Biodiversity Project Ranger received funds from the Environment Agency to clear willows which have self-seeded into the reed beds at the Willows CWS. Poplar suckers have also been removed from an area of grassland to improve the diversity of the flora. Works were undertaken in collaboration with Norfolk Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency and community volunteers. **Outcome**: Reduced overshading and improved the ecological functionality of the reedbed habitat.
Pond at Station Road, Heacham	The pond at Station Road is a summer drying pond with overgrown bankside willows that had not been managed for a decade. The willows had taken over half of the pond surface area. Works were undertaken to reduce the willow and tidy up the banks to improve the functionality of the area for wildlife and provide more light to aquatic flora. **Outcome**: Bank habitat was repaired and the shading on the pond reduced. The aim is to allow higher diversity of vegetation to develop within the water and on the banks to encourage amphibians and floral diversity.
Appointment of Biodiversity Project Ranger	A Biodiversity Project Ranger was appointed in April 2025 through the recommendations of the cabinet Biodiversity Task Group. The new ranger has been instrumental in the delivery of the projects outlined above. The position bridges the gap between the Public Open Spaces Team and the Planning Teams, offering specialist advice to community groups and council departments.

Action	Details and Outcome
	Outcomes: Improved visibility of biodiversity within the local community and implementation of projects which have already delivered increased functionality to reed beds, increased resources for invertebrates and increased community engagement across the borough.
Green Flag Award for Public Open Spaces parks and gardens	The Green Flag Award is the national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales. The aim of the award is to encourage local authorities to work with local communities and parks groups to achieve high environmental standards, creating a benchmark of excellence in recreational green areas. Awards are given on an annual basis, and winners must apply each year to renew their Green Flag status for each site. **Outcome:** There are five Green Flag Award Parks within the borough: • The Walks, King's Lynn • The Tower Gardens, King's Lynn • Mintlyn Crematorium, King's Lynn • Hunstanton Heritage Gardens, Hunstanton • Boston Square Sensory Park, Hunstanton
Implementation of Exacom	Investment into specialist software to record and monitor biodiversity net gain effectively. Exacom has a public facing module which allows users to view approved Biodiversity Net Gain data. The public facing module was launch this year with User guides created and published by the CIL team. **Outcome:** Compliance of Statutory Duty and accessibility of BNG data to the public.
Plovers In Peril funding	Continuation of part funding the Plovers in Peril Project (launched in 2021), a partnership between the RSPB and Wild Ken Hill, through developer contributions secured under the Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Fund (HMMF). The HMMF was put in place to offset recreation pressures on local Habitats Sites prior to the implementation of Norfolk Green Infrastructure Recreation Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (GIRAMS) though collection of a tariff on any development resulting in overnight accommodation. Together with a dedicated team of volunteers, project staff monitor the nesting ringed plovers every day during the nesting season, fence off vulnerable nesting areas and engage with visitors and the local community to help raise awareness of the Ringed Plovers' plight. **Outcome**: The ringed plover population on the stretch of beach between Snettisham and Heacham is bouncing back. In 2024, a record-breaking 71 Ringed Plover chicks successfully fledged from safeguarded nesting sites between Snettisham and Heacham. That was a huge 273% increase from the 19 chicks fledged in 2021, when the Plovers in Peril project first launched.
Species enhancements within Council development	The parkway residential development includes a range of species enhancements across the site which can be summerised as 14 bird boxes (small hole/open fronted/crevice), 15 sparrow terraces, 2

Action	Details and Outcome
	tawny owl vertical boxes, 226 swift bricks, 12 bat boxes (six crevice/six cavity) and a log pile. A management plan was created for Florence Fen, a site 250m east (located at Grid Reference TF63819) of the development, to improve the area for nature and recreation for local community and future residents. Florence Fen was subsequently designated as a County Wildlife Site. **Outcome**: Roosting and nesting opportunities incorporated into a large-scale development integrating homes with nature. The range of enhancements used should provide long term opportunities for a variety of different species. Works approved under the Florence Fen management Plan were commenced this year and included installation of hibernacula, vegetation clearance and creation of scrapes for waders.

