Brent Biodiversity Duty Report

2023-2028
Reporting Period

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Brent

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Executive Summary

The Brent Biodiversity Duty Report 2023-2028 outlines how the council is meeting its strengthened responsibility under the amended Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 to conserve and enhance biodiversity within one of London's most densely populated and built-up boroughs. With limited green space and ambitious plans to accommodate development to meet population growth, Brent faces constraints but also significant opportunities for delivering nature recovery in a city environment.

The report is organised into six thematic chapters, supported by an introduction, proposed actions and monitoring key performance indicators. The structure reflects the areas through which the council can directly or indirectly influence biodiversity in an urban borough.

This report sets out how the council is strengthening nature recovery across the borough by embedding biodiversity into planning, development, climate action, land management and everyday service delivery. Spatial planning is increasingly focused on protecting and enhancing green and blue infrastructure, while new biodiversity net gain requirements are ensuring that development contributes positively to habitats and wildlife.

Through its work, the council has expanded tree planting, community greening and climate resilient spaces, creating new habitats across streets, parks and neighbourhoods. Protected sites continue to benefit from targeted restoration and partnership work, while meadows, wildflower verges and bee corridors form a growing network of urban habitats under the council's land management approach.

A major shift has also taken place across internal teams, with housing, highways, public health, culture and other services increasingly recognising their role in supporting nature. Together, these actions are helping to create a greener, more resilient and more wildlife rich Brent for residents and future generations.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 We are living in an ecological emergency and are already witnessing the severe and accelerating impacts of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. Across the UK and globally, habitats are being fragmented and lost, species populations are declining, and natural systems that support human wellbeing are under increasing pressure. From the loss of pollinators and birds to the degradation of rivers, woodlands, and wetlands, the natural environment is being pushed beyond its limits.

1.1.2 The ecological risk to Brent is no different. In July 2019, the council declared a climate and ecological emergency and committed to do all in its gift to strive for carbon neutrality by 2030. The Brent Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy 2021-2030, sets out clear objectives across five key themes, including nature and green space. As part of subsequent Climate Strategy delivery plans, the borough has also developed a Green Infrastructure Vision and Climate Adaptation and Resilience Framework which set out how Brent also aims, by 2030, to be one the greenest, most biodiverse and climate-resilient boroughs in London with our residents better connected to nature.

1.1.3 If we fail to act, the continued decline of local biodiversity will have direct and lasting consequences for people and wildlife alike. Healthy ecosystems provide essential services, including flood regulation, air and water purification, urban cooling, and opportunities for recreation and mental wellbeing. As these systems are weakened, communities become more vulnerable to environmental and social pressures.

1.1.4 Access to high quality green space and a healthy local environment is not equal across the borough, and those already facing disadvantage are often least able to cope with environmental decline. This reinforces our responsibility to act decisively. There is no simple remedy to restore nature once it is lost; prevention, protection, and enhancement must happen now.

1.1.5 In the context of accelerating biodiversity loss, the ecological emergency underscores the need to move beyond passive consideration of biodiversity towards proactive, measurable action. Biodiversity reporting under the NERC Act is therefore a critical mechanism for demonstrating how ecological considerations are being embedded into decision making, service delivery, land management, and development management. By monitoring, reporting, and reviewing our actions, the council can evidence its response to the ecological emergency, identify gaps and opportunities for improvement, and ensure accountability in delivering meaningful biodiversity outcomes at a local level.

1.2 Purpose of this Document

1.2.1 An amendment to the original Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act) section 40 duty, provided for in the Environment Act 2021, extends the biodiversity duty on public authorities to include the enhancement of biodiversity alongside conservation by way of creating "the general biodiversity objective".

1.2.2 This is achieved by a revised section 40 of the NERC Act, including new provisions, which have been in force since 1st January 2023. The aim of this is to provide for the enhancement and improvement of biodiversity, going beyond the mere maintenance of biodiversity in its current state.

1.2.3 This document aims to demonstrate the council's collective responsibility for fulfilling the duties of the NERC Act, highlighting each team's role in conserving and enhancing biodiversity.

1.2.4 This document is part of the council's commitment to ensuring that biodiversity is enhanced across all functions of the organisation. It also tracks delivery of progress to reach targets and monitor outcomes from 2023 to 2028. This start date corresponds with when the strengthened NERC Act became law.

1.3 Structure of this Document

1.3.1 **Introduction Chapter** - an overview of the importance and relevance of biodiversity and nature recovery to Brent, the purpose and structure of the document.

1.3.2 **Theme Chapters** - a topic-by-topic breakdown of the key areas where the council can directly or indirectly influence and improve biodiversity. Each of six themes are addressed in turn, summarising progress to date and setting out proposed actions.

