Bracknell Forest Council

Bracknell Forest Council

Biodiversity Action Plan

2024-2029

Contents

Executive Summary

Biodiversity is the variety of all life. The Bracknell Forest Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is a partnership plan. It demonstrates the commitment of the council and local people to protecting and enhancing nature in the borough.

Aim of the Bracknell Forest BAP:

To conserve and enhance biodiversity within Bracknell Forest Borough.

Objectives:

- Track sites
- Monitor and survey
- Create and restore habitats
- Designate sites
- Connect habitats
- Enhance for wildlife
- Raise awareness
- Access to nature
- Strategic action
- Climate mitigation
- Climate adaptation

Targets:

The plan has 67 targets across 6 habitat themes.

General Themes

General themes targets are based on factors that influence the conservation of all species and habitats. Targets include:

- Tracking and surveying the condition of designated sites
- Engaging people with wildlife through volunteering, surveying and communications
- Involvement with broader strategies for nature and climate within Bracknell and across Berkshire

Grasslands

Neutral grasslands towards the north of the borough and acid grasslands towards the south support species such as the harvest mouse and bumblebees. Targets include:

- Surveying key sites and species
- Enhancing grassland habitats
- Making management advice available to grassland landowners

Woodlands

The woodland theme covers broadleaved and coniferous woodlands, orchards, hedgerows and veteran trees. Bracknell Forest has a high tree canopy cover at 35 per cent. Targets include:

- Tackling invasive species
- Creating and enhancing woodlands, hedgerows and orchards
- Proposing the best woodland sites to become Local Wildlife Sites

Rivers and wetlands

Rivers and wetlands targets cover waterways and waterbodies such as the Blackwater River, The Cut, Englemere Pond and smaller ponds. Important wetland species include great crested newts and kingfishers. Targets include:

- Monitoring outfalls
- Creating ponds and enhancing rivers
- Engaging with the Catchment Partnership

Heathland

The Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area is the largest example of heathland in the borough. This is a protected region home to important threatened birds. Heathland targets cover:

- Surveying
- Habitat enhancement
- Awareness raising
- Access management

Farmland

Farmland is mostly located in the north of the borough and supports species such as skylarks and barn owls. Targets cover:

- Monitoring and installing new barn owl boxes
- Sharing information with landowners and the public

Urban

The urban theme covers different types of habitats in the more built-up areas of the borough. Urban areas support species such as swifts, hedgehogs and badgers. Targets include:

- Tree planting and improved verge management
- Enhancing community spaces
- Raising awareness of biodiversity in urban areas and gardens

Delivery:

The plan is delivered by collaboration across organisations, working under the Bracknell Forest Nature Partnership. Bracknell Forest Council coordinates the partnership and tracks progress against targets in the plan.

1. Background

1.1 Introduction to Biodiversity Action Plans

Biodiversity Action Plans were first developed following the 1992 United Nations 'Earth Summit'.

The government published the UK Biodiversity Action Plan in 1994. It provided plans for the conservation of nature across the UK. Since then, there have been changes in policy and the UKBAP was not continued after 2012. However, the priority habitats and species first identified in the UKBAP are still used to direct action for nature recovery. In this report they are mainly referred to as UKBAP species and habitats, but are also known as priority species and habitats, Habitats and Species of Principle Importance, or Section 41 species and habitats. Bracknell Forest Council launched the first Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for the borough in 1997. The BAP is a partnership plan. It demonstrates the commitment of the Council and local people to protecting and enhancing nature in the borough. The BAP has changed over time to become a habitat-based plan. The 2024-2029 BAP is the 6th version.

1.2 Consultation

The BAP 2024-2029 has been developed by Bracknell Forest Council following consultation with partner organisations, the Bracknell Forest Nature Partnership and the public. The plan aims to reflect the views and priorities of the community.

2. Structure of the Plan

The plan is split into a General Themes Action Plan and 6 Habitat Action Plans. The Action Plans are a series of 'SMART' targets. Each Habitat Action Plan has flagship species to focus interest. Information about how the BAP species were chosen is in Appendix 5.
In previous years each Habitat Action Plan had its own objectives and targets. For 2024-2029, the objectives have been brought together into an overarching list, and each Habitat Action Plan consists of a list of targets.

2.1 Aim

The aim of the BAP is to conserve and enhance biodiversity within Bracknell Forest Borough. This will be achieved through:

- Targeted monitoring
- Positive management
- Effective communication
- Proactive policies

2.2 Objectives

The BAP has the following objectives:

Track sites: Track the condition of designated sites

Monitor and survey: Monitor key sites, features and indicator species to understand trends and inform management

Create and restore habitats: Enhance, restore or create high quality habitats, through Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Passive Open Space of Value (OSPV) projects and other project routes

Designate sites: Achieve nature conservation designations for high-quality sites

Connect habitats: Improve habitat connectivity

Enhance for wildlife: Enhance sites for wildlife by providing opportunities for nesting, foraging, hibernation and movement

Raise awareness: Build awareness and engage communities

Access to nature: Encourage access to nature while protecting sensitive habitats and wildlife

Strategic action: Contribute to related strategic plans and activities within Bracknell Forest and across administrative boundaries

Climate mitigation: Contribute to climate change mitigation (lowering emissions and/or carbon storage)

Climate adaptation: Contribute to climate change adaptation (improving the resilience of habitats, species and people to a changing climate)

The objectives link through to each of the targets in the plan. This is shown next to each target.

2.3 Targets

Targets are set within the Habitat Action Plans. To ensure that progress can be achieved and reported against, the targets use SMART criteria:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Time-bound

3. Delivery of the Plan

3.1 Partnership working

The success of the Biodiversity Action Plan is dependent on local people and organisations working together.

Bracknell Forest Nature Partnership

The Bracknell Forest Nature Partnership oversees the implementation of the plan. The partnership is made up of local people and organisations with an interest in nature conservation. This includes local environmental groups, wildlife charities and Town and Parish Councils. The partnership has been closely involved with the review of previous targets and development of new targets.

Berkshire Local Nature Partnership

This is the nature partnership at a county level. Members include government bodies, wildlife charities, local and national authorities and businesses. The partnership has identified Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs), which are key areas to focus nature conservation efforts at a landscape scale. A map showing BOAs within Bracknell Forest is in Section 5.

Bracknell Forest Council

Bracknell Forest Council acts as a coordinator for the Biodiversity Action Plan. The council hosts and chairs the Bracknell Forest Nature Partnership. The council gathers updates and reports on progress against the BAP targets.
The BAP forms part of the statutory duty for all public authorities to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

The council also plays a central role in the local community through education, public open space, highways, social care and many other roles that provide opportunities for biodiversity. As a Unitary Authority, Bracknell Forest Council is also responsible for the local planning process. Planning policy plays a key role in the protection and enhancement of biodiversity.

3.2 Monitoring

The Bracknell Forest Nature Partnership updates progress against the targets at 6-monthly meetings. Bracknell Forest Council collates progress updates and produces a mid-term review and end of term review.

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) collates biological records across Berkshire and Oxfordshire. TVERC provide Bracknell Forest Council with data on species and habitats through a service level agreement. TVERC also survey Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and Local Geological Sites (LGS). An independent panel assesses this information to review the designation of these important local sites.

3.3 Delivery Plan

A more detailed delivery plan is included in Appendix 1. This includes suggested areas for work, activities, timeframes and groups of partners for each target. Further detail will be worked up throughout the plan period by the Nature Partnership. The delivery plan will therefore evolve, with the version in the current document providing a starting point.

4. Legislation, policy and links with other plans

This section outlines some key areas of legislation and policy which relate to the Biodiversity Action Plan. The plans and objectives of partner organisations have also been incorporated into this plan where possible. A list of plans and policies is in Appendix 6.

National

4.1 Environment Act 2021

The Environment Act 2021 has been described by Tony Juniper, Chair of Natural England, as "the most ground-breaking piece of environmental legislation in many years" (Natural England, 2021). It brings in new targets, tools and requirements for nature recovery, some of which are still in development at the time of writing the BAP 2024-2029. The work areas most closely linked to the BAP are Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Biodiversity Net Gain.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) are county-scale spatial strategies to recover nature across England. Together, they will cover the country in a Nature Recovery Network. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead is leading the development of the Berkshire LNRS. The plan will be developed with input from a wide range of stakeholders. The result will be a strategic plan with mapped priorities and actions for nature recovery. It is anticipated it will be published in spring 2025.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a way to contribute to the recovery of nature while developing land. The new legislation will require all new developments to leave biodiversity in a measurably better state than it was before. Habitats can be created or enhanced on the development site, off-site, or through a combination of both. Biodiversity Net Gain became mandatory for many developments in 2024.

4.2 Environmental Land Management

The government is undertaking a significant reform of agricultural policy and spending in England. Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes will pay farmers to provide environmental goods and services alongside food production. These include protecting, restoring and creating wildlife rich habitats, improving water quality, increasing resilience to floods and droughts, increasing tree and woodland cover and storing carbon (Defra, 2023, A).

Bracknell Forest

4.3 Climate Change Strategy

In September 2023, Bracknell Forest Council declared a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency. This included a commitment to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions across the borough as close to 2030 as possible.

The council has a Climate Change Strategy (current version 2020-2024, upcoming version 2024-2028), and an associated Action Plan. The strategy has two main strands:
- Reduce carbon emissions that are under the council's control
- Influence and lead community action against climate change

The Joint Climate Action Board unites organisations in Bracknell Forest. The Board will play a central role in developing a Community Climate Emergency Strategy. It is supported by working groups from different sectors, including a biodiversity working group. The biodiversity working group brings together the biodiversity sector's climate change activities, including collating updates on the climate actions of the sector, identifying and promoting opportunities for climate action to organisations in the sector and across other sectors and running programmes and projects.

4.4 Local Plan

The Bracknell Forest Local Plan 2020-2037 (BFLP) provides the strategy for growth in the borough. It was adopted in March 2024. In particular the BFLP:
- sets out the strategy for the level and distribution of development in the Borough;
- allocates sites for specific uses, including housing and economic development; and
- includes policies used to determine planning applications.

The plan vision includes protecting and enhancing green networks and securing a net gain in biodiversity. The key policy for biodiversity defines the expectations for developments to achieve net gain, provide suitable ecological information and work in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy to first avoid, then mitigate and then compensate for negative impacts on biodiversity.

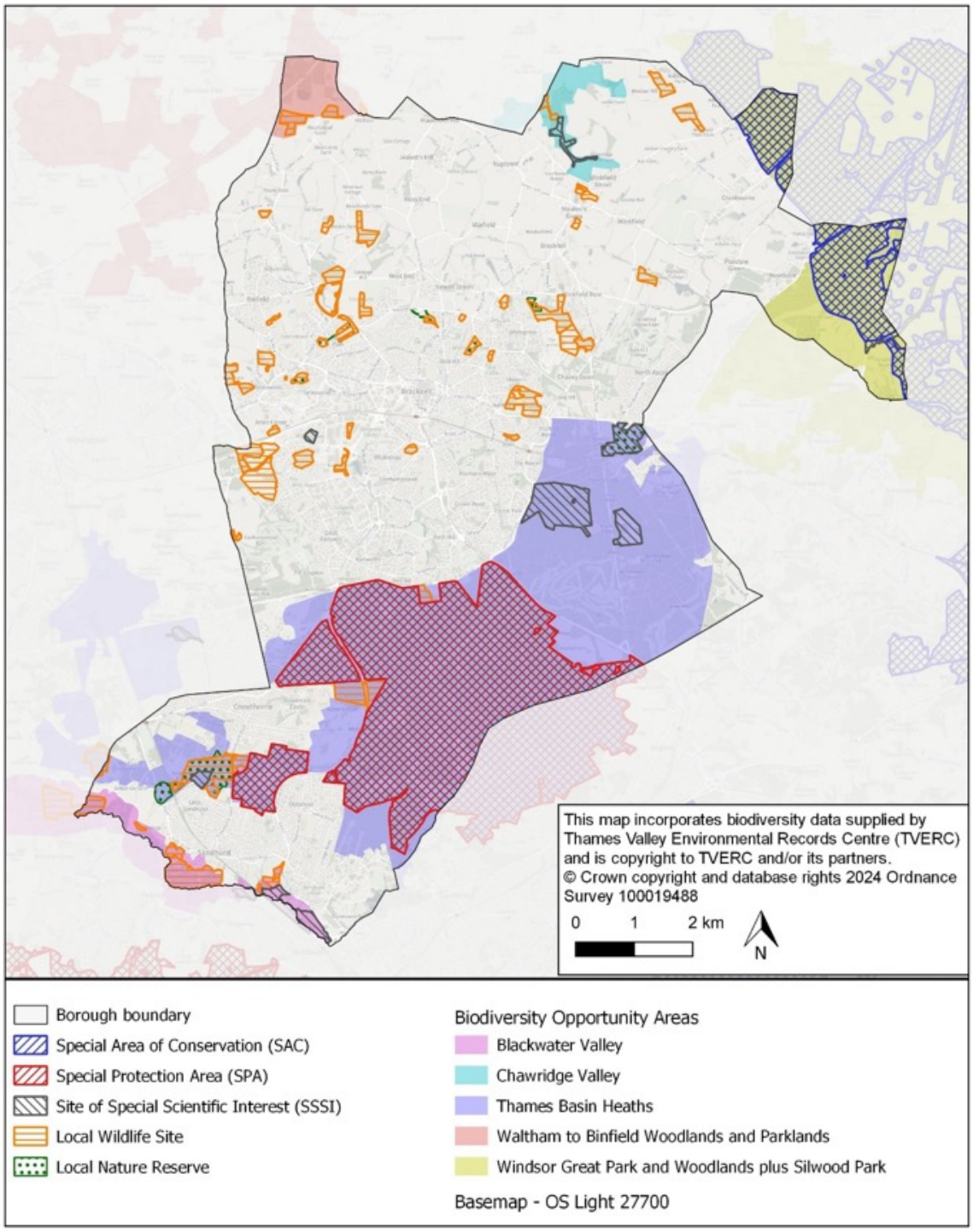
4.5 Other linked Bracknell Forest Council strategies

In addition to the Climate Change Strategy and Local Plan discussed above, this plan supports the following council plans as part of its developing overall green infrastructure strategy:
- Council Plan 2023-2027
- Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (2012)
- Tree Strategy (2017)
- Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2017-2027
- Local Transport Plan 2011-2026, and any replacement strategy
- Relevant Development Plan policies
- Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (2015), and any subject replacement SPD
- Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document (2018)

5. Sites and Habitats

5.1 Designated sites

Designated sites are areas of special importance for nature, due to their rarity or importance for wildlife. Sites can be designated for their importance for nature at the local, national and international level.



The sites are shown in the map above or can be viewed in more detail on Bracknell Forest Council's Wildlife and Nature Map, we can be accessed from our Wildlife and Biodiversity web page

The following types of designated sites can be found in Bracknell Forest:

Special Protection Area (SPA)

SPAs are strictly protected at a national level as the most important areas of habitat for certain rare and migratory birds. The Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area is partly within Bracknell Forest, as well as stretching across other areas of Berkshire, Surrey and Hampshire. It is the largest protected area in Bracknell Forest. The SPA consists of areas of heathland, scrub and woodland. The SPA is designated because of the nationally important populations of ground-nesting birds Dartford Warbler, Nightjar and Woodlark. However, these protected areas also support a wealth of other wildlife including butterflies, reptiles and dragonflies.

Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

SACs are a national-level network of high-quality sites supporting important habitats and species. Part of the Windsor Forest and Great Park Special Area of Conservation lies within Bracknell Forest. The site supports veteran oak trees and the Violet Click Beetle, an extremely rare species throughout its European range.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Nationally designated as the best examples of the UK's flora, fauna, geological or physiological features. In Bracknell Forest, SSSI include Wykery Copse, Chawridge Bourne and Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths.

Local Wildlife Site (LWS)

Locally designated areas supporting important and rare habitats and species. In Bracknell Forest these include Peacock Meadows, Big Wood and Lily Hill Park.