2.4 Future National Policies

Planning and Infrastructure Act

The Nature Restoration Fund, as introduced by the Planning and Infrastructure Act, aims to accelerate the building of homes and infrastructure while diverting the impact into the recovery of protected sites and species.

In December 2025, Natural England (NE) gave notice of its intention to prepare several Environmental Delivery Plans (EDP) in 2026, where the first one will apply to the King`s Lynn and West Norfolk. The first of EDP prepared will cover nutrient pollution from development for The Broads Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (including River Wensum SAC). King`s Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council are lightly impacted by Nutrient Neutrality with the catchment primarily interfacing with area to the west of the borough only (i.e. Great Bircham, Great Massingham, Docking).

Each EDP will set out the conservation measures that will be brought forward to materially outweigh the impact of the development on the environmental feature that the EDP covers. Once in place, developers will be able to pay the relevant nature restoration levy which will discharge the relevant environmental obligations covered by the EDP. Natural England will use this money to deliver the necessary conservation measures. Whilst the full details regarding EDPs are still emerging, once formally agreed by the Secretary of State, they will provide an alternative way for developers to address and pay for impacts on protected sites and species. The EDP for The Broads Special Area of Conservation (SAC) will be voluntary, meaning developers can still chose to use the `traditional` Habitats Regulation Assessment route and provide their own bespoke mitigation solutions.

Environment Act

In December 2025, Housing Minister Mathew Pennycook announced the intention to introduce an area-based exemption from mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for smaller sites up to 0.2 hectares. The Government's intention is to introduce a suite of other, simplified requirements to improve the implementation of small and medium-sized sites that are not exempt. Further detail is urgently needed to understand how these measures will operate in practice and how environmental integrity will be safeguarded.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The draft text for the NPPF details requirements for new developments to include nature-friendly features, such as swift bricks, which can deliver tangible benefits for wildlife and help embed biodiversity considerations into everyday development practice.

3. Biodiversity Net Gain information

Biodiversity Gain Plans are not agreed until the developer applies to discharge the statutory biodiversity gain condition. To do this, the applicant must submit a Biodiversity Gain Plan supported by a completed metric, final habitat plans and details of offsite units or credits that have been purchased. The condition must be discharged before work can commence on site, and it is advisable for the Biodiversity Gain Plan to be submitted just before this happens.

3.1 The number of biodiversity gain plans approved

In total 23 Biodiversity Gain Plans have been approved in the period 01 January 2024 until 31st December 2025. This covers the period in which Biodiversity Net Gain become mandatory (12th February 2024 for major applications and 2nd April 2024 for minor applications).

None of the Biodiversity Gain Plans (BGP) approved in that period have resulted in impacts on irreplaceable habitats.

3.2 How biodiversity net gain has been achieved

Biodiversity net gain has been achieved through a mix of onsite and offsite biodiversity units, but none of the approved Biodiversity Gain Plans have included the purchase of national statutory biodiversity credits. Table **1** sets out how the 23 Biodiversity Gain Plans approved are delivering Biodiversity Net Gain.

TABLE 1: TOTAL NUMBER OF BIODIVERSITY GAIN PLANS APPROVED AND METHOD OF DELIVERING 10% GAIN.

Consented applications requiring net gains	Number	Proportion
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved	23	not applicable
Total number of approved biodiversity gain plans securing BNG through on-site units only	17	74%
Total number of approved biodiversity gain securing BNG through off-site units only	0	0%
Total number of approved biodiversity gain plans securing BNG through a combination of on-site and off-site units	6	26%

The total overall expected gains and losses across the 23 approved Biodiversity Gain Plans in the reporting period is set out within Table **2**. The values are broken down by area units, hedgerow units and watercourse units.