1.3.3 **Monitoring and Reporting** - a summary of key actions across the six themes outlining progress and planned actions from 2023 to 2028. An outline of the monitoring and reporting outputs will be provided and delivered in the next cycle.

1.4 Outline of Key Themes

1.4.1 The six themes covered in this document include:

Spatial Planning

This theme focuses on existing and proposed spatial planning documents that support biodiversity.

Spatial planning sets the strategic direction for land use and ensures biodiversity priorities are embedded in policy, turning environmental ambitions into enforceable development outcomes.

Biodiversity Net Gain

This theme focuses on how the council has met its statutory BNG obligations since it became mandatory for major developments on 12th February 2024 and small sites on 2nd April 2024.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) covers the measurable site level and offsite outcomes of developments through the planning process. This is a statutory duty ensuring enhancements are embedded into routine planning decisions.

Climate Emergency

This theme focuses on existing and emerging strategies, programmes and interventions that address the climate and ecological crisis, setting out how the council is integrating nature-based solutions, biodiversity enhancement and climate resilience across its functions.

Biodiversity plays a central role in climate mitigation because healthy ecosystems absorb, store and regulate greenhouse gases, while also reducing the need for carbon intensive interventions. Nature is one of the most effective and cost-efficient climate solutions available when it is protected and restored.

Protected Sites, Habitats and Species

This theme focuses on existing legislation and strategies relating to protected habitats and species, setting out how the council protects and enhances designated and priority ecological assets, supports species recovery, and embeds conservation principles across its planning, land management and service delivery functions.

Certain habitats and species are legally protected for their rarity, vulnerability or species richness, whilst some are protected locally through planning policy.

Land Management

This theme focuses on how the council manages the land it owns or controls to conserve and enhance biodiversity, improve habitat quality and support ecological resilience.

How the council manages its parks, road verges, cemeteries and other areas of land can have a huge influence on biodiversity and species richness, particularly given the linear nature of the resource (in the case of road verges) and the coverage across the borough.

Cross-Council Involvement

This theme focuses on council teams whose everyday decisions indirectly influence biodiversity, even where this is not part of their core remit.

Aside from the services where biodiversity impacts are most visible and direct, many other council teams influence nature through their everyday decisions, often without realising it. Engaging these teams, even when biodiversity is not part of their core remit, strengthens collective ownership of ecological outcomes and ensures that every part of the organisation recognises the role it plays in supporting and enhancing the borough's natural environment.

2. Spatial Planning

2.1 Achievements and Progress

2.1.1 Biodiversity is already embedded in many of the council's strategies and policy documents and brief descriptions are provided below for the most significant.

2.1.2 The Brent Local Plan 2019-2041 has policies in place to protect and enhance biodiversity:

- Policy BGI1 seeks to ensure that new development contributes positively to the quantity, quality, accessibility and biodiversity value of public open space. while addressing existing deficiencies, supporting nature recovery, and integrating green and blue infrastructure into the design of places.
- Policy BGI2 aims to protect existing trees and maintain (and where possible enhance) tree canopy cover when development takes place.
- Other supporting policies include DMP1, a general policy for developments to enhance sites of ecological importance and BSUI4 to improve surface water management through the implantation of sustainable drainage measures.

2.1.3 The Sustainable Environment & Development SPD (2023) is part of the council's approach to ensuring collectively that new development in Brent is environmentally sustainable. It addresses technical standards and relevant assessments for a suite of policies including waste, clean air, green infrastructure and water. This includes a section on biodiversity net gain and urban greening and how to comply with legislation.

2.1.4 Brent commissioned a Strategy Biodiversity Assessment in early 2024 to understand the priorities for strategic delivery of biodiversity within the planning system. The report highlighted the difficulties in pursuing a nature recovery network approach to biodiversity conservation in Brent where the ecological value of open spaces is generally quite low and the land available for habitat creation is extremely limited.

2.1.5 Brent contains several key watercourses, including the River Brent, Wealdstone Brook, the Grand Union Canal, Mitchell Brook and Wembley Brook. These waterways are protected and enhanced through a combination of Local Plan policies, particularly those relating to blue infrastructure, flood risk management and waterside environments.

2.1.6 Policies such as BGI1 Green and Blue Infrastructure and BSUI4 Sustainable Drainage support habitat enhancement, naturalisation and improved ecological connectivity along river corridors, while site specific policies and the borough's waterside guidance promote sensitive, biodiversity led design near watercourses. Together, these policies help safeguard river habitats, improve water quality and ensure development contributes positively to the ecological value of Brent's waterways.

