

# Gloucestershire County Council

## Biodiversity Duty Report January 2026



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**Gloucestershire**

# About Gloucestershire County Council

Gloucestershire County Council is an upper tier local authority, responsible for education, Highways and transport, strategic planning, fire and public safety, social care, libraries, waste management and trading standards. The County Council operates through a governance framework that brings together an underlying set of legislative requirements, governance principles and management processes. The county is approximately 270,450ha hectares in extent, at least 5,000ha of this being estuarine habitat. Gloucestershire has a population of over 630,000 residents, which is likely to approach 700,000 by mid-century. The main areas of population (over 100,000) are situated in the largest settlements of Gloucester and Cheltenham but also within the wider adjoining Severn Vale.

Gloucestershire is a highly biodiversity rich county and is particularly special for its ancient woodland, unimproved limestone (calcareous) grassland, extensive wetlands, old orchards and species-rich hedgerows. It supports a range of protected and priority species some of which are becoming increasingly rare such as certain kinds of bats, amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates and rare plants. This diversity is reflected in the numerous designations for biodiversity and landscape, which includes 8 internationally important sites e.g. Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and/or Ramsar, 123 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), four National Nature Reserves (NNRs) designated as being among the best examples of a particular habitat, 11 Local Nature Reserves, approximately 902 Local Wildlife Sites. In addition, Gloucestershire is host to 3 National Landscape designations that fall at least partly within its boundaries – the Cotswolds National Landscape, the Wye Valley National Landscape and the Malvern Hills National Landscape. These National Landscapes (legally also known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) cover 136,400 ha of the county; implying a substantial portion (51.4%) Gloucestershire's land area is managed under this designation. This share is higher than that of any other local authority in England.

This highlights that many of our key services and day-to-day operations have the potential to have both a negative and positive impact on our biodiversity resource and why 'Climate and Nature' is one of the key focuses in our Corporate Strategy 2025-29.

## Introduction and background

The biodiversity duty is a legal obligation placed on public authorities who operate in England to consider what can be done across the functions of the authority to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (as amended)<sup>1</sup> originally placed a specific duty on public authorities in exercising their functions to conserve biodiversity. The Environment Act 2021<sup>2</sup> strengthened the biodiversity duty by amending Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 so that public authorities are now required to **conserve and enhance** biodiversity through the exercise of its functions – referred to as the 'biodiversity objective'.

In January 2023, the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP23)<sup>3</sup> was published by the government which set out specific actions and targets to improve and restore the natural environment and halt the decline in biodiversity. Under the 'apex goal' of improving nature, commitments were set out to

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<sup>1</sup> Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents>

<sup>2</sup> Environment Act (2021). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents>

<sup>3</sup> Environmental Improvement Plan (2023). Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64a6d9c1c531eb000c64fffa/environmental-improvement-plan-2023.pdf>

protect land and sea for nature through the Nature Recovery Network and delivering on rolling out and implementing Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Biodiversity Net Gain.

By 2030, the government committed to:

- Halting the decline in species abundance
- Protecting 30% of land in the UK

By 2042, the government committed to:

- Increasing species abundance by at least 10% from 2023 levels
- Restoring or creating at least 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitats
- Reducing the risk of species extinction
- Restoring 75% of one million hectares of terrestrial and freshwater protected sites to favourable condition

The EIP was updated in December 2025<sup>4</sup> to build on the existing visions and goals presented in the 2023 EIP, providing further detail for measures and delivery actions required to preserve and prioritise the natural environment. The latest EIP sets out clear targets, including ten goals to:

- Restore nature,
- Improve environmental quality,
- Drive forward a circular economy,
- Achieve environmental security, and
- Increase access to nature.

The actions taken by GCC to meet the biodiversity duty will contribute to achieving the goals and targets set out within the EIP.

Public authorities were required to complete a 'first consideration' of what action to take for biodiversity by 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 and agree policies and objectives as soon as possible after this date.