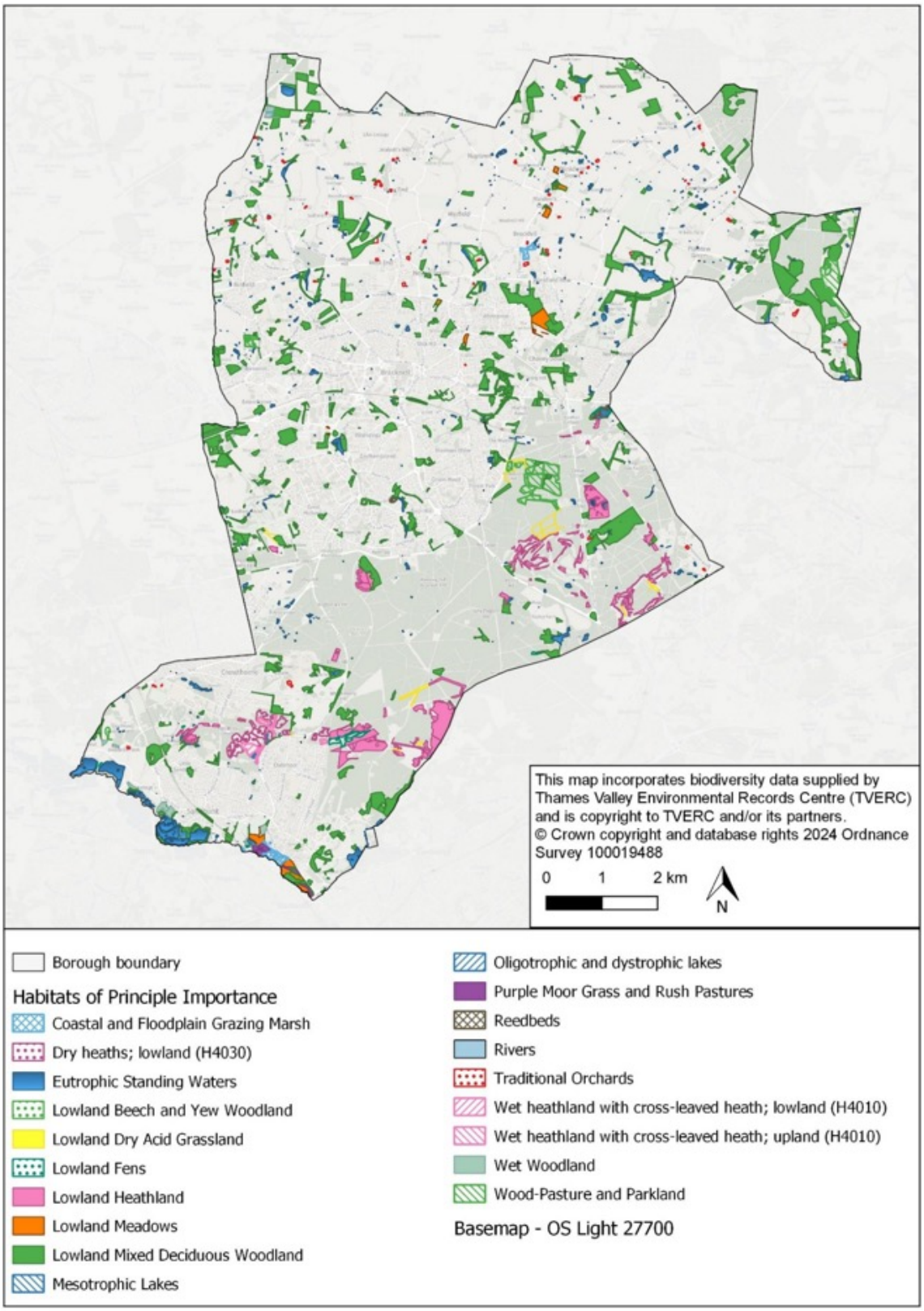
Local Nature Reserve

Designated by local authorities as important for wildlife, geology, education and enjoyment. In Bracknell Forest, Local Nature Reserves include Englemere Pond, Ambarrow Court and Farley Copse.

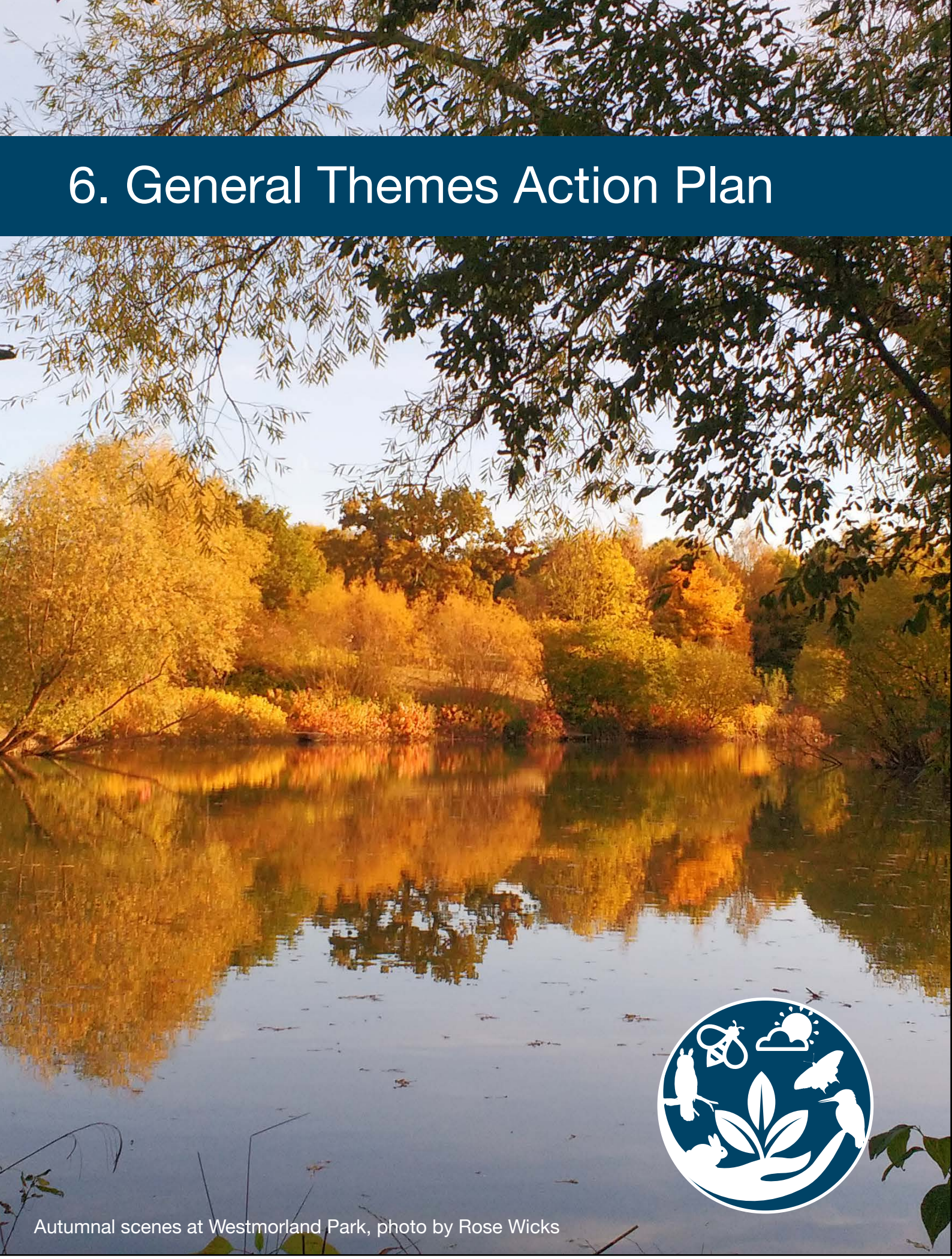
For more information see Appendix 4: Designated sites.
There is opportunity to designate new sites and also to enhance non-designated sites for their habitat and species value. This may include open spaces of public value, verges, incidental open space areas, parkland and Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs).

5.2 BAP habitats

TVERC has mapped habitats using field survey data and interpretation of aerial photography. The map below shows habitats identified as Section 41 Habitats of Principal Importance (also known as UKBAP priority habitats). Many areas would require on-the-ground survey to confirm that they support the priority habitat shown.



6. General Themes Action Plan



Autumnal scenes at Westmorland Park, photo by Rose Wicks

The General Themes Action Plan covers factors that influence the conservation of all species and habitats. The targets take a borough-wide, rather than habitat-specific, view. Key considerations in the General Themes section are:

Network of designated sites

As described in Section 5.1, designated sites are some of the most important sites for wildlife. Their protection is vital for nature conservation. It is important that sites are appropriately designated, monitored and that a proactive approach is taken to improve the management of sites, especially where there are concerns they may be deteriorating.

Information

Up-to-date information is essential to take the correct decisions and actions. This information may be collected by volunteer recorders, consultant ecologists, organisations, landowners and the public more widely.

Community engagement

Education and engagement are vital to achieve the aims of the BAP and ensure it has a long-lasting impact. Local people have a key role to play through practical volunteering, surveying and raising awareness. Local businesses, schools, charities, community groups and landowners all have different opportunities to protect and enhance nature.

Strategy and multi-functional benefits

Activities to work towards the BAP targets will also contribute to the aims of other strategic plans, and vice versa. Linked strategic actions may include providing good quality open space and addressing the causes and impacts of climate change.
Work to conserve and recover nature at the local level will also contribute to ambitions across Berkshire and across the country. The development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy provides a new opportunity for strategic planning and action. As the plan is under development, there is currently an opportunity to shape its development. There will then be opportunities to take action, though the precise nature of these actions is not yet known.

Resilience and climate change

Resilience is the ability to respond to change or disturbance, by resisting damage and recovering quickly. The diversity and connectivity of our species and habitats are factors which affect the resilience of nature in the borough and beyond. Pressures which species and habitats need to be resilient to, such as wind, fire or drought, may become more frequent with climate change. Therefore, working on habitat connectivity and nature conservation is essential in reducing the impacts of climate change.

Natural England and RSPB (2019) have assessed each priority habitat for the potential impacts of climate change. These are discussed in each habitat action plan.

6.1 Targets

No.	Target	Objectives
1	Track condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	• Track sites
2	Formally survey each Local Wildlife Site every 10 years, and supplement with additional, more frequent surveys where possible	• Track sites • Monitor and survey
3	75 per cent Local Wildlife Sites in positive management	• Track sites • Monitor and survey
4	Review the network of Local Nature Reserves and designate appropriate sites	• Track sites • Designate sites • Access to nature
5	Produce an annual report on the state of nature in Bracknell Forest	• Monitor and survey • Strategic action
6	Promote wildlife recording including submitting records to TVERC	• Monitor and survey • Raise awareness
7	Involve educational institutions in monitoring and management of biodiversity	• Monitor and survey • Raise awareness
8	Hold or publish at least 30 events and articles each year promoting the importance of biodiversity within the borough (see also individual habitat plans), including links to climate change where possible	• Raise awareness • Strategic action • Climate mitigation
9	Host at least 10,000 hours of volunteering for nature each year	• Create and restore habitats • Enhance for wildlife • Raise awareness • Climate adaptation
10	Bring together, review and enhance the plans and strategies for green infrastructure in Bracknell Forest	• Strategic action • Climate mitigation • Climate adaptation • Access to nature
11	Secure and monitor at least 10 per cent biodiversity net gain on relevant developments	• Create and restore habitats • Strategic action • Climate adaptation
12	Engage with the development of the Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)	• Strategic action
13	Support the delivery of the Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)	• Strategic action
14	Support and work with the Joint Climate Action Board (JCAB), including the biodiversity working group	• Raise awareness • Strategic action • Climate mitigation • Climate adaptation

7. Grassland Habitat Action Plan

Peacock Meadows, photo by Stewart Turkington

7.1 Bracknell Forest BAP Species for Grassland

These species have been chosen to represent and promote the habitat. They will be included in projects to protect and enhance important grassland habitats in the borough.

Harvest Mouse *(Micromys minutus)*

Status: A UKBAP species, thought to have become much more scarce in recent years and requiring conservation efforts to reduce the decline.

Habitat requirements: Habitats with structural grasses, including tussocky grasslands, hedgerows, field margins, road verges and reedbeds.

Bumblebees *(Bombus spp.)*

Status: Bumblebees have been in decline over the past century. Two species became extinct in the UK during the 20th century.
Habitat requirements: Habitats with plenty of flowers during the whole of their active phase (spring until late summer).

Ragged-Robin *(Lychnis flos-cuculi)*

Status: Widely distributed in the UK but declining and assessed as Near Threatened in England. Localised within the borough and largely reliant on protected sites.

Habitat requirements: Damp grassland managed by cutting or grazing to prevent more vigorous plants from becoming dominant.

Devil's-bit Scabious *(Succisa pratensis)*

Status: A plant of species-rich grasslands which have significantly declined over the past century.

Habitat requirements: Found in a range of habitats including neutral, calcareous and acid grasslands, purple moor-grass and rush pasture, fens and damp woodlands. In Bracknell Forest, mainly found in acid grasslands in the south of the borough where grazing keeps grasses in check.

Grassland species info from: Mammal Society (no date), Bumblebee Conservation Trust (2021), Freshwater Habitat Trust (no date), Magnificent Meadows (no date) and previous Bracknell Forest BAP.

7.2 UKBAP priority habitats

- Lowland dry acid grassland
- Lowland meadows
- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
- Purple moor grass and rush pasture

7.3 National status

Five per cent of England is covered by semi-natural grassland and 32 per cent by improved grassland. Improved grassland refers to modifying grassland to improve it for agriculture. It is unimproved grasslands, that have not been heavily modified or fertilised, which provide better grassland habitats for plants and wildlife. Grassland extent declined over the 20th century. This loss slowed towards the 21st century, though underlying this trend is an indication that the condition, or quality, of broad grassland habitats has declined in recent years (Plantlife International, 2023).

7.4 Grasslands in Bracknell Forest

Grasslands in the borough reflect the underlying geology. Grasslands are neutral and more extensive in the north of the borough where agriculture is more prevalent. In the south of the borough, acid grasslands form mosaics with heathland.

7.5 Threats

Species-rich grasslands may be lost directly due to arable conversion or development. They are also sensitive to changes that affect the balance between wildflower and grassland species. Factors which can affect this include:

- Lack of management leading to scrub encroachment and invasion of coarse grasses. These can outcompete wildflower species.
- Overgrazing, particularly by horses, resulting in loss of species and trampling.
- Agricultural improvement through addition of fertiliser, reseeding or treatment with herbicide. These actions remove wildflower species and replaces them with coarse grasses.
- Invasive species such as Goat's Rue and Pampas grass

Impacts of climate change on priority habitats

Lowland dry acid grassland is the grassland priority habitat most commonly found in Bracknell Forest. This has been assessed as having a low sensitivity to climate change. Nonetheless, hotter, drier summers may affect the composition of species, such as favouring more drought tolerant species. Increased incidence of fires may also affect community composition and increase vulnerability to invasive species (Natural England and RSPB, 2019).