2.1.7 A Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) Review was completed in 2014, producing digital habitat maps and recommendations for the accessible sites in the borough. Brent's Biodiversity Action Plan was published in 2001, and will be superseded by a Local Nature Recovery Plan for Brent. The plan will provide a local response to the London Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

2.1.8 A draft Brent Tree Strategy has recently been out to public consultation and is due for adoption in 2026. It will provide a borough-wide framework for protecting, managing and expanding Brent's tree cover over the next decade. The council currently uses the Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees (CAVAT) methodology to value trees at risk in the borough. In future, understanding the asset value (or natural capital) of other aspects of green infrastructure in the borough will be explored further.

2.2 Proposed Actions and Monitoring

2.2.1 The council is committed to conserving and enhancing biodiversity through its approach to spatial planning by aiming to deliver on the actions set out below and demonstrating progress using a series of key performance indicators (KPIs).

Actions

1) Develop cross-departmental policies to champion nature-based solutions.
2) Explore the benefits of understanding the asset value of council-owned green infrastructure and the potential value of new and retrofit blue and green roofs.
3) Consider commissioning a borough-wide assessment to understand the contribution private gardens and native street trees provide to the borough's biodiversity.
4) Deliver on the actions set out in the emerging Brent Tree Strategy 2026-2030.
5) Collate information relating to nature recovery, green infrastructure and other green space into a single document.

Monitoring KPIs

SP01 Number of nature-based solutions incorporated into council projects.

SP02 Completion of a map highlighting private garden habitats and ecologically valuable street trees.

SP03 Completion of a Local Nature Recovery Plan for Brent.

3. Biodiversity Net Gain

3.1 Achievements and Progress

3.1.1 In April 2024, a Principal Ecology Officer was appointed to the Spatial Planning & Transport team, which facilitated the council's statutory duty. Several documents were produced ensuring BNG is being applied correctly. This included:

- Monitoring contribution fee for different types of developments
- Financial modelling to evidence monitoring costs for different vegetation types
- Development Management procedure guidance
- List of offset providers
- s106 templates for on-site and off-site delivery

3.1.2 All developments that have triggered a BNG response have been recorded manually by the Principal Ecology Officer in a spreadsheet. This approach has provided a solid foundation during the early stages of implementing the new legislation and has enabled the council to track and extract key information effectively.

3.1.3 As the process evolves and projects progress from planning stage into monitoring, specialist platforms such as Mycelia will offer opportunities for more streamlined data management and deeper analysis. In the meantime, we have successfully extracted the required core metrics, summarised below:

Table 1: Summary of key biodiversity net gain metrics

Key biodiversity net gain metrics	
• Sites that have required ecology and/ or BNG-related comments	183 (2024) 230 (2025)
• Sites that have secured s106 agreements for on-site gains	15
• Sites that have approved Biodiversity Gain Plans	3
• Sites that are at application stage and likely to deliver an on-site deficit	30
• Sites that will impact watercourses located within 10 metres	7
• Sites that will require off-site habitat units	5
• Sites that have resulted in a loss of habitat	20

3.1.4 In terms of habitats being created on-site, these can be broadly summarised as:

- Urban trees
- Introduced shrubs
- Biodiverse green roofs
- Other green roofs
- Rain gardens
- Modified grassland

3.1.5 In terms of habitats being lost on-site, these can broadly be summarised as:

- Vegetated garden
- Non-native/ornamental hedge
- Urban trees
- Introduced shrubs
- Bramble scrub
- Other broadleaved woodland

3.1.6 The feasibility of establishing a habitat bank is currently being tested. This work, beginning in 2025, is supported by NCIL funding, with Neasden Recreation Ground identified as the preferred location. Its position next to the Welsh Harp Site of Special Scientific Interest, combined with its low public use, makes it a highly suitable site for this purpose.

3.1.7 In early 2025, the council supported the Greater London Authority in preparing the London Local Nature Recovery Strategy by contributing to engagement activities, sharing information, and providing evidence on the borough's ecological potential.

3.2 Proposed Actions and Monitoring

3.2.1 The council is committed to conserving and enhancing biodiversity through its approach to biodiversity net gain by aiming to deliver on the actions set out below and demonstrating progress using a series of key performance indicators (KPIs).

Actions

1) Develop robust solution to enable efficient BNG data management and monitoring.

2) Explore the opportunities of generating social value outcomes from BNG workstreams through a pilot project.

Monitoring KPIs

BG01 Decision on whether to proceed with the habitat bank at Neasden Recreation Ground.

BG02 Decision on a robust methodology to manage and monitor BNG data.

4. Climate Emergency

4.1 Achievements and Progress

4.1.1 The Brent Climate & Ecological Emergency Strategy 2021-2030 comprises five key themes and seeks to integrate biodiversity improvements both directly and indirectly across a number of these themes. The most direct link is via Key Theme 4: Nature and Green Space, but biodiversity also has a role to play in the design and implementation of different initiatives across Key Theme 2: Sustainable Travel, Key Theme 3: Homes, Buildings and the Built Environment, and is underpinned by Key Theme 5: Supporting Communities. Theme 5 is significant because the council is committed to ensuring that environmental action is delivered alongside local communities, and biodiversity and greening initiatives are often the best practical example of this in action on the ground.