GCC recognised the need for cross-services support for nature across a wider range of functions and as such, have agreed to hold a facilitated Nature Recovery Toolkit workshop supported by Natural England and the Planning Advisory Service (PAS). This will not only broaden awareness and support for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) but will help ensure wider organisational compliance with the Council's Biodiversity Duty. The outcomes of this facilitated workshop will be reported on in the next 5-year Biodiversity Duty Report reporting cycle. This current report predominantly focuses on existing service delivery.

## The Biodiversity Duty

The NERC Act 2006 (as amended) states that *the action which may be taken by the authority to further the general biodiversity objective includes, in particular, action taken for the purpose of:*

- a) conserving, restoring or otherwise enhancing a population of a particular species, and*
- b) conserving, restoring or otherwise enhancing a particular type of habitat.*

The NERC Act enables public authorities to state that there is no further action to take, but if it is concluded that further action needs to be taken, S40 1(A) requires that the public authority must:

- a) determine such policies and specific objectives as it considers appropriate for taking action to further the general biodiversity objective, and*

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<sup>4</sup> Environmental Improvement Plan (2025). Available at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/692d8d9c9ce50d215cae962a5/Environmental\\_Improvement\\_Plan\\_EIP\\_2025.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/692d8d9c9ce50d215cae962a5/Environmental_Improvement_Plan_EIP_2025.pdf)

- b) take such action as it considers appropriate, in the light of those policies and objectives, to further that objective.*

Section 40 (1B) enables for (a) to be satisfied by revising existing policies and specific objectives to further the general biodiversity objective. Section 40 (1E) requires that the determination of policies and objectives must be made as soon as practicable after consideration.

The NERC Act is amended by the Environment Act 2021 with reporting obligations placed on local authorities, including local planning authorities. Under Section 40A of the NERC Act, local authorities must publish a biodiversity report to evidence the actions taken to enhance and conserve biodiversity.

Guidance from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) on when biodiversity duty reporting needs to be published<sup>5</sup> states:

- The end date of your first reporting period should be no later than 1 January 2026.
- After this, the end date of each reporting period must be within 5 years of the end date of the previous reporting period.
- You must include the start and end dates of your reporting period in each report.
- You must publish all reports within 12 weeks of the reporting period end date.

By law, the biodiversity duty report must include:

- a summary of the action you've taken to comply with the biodiversity duty.
- how you plan to comply with the biodiversity duty in the next reporting period.
- any other information you consider appropriate.

Reports from local planning authorities must also include the following biodiversity net gain (BNG) information:

- the actions you've carried out to meet BNG obligations.
- details of BNG resulting, or expected to result, from biodiversity gain plans you've approved.
- how you plan to meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period.

The guidance from Defra also includes a list of optional reporting elements to further communicate how the authority has taken steps to improve the environment. The biodiversity duty report looks at actions that have been taken by GCC, as well as actions that can be taken in the future to meet the biodiversity duty.

## Reporting compliance with the biodiversity duty

This report for GCC adheres to the following structure to demonstrate compliance with the biodiversity duty reporting requirement, as set out in guidance on biodiversity duty reporting from DEFRA:

- Section 1: Policies, objectives and actions
  - The policies and objectives set to meet the biodiversity duty.
  - The actions completed, either alone or in partnership with others, that benefit biodiversity.
- Section 2: Future actions
  - How the local authority plans to fulfil the biodiversity duty over the next 5 years following the end of this reporting period.

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<sup>5</sup> Reporting your biodiversity duty actions (17<sup>th</sup> September 2025). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reporting-your-biodiversity-duty-actions>

- Section 3: Biodiversity Net Gain information for the local planning authority
  - The actions carried out to meet BNG obligations.
  - Details of BNG resulting, or expected to result, from approved biodiversity gain plans.
  - How GCC will meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period.

## Section 1: Policies, Objectives and Actions

The table within Appendix 1 demonstrates and provides details on the policies, objectives and actions that GCC have taken and implemented to meet the biodiversity duty across its functions. See Appendix 1 for full details.