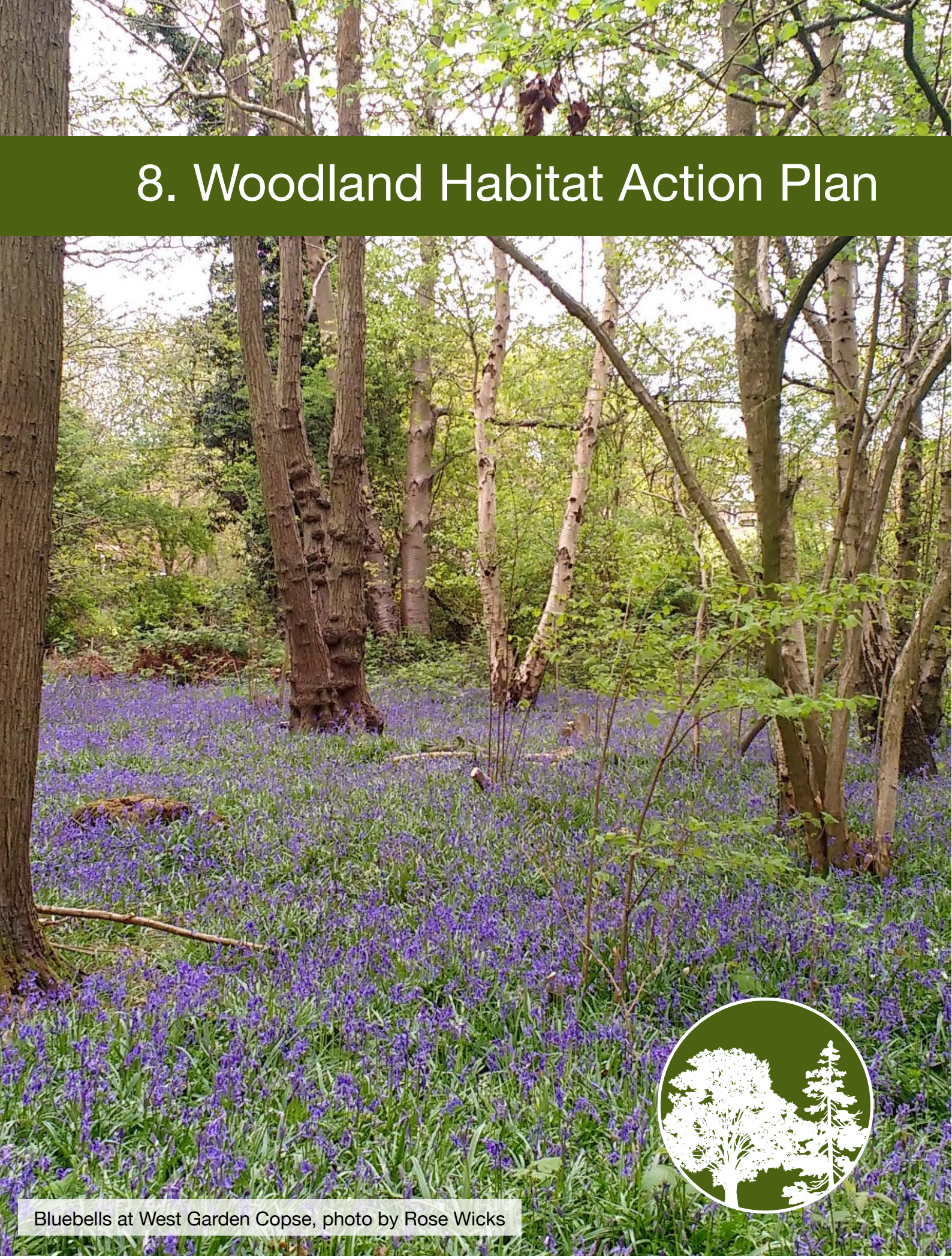
7.6 Opportunities

- Enhancement of existing poor-quality grasslands within public open space, with biodiversity net gain providing a driver for better quality habitats on development sites and via off-site projects, in accordance with the emerging Local Access to Nature standard
- Enhancement of grasslands for nature on agricultural land, supported by agri-environment schemes
- Increasing the diversity of the extensive horse paddocks in the borough
- Public interest in wildflowers and pollinators has increased support for grassland restoration in recent years

7.7 Targets

No.	Target	Objectives
15	Design and undertake regular surveys of key grassland sites/species to understand trends and feed into annual report (see General Themes target 5)	• Monitor and survey
16	Enhance, restore or create 15ha grassland habitats	• Create and restore habitats • Climate adaptation
17	Survey 5ha grassland to propose as Local Wildlife Sites	• Monitor and survey • Designate sites
18	Make management advice available to grassland landowners	• Create and restore habitats • Raise awareness
19	Raise awareness of grassland biodiversity within annual events and articles (see General Themes target 8)	• Raise awareness

8. Woodland Habitat Action Plan



Bluebells at West Garden Copse, photo by Rose Wicks

8.1 Bracknell Forest BAP Species for Woodland

These species have been chosen to represent and promote the habitat. They will be included in projects to protect and enhance important woodland habitats in the borough.

Bullfinch *(Pyrrhula pyrrhula)*

Status: A UKBAP species, classified as Amber under the UK Birds of Conservation Concern. Numbers in the UK declined steeply in the 1970s. Although there has been an improvement more recently, the population is still about 40 per cent lower than in the 1960s. Present in the borough in low numbers.

Habitat requirements: Feeds on buds and fruit in woodlands, hedgerows, parklands, gardens and orchards. Usually nests in shrubs, such as hawthorn and blackthorn.

Wild Service Tree *(Sorbus torminalis)*

Status: Widespread but not common in England. Generally confined to ancient woodlands and hedges, particularly on heavy clay soils.

Habitat requirements: Grows best in clay and lime-based soils. In Bracknell Forest this species appears to tolerate the neutral and clay soils in the north of the borough.

Noctule Bat *(Nyctalus noctula)*

Status: A UKBAP species and European protected species. Relatively widespread but has declined in Britain due to loss of feeding habitat and suitable trees for roosting. Found throughout the borough but roosts are rarely identified.

Habitat requirements: Noctules typically roost in holes in trees. They forage for insects in open areas, woodlands, wetlands and grasslands.

Stag beetle *(Lucanus cervus)*

Status: A UKBAP species which is declining across much of Europe. London and the Thames Valley area are a hotspot for stag beetles.
Habitat requirements: The natural habitat of stag beetles is woodland, but they also live in hedgerows, orchards, parks and gardens. The larvae rely on dead wood, particularly of oak trees and other broad-leaved species.

Woodland species info from: Stanbury and others (2021), BTO (no date, A), The Wildlife Trusts (no date, A and B), Woodland Trust (no date, A), Bat Conservation Trust (2010), Mammal Society (no date, B), Hendry (no date) and previous Bracknell Forest BAP.

8.2 UKBAP priority habitats

- Lowland beech and yew woodland
- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland
- Wet woodland
- Wood pasture and parkland
- Traditional orchards
- Hedgerows

Ancient woodland describes areas which have been woodland since 1600AD. These areas may now be one of the priority habitats above or may be another type of woodland habitat such as conifer plantation. Regardless of the current type of woodland cover, ancient woodlands are defined as irreplaceable habitats. They are given special protection in planning policies and Biodiversity Net Gain.

8.3 National status

Following declines in previous centuries, over the last 100 years the UK's woodland cover has more than doubled. Woodland today covers 13.2 per cent of the UK's land, up from 12 per cent in 1998. Half of this is native, the other half mainly non-native conifer plantation. Within this, ancient woodland covers 2.5 per cent of the UK's land (Reid and others, 2021).

8.4 Woodland habitats in Bracknell Forest

Woodlands

Bracknell Forest has a tree canopy cover (woodland and other trees) of 35 per cent. This is the second highest of the local authorities in England (Friends of the Earth, 2023). Some of the largest areas of woodland are Swinley Forest and Crowthorne Woods. These are owned by the Crown Estate and are predominantly conifer plantation. There are Local Wildlife Sites across the borough which support broadleaved woodland, often called 'copses', such as Long Copse and Tarman's Copse.

Traditional Orchards

Traditional orchards are a hotspot for biodiversity. They provide a mix of habitats such as fruit trees, grassland, hedges, scrub, deadwood and sometimes ponds. Since the 1950s, 90 per cent of traditional orchards in England and Wales have been lost (PTES, no date). Natural England data maps 65 traditional orchards in Bracknell Forest, but only a small number of these have been verified on the ground. There are community orchards at Larks Hill, Warfield Chase, Edmunds Green, Lily Hill Park, Jealott's Hill and Buckler's Park.

Hedgerows

There are half a million miles of hedgerow in the UK. Hedges have declined in the last century, although the loss has slowed since the 1990s. Hedges provide a variety of wildlife with food, shelter and 'corridors' to move though the landscape (Woodland Trust, no date, B). There is currently not an estimate for the overall extent of hedgerows in Bracknell Forest, but the northern parishes where there is more agriculture hold the main resource.

Ancient and Veteran Trees

Old trees can develop features such as decay, fungus, deadwood, holes and cavities. This creates a complex habitat which can support many species. The UK is very important for ancient and veteran trees, and Windsor Forest is home to many of these trees. It is recognised as a Special Area of Conservation for its valuable beech and oak woodland habitat which supports rare species such as the violet click beetle. Veteran trees have been identified by the Crown Estate within Windsor Forest, and by a range of groups and volunteers across the borough.

8.5 Threats

Woodland habitats in the borough are threatened by:

- Isolation from other habitats
- Invasive non-native species, in particular Rhododendron and Laurel which create dense shade and prevent understory species and new young trees from growing
- Lack of management
- Degradation by human activities such as dumping, fires and recreational pressures
- Deer browsing and grey squirrel damage
- Inappropriate management e.g., hedge cutting
- Removal of deadwood
- Development, particularly for veteran trees and orchards
- Pollution

Impacts of climate change on priority habitats

Wet woodland is assessed as moderately sensitive to climate change, while deciduous woodland, wood pasture, orchards and hedgerows have a low sensitivity. Woodlands are likely to be most threatened by more frequent and severe droughts. Pests and diseases may be more frequent as stressed trees are more susceptible, and pest insects are likely to benefit from climate change. Grey squirrel and deer are also likely to benefit from climate change which may increase pressure and reduce natural regeneration. Wind-throw may be more common if the UK becomes more stormy (Natural England and RSPB, 2019).

8.6 Opportunities

The government has a target to increase tree cover (which includes woodlands and smaller areas of trees) in England from 14.5 per cent in 2023 to 16.5 per cent in 2050 (Natural England and Forestry Commission, 2023). There are existing grant schemes for woodland creation and tree planting, and new opportunities from Biodiversity Net Gain and carbon markets. Agri-environment schemes provide incentives to landowners for activities such as woodland creation, woodland and hedgerow management and improving tree health (Defra, 2023, A).

8.7 Targets

No.	Target	Objectives
20	Design and undertake regular surveys of key woodland sites/species to understand trends and feed into annual report (see General Themes target 5)	• Monitor and survey
21	Enhance, restore or create 25ha woodland habitats, including ancient woodland sites where possible	• Create and restore habitats • Climate adaptation
22	Create an action plan of prioritised sites for woodland invasive species removal and take action across at least 10 sites	• Monitor and survey • Designate sites
23	Enhance, restore or create 5km native hedgerow	• Create and restore habitats • Raise awareness
24	Create 3 new community orchards	• Raise awareness
25	Survey 5ha woodland to propose as Local Wildlife Sites	• Monitor and survey • Designate sites
26	Consolidate veteran tree data, identify gaps and undertake targeted surveys to identify veteran trees	• Monitor and survey • Raise awareness
27	Identify 50 trees with potential to become veterans and improve management	• Create and restore habitats
28	Plant trees in an open, parkland-style setting at 5 sites	• Create and restore habitats • Climate mitigation
29	Include wild-service trees in re-stocking and planting plans for sites in the north of the borough	• Create and restore habitats • Climate mitigation
30	Install loggeries, bat roosting opportunities and dead-hedges at 30 sites with limited deadwood	• Enhance for wildlife
31	Make management advice available to woodland and hedgerow landowners	• Create and restore habitats • Raise awareness • Climate mitigation • Climate adaptation
32	Raise awareness of woodland biodiversity within annual events and articles (see General Themes target 8)	• Raise awareness
33	Review Bracknell Forest Borough Tree Strategy	• Strategic action • Climate mitigation • Climate adaptation

9. Rivers and Wetlands Habitat Action Plan

Horseshoe Lake, photo by Stewart Turkington

9.1 Bracknell Forest BAP Species for Rivers and Wetlands

These species have been chosen to represent and promote the habitat. They will be included in projects to protect and enhance important wetland habitats in the borough.

Great Crested Newt *(Triturus cristatus)*

Status: A UKBAP species and European Protected Species. Widespread in the UK but with a patchy distribution. Populations have disappeared from sites across Europe due to habitat loss. Found across Bracknell Forest where there are ponds.

Habitat requirements: Great crested newts breed in ponds in the spring, favouring large ponds with lots of weeds but no fish. The rest of the year they rely on woodland, hedgerow, marsh and tussocky grassland habitats for feeding and sheltering.

Brown Trout *(Salmo trutta)*

Status: A UKBAP species, threatened by overfishing, habitat loss and climate change (as it relies on cold water habitats). In Bracknell Forest, limited to the Wish Stream and possibly the River Blackwater.

Habitat requirements: Unpolluted, free-flowing rivers and streams with gravel beds for spawning and aquatic plants providing invertebrate prey.

Kingfisher *(Alcedo atthis*)

Status: In 2021, Kingfisher was moved from Amber to Green under the UK Birds of Conservation Concern. Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which provides additional protections from disturbance.

Habitat requirements: Slow-moving water with low hanging branches or posts to use as hunting perches. Kingfishers tunnel into high sided riverbanks to make a chamber for their nests.

Rivers and wetlands species info from: Froglife (no date), The Wildlife Trusts (no date, C), Stanbury and others (2021), Woodland Trust (no date, C andD) and previous Bracknell Forest BAP.

9.2 UKBAP priority habitats

- Eutrophic standing waters (high nutrient level)
- Ponds
- Mesotrophic lakes (moderate nutrient level)
- Rivers
- Lowland fens
- Lowland raised bog
- Reedbeds

9.3 National status

Freshwater, wetlands and floodplains cover approximately 5 per cent of the UK. The extent of these habitats increased by 25 per cent between 1990 and 2019. Many former quarries have been converted to artificial lakes which provide new habitats (Office for National Statistics, 2022). However, only 14 per cent of rivers and lakes are in good ecological health (achieving 'good ecological status' in 2019) (Environment Agency and Natural England, 2022).

9.4 Rivers and wetland habitats in Bracknell Forest

Many areas in the north of the borough were historically dug for clay to make bricks. This has left many ponds in Binfield, Warfield and Winkfield.

Two main rivers flow through Bracknell Forest. The Cut is a tributary of the River Thames, which flows through the northern parishes. It is partly fed by the Bullbrook stream and Blackmore Stream. Gormoor or Downmill Stream is mostly culverted but flows through the lakes at South Hill Park and Mill Pond, before flowing through a culvert and joining The Cut. The River Blackwater flows along the southern boundary of Sandhurst, partly fed by the Wish Stream. It is a tributary of the River Loddon, which is a chalk stream. Chalk streams are a special habitat, with nearly all the world's chalk streams found in England. As a tributary of the River Loddon, the water quality of the River Blackwater has an impact on the chalk stream habitats downstream.

Along the River Blackwater, extensive gravel extraction has created large lakes. These have varying conditions for biodiversity. Wetland habitats are focused, although not limited to, around these areas.

9.5 Threats

The borough's rivers and lakes are mainly threatened by activities within their floodplains or catchments, whereas ponds and wetlands tend to be more affected by a lack of management.

Key issues include:

- Nutrient enrichment and pollution – this often reaches the river at specific points, known as outfalls
- Development and associated pressures relating to sewage and water treatment
- Inappropriate management of waterside vegetation
- Invasive non-native species
- Artificial structures or alterations
- Formalisation of natural waterbodies
- Effects on hydrology from surrounding land use

Impacts of climate change on priority habitats

Rivers, streams and open waters have a high sensitivity to climate change, and reedbeds a moderate level. In rivers and lakes, changes to temperature and hydrological regimes are predicted. Warmer water temperatures will affect species adapted to cold conditions, and droughts may reduce available habitat space and water quality. There may be an increase in problems associated with algal blooms in lakes. Heavy rainfall events may increase runoff. Invasive species may spread further or more quickly (Natural England and RSPB, 2019).