4.1.2 The strategy is the umbrella document for environmental initiatives in the borough and has also subsequently been supported by the development of a number of offshoot plans which also emphasise the importance of biodiversity and tackling the ecological emergency holistically, including the:

- **Brent Green Infrastructure Vision**: this sets out at a high level how the borough intends to bring together a multitude of strands that provide an opportunity to develop a green infrastructure throughout Brent.
- **Climate Adaptation and Resilience Framework:** which sets out how Brent will adapt to the impacts of extreme weather and the role that green infrastructure has to play. It considers the effects of climate change to the natural environment, including species and habitat resilience and the enhancement of garden habitat to benefit residents.

4.1.3 Alongside borough-wide action, the council is also taking a progressive and pioneering approach to tackling the climate and ecological emergency through the delivery of several Green Neighbourhood pilots (the first phase being Church End & Roundwood and Kingsbury). This includes creating habitat as part of new community gardens, community orchards, biodiversity improvements through bee and bug hotels and bird boxes, SuDs, greener more climate resilient walking routes and piloting new approaches to greener roadsides through verge wildflower planting.

4.1.4 The Climate Action team also has a grant management function, through the Together Towards Zero small grants scheme (which makes up £5,000 in grant funding available to local communities for environmental projects) and also in horizon scanning and coordinating bid-writing to secure external grant funding. Since this function was set up in 2022, the council has secured £625,000 in external grant funding and has recently unlocked £4.7m from Community Infrastructure Levy funding for two ‘Green Corridors’ schemes in Church End & Roundwood and Kingsbury, which incorporate greening and biodiversity alongside active travel infrastructure improvements.

4.1.5 Key achievements to date (since 2022):

- At least 3,000 new trees planted across our streets and parks including several resident/community tree planting days, and new funding secured for at least 1,500 more trees.
- New community gardening initiatives such as North Brent Community Garden.
- New community orchards such as Fry's Orchard in Longstone Avenue Open Space.
- Enhanced biodiversity and nature-based activities, such as planting NS bird and bat box installation in Willesden New Cemetery.
- Biodiversity improvements to Leybourne Open Space including new planting and a swale.
- New planting and rain garden as part of Kensal Green Corridor scheme
- New rain garden and swale created in Silver Jubilee Park.
- Connecting residents with minimal access to greenery to our BEE Colourful street greening initiative.
- Four new Green and Healthy Streets initiatives at Our Lady of Grace Catholic Infants School, Oakington Manor Primary School, Crownhill Road and Leopold Primary Schools.
- New biodiversity initiatives in schools as part of the Our Schools Our World programme and delivery of the Schools Climate Action Guide.
- Developed a new borough-wide Highway Green Infrastructure guide and delivered the first pilot scheme on Honeypot Lane.
- Delivered award-winning enhancements to Brent's parks, securing a total of 25 Golds, 12 Silver Gilts and a category winner award at the annual London in Bloom awards which have occurred since 2022.
- Awarded two Green Flags (King Edward VII Park, Wembley and Bramshill Open Space, Harleseden) and a third Community Green Flag for Roe Green Walled Garden in 2025.
- Implementation of the council's first living green wall at Willesden Green Library.

Figure 1: Biodiversity boards and community engagement

4.2 Proposed Actions and Monitoring

4.2.1 The council is committed to conserving and enhancing biodiversity through its approach to the climate emergency by aiming to deliver on the actions set out below and demonstrating progress using a series of key performance indicators (KPIs).

Actions

1) Delivery of all remaining actions relating to biodiversity within the 2024-26 Climate Programme Delivery Plan.

2) Retaining the Nature and Green Space theme in the 2026-28 Climate Programme Delivery Plan and seeking to build upon the key initiatives that are underway or being maintained, alongside new actions that will enhance biodiversity.

Monitoring KPIs

CE01 Percent completion rate of all remaining actions relating to biodiversity within the 2024-26 Climate Programme Delivery Plan.

CE02 Percent completion rate of all new actions within a refreshed 2026-28 Climate Programme Delivery Plan.

Figure 2: Community planting events across Brent

5. Protected Sites, Habitats and Species

5.1 Achievements and Progress

5.1.1 The Welsh Harp is Brent's only Statutory Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It Is also a Site of Metropolitan Importance (SMI), Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and a Statutory Local Nature Reserve (LNR). In 2016, a management plan was written by the council in collaboration with the Canal and Rivers Trust and Barnet Council to work towards improving its ecological condition. Fryent Country Park is the only other non-statutory SMI in Brent. It is almost entirely managed by Barn Hill Conservation Group, a charitable organisation that organises regularly volunteering task days.