In order to implement some of these policies, objectives and actions, GCC have operated in partnership with other organisations, stakeholders and groups. Our key partners have been [Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership](#) and other public bodies in the county.



List of Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership Members

## Section 2: Future Actions

GCC will meet the Biodiversity Duty over the next 5-year period through a combination of the continuation and update of existing policies, objectives and actions as detailed within the table in appendix 1, and by taking the following actions:

1. Hold a corporate Nature Recovery Toolkit workshop:
  - Implement the outcomes from the PAS workshop
2. Continue to integrate biodiversity into decision making:
  - Ensure biodiversity considerations are embedded in planning policies and decisions.
3. Manage and enhance Council-owned land for nature:
  - Implement biodiversity-friendly land management practices for road verges and GCC estates where practicable.
4. Collaborate with stakeholders and further engage in partnership working:
  - Lead and convene delivery partnerships for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
  - Work with local conservation groups, nature partnerships, landowners, and businesses to support biodiversity initiatives.
  - Engage with the public and community groups to promote nature restoration and enhancement at a local scale.
5. Reporting on actions and progress:
  - Publish reports every 5 years demonstrating how the Council is meeting its legal obligations regarding the biodiversity duty.
  - Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of biodiversity initiatives to show measurable improvements and to identify areas where further progress may be deliverable.

## Section 3: Biodiversity Net Gain information

Under the Environment Act 2021, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory for major developments on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024 and for minor developments on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024, which requires developers to deliver at least 10% net gain for biodiversity through the following mechanisms, either alone or in combination:

- Delivery of on-site habitat creation and/or enhancements
- Delivery of off-site habitat creation and/or enhancements
- Purchase of off-site biodiversity units from a suitable provider from the Natural England register
- Purchase of statutory credits obtained from the government (considered as a 'last resort')

A list of exemptions and accompanying guidance was published by Defra.<sup>6</sup>

In order to meet the BNG obligations, GCC has carried out the following actions:

- Liaised with county LPAs for the delivery of BNG
- Organised internal training with planning officers
- Attended external training and advisory group meetings
- Developed BNG handbook to inform internal practices

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<sup>6</sup> Guidance for Biodiversity net gain: exempt developments (August 2024). Available at: [Biodiversity net gain: exempt developments - GOV.UK](#)

- Contributed to the development of county wide BNG guidance for developers and planners, which integrated with dedicated BNG advice webpages
- Developed internal systems for implementing, managing and monitoring BNG, including the update of planning IT systems and research for the procurement of BNG monitoring software
- Set up BNG enforcement and monitoring functions
- Set up section 106 legal agreement monitoring for BNG functions
- Set up planning application casework management changes to reflect BNG functions
- Utilised specialist agency ecological advice for overseeing BNG validation, assessment of submitted BNG plans and BNG metric spreadsheets, as well as for the provision of technical and strategic leadership
- Contributed to Service Level Agreement with the Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records
- Annual contributions to the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership
- Contributed to the cost of running two invitational webinars undertaken by the Gloucestershire Climate and Nature Fund for land agents, planning agents, landscape architects and developers likely to be engaged with proposals that will include BNG requirements

In order to meet the BNG obligations in the next reporting period, GCC will:

- Procure BNG monitoring software
- Employ a dedicated BNG Ecology Officer
- Undertake further internal and external training
- Continue to review internal guidance and procedures for BNG
- Strategically link BNG delivery with LNRS delivery

GCC has approved two biodiversity gain plans prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026. Across the approved biodiversity gain plans, the following units have been approved onsite through BNG:

- 9.81 habitat units
- 0 watercourse units
- 1.73 hedgerow units

The following units have been approved offsite through the purchase of BNG units:

- 19.02 habitat units
- 0 watercourse units
- 0 hedgerow units

The net gain of units across the two approved biodiversity gain plans is:

- 2.21 habitat units
- 0 watercourse units
- 1.73 hedgerow units

This equates to an average percentage gain across the two applications of:

- 10.11% habitat units
- 0% watercourse units
- 19.75% hedgerow units

In order to support the creation of a local habitat bank BNG market, the LPA has developed guidance for landowners, agents and brokers to use in the creation of offsite BNG opportunities such as habitat banks.

