

Planning Policy Cabinet Advisory Group – 24th March 2026

Item 6: Biodiversity Duty Report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Environment Act 2021 requires all public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity. In doing so, it obligates every Council to produce a Biodiversity Duty Report on a 5-year cycle, commencing in 2026.
- 1.2 To comply with the above, a report has been prepared which sets out how Lancaster City Council has integrated biodiversity considerations into its policies, strategies and operations. It shows the progress that has been made during the reporting period (January 2024 to January 2026). It also outlines the Council's future plans and actions for the continued improvement and delivery of biodiversity objectives across the district.

2.0 Biodiversity Duty Report - approach

- 2.1 The Report preparation started with a meeting of officers from each Service, who took on the role of coordinating inputs from the departments and compiling information about work undertaken and planned which is related to the Biodiversity Duty.
- 2.2 The work of some departments is closely linked to the Biodiversity Duty. Planning and Climate Action is involved, through Planning Policy and in the work of Development Control. Public Realm is also actively involved, through the management of the Council's land. The exercise also enabled other Services and departments to consider how their work might involve the Biodiversity Duty and contribute to the delivery of the Council's adopted Biodiversity Action Plan (2024).
- 2.3 This prompted some discussions, for example, on lighting at Salt Ayre and at car parks, and potential for swift boxes on some of the Council's housing. Strategic considerations regarding the Council's estate also interact with biodiversity, either where land has existing value for wildlife and/or amenity for communities, or where there are future opportunities for these, as additions or alternatives to other objectives. Biodiversity net gain is a new factor.
- 2.4 Defra set some requirements, to report on actions, set out future actions and submit details on consented planning applications subject to mandatory biodiversity net gain. These are all included in the report, together with a short review of future challenges and opportunities. Defra set the reporting period up to 1st January 2026, and gave a 12 week period for publication.

3.0 Biodiversity Duty Report structure

- 3.1 The Biodiversity Duty Report is presented in the following format:
 - i. The Duty Report itself, which comprises a summary of the actions undertaken and the future challenges and opportunities;
 - ii. Appendix A, which is the formal template provided by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) regarding biodiversity net gain data;

- iii. Appendix B, which is the Biodiversity Action Plan spreadsheet, which includes measurable objectives; and,
- iv. Appendix C, which lists specific actions and projects undertaken to date and the future actions that are identified to be undertaken within the next reporting period (i.e. by January 2031).

3.2 When read together, the report provides examples of how the Council has:

- Improved the biodiversity evidence base;
- Worked with key partners to support biodiversity delivery;
- Delivered a measurable increase in biodiversity in the district;
- Embedded biodiversity in leadership and decision-making;
- Promoted education and awareness; and,
- Promoted and supported projects that deliver biodiversity enhancements.

3.3 The future actions that are listed include:

- Registering the Council's first Habitat Bank at Burrow Beck Solar Farm;
- The designation of at least one new Local Nature Reserve;
- The encouragement of wildlife-friendly gardening;
- To increase public awareness of artificial light pollution;
- To work with partnering organisations to develop a management strategy and action plan for recreational access around Morecambe Bay.

3.0 Biodiversity Duty Report - status

3.1 Having been to Chief Officers for review, the completed report will go to the Cabinet for approval in April. The report will be published on the Council website, with some illustrations.