5.1.2 The River Brent and its tributaries are designated as non-statutory Sites of Borough Importance. These watercourses suffer from pollution and are heavily modified. Much work has been focused on removing invasive species and undertaken by Thames21. Community grant funding has also recently been awarded to the Friends of Woodcock Park to improve the habitat diversity of the Wealdstone Brook, which runs through the park. This will include the removal of vegetation to allow a greater diversity of plants to colonise the river margins.

SINC Management

5.1.3 As of 2025, 50 of the 62 SINCs in Brent - around 81% - were in positive conservation management, reflecting the borough's ongoing commitment to ecological protection and habitat enhancement. This local progress exceeds wider national trends reported by Defra, which found that 38% of Local Sites across England were in positive conservation management in the five years up to March 2025.

Habitat and Species Management

5.1.4 At present, there no specific Habitat Action Plans in place and much of the action taken is via habitat restoration, creation, and management. Practical action is also continuing for a number of species in the borough including:

- Common Frog
- Common Toad
- Bees (all species)
- Butterflies - as part of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy list for London including for the Essex Skipper, Small Skipper, Large Skipper, and Brown Hairstreak. In addition, locally there have been actions to encourage the Brimstone within the borough.
- Bats (all species)
- Narrow-leaved Bitter-cress
- Great Burnet
- Birds, particularly those associated with water at the Brent Reservoir

5.1.5 The Parks Service has contributed to enhancing the wildlife of grasslands, hedges, woodland, traditional orchards, ponds, wetland and of more formal horticultural planting. This has benefited some species including grassland wildflowers, the Common Frog, Common Toad, and butterflies.

5.1.6 In Gladstone Park, support has been provided by Butterfly Conservation and the 'Friends of' group to leave small areas of nettles for egg laying of particular butterflies and to carry out monitoring on site of species development. A volunteer is also carrying out monitoring of the Brown Hairstreak butterfly in Fryent Country Park.

5.2 Proposed Actions and Monitoring

5.2.1 The council is committed to conserving and enhancing biodiversity through its approach to protected sites, habitats and species by aiming to deliver on the actions set out below and demonstrating progress using a series of key performance indicators (KPIs).

Actions

1) Update the joint vision for the Brent Reservoir/Welsh Harp.
2) Explore the benefits of applying natural capital accounting to council-owned green infrastructure.
3) Commission a borough-wide evidence base to assess biodiversity outside parks such as street trees and private gardens.
4) Update the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and embed it into a new Local Nature Recovery Plan for Brent.

Monitoring KPIs

PS01 Publication of an updated joint vision for the Brent Reservoir/Welsh Harp.

PS02 Completion of a map highlighting private garden habitats and ecologically valuable street trees.

PS03 Completion of a Local Nature Recovery Plan for Brent.

6. Land Management

6.1 Achievements and Progress

6.1.1 Our Parks Service has created a network of bee corridors and meadow areas, where grassland is allowed to grow through spring and summer, supported by wildflower planting and mown paths. Meadows are cut in September, with the cuttings removed, and interpretative panels have been installed.

6.1.2 It also manages the grass-verge maintenance contract for the Highways Service. Verges are allowed to grow to around 30cm, with a five-week cutting cycle and sightlines maintained for safety. This approach supports flowering plants, increases invertebrate wildlife and encourages species movement along these linear corridors. Several verges have been sown with low-growing wildflower mixes to enhance existing vegetation. Grounds maintenance is carried out without pesticides or herbicides, except in limited cases such as the control of Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed.

6.1.3 Our Parks Service also actively supports ‘Friends of’ groups, community organisations and practical conservation groups. Their volunteers play a significant role in innovation, habitat improvement and biodiversity monitoring. The council also participates in the River Brent Catchment Partnership, working with four other London boroughs and a range of partner organisations to improve the River Brent and its tributaries.

6.2 Proposed Actions and Monitoring

6.2.1 The council is committed to conserving and enhancing biodiversity through its approach to land management by aiming to deliver on the actions set out below and demonstrating progress using a series of key performance indicators (KPIs).

Actions

1) Continue to undertake park and road verge projects that deliver biodiversity enhancements.

Monitoring KPIs

LM01 Number of new trees planted.

LM02 Extent of new hedgerows planted.

LM03 Number and type of new habitats created.

7. Cross-Council Involvement

7.1 Overview

7.1.1 The council employs around 3,000 people, and determining who may be able to support biodiversity work can initially seem daunting. To manage this, a two-stage approach was adopted: first, engaging with knowledgeable colleagues, and second, using AI to identify council job roles that may influence biodiversity.