## Appendix 1: Relevant Policies, Objectives and Actions

Relevant policies, strategies/plans/functions for consideration	Status and contribution to Biodiversity Duty	Further work (additional policies/actions/objectives to consider)	Responsibility for Implementation
<p><a href="#">GCC Council Strategy 2025-2029</a>: Strategic Priorities Theme 3 – A place to be proud of</p>	<p>Gloucestershire’s biodiversity and green spaces will be maintained and enhanced through the implementation of a two-year transformation programme developed in partnership with district partners for nature recovery, climate change, and waste reduction and through the delivery of appropriate measures in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. This aims to support a more resilient natural environment in response to the risks and impacts of climate change.</p>	<p>GCC has committed to becoming a pilot delivery council for the Natural England Nature Recovery Toolkit. The Local Government Association and the Planning Advisory Service will be running a facilitated workshop in March 2026 to help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Align green efforts across departments and services</li> <li>• Look across into other plans and strategies to help streamline benefits</li> <li>• Provide a clearer understanding of how to deliver change, funding and cost-saving opportunities</li> <li>• Help define and deliver the Biodiversity Duty and councils contribution to LNRS delivery</li> <li>• Shortlist of priority activities and interventions that can start to be delivered</li> <li>• This will help GCC to shortlist activities and interventions that can be delivered corporately over the next five years.</li> </ul>	<p>GCC Heritage and Ecology team will lead on the implementation of this workshop.</p> <p>All relevant services will be responsible for delivering agreed outcomes in their service areas.</p>
<p><a href="#">Greener Gloucestershire Action Plan</a></p>	<p>This is a countywide action plan created by Climate Leadership Gloucestershire (CLG). CLG is an innovative public sector partnership of</p>	<p><u>Further work to be completed on actions</u></p> <p>Action ID 0202 – Declare an ecological emergency</p>	<p>Agreed actions will be disseminated by GCC Climate Leadership Gloucestershire</p>