TABLE 2: TOTAL NET CHANGE IN BIODIVERSITY UNITS FOR APPROVED BIODIVERSITY GAIN PLANS

Overall expected gains and losses	Area	Hedge	Water	Total
Number of pre-development biodiversity units approved on-site	71.38	8.80	15.70	95.88
Number of post-development biodiversity units approved on-site	93.95	13.25	18.25	125.45
Net unit change in biodiversity units on-site	22.57	4.45	2.55	29.57
Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units on-site	**0.32%**	**0.51%**	**0.16%**	**0.98%**
Number of baseline biodiversity units approved off-site	0.18	0.01	0.04	0.24

Overall expected gains and losses	Area	Hedge	Water	Total
Number of post-intervention biodiversity units approved off-site	0.97	0.36	0.07	1.40
Net unit change in biodiversity units off-site	0.79	0.35	0.02	1.16
Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, off-site	**4.32%**	**24.73%**	**0.51%**	**29.55%**
Number of biodiversity units offset using statutory credits	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Net unit change in biodiversity units	23.35	4.80	2.57	30.73
Average percentage (%) change (including statutory credits)	**0.33%**	**0.54%**	**0.16%**	**1.03%**

The area/length and biodiversity unit values for each habitat (Table **3**), hedgerow (Table **4**) and watercourse (Table **5**) type, both at baseline and post-development across both on-site and off-site delivery, are shown in the tables below.

TABLE 3: TOTAL LENGTH (HECTARE) AND BIODIVERSITY UNIT VALUES FOR HEDGEROWS

Habitat Type - Area	Baseline		Post-development		Net Change	
	Total units	Total ha	Total units	Total ha	Total units	Total ha
Cropland	34.43	17.22	0.35	0.18	-34.08	-17.04
Grassland	18.00	4.62	50.97	9.89	32.97	5.27
Heathland and Scrub	0.31	0.08	2.19	0.33	1.88	0.25
Lakes	0.47	0.06	21.26	6.99	20.79	6.94
Sparsely Vegetated Land	7.33	1.35	6.30	1.05	-1.03	-0.30
Urban	1.68	4.44	2.65	9.60	0.97	5.17
Wetland	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Woodland and Forest	4.16	0.35	4.16	0.35	0.00	0.00
Intertidal sediment	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Coastal Saltmarsh	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Rocky Shore	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Coastal Lagoons	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Intertidal Hard Structures	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse footprint	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Individual Trees	5.18	0.54	7.05	1.38	1.86	0.84
Total	71.57	28.64	94.92	29.76	23.35	1.12

TABLE 4: TOTAL LENGTH (KILOMETRES) AND BIODIVERSITY UNIT VALUES FOR HEDGEROWS

Habitat type - hedgerows and lines of trees	Baseline		Post development		Net Change	
	Total units	Total km	Total units	Total km	Total units	Total km
Species-rich native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Species-rich native hedgerow with trees	0.00	0.00	3.17	0.34	3.17	0.34
Species-rich native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.02	0.00
Native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Species -rich native hedgerow	0.94	0.12	3.85	0.60	2.91	0.48
Native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch	2.83	0.32	2.46	0.28	-0.37	-0.04
Native hedgerow with trees	0.05	0.01	0.60	0.01	0.55	0.00
Ecologically valuable line of trees	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Ecologically valuable line of trees - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Native hedgerow	4.32	0.86	2.94	0.72	-1.39	-0.14
Line of trees	0.24	0.05	0.24	0.05	0.00	0.00
Line of trees associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	0.44	0.44	0.33	0.34	-0.11	-0.10
Total	8.81	1.79	13.61	2.34	4.80	0.54

TABLE 5: TOTAL LENGTH (KILOMETRES) AND BIODIVERSITY UNIT VALUES FOR WATERCOURSES

Habitat type - watercourse	Baseline		Post-development		Net Change	
	Total units	Total km	Total units	Total km	Total units	Total km
Priority Habitat	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other Rivers and Streams	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Ditches	15.26	2.16	17.75	2.46	2.50	0.20
Canals	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Culverts	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	15.26	2.16	17.75	2.46	2.50	0.20

3.3 Location of offsite unit Biodiversity Gain site

The biodiversity metric includes a 'spatial risk multiplier' calculation which is applied where offsite units are purchased, or blue line land is relied on, from outside the Local Planning Authority boundary and outside the National Character Area (NCA). NCAs are areas that have been designated by Natural England and are defined as 'areas of distinct and recognisable character at the national scale'. King`s Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council is covered by three National Character Areas (NCA); 46 -The Fens, 76- Northwest Norfolk and 85 – the Brecks.