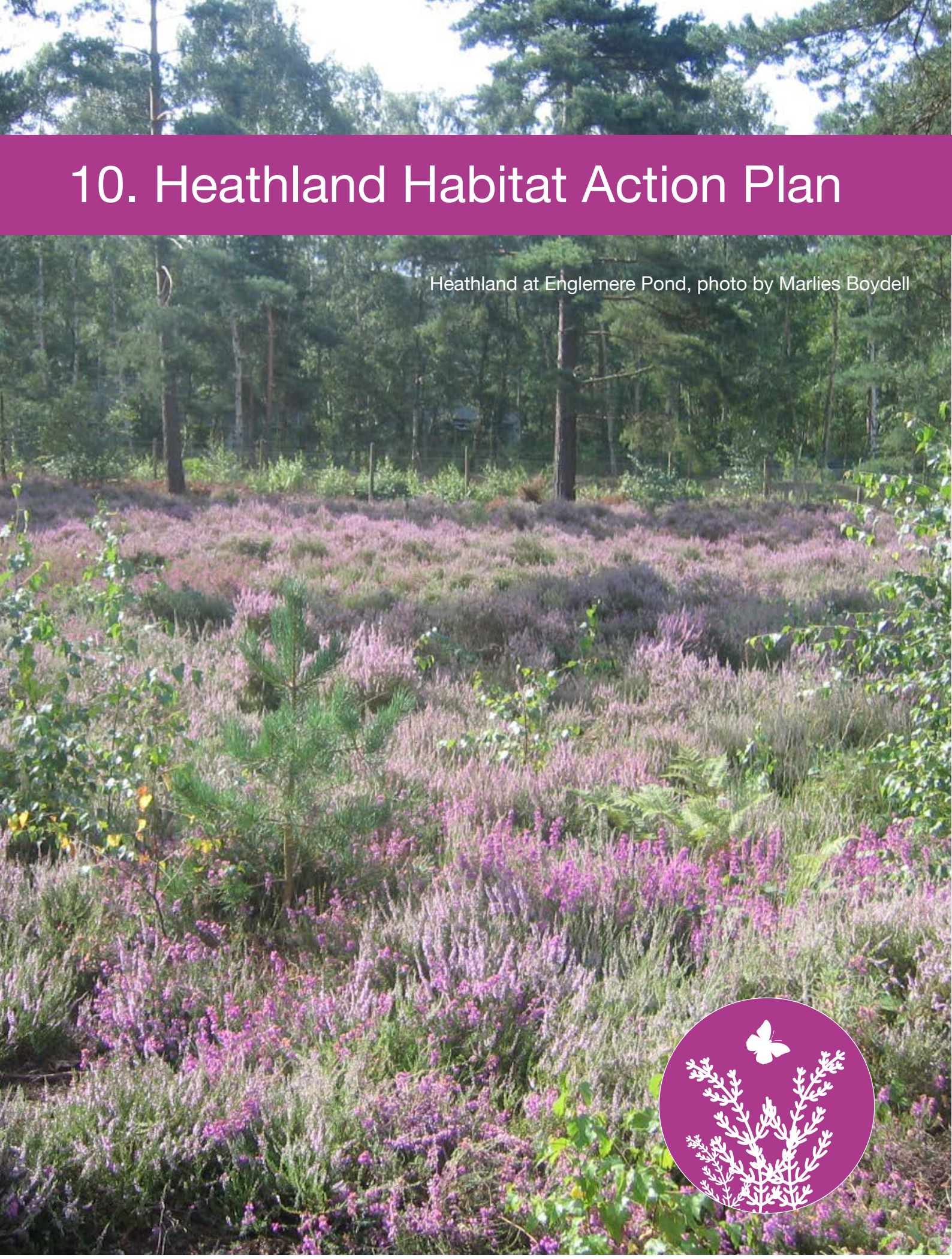
9.6 Opportunities

The role wetlands play in flood alleviation may provide opportunities for habitat creation and restoration, often known as 'nature-based solutions'. In recent years, there has been much greater public awareness of pressures on rivers such as pollution, which may provide drivers for protection and restoration. The Government's Environmental Improvement Plan (HM Government, 2023) includes a goal for clean and plentiful water, with associated targets and commitments such as reducing water use, restoring 75 per cent of water bodies to good ecological status and reducing pollution from agriculture. Biodiversity net gain will provide a driver for better quality habitats on development sites and via off-site projects. There is a specific watercourse assessment module for developments affecting rivers and streams (Defra, 2023, B). Agri-environment schemes provide incentives to landowners to take action to improve water quality and biodiversity in watercourses, such as creating riparian buffers, and support wetland habitats, for example by creating and managing reedbeds (Defra, 2023, A).

9.7 Targets

No.	Target	Objectives
34	Design and undertake regular surveys of key wetland sites/species to understand trends and feed into annual report (see General Themes target 5)	• Monitor and survey
35	Monitor outfalls at least every 4 years	• Monitor and survey • Raise awareness • Strategic action
36	Enhance, restore or create 20 ponds	• Create and restore habitats • Enhance for wildlife • Climate mitigation • Climate adaptation
37	Restore or enhance 2km of river or stream habitat	• Create and restore habitats • Connect habitats • Enhance for wildlife • Climate adaptation
38	Restore or enhance 3 wetland sites, including improving reedbed management where appropriate	• Create and restore habitats • Climate adaptation
39	Create an action plan of prioritised sites for Himalayan Balsam removal and take action across at least 10 sites	• Create and restore habitats • Climate adaptation
40	Review access patterns at two river or wetland sites and adapt access management	• Create and restore habitats • Raise awareness • Access to nature
41	Make management advice available to riverside landowners	• Create and restore habitats • Raise awareness
42	Raise awareness of wetland biodiversity, including issues facing rivers and opportunities for communities to get involved, within annual events and articles (see General Themes target 8)	• Raise awareness
43	Engage with the Catchment Partnership and its strategic plans	• Strategic action

10. Heathland Habitat Action Plan



Heathland at Englemere Pond, photo by Marlies Boydell

10.1 Bracknell Forest BAP species for heathland

These species have been chosen to represent and promote the habitat. They will be included in projects to protect and enhance important heathland habitats in the borough.

Dartford Warbler *(Sylvia undata)*

Status: One of the three threatened heathland birds that the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection area (SPA) was created to protect (with Woodlark and Nightjar described below). These species are found in the south of the borough in heathland and young conifer plantations. Dartford Warblers are listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Habitat requirements: Dartford warblers prefer long heather and gorse bushes to forage and nest. All three species nest on or very near the ground.

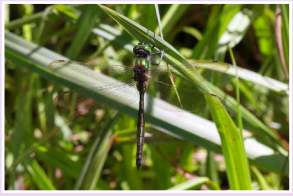
Woodlark *(Lullula arborea)*

Status: Second of the three SPA bird species found in the south of the borough in heathland and young conifer plantations. Woodlarks are listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
Habitat requirements: Woodlarks need occasional trees for territorial song and display and nest in heath and early plantation. All three species nest on or very near the ground.

Nightjar *(Caprimulgus europaeus)*

Status: Third of the three SPA bird species found in the south of the borough in heathland and young conifer plantations. Nightjars are a UKBAP priority species.

Habitat requirements: Nightjars prefer more open heath and will nest and forage in early plantation. All three species nest on or very near the ground.



Brilliant Emerald Dragonfly *(Somatochlora metallica)*

Status: Nationally scarce species found in discrete areas of southeast England and Scotland.

Habitat requirements: Sheltered standing or slow-flowing waters, with some overhanging vegetation or trees.

Silver-studded Blue *(Plebejus argus)*

Status: A UKBAP species. It has a restricted distribution and has declined through most of its range but can occur in large numbers in suitable sites.

Habitat requirements: Lowland heathland, with eggs often laid in short or sparse vegetation. They have a close relationship with ants and will only lay eggs where there are suitable ant populations.

Adder *(Vipera berus)*

Status: A UKBAP species, adder numbers are in decline and populations are becoming fragmented and isolated.
Habitat requirements: Associated with open habitats such as heathland, moorland and woodland edges. Adders hibernate in sheltered, dry places such as old rodent burrows or in fallen trees.
Heathland species info from: British Dragonfly Society (no date), Butterfly Conservation (no date), Woodland Trust (no date, E) and previous Bracknell Forest BAP.

10.2 UKBAP priority habitats

- Lowland heathland
- Lowland raised bog (covered in wetland section)

10.3 National status

In the lowlands, around 85 per cent of heathland has been lost over the past 150 years. However, in more recent years, there has been conservation efforts to halt losses, restore and increase the area of heathland (The Wildlife Trusts, no date, D).

10.4 Heathland habitats in Bracknell Forest

The underlying geology in Crowthorne and Sandhurst provides the conditions for heathland. It forms a patchwork with large areas of forestry and development. Forestry can provide benefits for biodiversity through rotational management of land. This provides a range of habitat niches which support heathland habitats and species. Bogs are a specialised habitat within heathland areas. Waterlogging can form wet heathland, ponds and true bog areas.

10.5 Threats

The majority of heathland in the borough falls within Sites of Species Scientific Interest (SSSIs), though there are some patches outside of these designated sites. Threats or pressures on heathland, both within and outside of protected sites, can include:

- Lack of or inappropriate management
- Change in groundwater levels affecting bogs
- Nutrient enrichment e.g., dog fouling, air pollution, agricultural runoff
- Fires and dumping
- Disturbance of key species e.g., ground nesting birds
- Persecution e.g., snakes and other species can be subject to persecution due to culturally inherited fears

Impacts of climate change on priority habitats

Higher temperatures and more frequent droughts associated with climate change may affect the hydrological conditions within heathlands and the frequency of fires. This may change the balance of species. Warmer temperatures may also cause grass species to become more dominant. Some heathland species may benefit from warmer temperatures by expanding their range north. However, the fragmented nature of heathland means the habitat and its associated species may be vulnerable and struggle to adapt to climate change (Natural England and RSPB, 2019).

10.6 Opportunities

Heathland is a rare and valuable habitat and management and restoration is supported through agri-environment schemes. Biodiversity net gain is providing a driver for better quality habitats. While heathland is not typically directly affected by development, there may be opportunities to create and enhance heathland via off-site projects.

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces are important in protecting the heathland habitats of the SPA. They provide opportunities for recreation away from the most important heathland sites which are sensitive to disturbance. New housing developments close to the SPA must contribute towards the enhancement of SANGs.

10.7 Targets

No.	Target	Objectives
44	Design and undertake regular surveys of key heathland sites/species to understand trends and feed into annual report (see General Themes target 5)	• Monitor and survey
45	Enhance, restore or create 10ha of heathland	• Create and restore habitats • Climate mitigation • Climate adaptation
46	Create 5 new bogs or ponds within heathland	• Create and restore habitats • Climate mitigation • Climate adaptation
47	Promote SANGs to reduce pressure on SPA heathland	• Raise awareness • Strategic action • Access to nature
48	Review access patterns at two heathland sites and adapt access management	• Create and restore habitats • Raise awareness • Access to nature
49	Run 20 educational sessions on heathland wildlife and conservation	• Raise awareness
50	Raise awareness of heathland biodiversity within annual events and articles (see General Themes target 8)	• Raise awareness

11. Farmland Habitat Action Plan

11.1 Bracknell Forest BAP species for farmland

These species have been chosen to represent and promote the habitat. They will be included in projects to protect and enhance important farmland habitats in the borough. However, species representing other habitats, found within farmland, will also be relevant.

Skylark *(Alauda arvensis)*

Status: A UKBAP species and red listed in the UK under the Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (2021). Skylark numbers have fallen dramatically in the UK since the 1970s, but latest population trends indicate a small upturn.

Habitat requirements: Found in open farmland, preferring larger arable and grassland fields. Skylarks nest on the ground in short grass or crops.

Barn Owl *(Tyto alba)*

Status: Barn owl numbers have suffered declines and the species is thought to have been negatively affected by pesticides such as DDT in the 1950s and '60s. However, they are green listed under the Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (2021). Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which provides additional protections from disturbance.

Habitat requirements: Barn owls hunt over open grassland for small mammals. They nest in old barns and buildings and hollows of trees. Farmland species info from: BTO (no date, B), Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (no date), RSPB (no date, A), Woodland Trust (no date, F), Stanbury and others (2021) and previous Bracknell Forest BAP.

11.2 UKBAP priority habitats

Arable field margins are a UKBAP priority habitat, though they are typically not mapped in priority habitat maps and are not included in TVERC habitat coverage data.
All terrestrial habitats have the potential to be part of farmland and therefore there is a high level of overlap with the other habitat action plans.

11.3 Farmland habitats in Bracknell Forest

The majority of farmland is found in the north of the borough where soils are neutral and clay. The area of farmed land is falling in the borough. According to Defra's June surveys of agriculture and horticulture, in 2021, 1,335ha of land in Bracknell Forest was farmed. Of this, 886ha is grassland (Defra, 2023, C).

11.4 Threats

Farmland biodiversity generally relies on less intensively managed areas around the edges of fields or uncultivated areas of the farm. These areas can be vulnerable to:

- Intensification of crop production
- Market forces leading to changes in land use, such as development, urbanisation or neglect
- Intensification of grazing
- Use of pesticides and fertilisers

Impacts of climate change on priority habitats

Arable field margins managed for wildlife are the priority habitat most closely associated with farmland. These have been assessed as having a low sensitivity to climate change. Nonetheless, threats from climate change may include an increase in pests and diseases, and drier summers may cause changes in species composition and more bare ground (Natural England and RSPB, 2019).

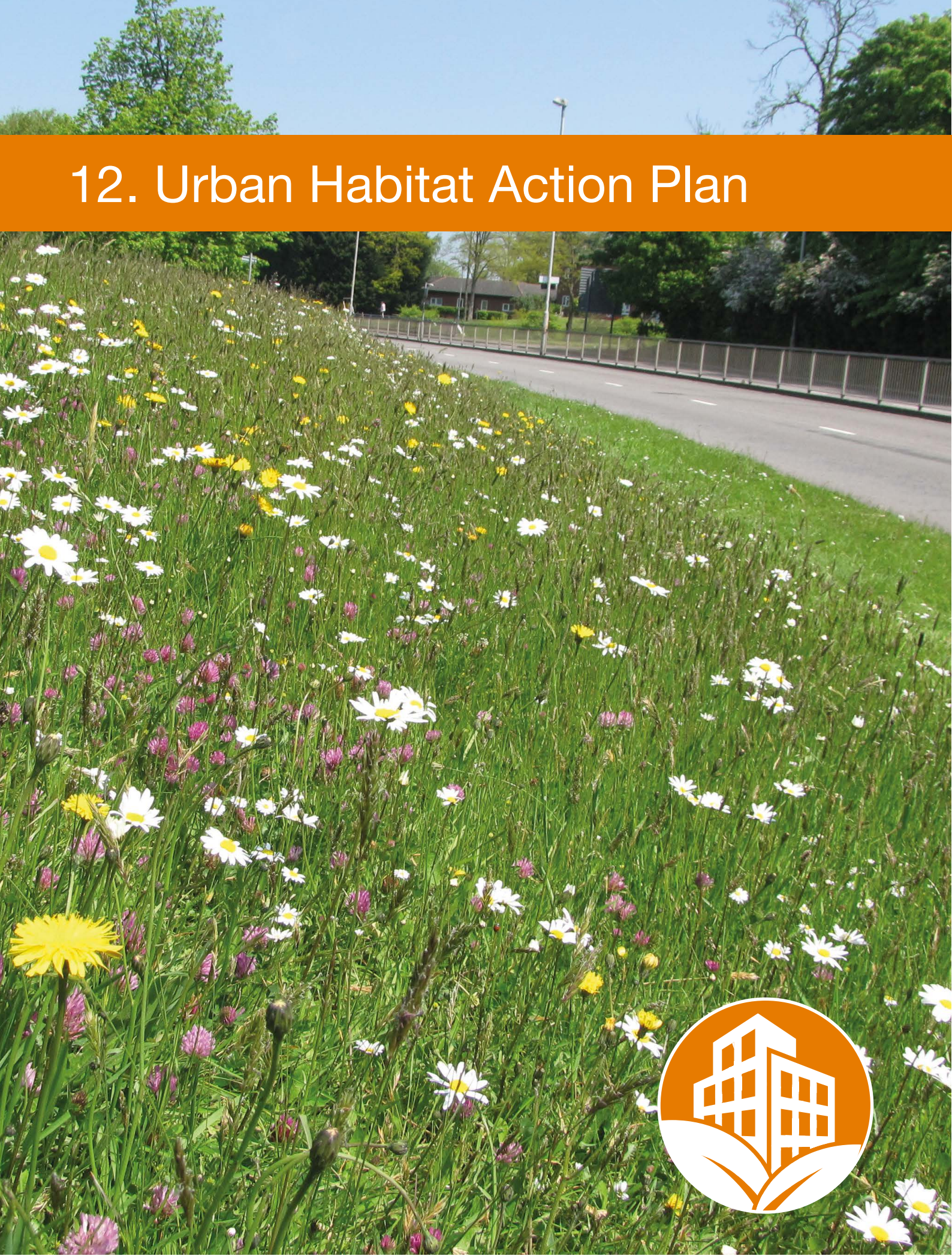
11.5 Opportunities

Farmers are recognised as key stewards of our countryside, and many are keen to support wildlife provided it can be done whilst maintaining a livelihood. Agri-environment schemes provide financial incentives to improve biodiversity on farmland. Biodiversity net gain may provide farmers with a new source of income to manage uncultivated areas of habitat in their farm.