7.1.2 The council uses a human resources management system called Oracle Cloud. This allows the collation and organising of large numbers of employees, structured in team and directorate tiers, reporting lines and job roles. This was used to search which teams might have a closer relationship to biodiversity directly or indirectly. Emails were sent out to approximately 50 staff, mostly at 'Head of Service' level and the response rate was excellent, far exceeding expectations.

7.1.3 During this reporting year, efforts have centred on initial engagement and relationship building. For many respondents, it was their first time being asked about biodiversity during their tenure at the council. Others came forward because of their wildlife interests and their perceived understanding of the interface between their area of work and biodiversity. In the next reporting cycle, the focus will shift towards strengthening these relationships and progressing the systemic integration of biodiversity considerations across all service areas.

7.1.4 A summary of individual conversations is provided below, broken down into the respective service areas - responses have been anonymised with only job titles included for reference.

Adult Social Care

7.1.5 A Service Manager in Adult Social Care reported they had never been asked the biodiversity question in her 25 years at the council. Their work has recently engaged in the creation of a community garden supported by NCIL funding. The focus will be on providing a sensory experience (requested by residents) whilst also supporting the local charity Sufra. This will have an indirect benefit to biodiversity.

Environment Strategy and Climate Action

7.1.6 See **Chapter 4** for a summary of how the Climate Action team's work supports and enhances biodiversity. Given they raise funds for projects including tree planting, building community gardens and undertaking public engagement, they play and important role in delivering biodiversity improvements.

Healthy Streets and Parking

7.1.7 An Air Quality Programme Manager in Healthy Streets and Parking mentioned that future considerations for air quality via planting of trees and vegetation has been set out in the Air Quality Action Plan (2023-2027). This has been undertaken in collaboration with Brent's Principal Tree Officer and the Climate Action team.

Highways Management

7.1.8 The Principal Flood and Drainage Engineer in the Highways Management team applies for funding from the Environment Agency, to carry out Flood Alleviation Schemes, which provide engineering solutions to improve the borough's watercourses. A Flood Alleviation Scheme project is due to be completed at Woodcock Park in partnership with the Environment Agency and the 'Friends of Woodcock Park' group. Another Flood Alleviation Scheme is to be started for the Wembley Brook, and this report is expected to provide flood resilience project options, to improve the conditions along the Wembley Brook.

7.1.9 The team responsible for vehicle crossings in Highways Management oversees vehicle crossover applications. Whilst these are generally considered less favourable to biodiversity by using front gardens as off-street car parking space, the team does require applications to deliver 30-50% soft landscaping as part of any proposal. This is often a betterment if the existing frontage is all hard standing.

Housing Services

7.1.10 The Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods reported that, although very little is currently being done with green spaces around council housing, there are many such areas across Brent Estates that could be better utilised. While new-build council homes often include roof gardens and consider biodiversity, the older housing stock and estates lack similar provisions. They noted that the service needs both a dedicated budget and specialist expertise to progress this work but would be happy to support new initiatives. They also suggested that funding could potentially come from social value contributions.

Leisure and Parks

7.1.11 The Interim Head of Active Wellbeing in Leisure and Parks is working on a suite of infrastructure strategies (linked to the Brent Local Plan) and the emerging new Active Wellbeing Strategy in which biodiversity can be embedded in the direction of travel and progressed through several connected strands over the next five-year reporting cycle.

Neighbourhood Management

7.1.12 An Estate Improvement Project Lead in Neighbourhood Management is responsible for reducing waste and fly-tipping across the borough. Where removal of waste is undertaken, there are opportunities to improve the cleaned-up area into something positive, such as a community garden or allotment. In the current five-year reporting cycle, the team helped support Sufra, a well-established Community Interest Company that delivers many valuable services to local communities.

Parks and Green Infrastructure

7.1.13 See **Chapter 6** for a summary of how the Parks Service's work supports and enhances biodiversity through land management. Given they manage the green assets across the borough, such as road verges, parks and other green spaces, they play and important role in delivering biodiversity improvements.

Planning and Development Services

7.1.14 The Principal Urban Design Officer in Spatial Planning recognised the ability of their profession to unlock areas that could accommodate green infrastructure, that would otherwise be hard surfaces. Through the planning process, they have a strategic role of influencing the design outcome of minor and major development proposals within the borough, to enhance and create more green infrastructure including new trees, SuDs and soft landscaping.

7.1.15 The Principal Tree Officer in Spatial Planning plays an important role in supporting biodiversity by protecting trees through the planning process and helping to increase canopy cover. Their work also targets planting in areas with a high Priority Need for Tree Equity. The emerging Brent Tree Strategy 2026-2030 reinforces this approach, while also developing a plan for managing the borough's tree stock in a changing climate.