	<p>all the county's councils, NHS, police and academia institutions to develop solutions to tackle environmental issues.</p> <p>The action plan tackles the most strategic and cross-cutting climate change issues for the county covering the following 10 key themes.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 <a href="#">Adaptation</a></li> <li>2 <a href="#">Biodiversity</a></li> <li>3 <a href="#">Behaviour change</a></li> <li>4 <a href="#">Economy</a></li> <li>5 <a href="#">Energy</a></li> <li>6 <a href="#">Food and farming</a></li> <li>7 <a href="#">Planning</a></li> <li>8 <a href="#">Retrofit</a></li> <li>9 <a href="#">Transport</a></li> <li>10 <a href="#">Waste</a></li> </ol> <p>The <a href="#">biodiversity action plan</a> details 13 recommended actions to protect and enhance biodiversity across the county. The county council has addressed the following:</p> <p>Action ID 0201– Development of the LNRS  <i>GCC commissioned the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership to develop the Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy</i></p> <p>Action ID 0203 – Partners to list involvement in water focused local partnerships and strategic planning</p>	<p><i>Declaration of ecological emergency is currently pending and is the responsibility of the Lead Cabinet Member for Nature, Climate and Waste Reduction.</i></p> <p>Action ID 0204 – Embed Natural Flood Management as a core component of a new Local Flood Risk Management Strategy</p> <p>Action ID 0206 – Develop green infrastructure strategies and use new Natural Infrastructure standards in major planning applications and Local Plans</p> <p>Action ID 0207 – Support Gloucester Nature Park  <i>GCC will continue to comply with this action</i></p> <p>Action ID 0209 – Partners to actively look for opportunities to create new SANGs  <i>GCC will ensure that SANGs are suitably located and align with LNRS measures</i></p> <p>Action 0211 – Tree Strategy to be revised and updated  <i>GCC are in the process of creating a new GCC Tree Strategy and are working to incorporate green infrastructure and flood prevention at the design phase of infrastructure projects.</i></p>	<p>representatives to the relevant GCC service areas for implementation.</p>
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	<p><i>Through GCC's Flood Risk team, GCC has engaged with all catchment partnerships via the Natural Flood Management Partnership</i></p> <p>Action ID 0205 – Train planners and members in BNG requirements and raise awareness of GNCF <i>See Section 3</i></p> <p>Action ID 0207 – Support Gloucester Nature Park <i>GCC has provided support to this initiative as part of a steering group</i></p> <p>Action ID 0208 – Accessible biodiversity rich green spaces within a 15 minute walk for all Gloucestershire residents <i>GCC has ensured that this measure was included in the LNRS</i></p>	<p><u>Potential additions to the existing Greener Gloucestershire Action Plan</u></p> <p>Expand Greener Gloucestershire Action Plan to adopt key messaging from the LNRS around biodiversity i.e. 'bigger, better &amp; more joined up'.</p> <p>Expand Net Zero commitments to include biodiversity policies.</p> <p>Expand Energy commitments to include biodiversity policies.</p> <p>Expand Food &amp; Farming commitments to include biodiversity policies, particularly in relation to net zero farming practices</p> <p>Continued sharing of best practice through regular County Planning Officers Group and the setup of a shared document space (both already in action).</p> <p>Expand retro fit commitments to include impacts on biodiversity</p> <p>Continued consideration for LNRS and waste impact on biodiversity.</p>	
GCC Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP)	Appendix 21: Lifecycle plan Verges of the TAMP provides guidance for the promotion of biodiversity as part of a maintenance minimisation plan for road verges.	Road verges maintenance are due to be audited by GCC's Biodiversity Officer.	GCC Highways and Infrastructure

<p><u><a href="#">GCC Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan 2020-2041:</a></u>  Policy LTP PD0.2 – Local Environmental Protection,  Policy LTP PD0.4 – Integration with Land Use Planning and New Development, Policy LTP PD2.2 – Cycle Asset Management, Policy LTP PD4.1 – Gloucestershire’s Highway Network, Policy LTP PD4.2 – Highway Network Resilience, Policy LTP PD4.3 – Highway Maintenance, Policy LTP PD6.3 – Pedestrian Asset Management</p>	<p>Policy LTP PD0.2 seeks to protect and minimise harm to biodiversity, geodiversity and water resources in highways associated developments, whilst ensuring the natural environment is enhanced wherever practicable. This is supported by policy LTP PD 4.3 that seeks to enhance the biodiversity of verges. This will be done in accordance with the <u><a href="#">Gloucestershire Highways Biodiversity Guidance</a></u> and the Green Infrastructure Pledge. The Gloucestershire Highways Biodiversity Guidance is a comprehensive highways manual for informing different service areas on how to comply with wildlife legislation to ensure that protected species and sites are not harmed. Policies LTP PD 2.2, LTP PD4.2 and LTP PD6.3 ensure that winter maintenance and vegetation clearance procedures and policies accord with this guidance.</p> <p>Policies LTP PD0.2, LTP PD0.4 and LTP PD4.1 ensure that green infrastructure principles in the design, maintenance and operation of highways assets.  Policy LTP PD 0.2 ensures Natural England’s work on the Green Transport Corridors and Green Infrastructure Agreements are supported by GCC to deliver biodiversity gains, ecological connectivity and ecosystem services.</p>	<p>The Council will continue to use this document to provide a clear policy framework for transport planning across Gloucestershire.</p> <p>The Plan is currently under review.</p>	<p>GCC Transport Planning</p>
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Planned road schemes	All road schemes are subject to ecological appraisals, Habitat Regulations Assessments and the appropriate mitigations taken forward.	GCC will continue to its statutory obligations for biodiversity legislation.	GCC Highways Teams
Highways Operations	Policy is to ensure that day-to-day operations follow the recommendations of the <a href="#">Gloucestershire Highways Biodiversity Guidance</a> .	GCC will continue to consult this guidance for highways operations.	GCC Highways Teams
Gloucestershire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS)	<p>GCC as Lead Local Flood Authority has a statutory duty under the Flood and Water Management Act (2010) to produce and deliver a LFRMS.</p> <p>The current strategy is undergoing review with a refreshed / updated version due to be consulted on in 2026.</p> <p>The key objectives of the LFRMS are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve our understanding of local flood risk</li> <li>• Put in place plans to manage these risks</li> <li>• Avoid inappropriate development and ensure new development does not increase flooding elsewhere</li> <li>• Increase public awareness of flooding and encourage local communities to take action</li> <li>• Support response to, and recovery from, flooding incidents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review / update LFRMS</li> <li>• Continue to lead and support the Gloucestershire Natural Flood Management Partnership</li> <li>• Continue to support and deliver the Gloucestershire NFM small grants scheme, seeking additional funding as required.</li> <li>• Maintain and deliver a programme of planned NFM activity (9+ schemes currently in development)</li> <li>• Develop a pipeline for retro-fit urban multiple-benefit SuDS schemes and carry out an opportunity-mapping exercise</li> </ul> <p>Consider nature-based solutions as the first preference for all flood mitigation projects.</p>	GCC Lead Local Flood Authority/GCC Flood Team