11.6 Targets

No.	Target	Objectives
51	Monitor trends in farmland bird species and feed into annual report (see General Themes target 5)	• Monitor and survey
52	Monitor barn owl boxes	• Monitor and survey • Enhance for wildlife
53	Install 5 new owl boxes including at least 2 barn owl boxes	• Enhance for wildlifeon
54	Share information on new agri-environment schemes and monitor uptake	• Create and restore habitats • Raise awareness • Strategic action • Climate mitigation • Climate adaptation
55	Make management advice available to farmland landowners and horse owners	• Create and restore habitats • Raise awareness • Climate mitigation • Climate adaptation
56	Raise awareness of farmland biodiversity within annual events and articles (see General Themes target 8)	• Raise awareness

12. Urban Habitat Action Plan



12.1 Bracknell Forest BAP species for urban areas

These species have been chosen to represent and promote the habitat. They will be included in projects to protect and enhance important urban habitats in the borough. Species representing other habitats, found within urban areas, will also be relevant.

Swift *(Apus apus)*

Status: Added to the red list under the Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (2021). A factor in their decline is a loss of nesting sites as old buildings are renovated.

Habitat requirements: Swifts nest in roof cervices of buildings and forage for insects while on the wing (flying).

Hedgehog *(Erinaceus europaeus)*

Status: A UKBAP species suffering a long historic decline in numbers. The decline is thought to relate to loss of hedgerow and woodland habitat, use of pesticides, and the impact of urbanisation, including impermeable fencing and road casualties. In urban areas, numbers are thought to be stabilising and may be recovering.

Habitat requirements: Can live in a variety of habitats including woodland, farmland, parks and gardens. Eats mainly invertebrates and needs areas to shelter during winter hibernation and during the day in the summer.

Cowslip *(Primula veris)*

Status: After suffering declines due to agricultural intensification, it is now showing signs of recovery.

Habitat requirements: Can be found in open woods, meadows, pastures and roadsides.

Badgers

Badgers are not a BAP species due to their widespread populations across the UK. However, their numbers are declining in Bracknell Forest. The main threats are the high levels of human activity in woodlands, road accidents, and development in surrounding fields. Badgers need a diverse range of habitats for foraging and wide corridors. Actions to protect this species will also benefit other urban wildlife and habitats, and so badgers are given special consideration in this section.

Urban species info from: RSPB (no date, B), Woodland Trust (no date, G), Plantlife (no date) and previous Bracknell Forest BAP.

12.2 UKBAP priority habitats

- Open mosaic habitat on previously developed land

All terrestrial habitats have the potential to be part of urban areas and therefore there is a high level of overlap with the other habitat action plans.

12.3 Urban habitats in Bracknell Forest

The largest urban area in the borough is Bracknell Town. Other urban and residential areas include the town of Sandhurst and villages of Crowthorne, Binfield, Warfield and Winkfield.

All of the other habitats in the BAP may be found within urban areas. In addition, the following are some of the places that can be valuable for biodiversity:

- Parks and open spaces
- Verges next to roads, railways, cycleways and footpaths
- Sports pitches and play areas
- Private gardens
- Golf courses
- Churchyards and cemeteries
- Buildings

Settlement areas can support rare and declining species both within semi-natural habitats and the built environment. For example, swifts rely on buildings to provide their nest sites.
Green infrastructure is the network of green spaces and features which provides many different benefits for people and wildlife. Green infrastructure is important in urban areas for many reasons, including allowing species to move and respond to climate change.

12.4 Threats

Urban biodiversity can be overlooked, and may be affected by the following factors:

- Changes in management regimes e.g., grass cutting
- Building maintenance and construction
- Development
- Invasive non-native species
- Isolation and fragmentation of habitats
- Persecution e.g., bats, snakes and stag beetles can be subject to persecution due to culturally inherited fears

Impacts of climate change on biodiversity in urban areas

As with rural areas, urban habitats may change in composition as the climate changes. Species may shift in range and distribution. There may be changes in interactions between different species and between species and natural events (such as earlier spring weather). As urban habitats can be small and fragmented, the ability of species to move and adapt may be restricted (Natural England and RSPB, 2019).

12.5 Opportunities

Engaging support for urban species can be very successful in showing the link between people and nature at home, at work and during leisure. As urban areas encompass many different people, this urban action plan has a greater emphasis on community involvement, such as with schools, religious groups and businesses.
Green infrastructure within urban areas can provide new habitats for wildlife, while also improving urban areas for people and helping us adapt to climate change (Natural England and RSPB, 2019).

12.6 Targets

No.	Target	Objectives
57	Design and undertake regular surveys of key urban sites/species to understand trends and feed into annual report (see General Themes target 5)	• Monitor and survey
58	Identify, protect and increase the number of active swift and house martin nest sites	• Monitor and survey • Enhance for wildlife
59	Plant or replace 50 large native urban trees	• Create and restore habitats • Climate mitigation • Climate adaptation
60	Identify 20 verges or groups of verges and enhance for wildflowers and pollinators	• Create and restore habitats • Connect habitats
61	Enhance 10 community spaces for wildlife	• Create and restore habitats • Raise awareness • Climate mitigation • Climate adaptation
62	At least 10 private landowners to have enhanced their grounds for wildlife	• Raise awareness
63	Secure wildlife enhancement features, including nest boxes, hibernation features and gaps for movement, within new and existing urban spaces, including seeking enhancements via planning process	• Enhance for wildlife
64	Planning permissions in areas with badger setts to ensure measures for badger protection	• Enhance for wildlife • Strategic action
65	All public greenspace management plans to include biodiversity actions	• Create and restore habitats • Enhance for wildlife • Strategic action
66	Make management advice available to urban landowners, such as businesses	• Create and restore habitats • Raise awareness
67	Raise awareness of urban and garden biodiversity, and opportunities for communities to get involved, within annual events and articles (see General Themes target 8)	• Raise awareness
68	Promote Local Access to Nature to residents	• Raise awareness • Access to nature

Appendix 1: Delivery Plan

The following Delivery Plan includes suggested activities, timeframes and groups of partners for each target. Fuller details will be developed and worked on throughout the plan period by the Bracknell Forest Nature Partnership and other partners. The delivery plan will therefore evolve through the plan period with the version below providing a starting point.

General themes

No	Target	Delivery partners	Timeframe	Initial proposed actions
1	Track condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	• Natural England • Bracknell Forest Council • TVERC	Annual	• Natural England assess sites • TVERC provide Annual Monitoring Report • Bracknell Forest Council to report in annual nature report/BAP reviews
2	Formally survey each Local Wildlife Site every 10 years, and supplement with additional, more frequent surveys where possible	• TVERC • Survey sub-group of Bracknell Forest Nature Partnership and Biodiversity and Climate Working Group	Progress annually	• TVERC undertake annual surveys • Survey sub-group to explore opportunities to supplement surveys, with consideration of methods, permissions and capacity of surveyors
3	75 per cent Local Wildlife Sites in positive management	• TVERC • Bracknell Forest Council • Landowners	Progress and track annually, achieve by 2029	• TVERC and Bracknell Forest Council to connect with landowners to increase number of sites with management plans or advice
4	Review the network of Local Nature Reserves and designate appropriate sites	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils	2026	• Bracknell Forest Council to review current network of sites • Bracknell Forest and TandP councils to identify sites to be designated • Seek approvals, apply to Natural England

No	Target	Delivery partners	Timeframe	Initial proposed actions
5	Produce an annual report on the state of nature in Bracknell Forest	• Produce an annual report on the state of nature in Bracknell Forest Bracknell Forest Council • TVERC • Survey sub-group • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group	Initial work in 2024, then annual	• Develop template in 2024 • Review a range of local and national data and produce report annually
6	Promote wildlife recording including submitting records to TVERC	• Bracknell Forest Council • TVERC • Local env. groups • Survey sub-group	Annual	• Surveying sub-group set up to help progress this target (and others) • Actions to include: sharing consistent advice, supporting regular and ad hoc recording, providing training. • TVERC to continue to support recording community through events and Officer
7	Involve educational institutions in monitoring and management of biodiversity	• Bracknell Forest Council • TVERC • Survey sub-group	Annual	• Identify opportunities and connect with educational institutions • Consider creating a list of research projects
8	Hold or publish at least 30 events and articles each year promoting the importance of biodiversity within the borough (see also individual habitat plans), including links to climate change where possible	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. groups • Regional groups/ orgs. • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group	Annual	• Coordinate across Nature Partnership to hold events and publish articles • Develop resources e.g. info sheets • Work with Climate Change Officers and Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group to identify links to climate change and include in events and articles

No	Target	Delivery partners	Timeframe	Initial proposed actions
9	Host at least 10,000 hours of volunteering for nature each year	• Bracknell Forest Council • Local env. groups • Regional groups/ orgs.	Annual	• Coordinate across Nature Partnership to host volunteer work and track delivery
10	Bring together, review and enhance the plans and strategies for green infrastructure in Bracknell Forest	• Bracknell Forest Council	2025	• Work with Planning Policy and Parks and Countryside to review existing plans and bring together under green infrastructure
11	Secure and monitor at least 10 per cent biodiversity net gain on relevant developments	• Bracknell Forest Council	Annual	• Work with BNG Officer, Planning and Planning Policy to secure net gain and monitor
12	Engage with the development of the Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)	• All partners	2024	• Partners to share, promote and get involved with workshops and working groups • Bracknell Forest Council have role as supporting authority to review and sign off
13	Support the delivery of the Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)		Annual from 2025	• TBC following development of LNRS
14	Support and work with the Joint Climate Action Board (JCAB), including the biodiversity working group		Annual	• Establish and maintain communication and coordination between Nature Partnership and Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group

Grassland

No	Target	Delivery partners	Timeframe	Initial proposed actions
15	Design and undertake regular surveys of key grassland sites/species to understand trends and feed into annual report (see General Themes target 5)	• Bracknell Forest Council • TVERC • Local env. groups • Survey sub-group	Initial work by 2025, then annual	• Review ongoing survey work and citizen science schemes • Identify ways to coordinate, key sites/species • Survey regularly and/or promote schemes • Share data with scheme organiser, TVERC and landowners where possible • Review data, feed findings into annual report
16	Enhance, restore or create 15ha grassland habitats	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. groups • Landowners	Progress annually, achieve by 2029	• Habitat work to be delivered by BNG projects, SANG enhancements, SSSI management work and other projects • Potential sites: Jennett's Hill, The Parks, Longhill Park, Ennerdale, Westmorland Park, Farningham Ride, World's End
17	Survey 5ha grassland to propose as Local Wildlife Sites	• Bracknell Forest Council • TVERC • Survey sub-group	Focus effort in second half of plan (2027-29)	• Identify and survey grassland sites which may be of LWS standard
18	Make management advice available to grassland landowners	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • TVERC • Regional groups/orgs. • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group	Develop advice in first half of plan (by 2026) and then share throughout	• Develop advice and share consistent messages on websites and through communication channels
19	Raise awareness of grassland biodiversity within annual events and articles (see General Themes target 8)	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. groups • Regional groups/orgs. • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group	Annual	• See target 8. Include grassland elements where appropriate.

Woodland

No	Target	Delivery partners	Timeframe	Initial proposed actions
20	Design and undertake regular surveys of key woodland sites/species to understand trends and feed into annual report (see General Themes target 5)	• Bracknell Forest Council • TVERC • Local env. groups • Survey sub-group	Initial work by 2025, then annual	• Review ongoing survey work and citizen science schemes • Identify ways to coordinate, key sites/ species • Survey regularly and/or promote schemes • Share data with scheme organiser, TVERC and landowners where possible • Review data, feed findings into annual report
21	Enhance, restore or create 25ha woodland habitats, including ancient woodland sites where possible	• Bracknell Forest Council • Local env. Groups • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group • Landowners	Progress annually, achieve by 2029	• Habitat work to be delivered by BNG projects, SANG enhancements and other projects • Consider coppicing schedule at relevant sites, with protection from deer • Potential sites: South Hill Park, Nine Mile Ride, Bagshot Road, Savernake Park, School Hill, Chaucer Woods, Church Hill Park, Big Wood, Buckler's Forest
22	Create an action plan of prioritised sites for woodland invasive species removal and take action across at least 10 sites	• Bracknell Forest Council • Local env. groups • Landowners	Action plan by 2025, action at 5 sites by 2027 and a further 5 sites by 2029	• Review existing data • Undertake site visits • Create action plan • Take action at prioritised sites • Share advice (target 31)

No	Target	Delivery partners	Timeframe	Initial proposed actions
23	Enhance, restore or create 5km native hedgerow	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. Groups • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group • Landowners	Progress annually, achieve by 2029	• Work to be delivered by BNG projects, SANG enhancements and other projects • Maintain a record of hedge creation, management schedule and timing of significant work such as laying • Consider hedge-laying training • Potential sites: Bluebell Hill, Peacock South, Buckler's Forest.
24	Create 3 new community orchards	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. Groups • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group • Landowners	1 in place by 2027 and a further 2 in place by 2029	• Identify potential sites, undertake site visits • Work with local community to develop plan for use and maintenance • Plant trees, manage • Potential sites: TBC, Peacock South
25	Survey 5ha woodland to propose as Local Wildlife Sites	• Bracknell Forest Council • TVERC • Survey sub-group	Focus effort in second half of plan (2027-29)	• Identify and survey grassland sites which may be of LWS standard
26	Consolidate veteran tree data, identify gaps and undertake targeted surveys to identify veteran trees	• Bracknell Forest Council • TVERC • Local env. groups • Survey sub-group	Initial work by 2026, achieve by 2029	• Liaise with TVERC to get up-to-date data • Nature Partnership/ survey sub-group to identify gaps and allocate to groups • Bracknell Forest Council to implement process for capturing trees identified through planning and site visits
27	Identify 50 trees with potential to become veterans and improve management	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. groups • Landowners	Progress annually, achieve by 2029	• Identify potential sites, undertake site visits, identify trees • Improve management e.g. mulching, fencing, reducing shading etc. as appropriate. • Potential sites: Church Hill Park

No	Target	Delivery partners	Timeframe	Initial proposed actions
28	Plant trees in an open, parkland-style setting at 5 sites	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. groups • Landowners	Progress annually, achieve by 2029	• Identify potential sites, undertake site visits, plant trees and manage similar to veterans e.g. mulching, fencing etc. as appropriate. • Preference for sites which are grazed to replicate traditional wood pasture and avoid obstacles for hay cutting.
29	Include wild-service trees in re-stocking and planting plans for sites in the north of the borough	• Bracknell Forest Council • Local env. groups	Annual	• Identify and take opportunities to plant new wild service trees
30	Install loggeries, bat roosting opportunities and dead-hedges at 30 sites with limited deadwood	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. groups • Landowners	Progress annually, achieve by 2029	• Identify potential sites, undertake site visits, identify opportunities and install • Record on PTES website where appropriate (stag beetle loggeries) • Investigate BTC project to create noctule roosting opportunities • Monitor uptake where possible
31	Make management advice available to woodland and hedgerow landowners	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • TVERC • Regional groups/orgs • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group	Develop advice in first half of plan (by 2026) and then share throughout	• Develop advice and share consistent messages on websites and through communication channels
32	Raise awareness of woodland biodiversity within annual events and articles (see General Themes target 8)	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. groups • Regional groups/orgs. • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group	Annual	• See target 8. Include woodland elements where appropriate.