The strategic risk multiplier acts as a penalty within the metric, which increases the number of units that must be delivered to achieve 10% dependent on where the Biodiversity Gain site is in relation to the application site. Table **6** outlines the spatial allocation of offsite units used to deliver 10% net gain. It is worth noting that all 0.07 Units being delivered outside of the operational catchment are accounted for by a single development delivering water course Units via the Wendling Beck Habitat Bank (BGS-121224001). At the time of delivery this was the only Habitat Bank selling water course Units in Norfolk.

TABLE 6**:** THE LOCATION OF OFFSITE BIODIVERSITY UNITS BASED ON STATUTORY METRIC SPATIAL RISK CATAGORIES.

Location of offsite biodiversity units	Total number of Units	Proportion
Units located inside LPA boundary or NCA of impact site/within waterbody catchment	0.75	59.57%
Units located outside LPA or NCA of impact site, but in neighbouring LPA or NCA/outside waterbody catchment but within operational catchment	0.43	34.87%
Units located outside of LPA or NCA of impact site and neighbouring LPA or NCA/outside of operational catchment	0.07	5.56%

3.4 Statutory Monitoring of onsite habitat

The legislation requires a detailed Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) to be submitted with the Gain Plan for any new habitats deemed to be 'significant' to explain how the habitat will be managed over 30 years and how it will reach the target condition stated in the metric.

Out of the 23 Biodiversity Gain Plans approved 17 included the delivery of `significant ' on-site gains and one included the delivery of offsite gains where the LPA are responsible for monitoring for 30 years (delivery in blue line land). The remaining five approved Biodiversity Gain Plans included delivery through the purchase of Habitat Bank units where the LPA have no responsibility for monitoring.

There were no Biodiversity Gain Plans that required monitoring during the reporting period.

3.5 Actions carried out to meet BNG obligations

A Norfolk BNG officer working group was set up comprising Development Management officers across the Norfolk authorities, to prepare for the implementation of BNG. Ecology and Planning Officers have been actively involved in the BNG Forum which has been set up by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to support local planning authorities with the implementation of BNG, provide training sessions and regular forum meetings to share experiences. An internal group for Norfolk BNG Ecologists was also set up to facilitate discussions and knowledge-sharing across the county between relevant specialist officers.

The Ecology Officer provided a number of detailed training sessions for Officers within the planning teams, planning committee, members and other relevant departments within the Council before and during implementation of BNG. These training sessions incorporated knowledge gained from the PAS resources as well as industry led training given by Natural England, DEFRA and CIEEM. Training sessions continue to be delivered to the Planning Department on a semi-regular basis to provide

updates on legislation and implementation, increase confidence with reviewing Small Sites Metrics and to outline appropriate mechanisms for securing Biodiversity Net Gains.

An internal validation checklist for BNG was prepared and distributed to the planning validation team to aid validation of planning applications. A validation team surgery was run bi-weekly in the first six months of implementation to discuss specific cases, deliver training and improve the validation checklist. As a result, very few errors occur in validation of applications that are subject to the general Biodiversity Net Gain condition.

A specialist database known as 'Exacom' is used to keep a record of approved Biodiversity Gain Plans and the 30 years of monitoring required for the successful delivery of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain objective. The software has built in capabilities to check the submitted metric and identify any errors or areas of concern. Exacom interprets the baseline (pre-development) and post development information on habitats and presents it in a user-friendly way, to help case officers to understand what changes in habitat are proposed and if proposal meet statutory requirements.