- Ensure close partnership working and co-ordination with other risk management authorities in Gloucestershire.

The elements that contribute directly towards Biodiversity Duty are centred on nature-based solutions to flood risk management and include Natural Flood Management and multiple-benefit sustainable drainage schemes (SuDS). Both approaches deliver improvements to water quantity (attenuation), water quality, biodiversity and amenity.

The biodiversity elements include habitat creation, such as watercourse renaturalisation and in-channel natural features as well as carbon sequestration. One current example is the ongoing NFM project in the Forest of Dean (Cannop catchment) of unprecedented scale which involves:

- 50km<sup>2</sup> above Lydney
- GCC partnered with Forestry England & EA
- 5,000 large woody debris (1k so far)
- 13ha wetland/wet woodland to be created (5ha so far)
- 15 reaches buffered; 40k trees to be planted (2k so far)
- 74.5km river to be restored (12km so far)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2+ captive beaver release sites.</li> </ul>		
<p><a href="#">Minerals Local Plan</a> for Gloucestershire: Policy DM06 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity</p>	<p>Policy DM06 ensures that biodiversity conservation and overall net gain is demonstrated by proposed mineral developments. Where adverse impacts cannot be avoided, mitigations must be sought. In exceptional circumstances, compensatory measures including biodiversity offsets can be used to provide an overall net gain. In general, proposed measures that will aid the protection of and / or provide for biodiversity enhancements within Gloucestershire will be supported by the MPA.</p> <p>Sustainability Appraisal (SA) reports were used to inform the plan’s preparation, ensuring all alternative options and approaches were appropriately considered and effectively evaluated. Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) work was undertaken to ensure that sites of international environmental significance were identified, scrutinised and adequately protected. In accordance with the provisions of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, considerations on protecting the biodiversity of non-designated sites identified by the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership informed the plan’s</p>	<p>The Council will continue to use this document to provide a clear policy framework for how mineral developments should take place across Gloucestershire.</p> <p>The Plan is scheduled for a 5-year review.</p> <p>An internal review of the plan is currently underway, and it is anticipated that any subsequent plan will be prepared under the new plan making system as proposed in the upcoming updated NPPF.</p>	<p>GCC Minerals and Waste Policy Team/GCC acting as MPA</p>