No	Target	Delivery partners	Timeframe	Initial proposed actions
33	Review Bracknell Forest Borough Tree Strategy	• Bracknell Forest Council	2025	• Bracknell forest Council to review strategy • Consider opportunities to increase canopy cover and for urban tree planting

Rivers and Wetlands

No	Target	Delivery partners	Timeframe	Initial proposed actions
34	Design and undertake regular surveys of key wetland sites/species to understand trends and feed into annual report (see General Themes target 5)	• Bracknell Forest Council • TVERC • Local env. groups • Survey sub-group	Initial work by 2025, then annual	• Review survey work and citizen science schemes. Consider water quality testing, Big River Watch, PlasticBlitz and Riverfly. • Identify ways to coordinate, key sites/ species • Survey regularly and/or promote schemes • Share data with scheme organiser, TVERC and landowners where possible • Review data, feed findings into annual report
35	Monitor outfalls at least every 4 years	• Local env. groups • Survey sub-group	2024, 2028	• Repeat process undertaken in 2022 using ZSL methodology or similar local processes

No	Target	Delivery partners	Timeframe	Initial proposed actions
36	Enhance, restore or create 20 ponds	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. groups • Landowners • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group	Progress annually, achieve by 2029	• Identify potential sites, undertake site visits, install/restore ponds, manage. • To include creation/ enhancement of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) where appropriate. • Potential sites: The Parks, Chaucer Woods, Frost Folly, Big Wood, Snaprails
37	Restore or enhance 2km of river or stream habitat	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. groups • Landowners	At least 1km by 2027 and a further 1km by 2029	• Work to be delivered by BNG projects, SANG enhancements and other projects • Make use of Road Pollution Solutions tool to target interventions • Create/enhance habitat buffers around rivers • Investigate opportunities for de-culverting
38	Restore or enhance 3 wetland sites, including improving reedbed management where appropriate	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. groups • Landowners	At least 1 site by 2027 and a further 2 by 2029	• Work to be delivered by BNG projects, SANG enhancements and other projects • Potential sites: South Hill Park, Mill Pond, Englemere Pond
39	Create an action plan of prioritised sites for Himalayan Balsam removal and take action across at least 10 sites	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. groups • Landowners	Action plan by 2025, achieve action at 5 sites by 2027 and 5 sites by 2029	• Review existing data • Undertake site visits • Create action plan • Take action at prioritised sites • Share advice (target 40)

No	Target	Delivery partners	Timeframe	Initial proposed actions
40	Review access patterns at two river or wetland sites and adapt access management	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Landowners	2025	• Identify potential sites, undertake site visits, manage access to protect wildlife/habitat. • Focus on managing erosion and other impacts associated with recreation on ponds and riverbanks e.g. allowing a pond for dog access and keeping a pond fenced. • Consider use of dead-hedges (which have other benefits such as providing dead-wood habitat – see target 30) • Potential sites: Frost Folly, Buckler's Forest.
41	Make management advice available to riverside landowners	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • TVERC • Regional groups/orgs. • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group	Develop advice in first half of plan (by 2026) and then share throughout	• Develop advice and share consistent messages on websites and through communication channels
42	Raise awareness of wetland biodiversity, including issues facing rivers and opportunities for communities to get involved, within annual events and articles (see General Themes target 8)	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. groups • Regional groups/orgs. • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group	Annual	• See target 8. Include river/wetland elements where appropriate. • Educational elements could include raising awareness of road runoff and issues with pollution in drains (yellow fish campaign). • Consider establishment of Bracknell River Action Group to deliver community action.
43	Engage with the Catchment Partnership and its strategic plans	• Bracknell Forest Council	Annual	• Bracknell Forest Council to continue to engage with the Catchment Partnership, and share info with Nature Partnership such as funding/project opportunities etc.

Heathland

No	Target	Delivery partners	Timeframe	Initial proposed actions
44	Design and undertake regular surveys of key heathland sites/species to understand trends and feed into annual report (see General Themes target 5)	• Bracknell Forest Council • TVERC • Local env. groups • Survey sub-group	Initial work by 2025, then annual	• Review ongoing survey work and citizen science schemes • Identify ways to coordinate, key sites/ species • Survey regularly and/or promote schemes • Share data with scheme organiser, TVERC and landowners where possible • Review data, feed findings into annual report
45	Enhance, restore or create 10ha of heathland	• Bracknell Forest Council • Local env. groups • Regional groups/orgs. • Landowners	Progress annually, achieve by 2029	• Work to be delivered by BNG projects, SANG enhancements and other projects • Potential sites: Wildmoor Heath, Longhill Park, Foresters Way, Buckler's Forest
46	Create 5 new bogs or ponds within heathland	• Bracknell Forest Council • Local env. groups • Regional groups/orgs. • Landowners	Progress annually, achieve by 2029	• Identify potential sites, undertake site visits, install/restore ponds, manage. • Potential sites: TBC
47	Promote SANGs to reduce pressure on SPA heathland	• Bracknell Forest Council • Regional groups/orgs	Annual	• Promote through websites and communication channels

No	Target	Delivery partners	Timeframe	Initial proposed actions
48	Review access patterns at two heathland sites and adapt access management	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Landowners	2027	• Identify potential sites, undertake site visits, manage access to protect wildlife/habitat. • Likely to focus on impact of recreation e.g. fencing or dead-hedging to protect important areas of habitat. Dead-hedges also have other benefits such as providing dead-wood habitat – see target 30 • Make use of people counter data where available to inform action. • Potential sites: Buckler's Forest
49	Run 20 educational sessions on heathland wildlife and conservation	• Bracknell Forest Council • Regional groups/orgs	Progress annually, achieve by 2029	• To be delivered mainly by Thames Basin Heaths Partnership and Bracknell Forest Council
50	Raise awareness of heathland biodiversity within annual events and articles (see General Themes target 8)	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. groups • Regional groups/orgs. • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group	Annual	• See target 8. Include heathland elements where appropriate.

Farmland

No	Target	Delivery partners	Timeframe	Initial proposed actions
51	Monitor trends in farmland bird species and feed into annual report (see General Themes target 5)	• Bracknell Forest Council • TVERC • Local env. groups • Survey sub-group	Initial work by 2025, then annual	• TVERC supply farmland bird species trend data in Annual Monitoring Report • Survey sub-group to review data needs and promote schemes based on findings • Review data, feed findings into annual report
52	Monitor barn owl boxes	• Bracknell Forest Council • TVERC • Survey sub-group	Annual	• Record owl boxes through the BTO Nest Recording Scheme
53	Install 5 new owl boxes including at least 2 barn owl boxes	• Bracknell Forest Council • Local env. groups	2028	• Identify potential sites, undertake site visits, install/create nesting opportunities, manage. • Monitor uptake where possible • Potential sites: Frost Folly, Cabbage Hill
54	Share information on new agri-environment schemes and monitor uptake	• Bracknell Forest Council • Regional groups/orgs. • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group	TBC dependent on scheme roll-out and data availability	• TBC dependent on agri-environment scheme roll-out and data availability
55	Make management advice available to farmland landowners and horse owners	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Regional groups/orgs. • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group	Develop advice in first half of plan (by 2026) and then share throughout	• Develop advice and share consistent messages on websites and through communication channels
56	Raise awareness of farmland biodiversity within annual events and articles (see General Themes target 8)	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. groups • Regional groups/orgs. • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group	Annual	• See target 8. Include farmland elements where appropriate.

Urban

No	Target	Delivery partners	Timeframe	Initial proposed actions
57	Design and undertake regular surveys of key urban sites/species to understand trends and feed into annual report (see General Themes target 5)	• Bracknell Forest Council • TVERC • Local env. groups • Survey sub-group	Initial work by 2025, then annual	• Review ongoing survey work and citizen science schemes • Identify ways to coordinate, key sites/ species • Survey regularly and/or promote schemes • Share data with scheme organiser, TVERC and landowners where possible • Review data, feed findings into annual report
58	Identify, protect and increase the number of active swift and house martin nest sites	• Bracknell Forest Council • TVERC • Local env. groups • Survey sub-group	Progress annually, achieve by 2029	• Review existing data and identify priorities for further survey • Encourage inclusion of nest boxes in new developments • Identify potential sites for new nest boxes and callers where possible, undertake site visits, install, manage. • Monitor uptake where possible • Likely potential sites: Buckler's Forest
59	Plant or replace 50 large native urban trees	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. groups • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group	Progress annually, achieve by 2029	• Identify potential sites, undertake site visits, plant trees and manage • Trees should be a suitable species and position to allow them to grow large and be long-lived while still being in an urban setting • Involve community in planting when possible • Likely potential sites: TBC

No	Target	Delivery partners	Timeframe	Initial proposed actions
60	Identify 20 verges or groups of verges and enhance for wildflowers and pollinators	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. groups • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group	Progress annually, achieve by 2029	• Identify potential sites, undertake site visits, request change in management regime and manage • Focus on verges which may be able to provide a link between larger greenspaces
61	Enhance 10 community spaces for wildlife	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. groups • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group	Progress annually, achieve by 2029	• Identify potential sites, work with owners/ managers to identify opportunities to enhance for nature, implement, manage. • Likely to include: school wildlife gardens, allotments and community gardens, churchyards, places of worship. Specific locations not yet identified.
62	At least 10 private landowners to have enhanced their grounds for wildlife	• Landowners • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group	Progress annually, achieve by 2029	• Identify potential sites, work with owners/ managers to identify opportunities to enhance for nature, implement, manage. • Urban focus so consider grounds of offices, retail areas, industrial estates, bus stops etc. Also consider golf courses. • Biodiversity and Climate Change Group project to provide advice/ instructions is likely to support this.

No	Target	Delivery partners	Timeframe	Initial proposed actions
63	Secure wildlife enhancement features, including nest boxes, hibernation features and gaps for movement, within new and existing urban spaces, including seeking enhancements via planning process	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. groups	Progress annually, achieve by 2029	• Likely to be delivered predominantly through planning conditions for enhancements. • Also identify opportunities on land owned/ managed by council, businesses etc. to create enhancements outside of planning process (if not covered by targets above). • Biodiversity and Climate Change Group project to provide advice/ instructions is likely to support this. • To include enhancements for BAP species such as swift bricks and hedgehog holes
64	Planning permissions in areas with badger setts to ensure measures for badger protection	• Bracknell Forest Council	Annual	• To be delivered through planning consultation process
65	All public greenspace management plans to include biodiversity actions	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils	Focus effort in second half of plan (2027-29)	• Review site plans and add biodiversity actions where not already present • Consider within this concern raised in consultation regarding impact of strimmers
66	Make management advice available to urban landowners, such as businesses	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Regional groups/orgs. • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group	Develop advice in first half of plan (by 2026) and then share throughout	• Develop advice and share consistent messages on websites and through communication channels

No	Target	Delivery partners	Timeframe	Initial proposed actions
67	Raise awareness of urban and garden biodiversity, and opportunities for communities to get involved, within annual events and articles (see General Themes target 8)	• Bracknell Forest Council • Town and Parish Councils • Local env. groups • Regional groups/orgs. • Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group	Annual	• See target 8. Include urban/garden elements where appropriate. • Consider elements suggested in consultation such as: going peat-free, creating log piles, planting native hedges, no mow May, negative impacts of artificial grass and suggesting alternatives, encouraging gardeners to match their garden environment more closely to their surrounding habitat.
68	Promote Local Access to Nature to residents		Annual	• Share information on websites and through communication channels

Appendix 2: Bracknell Forest Borough Information

Area

10,943 hectares or 42 square miles.

Location

Bracknell Forest lies 40km west of London, within the county of Berkshire. Bracknell Forest is one of 6 unitary authorities in Berkshire. It borders two of these: Wokingham and Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The south of the borough also borders Hampshire and Surrey.

Towns and Parishes

There are two towns: Bracknell and Sandhurst, and four parishes: Binfield, Crowthorne, Warfield and Winkfield. Each of these has a corresponding town or parish council.

Geology and soils

Towards the south of the borough, the sandy Barton Beds, Bracklesham Beds and Bagshot Beds create acidic soils mixed with gravels. These support a landscape of heathland and conifer plantations. Towards the north, London Clay soils support a traditional lowland agricultural landscape of woodland, open fields and hedgerows. This meets in the centre of the borough where Bracknell town holds a mixture of soil types. This may include imported soil of chalk origin indicated by some of the plants found there.

Hydrology

Two main rivers run through Bracknell Forest. The River Blackwater forms the borough's southern boundary, and The Cut meanders through the northern parishes. These receive water from small streams, namely the Bull Brook feeds water into The Cut and the Wish Stream flows into the River Blackwater. The River Blackwater feeds into the River Loddon, which is a chalk stream. The Cut feeds into the River Thames.

Land cover

Land use statistics for 2022 (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2022) indicate that 18 per cent of Bracknell Forest is developed, including uses such as housing, offices, retail and roads (this figure excludes residential gardens). Agricultural land uses cover 26 per cent and woodland and forestry 27 per cent.

Appendix 3: Glossary

Agri-environment schemes: Schemes that pay farmers and other land managers to manage their land in an environmentally friendly way (Natural England, 2009).

Ancient woodland: Areas that have been woodland continuously for at least the past 400 years.

Biodiversity: The variety of all life on Earth.

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP): Biodiversity Action Plans were first developed following the 1992 United Nations 'Earth Summit'. Biodiversity Action Plans provide plans for the conservation of nature. Bracknell Forest Council launched the first BAP for the borough in 1997.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG): Approach to development that requires habitats for wildlife to be left in a measurably better state than before development.

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs): BOAs identify areas with the greatest potential for habitat creation and restoration. This helps focus resources to where they will have the greatest nature conservation impact (Berkshire LNP, no date).

Climate change adaptation: Adjusting and adapting to cope with the impacts of a changing climate.

Climate change mitigation: Lowering emissions and/or increasing storage of greenhouse gases, which cause climate change.

Designated sites: In the context of the BAP, these are sites identified and protected for their nature conservation value. See Appendix 4.

Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS): New agricultural policy being brought in since the UK left the EU. See National Strategies under Appendix 6.

Green infrastructure: The network of green spaces and features which provide benefits for people and wildlife.

Invasive non-native species (INNS): Species which have been introduced to a new area by people, and go on to spread and cause harm to wildlife, the environment, human health and/or the economy.

Joint Climate Action Board: A board of key stakeholders in Bracknell Forest working to coordinate and track action towards net zero.

Local Access to Nature: The standard in the emerging Bracknell Forest Local Plan for green infrastructure features including biodiversity, habitat and passive open space of public value within 250 metres (5 minutes walk) of every home.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy: County-scale strategies with mapped priorities and actions to recover nature.

Local Plan: Local Plans set out planning policies and proposals for a local area.

Local Wildlife Site (LWS): Sites of value for nature conservation at a county level. See Appendix 4.

Net-zero greenhouse gas emissions: A target to not add to the overall greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, by reducing emissions and increasing how much is absorbed and stored.

Passive Open Space of Value (OSPV): OSPV is land on which play, open space and recreational facilities are located. Passive OSPV comprises woodland, green corridors, SANG, nature areas, picnic areas and amenity open space.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): Sites designated nationally as wildlife habitats. See Appendix 4.

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG): Open spaces which are improved for recreation. The aim is to help reduce the number of visitors to Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and reduce recreational pressure on these important habitats.

UKBAP Species and Habitats: Habitats and species first identified in the UKBAP to direct action for nature recovery. The government has a legal duty to publish the list under Section 41 of the NERC Act. Also known as priority species and habitats, Habitats and Species of Principle Importance, or Section 41 species and habitats.

Veteran trees: Trees with decay features which provide value for wildlife and heritage. Very old veteran trees are called ancient trees.

Appendix 4: Designated sites

Designated or protected sites are identified for their nature conservation value. A map and summary are given in Section 5. The sites can be viewed in more detail on Bracknell Forest Council's Wildlife and Nature Map, we can be accessed from our Wildlife and Biodiversity web page.

Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)

Local Wildlife Sites are non-statutory sites of significant value for the conservation of wildlife at a county level. They are protected from harmful development though the planning system. LWS may support species and habitats of national significance or may be of more local importance. They are designated if they meet certain selection criteria, developed by local environmental records centres in line with guidance from Defra. Site may be selected for supporting species or habitats which are rare or special within the county. There are also criteria relating to diversity, connectivity, cultural significance and value for public engagement with nature.

In 2023, there were 49 Local Wildlife Sites in Bracknell Forest.

Survey work is carried out by TVERC staff and experienced volunteers, with the aim of surveying sites every 10 years. This information is used to decide if a site should remain as an LWS. TVERC also reports annually to local authorities in Berkshire and Defra on how well LWS are being managed (TVERC, no date).

Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

Local Nature Reserves are a statutory designation. Local authorities can designate a site as a Local Nature Reserve if it is important for wildlife, geology, education and enjoyment (Natural England and Defra, 2023).

In 2023, the following sites in Bracknell Forest have Local Nature Reserve status:

- Ambarrow Court
- Edgebarrow Woods
- Englemere Pond
- Farley Copse
- Hayley Green Wood
- Jock's Copse
- Piggy Wood
- Temple Copse
- Tinkers Copse
- Whitegrove Copse

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

This is the primary designation relating to wildlife habitats in England and Wales. SSSI are areas of special interest for their flora, fauna, geological or physiological features. They are selected and monitored by Natural England.