Where the habitats to be created are considered to be 'significant', either in terms of the type of habitat, or in terms of the number of units delivered relative to the overall biodiversity value of a site, the applicant is required to enter into an agreement to monitor the habitats for a 30 year period and to provide regular reports on the progress of the habitat to its target condition and its continued maintenance. Significance is assessed as per government guidance.

King`s Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council have devised a strategy that will allow the Council to collect monitoring fees to cover the costs to the local planning authority in carrying out its statutory duty of ensuring significant habitats are delivered and net gain is achieved. The cost to the local planning authority includes reviews monitoring reports, site checks and enforcing the legislation. The local planning authority is required to keep a record of all the sites where significant biodiversity habitats have been approved and to report to Government on their progress. Information about these habitats and the submitted information is stored within Exacom which helps officers to keep track of progress and generates reminders when reports are due. Exacom has a public facing module which allows the public to view net gain basic data.

4. Biodiversity Highlights and challenges

4.1 Biodiversity Highlights

KLWNBC created a series of documents to ensure that the mandatory policy for BNG is incorporated into the application assessment process. This includes:

- The success of the Biodiversity Ranger in delivering several projects across the borough in collaboration with local statutory bodies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and community stakeholders
- Creation of a monitoring fee calculator to determine appropriate fees to help self-fund ecological resources required to carry out statutory monitoring duties. This was based on PAS resources provided by other authorities and extensive forecasting to tailor to local conditions.
- Adoption of standard conditions and legal templates provided by PAS. These documents were rolled out to the Development Management Team with corresponding training on how to implement use of planning obligations and legal agreements to secure net gain. This has resulted in delays during determination being avoided.
- Implementation of BNG monitoring Software that enable the LPA to record key data and follow applications through the development process.
- Engagement with local habitat banks culminating in a site visit by the Development Management Team to help develop a deeper understanding of biodiversity net gain and the ultimate goals of the legislation as well as promoting good relationships between local Unit providers and the authority.
- Continued funding of the RSPB Plovers in Peril Project via the Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Fund and continued involvement in GIRAMs board meeting to help shape strategic mitigation across the county going forward.

4.2 Future Challenges

- Economic pressures: Budgetary pressures of delivering essential services whilst introducing new environmental policies. Reduced government funding for Biodiversity Net Gain burden will mean any new resources required may have to be self-funded.
- Delivering cross-cutting actions: Ensuring that there is a long-term strategic action plan for biodiversity.
- Preventing further loss of habitats and species: Implement an effective programme of monitoring and reporting. Ensure rigorous assessment of Biodiversity Net Gain through the planning system to avoid loss of irreplaceable and priority habitats.
- Pressures for space: Any future Local Plan will need to balance housing targets and environmental aspirations
- Upskilling staff to understand national targets as well as regional and local ones.
- Changing Political Landscape: Any future policy changes and new regulations
- Resource pressure: Ensuring enough specialist resource is available. This is an issue that will impact the council and ecological industry as whole.
- Anti-social behaviour: New habitat creation undermined by theft of materials left on site for wildlife (i.e. wood for hibernacula), fly tipping and rough sleeping.

5. Raising Awareness and Education

5.1 Engaging the Public

Garden Wildlife Competition - March to August 2025, KLWNBC ran a Garden Wildlife Competition which encouraged members of the public to celebrate their gardens and include features within them which could maximise their garden`s biodiversity benefits. The competition received 40 entries across five categories. The Wildlife Trust offered a family membership as a prize and the Local Men's Shed created bespoke wooden plaques for the winning gardens demonstrating community support for the initiative. The competition will continue to run in 2026.

Climate Change Competition - As part of a borough-wide schools' competition, pupils from across West Norfolk took part in three interactive lessons exploring climate change and practical actions to reduce environmental impact at home and school. The objective was to create campaigns that would inspire their school communities to take climate-conscious action with a prize for the best campaigns. It forms part of the Council's wider climate change strategy, following its 2021 declaration of a climate emergency. The competition was a collaboration between the Borough Council and Groundwork East, a sustainability charity helping communities and businesses transition to net-zero and restore nature in a way that supports healthier, fairer, and greener lives.