7.1.16 The Principal Ecology Officer in Spatial Planning is responsible for delivering the biodiversity duty report. Their role is principal focused on securing biodiversity net gain through the planning process by providing advice to Development Management, commenting on pre-applications and planning applications. Securing funding for specific projects, such as the NCIL-funded habitat bank at Neasden Recreation Ground is also an opportunity to enhance biodiversity in the borough. They also work closely with community groups, particularly Brent Parks Forum to ensure enhancements are locally relevant and supported by residents.

7.1.17 The Principal Heritage Officer in Spatial Planning reported they primarily interact with biodiversity through their responses to pre-applications and planning applications. This planning consultee work includes protecting and enhancing greenery within conservation areas and controlling new development within back gardens. This is primarily for the preservation and enhancement of the conservation areas' architectural and spatial character, but biodiversity promotion is a by-product of this process.

7.1.18 The Transport Planning Manager in Spatial Planning stated that several of the electric vehicle charge point (EVCP) contracts include a social value element where operators are required to fund the planting of new trees and green infrastructure.

7.1.19 The Planning Policy Team Leader in Spatial Planning stated that biodiversity is well covered in existing planning policies, either directly through policies on green infrastructure, trees, open space and biodiversity net gain or holistically through site allocations and design policies. As part of the Local Plan Review the effectiveness of the biodiversity policy will be addressed. The extent to which policies will change will depend on the evidence gathered as part of the plan-making process, planning practice guidance and any changes in legislation.

7.1.20 The Senior Economic Growth Manager in Spatial Planning stated that many of the projects they have delivered were primarily for economic regeneration and public realm enhancement, however, there are urban greening components that may align with biodiversity objectives. These included, a living wall, street tree planting, and town centre parklets.

7.1.21 Development Management in Planning and Development Services (the local planning authority) is responsible for processing approximately 3,500 planning applications a year. These range from major applications to minor or householder applications that all may impact positively or negatively on local biodiversity. For most applications, a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is charged and spent on either strategic (SCIL) or neighbourhood (NCIL) level infrastructure projects. The council also secures s106 financial contributions that are spent on projects specific to a development proposal. These contributions are collected and administered to support and deliver projects across the council throughout the year with officers routinely applying for this funding. In the next five-year reporting cycle, we will explore the benefit of translating biodiversity net gain data into urban typologies so that biodiversity value could be calculated based on the type of development in different parts of the borough.

Property & Assets

7.1.22 The Head of Capital Delivery stated that they have proposed ecological interventions and/or enhancements in line with statutory and planning requirements as part of their development proposals. These have been developed with externally appointed landscape architects and with liaison with the Planning Service. In the next five-year reporting cycle, we will explore how this enhancement could deliver greater benefit to biodiversity.

7.1.23 The Head of Property stated that ecological targets are challenging for most council-owned properties as they are let out and, as such, the council no longer has direct control. The exception will be for multi-let buildings which are far and few between. In the future the provision in new leases could support biodiversity aims will be explored.

Public Health

7.1.24 The Health Improvement team are responsible for improving the health of our residents, particularly around getting people more active. This is done in a variety of ways, though the current work on a borough-wide food strategy is most relevant. The strategy will encourage food growing, education, training and skills, such as set up a gardening project for men's groups. Allotment for asylum refugees. Public Health (a team of 50+) also apply for funding which supports projects delivered by the climate team such as greening and access to nature. Community greening projects being a particularly important area of work.

Resident Services

7.1.25 The Cemeteries Manager in Resident Services stated all four cemeteries in council ownership are managed for biodiversity with projects being undertaken such as tree planting, pond creation and wildflower meadow planting. In the next five-year reporting cycle, the team will continue to develop projects with support from the council's Change Team.

7.1.26 The Brent 2020 Legacy Manager in Libraries, Culture & Heritage noted that the new culture strategy, Brent Creates, prioritises environmental sustainability and the protection of parks and wildlife corridors during cultural activity. In line with these commitments, the service will explore making Brent's Nature Conservation Handbook accessible again over the next five year reporting cycle. The out of print handbook, which records the borough's natural environment and cultural heritage from 30 years ago, will be accessioned into the borough archive to ensure long term preservation and public access.

External Involvement

7.1.27 The Principal Ecology Officer, Park's Project Officer and the Flood and Drainage Engineer all sit on the Brent's Catchment Partnership (BCP) that works across north west London to improve the resilience and ecological value of the River Brent.