	<p>creation. This was done in conjunction with legislative requirements for biodiversity and priority habitats and species on the English List (Section 41, NERC Act).</p>		
<p><u>Gloucestershire Waste Core Strategy (WCS):</u> Core Policy WCS15 – Nature Conservation (Biodiversity &amp; Geodiversity)</p>	<p>Core Policy WCS15 ensures that waste development proposals assess their impact on the natural environment and contribute to local nature conservation targets to provide a net gain for biodiversity. SSSI, NNR and local nature conservation designation sites are safeguarded against inappropriate development. Development would only be granted if potential impacts can be mitigated and the benefits of development outweigh any impact.</p> <p>The WCS was subjected to an initial HRA screening process and subsequently a HRA which was used to inform the final WCS, including the designation of the plan's strategic site allocations in WCS6 and the key development criteria in Appendix 5 as transposed into UK law by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (the 2010 Regulations).</p>	<p>The Council will continue to use this document to provide a clear policy framework for waste management in Gloucestershire.</p> <p>The Plan is scheduled for a review.</p> <p>An internal review of the plan is currently underway, and it is anticipated that any subsequent plan will be prepared under the new plan making system as proposed in the upcoming updated NPPF.</p>	<p>GCC Minerals and Waste Policy Team/GCC acting as WPA</p>
<p>Saved Waste Local Plan (WLP) Policies: Policy 25 – Conservation Outside Designated Sites</p>	<p>Policy 25 ensures that non-designated sites containing important flora, fauna and natural and cultural heritage features shall be protected from waste developments. It recognises the importance of non-designated sites in</p>	<p>The Council will continue to use this document to provide a clear policy framework for waste management in Gloucestershire.</p> <p>Saved policies are scheduled for a</p>	<p>GCC Minerals and Waste Policy Team/GCC acting as WPA</p>

	<p>maintaining ecological networks. Waste development will only be permitted where adverse impacts on these features can be prevented or mitigated. This shall be adjudged against the Biodiversity Action Plan for the County.</p> <p>The schedule of saved Waste Local Plan Policies is set out in Appendix 1 of the WCS.</p>	<p>review as part of the wider update to the Minerals and Waste Development Framework.</p> <p>In accordance with the internal review of the WCS currently underway, it is anticipated that any subsequent saved policies will be assessed under the new plan making system as proposed in the upcoming updated NPPF.</p>	
Local Nature Recovery Strategy	<p>Gloucestershire County Council is the responsible authority for the preparation and publication of the LNRS. GCC commissioned the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership to prepare the LNRS. The LNRS will ensure habitat enhancement and creation is guided to the most appropriate locations. The public consultation was conducted in autumn 2025.</p>	<p>The LNRS is due to be adopted in January 2026 and published on GCC's website in February 2026. GCC's LNRS Officer will oversee delivery across GCC's services.</p>	<p>Gloucestershire County Council &amp; Local Nature Recovery Partnership</p>
Tree and Woodland Strategy	<p>GCC has committed to planting 1 million trees across the county by 2030 and has created communication channels for landowners to come forward with appropriate land for tree planting.</p> <p>Currently, GCC follows the county wide <a href="#">Gloucestershire Tree Strategy</a> guidance.</p>	<p>An internal review of the creation of GCC's Tree and Woodland Strategy is underway.</p>	<p>GCC Tree and Greenspace Team</p>
Species Conservation Strategy	<p>GCC holds an organisational license for the NatureSpace partnership for off-site habitat compensation for Great</p>	<p>This license is ongoing.</p>	<p>GCC Assistant Director of Planning and Economic</p>