South Lynn Community Orchard - Funding for a community orchard in South Lynn was secured in December 2024. The project involved planting 34 fruit trees alongside one oak and six field maples, community planters and hedgerows. The project was implemented in early 2025 with hedgerow planting in November 2025 led by the Biodiversity Project ranger with the support of Harding's Pitts volunteers. The expected benefits from this Project are an increase in tree canopy cover, a source of free food for the local community, additional outdoor space, improved biodiversity and habitat. The project aligns Norfolk LNRS unmapped areas for urban habitats.

The Walks Tree Trail - The tree trail offers a self-guided tour of The Walks park's diverse species, including giant sequoias and historic, Grade II-listed parkland scenery. The guide includes a user-friendly spatial map to identify location of tree species within The Walks as well as an image of the species alongside a description of how to identify them. The 2026 update of this document has been a collaboration between the Council arboriculture experts and a local volunteer group.

6. Future Actions

6.1 How King`s Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council plans to meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period

Monitoring

It is expected that for the next reporting period a significantly higher number of Biodiversity Gain Plans will have been approved, and there will be greater levels of data on trends in biodiversity outcomes as a result of development. This will enable KLWNBC to identify gains or losses in specific habitats as well as identify where offsite gains are being achieved. However, the increased number of approved plans is expected to be tempered by the implementation of the new small sites 0.2ha exemption.

It is likely that by the time of the next reporting period, some of the applications with significant gains will have been implemented and the habitats created. The use of the Exacom software package will enable officers to track progress of those habitats and ensure up to date information is maintained. Accurate and timely uploading of data to the system by Officers will be crucial to the effective functioning of this software.

Enforcement

The enforcement of the statutory condition is going to be essential to enable the local planning authority to carry out its statutory duty in relation to biodiversity net gain. Robust mechanisms for achieving this will need to be explored to ensure that developers are complying with the legislation, although it is recognised that there may be resourcing implications for this. Further consideration of how best this can be addressed will be required, but the LPA will endeavour to work with applicants to meet their net gain requirements in the first instance before perusing an enforcement case.

Implementation

Ongoing detailed training will be provided to Officers and members on BNG, and the guidance document and validation process will be regularly updated to take account of any changes to BNG legislation and national guidance. The local Norfolk BNG Ecologists' network will continue to provide support and encourage consistency in approach to determining applications across the county. Consideration will also be given to opportunities to provide support and help to ecological consultants and planning agents submitting biodiversity net gain information.

Through the development of the new KLWNBC Local Plan, consideration will be given to how policies can best support the Council's biodiversity objectives and help to secure increased and better local biodiversity net gains.

Community engagement and Council owned land

The Biodiversity Project Ranger will continue to implement the KLWNBC Pollinator Action Plan which will secure increased and more effective local biodiversity opportunities by continuing to engage volunteers and identifying opportunities for improvement on Council owned land. The Pollinator Action Plan is primarily focused on improvements for pollinators but many of the actions proposed will benefit wider biodiversity aims. A strategy of small-scale improvements to Council owned land is being developed which will implement the installation of bird, bat and insect boxes alongside changes to management regimes with the aim of improving biodiversity opportunities as well as public awareness.

7. Glossary of Acronyms

The below provides a glossary of acronyms used within this document.

Acronym	Full Form
BGP	Biodiversity Gain Plan
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
CIEM	Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
CWS	County Wildlife Site
DEFRA	Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
DM	Downham Market
EDP	Environmental Delivery Plans
GI	Green Infrastructure
GIRAMS	Green Infrastructure and Recreation Mitigation Strategy
HMMF	Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Fund
HMMP	Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan
HRA	Habitats Regulation Assessment
Huns	Hunstanton
KL	King`s Lynn
KLWNBC	King`s Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council
LNRS	Local Nature Recovery Strategy
LPA	Local Planning Authority
NCA	National Character Area
NE	Natural England
NERC Act	The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PAS	Planning Advisory Service
PRoW	Public Rights of Way
RSPB	Royal Society for Protection of birds
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SANGS	Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces
WF	Wisbech Fringe

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