7.1.28 The Principal Ecology Officer has also been liaising with other London boroughs, such as Ealing, Barnet, Harrow, Hammersmith and Fulham, Westminster, City of London and Camden, as well as the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC). There is much interest to work collaboratively on a range of biodiversity areas, including habitat bank development. In the next five-year reporting cycle, we will work with Ealing to explore how Brent can support its development of a new Regional Park within the River Brent Catchment to form an interconnected network of natural spaces.

7.2 Proposed Actions and Monitoring

7.2.1 The council is committed to conserving and enhancing biodiversity through its approach to cross-council involvement by aiming to deliver on the actions set out below and demonstrating progress using a series of key performance indicators (KPIs).

Actions

1) Continue to develop a food strategy to promote food growing, healthy lifestyles and access to nature close to home.
2) Create a community garden map to support local food growing, social prescribing, active lifestyles and access to nature.
3) Deliver the flood alleviation works to Wembley Brook with funding support from the Environment Agency.
4) Continue to identify waste clean-up locations for biodiversity enhancements.
5) Explore opportunities to deliver biodiversity uplift on Brent Housing Management (BHM) estates.

Monitoring KPIs

CC01 Completion of a food strategy.

CC02 Completion of a community garden map to support local food growing.

CC03 Funding sources identified for the delivery of greening on BHM estates.

CC04 Completion of the Wembley Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme.

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1: Summary Table of Actions and Monitoring KPIs

8.1.1 For ease of reference, a summary table of the actions and monitoring key performance indicators set out in this report has been compiled to bring together what commitments the council is making to conserve and enhance biodiversity and how delivery of these will be demonstrated.

Table 2: Summary table of actions and monitoring key performance indicators

Actions	Monitoring KPIs
Spatial Planning	
1) Develop cross-departmental policies to champion nature-based solutions. 2) Explore the benefits of understanding the asset value of council-owned green infrastructure and the potential value of new and retrofit blue and green roofs. 3) Consider commissioning a borough-wide assessment to understand the contribution private gardens and native street trees provide to the borough's biodiversity. 4) Deliver on the actions set out in the emerging Brent Tree Strategy 2026-2030. 1) Collate information relating to nature recovery, green infrastructure and other green space into a single document.	**SP01** Number of nature-based solutions incorporated into council projects. **SP02** Completion of a map highlighting private garden habitats and ecologically valuable street trees. **SP03** Completion of a Local Nature Recovery Plan for Brent.
Biodiversity Net Gain	
1) Develop robust solution to enable efficient BNG data management and monitoring. 2) Explore the opportunities of generating social value outcomes from BNG workstreams through a pilot project.	**BG01** Decision on whether to proceed with the habitat bank at Neasden Recreation Ground. **BG02** Decision on a robust methodology to manage and monitor BNG data.

Actions	Monitoring KPIs
Climate Emergency	
1) Delivery of all remaining actions relating to biodiversity within the 2024-26 Climate Programme Delivery Plan. 2) Retaining the Nature and Green Space theme in the 2026-28 Climate Programme Delivery Plan and seeking to build upon the key initiatives that are underway or being maintained, alongside new actions that will enhance biodiversity.	**CE01** Percent completion rate of all remaining actions relating to biodiversity within the 2024-26 Climate Programme Delivery Plan. **CE02** Percent completion rate of all new actions within a refreshed 2026-28 Climate Programme Delivery Plan.
Protected Sites, Habitats and Species	
1) Update the joint vision for the Brent Reservoir/Welsh Harp. 2) Explore the benefits of applying natural capital accounting to council-owned green infrastructure. 3) Commission a borough-wide evidence base to assess biodiversity outside parks such as street trees and private gardens. 4) Update the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and embed it into a new Local Nature Recovery Plan for Brent.	**PS01** Publication of an updated joint vision for the Brent Reservoir/ Welsh Harp. **PS02** Completion of a map highlighting private garden habitats and ecologically valuable street trees. **PS03** Completion of a Local Nature Recovery Plan for Brent.
Land Management	
1) Continue to undertake park and road verge projects that deliver biodiversity enhancements.	**LM01** Number of new trees planted. **LM02** Extent of new hedgerows planted. **LM03** Number and type of new habitats created.
Cross-Council Involvement	
1) Continue to develop a food strategy to promote food growing, healthy lifestyles and access to nature close to home. 2) Create a community garden map to support local food growing, social prescribing, active lifestyles and access to nature.	**CC01** Completion of a food strategy. **CC02** Completion of a community garden map to support local food growing. **CC03** Funding sources identified for the delivery of greening on BHM estates.

Actions	Monitoring KPIs
3) Deliver the flood alleviation works to Wembley Brook with funding support from the Environment Agency. 4) Continue to identify waste clean-up locations for biodiversity enhancements. 5) Explore opportunities to deliver biodiversity uplift on Brent Housing Management (BHM) estates.	**CC04** Completion of the Wembley Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme.

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