	<p>Crested Newt populations affected by development. This enables GCC to discharge its obligations if the developer wishes to use this route for mitigation.</p>		Development
Protected Site Strategies	<p>GCC is an active member of ASERA who are responsible for ensuring implementation of the management plan for Severan Estuary SAC/SPA/Ramsar.</p> <p>All relevant planning applications are screened to see if they require a Habitats Regulation Assessment.</p> <p>GCC provides strategic support to district councils regarding county-wide recreational mitigation strategies required for SAC/SPA/Ramsar sites in the county, including provision of offsite Sustainable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs).</p>	<p>This membership is ongoing.</p> <p>This practice is ongoing.</p> <p>This practice is ongoing.</p>	GCC Economy, Environment and Infrastructure Directorate
National Landscape Management plans	<p>Gloucestershire has three National Landscapes designations: the Cotswolds National Landscape, the Wye Valley National Landscape and the Malvern Hills National Landscape. National Landscape Management plans are key documents to protect and enhance the quality of the natural assets within the boundary of these National Landscapes. GCC is a 'relevant authority' for these plans. In preparation of these plans, GCC Officers have engaged actively during</p>	<p>The Council will continue to use these management plans to provide a clear policy framework for the preparation of GCC strategies, plans, policies and projects such as the preparation of the minerals and waste local plan and for highways and public rights of way improvements and maintenance.</p> <p>Since 2023, the County Council also has a statutory duty (as per Section 245 of Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023) to 'seek to further' the purposes</p>	GCC Economy, Environment and Infrastructure Directorate

	<p>the public consultation phases and have endorsed the plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of evidence base for preparation and implementation of relevant GCC strategies, spatial plans, policies and projects;</li> <li>• As material consideration in the determination of planning applications and;</li> <li>• To inform the development and delivery of the Council's services and activities.</li> </ul>	<p>of National landscape – requiring the council to be more proactive in promoting objectives of the management plans.</p>	
<p>Manage land to improve biodiversity</p>	<p><u>Road verges</u></p> <p>The most important road verges in relation to biodiversity are classified as Conservation Road Verges (CRV), with 109 identified in the county. Management is not limited to GCC and should happen once annually, ideally mid-July-October, unless a lack of visibility causes a safety issue for road users.</p> <p><u>Rural Estates</u></p> <p>Currently unknown.</p> <p><u>Tree and Greenspace Team</u></p> <p>GCC are on target to reach their goal of planting 1 million trees by 2030 with 400,000 already planted in partnership with stakeholders such as Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, National Trust, Westonbirt Arboretum</p>	<p>A full audit and re-assessment of all CRVs is planned for 2026.</p> <p>A rural estate audit for biodiversity opportunities is due to commence April 2026.</p> <p>Going forward, tree planting targets will be aligned with woodland restoration and creation opportunities/measures in the LNRS.</p>	<p>GCC Biodiversity Officer in conjunction with Highways</p> <p>GCC Rural Estates</p> <p>GCC Tree and Greenspace Team</p>

	<p>as well as estates and individual landowners.</p> <p><u>Asset Management and Property Services (AMPS)</u></p> <p>GCC are currently assessing school grounds for potential retrofitting of rain gardens/SuDS schemes.</p>	<p>Further opportunities will be sought to retrofit SuDS/green roofs/bird and bat boxes etc, and review grounds maintenance contracts to ensure they are biodiversity friendly.</p>	<p>GCC Asset Management and Property Services</p>
<p>Education, advise and awareness</p>	<p>GCC host the <a href="#">Greener Gloucestershire dashboard</a> which provides information to local communities on themes such No Mow May, Biodiversity Week and local tree planting opportunities as well as events with partner organisations.</p>	<p>Further events &amp; awareness campaigns focusing on biodiversity &amp; the ecological emergency to be arranged.</p>	<p>GCC Sustainability Engagement Team</p>

## Appendix 2: Discharged Biodiversity Gain Plans

Planning reference	Date biodiversity gain plan discharged	On-site / Off-site (units/credits)	Units / Net change %		
			Habitats	Watercourses	Hedgerows
24/0033/GLR3MJ (25/0025/COMPLI)	11/07/2025	On-site	-12.66 / -69.09%	0 / 0%	0.48 / NA
		Off-site (units)	14.49 / 320.17%	0 / 0%	0 / 0%
24/0051/CHREG3 (25/0035/COMPLI)	17/07/2025	On-site	0.38 / 10.22%	0 / 0%	0.21 / 19.75%