SSSIs are given special protection from development and landowners must manage land within a SSSI appropriately to conserve its special features.

In 2023, the following sites in Bracknell Forest have SSSI status:

- Blackwater Valley
- Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths
- Chawridge Bourne
- Englemere Pond
- Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths
- Swinley Park and Brick Pits
- Wellington College Bog
- Windsor Forest and Great Park
- Wykery Copse

Special Protection Area (SPA)

The origin of Special Protection Areas is the EC directive 79/409 (amended in 2009 to Directive 2009/147), known as the 'Birds Directive'. This required the government to designate the most suitable areas of habitat for rare and migratory birds listed in Annex I of the directive. The Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area is partly within Bracknell Forest. It supports nationally important populations of Dartford Warbler, Nightjar and Woodlark.

Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

The origin of Special Areas of Conservation is the EC Directive 92/43, known as the 'Habitats Directive'. This required the government to identify SACs to protect the habitats of the species listed in Annex II of the Directive. Part of the Windsor Forest and Great Park Special Area of Conservation lies within Bracknell Forest. The site supports the Violet Click Beetle, an extremely rare species throughout its European range. The area is one of only four locations in the UK containing dry oak dominated woodland on acid sandy soils, which are of high value for saproxylic invertebrates and lichens.

Other areas

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas - BOAs identify key areas to focus nature conservation efforts at a landscape scale.

Appendix 5: Bracknell Forest BAP Species Selection Process

The Bracknell Forest BAP species were reviewed ahead of the 2012-2018 BAP, when the plan became more habitat focused. The species have remained consistent since then, with the addition of 2 for this current BAP (2024-2029). This section describes the species selection process.

Three criteria for habitats and species were taken from the Guidance for Local Biodiversity Action Plans Guidance Note 4 published by the UK Local Issues Advisory Group in 1996, as follows:

- UKBAP species
- Significance of local resource in UK context
- Distinctiveness

The species were also rated based on how well they can represent their habitat and be indicators of good habitat quality. However, there was also a need to select species that are distinctive and widespread to achieve benefits for the wider habitat.

Stage 1

UKBAP/NERC species list was reviewed and any species with no records in the borough were removed. This left 243 species.

Stage 2

Any other existing Bracknell Forest BAP species were added. These species were included as they had a good record base and conservation interest established in previous plans.

Each species was scored for the proportion of national resource found within the borough. This used a relative scale of 1-5 (a lower score for more common species). They were also scored for distinctiveness, scoring more highly species which are easy to identify and will be engaging to local people. This left 96 species.

Stage 3

Each species was assigned a main habitat.

Stage 4

An overall assessment was made of the remaining species grouped by habitat. The lists were considered in order of score, considering the existing BAP species and factors such as representing different aspects of the broad habitats.

2024 addition

Two additional species have been added based on consultation with key stakeholders. These are harvest mouse and adder. These are both UKBAP species which are distinctive and charismatic. They therefore fit the original selection criteria.

Appendix 6: Relevant Legislation, Policies and Plans

Legislation

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

Link: www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents/made

These regulations are one of the pieces of domestic law that transposed the EEC Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) and certain elements of the Wild Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC). The regulations provide protection for European Protected Species (listed in Schedule 2). These include bats and great crested newts. It is illegal to disturb injure or kill individuals or to disturb or destroy the resting place or breeding site of such a species.

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

Link: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/contents

Provides for public access on foot to certain types of land, amends the law relating to public rights of way, increases measures for the management and protection of Sites of Special Scientific Interest and strengthens wildlife enforcement legislation, and provides for better management of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now known as National Landscapes).

Environment Act 2021

Link: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted

Legislation to improve air and water quality, tackle waste, increase recycling, halt the decline of species, and improve our natural environment. The legislation brings in long term targets, Environmental Improvement Plans and establishes an Office for Environmental Protection to uphold environmental law. Parts most relevant for nature conservation include:

- Strengthened biodiversity duty
- Biodiversity net gain to ensure developments deliver at least 10 per cent increase in biodiversity
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies to support a Nature Recovery Network

- Conservation Covenants
- Protected Site Strategies and Species Conservation Strategies to support the design and delivery of strategic approaches to deliver better outcomes for nature

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

Link: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents

Section 40 of the NERC 2006 Act has been updated by the Environment Act 2021 to bring in an 'enhanced biodiversity duty'. Section 40A brings in associated reporting for public authorities. An extract of Section 40 is:

"40 Duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity

(A1) For the purposes of this section "the general biodiversity objective" is the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in England through the exercise of functions in relation to England.

(1) A public authority which has any functions exercisable in relation to England must from time to time consider what action the authority can properly take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective.

(1A) After that consideration the authority must (unless it concludes there is no new action it

can properly take)—

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

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

Section 41 requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of Habitats and Species of Principle Importance for the purpose of conserving or enhancing biodiversity. In this plan these are referred to as UKBAP species and habitats.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Link: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/contents

Part 1 protects by law all wild birds, their nests and eggs. It is an offence, with certain exceptions, to:

- kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- take, damage or destroy the nest of a wild bird included in Schedule ZA1
- take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or
- take or destroy an egg of any wild bird

Birds listed in Schedule 1 (which includes Bracknell Forest BAP species kingfisher, barn owl, Dartford warbler and woodlark) have additional protection against disturbance. They are protected from disturbance while building a nest or while in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young.

Wild animals in schedule 5 are protected against killing and injury. These include the four species of reptile found in Bracknell Forest (adders, common lizards, grass snakes and slow worms).

Schedule 8 plants are protected. Part II of Schedule 9 lists plants which are non-native invasive, which by law must not be planted or caused to grow in the wild.

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Link: www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It was first published in 2012 and has been updated several times, most recently (at the time of writing) in December 2023. Of particular relevance are:

2. Achieving sustainable development

Paragraph 8 (c): an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

11. Making effective use of land

Paragraph 24: Planning policies and decisions should:

(a) encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains – such as developments that would enable new habitat creation or improve public access to the countryside

(b) recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage or food production;

12. Achieving well-designed and beautiful places

Paragraph 136: Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users.

13. Protecting Green Belt land

Paragraph 142: The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

15.Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Paragraph 180: Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate

Paragraph 186: When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

ODPM Circular 06/2005: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System

Link: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7692/147570.pdf

This document covers a wide range of biodiversity issues including protected sites and protected species. Of particular relevance is:

The potential effects of a development, on habitats or species listed as priorities in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), and by Local Biodiversity Partnerships, together with policies in the England Biodiversity Strategy, are capable of being a material consideration in the preparation of regional spatial strategies and local development documents and the making of planning decisions.

Bracknell Forest Local Plan 2020-2037 (Bracknell Forest Council)

The Bracknell Forest Local Plan (BFLP) is the principal planning policy document for the Borough and will guide development in the Borough up to 2037. It was adopted in March 2024. It replaces the saved policies in the Bracknell Forest Local Plan (2002) and the Core Strategy (2008). Three of the key policies for habitats and wildlife are included below (Green Infrastructure, Thames Basin Heath Special Protection and Biodiversity).

Policy LP30 Green infrastructure

1. The Borough's green infrastructure will be protected and enhanced. In considering proposals that affect the Borough's green infrastructure account will be taken of the scale, type and quality of any assets lost or created and the contribution they make to the wider green infrastructure network. As appropriate to the scale of development and the opportunities it offers, development should:

i. be designed and located to maximise opportunities for green infrastructure within the development;

ii. protect and enhance the wider green infrastructure network including the connectivity of different habitat types;

iii. provide new links to the existing public access networks;

iv. create new green infrastructure either through on site provision or financial contributions; and,

v. not fragment green infrastructure assets or create barriers to the movement of people, biodiversity and water through green infrastructure.

2. Where new or improved green infrastructure is proposed, the maximum benefit should be achieved by designing it to serve a variety of functions.

3. Where development is required to provide green infrastructure, consideration should be given as to whether this can be in a form that provides accessible natural green space and other green infrastructure assets to help meet identified green infrastructure requirements in Bracknell Forest.

4. Where the need for development has been demonstrated and adverse impacts on green infrastructure are identified, including fragmentation, they must be proportionately addressed in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy of:

i. Avoidance;

ii. Mitigation;

iii. Compensation.

5. Where the requirements of this hierarchy cannot be met, development will be refused.

6. Where development is proposed adjacent to a main river or an ordinary watercourse a minimum 8 metre wide undeveloped buffer zone should be created or retained between the top of the river bank and the development. A long term landscape and ecological management plan will be required for this buffer.

7. Planning permission will only be granted for proposals which do not involve the culverting of watercourses, unless there are no other means of access, and do not prejudice future opportunities for de-culverting.

Policy LP32 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

1. New development which, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) (as identified on the Policies Map) without appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures will be refused.

2. Where development is proposed that is likely to have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA it must be demonstrated that adequate measures will be put in place to avoid or mitigate any such effects. Such measures must be agreed with the Council and Natural England. In order to assist the Council in carrying out a Habitats Regulations Assessment, the developer will be required to provide such information as the Council may reasonably require for the purpose of the assessment. For larger residential developments this may include an air quality assessment of the likely significant effects on the SPA and other habitats sites. Applications for non-residential development will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Zones of Influence

3. Where Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) mitigation measures are required for residential development, the Council will follow a consistent approach to mitigation, based on the following zones of influence (as identified on the Policies Map):

i. A straight line distance of between 0 to 400 metres from the SPA boundary (400m Zone of Influence). This will be an 'exclusion zone' where mitigation measures are unlikely to be capable of protecting the integrity of the SPA. Proposals for a net increase in dwellings within this zone will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated through a Habitats Regulations Assessment that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA.

SANG Standards

4. The provision of SANG will meet the following standards and arrangements:

i. Within the 400m – 5km zone a minimum of 8 hectares of SANG land (after discounting to account for current access and capacity) will be provided per 1,000 new occupants.

ii. Residential developments of net 9 dwellings or fewer will not be required to be within a specified distance of SANG land provided it is ensured that a sufficient quantity of SANG land is in place to cater for the consequent increase in residents.

iii. Developments of 10 or more net dwellings will need to be within the catchment of a specified SANG and a sufficient quantity of SANG land must be in place to cater for the consequent increase in residents.

iv. Small developments as set out in supporting guidance will be required to provide developer contributions towards strategic SANG facilitated by the Council subject to available SANG capacity unless there are other material considerations.

v. Large developments as set out in supporting guidance may be expected to provide bespoke SANG.

vi. SANG will include a combination of benefits such as biodiversity enhancement, green infrastructure and, potentially, new recreational facilities.

vii. Developments which use third party SANG capacity will need to demonstrate to the Council that this has been agreed with the landowner and that there is sufficient SANG capacity in the correct location to mitigate their development.

SAMM contributions

5. A developer contribution will be made toward the SAMM Project for each net additional dwelling. This will provide an SPA-wide wardening and education service and monitor the effectiveness of the avoidance and mitigation measures and visitor pressure on the SPA.

Further evidence

6. Where further evidence demonstrates that the integrity of the SPA can be protected using different linear thresholds or with alternative mitigation measures (including air quality mitigation and standards of SANG provision different to those set out in this policy) these must be agreed with the Council and Natural England.

Policy LP 53 Biodiversity

1. Development in the Borough will be expected to achieve a minimum 10% net gain for biodiversity.

2. Development proposals will be expected to:

i. provide suitable ecological survey information and assessment to establish biodiversity net gains and the extent of any potential impact on ecological features. These may include ancient woodland, veteran trees, waterbodies, wildlife corridors (including river corridors), protected species, priority species or priority habitat that may be affected during and after development. This information shall be provided prior to the determination of an application;

ii. retain, protect, enhance and buffer ecological features and provide for their appropriate management;

iii. where possible, create new ecological features and incorporate provisions to maximise opportunities for biodiversity; and

iv. avoid fragmentation of habitats and create coherent ecological networks within the borough such as improvements to Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and Nature Recovery Networks.

3. Where the adverse impacts of development on biodiversity are identified, they must be proportionately addressed in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy of:

i. avoidance;

ii. mitigation; and,

iii. compensation.

4. Where the requirements of this hierarchy cannot be met, development will be refused.

5. Where biodiversity has been removed or degraded (including through neglect), the Council will take the pre-development biodiversity value as what it is likely to have been had the removal or degradation not occurred.

6. The Council will secure effective avoidance, mitigation, monitoring and compensation measures which will be maintained for at least 30 years after the development has been completed through the imposition of planning conditions, conservation covenants or planning obligations as appropriate, including monitoring of the effectiveness of these measures.

Binfield Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2026 (Binfield Parish Council)

Link: https://binfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk/binfield-parish-council-neighbourhood-plan/

Objectives – Environment

6. To protect and enhance wildlife corridors in order to improve biodiversity

7. Ensure that air pollution does not reach unacceptable levels

8. Protect and enhance local green areas and their biodiversity value to ensure local people continue to have access to nature

9. Ensure that development sustains or enhances the historic rural quality of the Parish's landscape and makes areas of rural character and historic parkland accessible to residents for their health and enjoyment as a result of development.

Bracknell Town Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2036 (Bracknell Town Council)

Link: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/bracknell-town-neighbourhood-area

Policy EV 4 Protection of Trees

Development proposals will be expected to retain all trees in good condition and which possess amenity value, especially ancient trees, which, either individually or collectively, contribute to the sylvan character of the immediate area and the town in general.

Policy EV 5 New Tree Planting

Wherever possible and where appropriate, all new development, particularly at gateway locations, will be expected to incorporate tree planting within their landscaping proposals, including trees of an appropriate size and species of suitable longevity, that can make a significant contribution to enhancing the sylvan character of the town, as well as add to the visual amenity of the immediate area

Policy EV 8 Watercourses and River Corridors

Development proposals that provide improved public access to watercourses and river corridors will be supported where they maintain and enhance the quality of the environment.

Policy HO 5 Private Gardens: Green infrastructure and biodiversity networks

On all future residential development, including any infill development, the configuration of private gardens and their means of enclosure should provide a degree of connectivity to enable wildlife such as hedgehogs to travel between gardens and onto any adjacent areas of green space.

Crowthorne Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2036 (Crowthorne Parish Council)

Link: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/crowthorne-neighbourhood-plan

Policy CR12 Biodiversity highlights that development proposals will consider protected and notable species and incorporate sustainable drainage systems. Wherever practicable, proposals should enhance the natural environment by providing additional habitat resources for wildlife and green spaces for the community.

The Three Year Strategic Plan and its updates Three Year Strategy Plan (https://www.crowthorne-pc.gov.uk/three-year-strategy-plan.php) highlights CPC's project commitments in the Our World section and states that CPC will support the move to greener lifestyles using sustainable energy, in response to the government's climate emergency.

In November 2023, CPC adopted a biodiversity policy to show a greater commitment to the to the local and global environment (https://www.crowthorne-pc.gov.uk/admin/ccs_files/Biodiversity-Policy-Nov-23.pdf). In it, CPC promises to consider the impact on biodiversity in the decisions made by council and its working groups, by seeking to minimise adverse impacts on biodiversity, and identifying opportunities to increase it. This includes management practices within CPC's own estate, grant making policies and to consider environmental impact as a social value on all acquisitions and procurements such as emissions, recyclability, longevity etc.

Warfield Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2037 (Warfield Parish Council)

Link: www.warfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk/the-council/information/neighbourhood-plan/

Policy WNP8: Enhancing Green Infrastructure

The Parish's green and blue infrastructure will be protected and enhanced. The Warfield Green Infrastructure Network will be established and will include, but is not limited to, the features shown on the Green Infrastructure Policies Map.

Development proposals on land that adjoins the network should enhance its visual character and biodiversity and contribute to the maintenance and improvement of the network, including the ecological value of The Cut and Bull Brook. Opportunity to create a new Bridleway Circuit, as shown on the Policies Map, will be supported.

Proposals that lead to the loss of land or features that form part of the network, that reduce its environmental quality or will prejudice the completion of the comprehensive network will not be supported.

Policy WNP11: Protecting and Enhancing Heritage and Biodiversity

B. Developments should provide net gains for biodiversity. Where effects are unavoidable then the proposals must show how these effects will be mitigated. Development proposals should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by ensuring the protection of local assets such as mature trees, hedgerows, woodland, the network of Local Nature Reserves in the south of the Parish and the provision of additional habitat for wildlife and green spaces for the community.

Winkfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2037 (Winkfield Parish Council)

Link: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/winkfield-neighbourhood-plan

Policy W8: Biodiversity and Wildlife Corridors

A. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location development proposals are expected to deliver at least a 10% biodiversity net gain in addition to protecting existing habitats and species. Development proposals on or adjacent to the wildlife corridors identified in Figure 11.1 and on the Policy Map must demonstrate a layout and design which ensures that wildlife is

not impeded in its movement along the corridor. Proposals to enhance the wildlife corridors or create new corridors are strongly encouraged.

B. The incorporation of design features into development proposals that encourage and promote local wildlife will be particularly supported.

C. As part of its requirements to demonstrate biodiversity net gain, development should be designed to retain trees, shrubs and hedgerows of arboricultural, habitat and amenity value on-site and to conserve and enhance connectivity to the wider green and blue infrastructure networks. New planting should consist of native species of trees, shrubs and grasses acting and designed to provide accessibility for wildlife.

D. Where practicable development proposals should incorporate sustainable urban drainage and natural flood management techniques.

National Strategies

Environmental Improvement Plan

Link: www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan/environmental-improvement-plan-2023-executive-summary

In 2018, the 25 Year Environment Plan set out the government's plans to improve the environment within a generation. In 2023 the government undertook the first 5-yearly review and published the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023. The apex goal is to halt the decline in biodiversity and achieve thriving plants and wildlife. This is one of 10 goals, with other goals including clean air, clean and plentiful water and mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Environmental Land Management

Link: www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-land-management-update-how-government-will-pay-for-land-based-environment-and-climate-goods-and-services/environmental-land-management-elm-update-how-government-will-pay-for-land-based-environment-and-climate-goods-and-services

The government is undertaking a significant reform of agricultural policy and spending in England. Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes will pay farmers to provide environmental goods and services alongside food production. There will be three schemes:

- Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) will pay farmers for sustainable farming practices that can protect and enhance the natural environment alongside food production, and also support farm productivity
- Countryside Stewardship (CS) will pay for more targeted actions relating to specific locations, features and habitats
- Landscape Recovery will pay for bespoke, longer-term, larger scale projects to enhance the natural environment

Natural England – Vision, Mission and Priorities

Link: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england/about

Natural England's vision is 'Thriving Nature for people and planet'.

They aim to achieve this through their mission 'Building partnerships for Nature's recovery'.

Natural England's priorities for 2020 to 2025 support their mission and the ambitions of the government's 25 Year Environment Plan. They aim for:

- a well-managed Nature Recovery Network across land, water and sea, which creates and protects resilient ecosystems rich in wildlife and natural beauty, enjoyed by people and widely benefiting society
- people connected to the natural environment for their own and society's wellbeing, enjoyment and prosperity
- Nature-based solutions contributing fully to tackling the climate change challenge and wider environmental hazards and threats
- improvements in the natural capital that drives sustainable economic growth, healthy food systems and prospering communities
- evidence and expertise being used by a broad range of partnerships, organisations and communities to achieve Nature recovery and enable effective regulation and accreditation
- being a values-led organisation that delivers excellent service standards to all partners, organisations and communities engaged in achieving Nature's recovery

Environment Agency – Priorities

Link: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency/about

The Environment Agency's priorities are to:

- work with businesses and other organisations to manage the use of resources
- increase the resilience of people, property and businesses to the risks of flooding and coastal erosion
- protect and improving water, land and biodiversity
- improve the way we work as a regulator to protect people and the environment and support sustainable growth

Ministry of Defence/ Defence Infrastructure Organisation

Link: www.gov.uk/guidance/defence-infrastructure-organisation-estate-and-sustainable-development

MOD biodiversity targets are:

- to be an exemplar in the management of designated sites where compatible with military requirements
- to ensure natural environment requirements and best practice are fully integrated into the estate management
- to contribute, as appropriate, to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (and Country Biodiversity Strategies)

The Crown Estate

Link: www.thecrownestate.co.uk/about-us

The Crown Estate's strategy focuses on:

- Net zero and energy security - Being a leader in supporting the UK towards a net zero carbon and energy-secure future
- Inclusive communities and economic growth - Helping create inclusive communities and

support economic growth and productivity

- Nature and biodiversity - Taking a leading role in stewarding the UK's natural environment and biodiversity

Bracknell Forest Council Plans and Strategies

Council Plan 2023-2027

Link: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/strategies-plans-and-policies/council-plan-2023-2027

Our vision for the borough is where we put residents first, working together to grow sustainable, resilient, and inclusive communities.

The Council Plan for 2023 to 2027 will focus on 3 borough priorities to achieve this ambition:

- Engaged and healthy communities
- Thriving and connected economy
- Green and sustainable environment

Within the green and sustainable environment priority, our ambitions for the borough are:

- There is collective action to address and adapt to the climate and biodiversity emergency
- Our green spaces and parks foster sustainability, biodiversity, and wellbeing
- Local transport networks provide choice in travel

Parks and Open Spaces Strategy

Link: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-11/parks-and-open-spaces-strategy.pdf

Priorities

3. Encourage the provision of new parks and opens spaces to support achievement of sustainable development. Create links between existing parks and open spaces to extend green infrastructure networks.

4. Implement planned improvement works to sites designated as Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) to encourage residents to visit recreational areas outside of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. Identify opportunities to extend the provision of SANGs.

6. Enhance the natural qualities of parks and open spaces. Protect and enhance biodiversity. Positively manage trees and woodlands, to include new planting to provide for future generations.

7. Identify opportunities to increase the positive role that parks and open spaces can contribute to climate change mitigation (e.g. tree planting as part of carbon sequestration). Implement appropriate measures in support of climate change adaption (e.g. ponds and scrapes).

Climate Change

Link: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/strategies-plans-and-policies/climate-change

Motion of 13 September 2023

This council declares a climate and biodiversity emergency.

To that end, this council invites the Executive to:

1. Resolve to review, broaden and accelerate its Climate Change Strategy. To commit to achieve net-zero CO2 emissions as close to 2030 as possible.
2. Co-produce with the community a Community Climate Emergency Strategy. The aim will be to make the wider Bracknell Forest area net-zero as close to 2030 as possible.
3. Both strategies should be produced in a financially transparent way. They will demonstrate accountability, affordability and economic benefits with clear interim, smart targets.
4. Explore the feasibility of raising a Bracknell Forest Local Climate Bond. This will be to support decarbonisation projects throughout the borough.
5. Revise the Biodiversity Action Plan to include audits of the state of nature in the borough and to highlight local biodiversity threats due to climate change. Reports of these will be presented annually. Any expected ecological impacts will also be added to Executive and council reports.

Climate Change Strategy 2020-2024

The council's climate change strategy gives a strategic framework for tackling climate change in Bracknell Forest and is underpinned by a rolling action plan. This will be replaced by an updated strategy for 2024-2028.

Our objective will be to achieve this through 4 strategic principles:

- Working with partners
- Preserving the climate beneficial elements of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Working with schools and young people
- Preserving the natural environment sustainably in line with the Bracknell Forest plans

Our strategy has 2 main strands:

- Reduce carbon emissions that are under the council's control
- Influence and lead community action against climate change

Tree Strategy

Link: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/strategies-plans-and-policies/parks-and-countryside-strategies-and-policies

This strategy describes how the council will approach the management of trees, hedgerows, orchards and woodland in Bracknell Forest on public and private land. The adoption of this strategy provides a coordinated approach to the management of Council owned and private trees, while maintaining their individual character.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP2) 2017-2027

Link: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/strategies-plans-and-policies/parks-and-countryside-strategies-and-policies

Policy RoWIP 7: Sustainable Development

Manage a countryside and access network that delivers benefits to health and well-being,

economy and biodiversity…

7.2 Protect and enhance environment and biodiversity on PRoW network…

Local Strategies

Berkshire Amphibian and Reptile Group

The aim of BRAG is to try to help prevent the continuing decline of amphibians and reptiles in Berkshire in a number of ways including:

- Providing information and advice about reptiles and amphibians to the public, planners and developers.
- Recording, mapping and monitoring amphibian and reptile populations across the county.
- Providing training for volunteers in reptile and amphibian survey methods.
- Helping safeguard important sites

BRAG is a member of the ARG-UK network.

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) Strategic Plan 2021-2026

Link: www.bbowt.org.uk/about/publications

BBOWT's mission is to bring about nature's recovery through local action – in partnership with people from all sectors of society, working with councils, MP's landowners, farmers and people from across local communities.

To achieve this mission, BBOWT has the following goals:

1. Put nature into recovery

   Encouraging nature's recovery though joining up bigger, wilder, connected landscapes where nature can thrive

2. Empower people to act for nature

   Support and enable local communities to reconnect with an restore nature in their own neighbourhoods and beyond

3. Secure our future

   Making BBOWT secure and sustainable

Berkshire Local Nature Partnership

Link: www.berkshirelnp.org/

The Berkshire Local Nature Partnership (BLNP) works together to create a sustainable, healthy and vibrant Berkshire by promoting the conservation and enhancement of nature and the benefits we receive from a healthy environment. The BLNP do this by:

- Creating a strategic vision for the natural environment in Berkshire
- Offering a single, unified voice for the natural environment in decision-making
- Improving awareness of the challenges and opportunities facing nature
- Providing a network of advice and expertise relating to the environment

Berkshire and South Bucks Bat Group

Link: http://berksbats.org.uk/

The group's main aims are:

- To promote and further the conservation of bats and their habitats.
- To raise awareness of bats and their conservation status.

Binfield Environment Group

Link: https://binfieldeg.wixsite.com/binfieldeg/get-involved

Binfield Environment Group (BEG) is a voluntary organisation, formed in 2017 by residents who care about the local environment and want to help improve it.

Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust

Link: www.bvct.org.uk/about-us/

The Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust was founded in 2006 by enthusiasts who are passionate about the people and wildlife of the Blackwater Valley.

BVCT's aims are to enhance the environment for both people and wildlife by:

1. Promoting public access to the countryside by means of a programme of events, including walks and talks
2. Involving people in their valley and the wildlife on their doorstep
3. Identifying improvement ideas, creating projects and raising funds to progress them
4. Encouraging a sense of belonging in the Blackwater Valley

Bracknell Conservation Volunteers

Link: www.bracknellcv.org.uk/index.html

Bracknell Conservation Volunteers are a friendly and informal group of local adults who carry out conservation work and practical tasks to promote wildlife and enhance the local environment.

Bracknell Forest Natural History Society

Link: www.bfnathistsoc.org.uk/index.html

The Society is for everyone interested in nature and its conservation. The Society aims are to present and share information about the Natural World, to increase awareness about its importance and to work to increase the biodiversity of local wildlife habitats.

Climate and Biodiversity Working Group

The overarching aim of the group is to consolidate the biodiversity sector's climate change activities and contribute to borough-wide collaboration through the JCAB. Objectives in support of this will include the following:

- To agree group membership; meeting frequency/locations; chairs/leads and representatives to the JCAB; and overall administrative responsibilities
- To collate updates on the climate actions of the sector

- To identify and promote opportunities for climate action to organisations in the sector
- To run programmes and projects, where appropriate
- To collaborate with other working groups through the JCAB, providing updates and contributing to the Community Climate Emergency Strategy and Joint Action Plan

Goals for group area of focus:

1. Research the effects of climate change on local biodiversity. From this develop advice, recommendations and projects to mitigate these effects. Our findings should be evidence-based.
2. Monitor biodiversity and ecology over time to measure the effects of climate change and our interventions.
3. Improve habitats to increase biodiversity.
4. Engage with organisations and the public to build trust, raise awareness and understanding of climate change biodiversity issues.
5. Encourage organisations and the public to change their behaviour to support biodiversity and reduce their inputs to climate change.

Crowthorne Village Action Group

Link: www.cvag.org.uk/

CVAG is a non-political residents association, seeking to balance the pressures for additional homes with conserving those features which make Crowthorne such a lovely place to live.

Forestry England Thames Basin Heaths Forest Plan

Link: www.forestryengland.uk/forest-planning/thames-basin-heaths-forest-plan

The objectives of the management plan include:

- Contribute to stopping the long-term decline in the number of woodland birds by 2020.
- Maintain SPA bird populations (nightjar, woodlark and Dartford warbler).

Hedge and Woodland Conservationists

HAWCs aims to…

- Keep the ancient crafts of hedgelaying and coppicing alive
- Conserve and maintain hedgerows, woodlands, and rights of way for the benefit of the public and the wildlife which depends on them
- Educate the public in the principles and practice of nature conservation

Loddon Catchment Partnership – Catchment Priorities

Link: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/4328b25bc06947889a21710cbefcca4e?item=5

Protecting and enhancing our landscapes

- Identifying habitat improvements - taking a strategic approach to deliver habitat enhancements across the catchment;

- Implementing habitat enhancements - delivering habitat enhancements in priority areas across the catchment;
- Improving fish passage - identifying and tackling barriers to fish;
- Keeping rivers cool - using tree shade to keep small rivers cool in the face of a changing climate;
- Tackling invasive non-native species - taking a catchment-based approach to the management of INNS.

Loddon Fisheries and Conservation Consultative

Link: https://lfcc.org.uk/about-us

The three main objectives of the LFCC are:

1) Represent fisheries, angling and conservation interests.

2) Work with others to protect and improve for future generations stillwaters, rivers and canals in the Loddon catchment.

3) Increase awareness of fisheries, angling and conservation through collection and sharing of best practice information.

Maidenhead to Teddington Catchment Partnership

Link: www.thames21.org.uk/catchment-partnerships/maidenhead-to-teddington/

The Maidenhead to Teddington catchment partnership meets regularly to discuss the sustainable management of land and water in the Lower Thames catchment and to balance the environmental, economic and social demands. The partnership works together to:

- Engage local communities in understanding, valuing, caring for, and enjoying their river catchment
- Enhance, improve and protect the water environment by collaboratively delivering river and valley improvement projects
- Share information, skills and bring people together working catchment-wide with multiple organisations.

Moor Green Lakes Group

Link: www.mglg.org.uk/

The Moor Green Lakes Group (MGLG) was established in 1993 as an organisation to help manage the Moor Green Lakes Nature Reserve in Berkshire, England. The group's aims are:

- To improve the Reserve for wildlife
- Record and monitor that wildlife
- Enhance the facilities of the Reserve for members of the Moor Green Lakes Group and other visitors

Warfield Environment Group

Link: www.warfieldenvgroup.wordpress.com

Warfield Environment Group's aim is to raise awareness of environmental issues and help to increase biodiversity in Warfield. We do this by encouraging the community of Warfield – individuals, local organisations and businesses – to engage in projects to survey, protect and improve our local environment.

Wild Bracknell

Wild Bracknell are an environment group who work with individuals and organisations to co-produce projects that enhance and protect biodiversity. We also run nature activities for communities.

Our vision is a borough in which all people and organisations understand the importance of nature, support its restoration and also enjoy nature for their own wellbeing.

Wildlife in Ascot

Link: www.wildlifeinascot.org/about-us

Mission: Taking responsibility for protecting and encouraging wildlife in and around Ascot

Goals:

- We want to create good habitats and still have beautiful gardens.
- We want to have fun, get to know our neighbours and learn about the world on our doorstep.
- We want to manage the "Green corridors" in our area which we have succeeded in getting recognised in our neighbourhood plan.
- We want to improve the eco-system of our area by highlighting opportunities and raising concerns as necessary to try to ensure that future development does not have a negative impact on the environment and enhances habitats where possible.

References

A link is included directly under each section of Appendix 6. The following references are relevant for the rest of the document:

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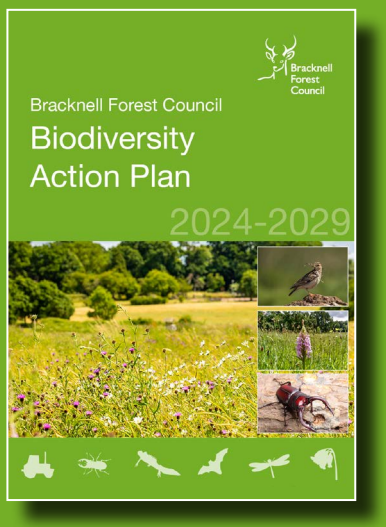

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