

From: Paul King, Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Special Projects
Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee meeting on 10th March 2026

Subject: Kent County Council's Draft Biodiversity Duty Report 2020-2025

Non-Key decision

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: None – this is a new duty on local authorities.

Future Pathway of report: None – Biodiversity Duty report will be published

Electoral Division: All electoral divisions

Summary: The biodiversity duty is a legal requirement for public authorities in the UK to actively consider, conserve, and enhance biodiversity when exercising their functions. The Environment Act 2021 strengthened the duty, requiring Local Authorities to publish a biodiversity report every five years. The first reporting period covers 1st January 2020 – 31st December 2025 and provides a summary of the actions taken to comply with the biodiversity duty. The draft report demonstrates the breadth of biodiversity enhancement activity that is being delivered as part of the day-to-day operational activity of services and directorates. The draft report also highlights the continued commitment to biodiversity and nature recovery for the future. The report must be published by April 2026.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note and endorse the draft biodiversity duty report.

1. Introduction

1.1 The biodiversity duty is a legal requirement for public authorities in the UK to actively consider, conserve, and enhance biodiversity when exercising their functions. The Environment Act 2021 strengthened this duty for public authorities, requires them to not only conserve biodiversity but to actively enhance it and create a more sustainable and resilient natural environment, by integrating biodiversity into the existing operation framework.

1.2 The strengthen biodiversity now requires:

- Consideration of what the authority can do to conserve and enhance

- Agreement of policies and specific objectives to enhance biodiversity, based on those considerations.
 - Action to deliver these policies and achieve the objectives.
- 1.3 More detail on complying with the biodiversity can be found online at [Complying with the biodiversity duty - GOV.UK](#).
- 1.4 Local authorities (excluding parish councils) and local planning authorities must publish a biodiversity report, with the first reporting period up to the end of 2025. After this, the end date of each reporting period must be within 5 years of the end date of the previous reporting period. The purpose of the biodiversity report is to:
- Help everyone understand how we are collectively meeting shared goals to conserve and enhance biodiversity
 - Allow you to showcase the action you're taking to improve biodiversity
 - Show other authorities and the general public what they can do for nature recovery and share good practice
- 1.5 More detail on the requirements of the biodiversity report can be found online at [Reporting your biodiversity duty actions - GOV.UK](#)
- 1.6 At the introduction of the strengthened biodiversity duty in 2021, Kent County Council stated its policies, objectives and actions through the Kent Biodiversity Strategy, Plan Bee Action Plan and Plan Tree Strategy. Work relating to these areas in the period 2020-2025 is described in the biodiversity duty report, along with many wider actions that have been carried out by Kent County Council, all contributing the enhancement and conservation of biodiversity. The report covers the period 2020 to 2025.

2. What is presented in the report

- 2.1 By law, the report must include:
- A summary of the action taken to comply with the biodiversity duty
 - Plans to comply with the biodiversity duty in the next reporting period (2026-2031)
 - Any other information you consider appropriate
 - Actions carried out to meet BNG obligations
 - Details of resulting biodiversity gain plans
 - Plans to meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period (2026-2031)
- 2.2 Consequently the report is divided into three parts: an introduction; a review of the period 2020-2025; and a look forward to ambitions for 2026-2031. Action taken (and to be taken) is framed around:
- Policies, strategies, frameworks and processes that guide and steer our priorities and the manner in which we deliver our services.
 - Delivery against Kent County Council biodiversity priorities.
 - Partnership work for nature recovery

- Estate management for the benefit of biodiversity
- Biodiversity Net Gain delivery and consideration of biodiversity in planning

2.3 The report has been compiled with information gathered from a wide range of services and teams across Kent County Council, ranging from the Natural Environment and Coast Team, Country Parks and Countryside Management Partnerships to Flood and Water Management, Highways and Transportation, Public Rights of Way, Libraries and Kent County Council estate, but this is not an exhaustive list. This shows that biodiversity is something integrated across the authority and not an additional add on. Biodiversity supports many of the services the authority provides. The report will be published on the Kent County Council website by April 2026. The biodiversity duty report will:

- Help everyone understand how we are meeting the shared goals to conserve and enhance biodiversity
- Showcase the action we're taking to improve biodiversity
- Share good practice and experience with other authorities

3. Biodiversity Duty Report highlights

3.1 Key achievements featured within the report include:

1. **300,000 trees** have been planted as a result of the authority's tree establishment strategy, Plan Tree, and its associated partnership during the period 2021 to 2025.
2. **£1 million for tree planting** has been secured by Kent County Council from the Local Authority Treescape Fund between 2021 and 2025.
3. **Innovative methods for urban tree planting** to improve outcomes for newly planted trees have been trialled, including the Miyawaki method, which is now being utilised on various sites.
4. **450km of highway verge managed to support habitat for pollinators.** An officer has been seconded to Kent County Council from Bumblebee Conservation Trust during the reporting period to lead and support work relating to Plan Bee.
5. **Natural flood management delivered alongside new habitat**, with the creation of wetlands and installation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)
6. **15 environmental projects worth £2.82 million** enabled by the Kent Downs National Landscape team between 2021 and 2025 with Defra's Farming in Protected Landscapes fund.
7. **543ha of land managed for nature** by Kent County Council's country parks.

8. **1.25 million people engaging with nature** at Kent County Council Country Parks in 2024/25.
9. **360 ponds created and restored** by Kent Countryside Management Partnerships through the Natural England District Level Licensing Scheme for Great Crested Newts (2018 to date).
10. **Publication of England's 18th Local Nature Recovery Strategy** in November 2025, following 2 years of development with the participation of over 1,000 individuals, providing a strong foundation for future partnership-led action.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The coordination of the biodiversity duty report is undertaken by a member of staff, so there is no additional financial pressures from its production.
- 4.2 Actions outline in the biodiversity duty report for the period 2026-2031 are items already planned and budgeted for – they do not represent any new or future financial burden on Kent County Council.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 Kent County Council has a statutory duty to publish a Biodiversity Duty Report every five years. The report must be published 12 weeks after the end of the reporting period.

6. Equalities implications

- 6.1 The report itself will not require an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA), however it contains information about many projects and initiatives which individually will have their own EqIAs.

7. Other corporate implications

- 7.1 There are no specific implications on other areas of Kent County Council. However, reporting and compiling the evidence to support the duty report requires support from other areas of Kent County Council. There are no expectations for any additional spending as biodiversity enhancement is expected to be integrated into the existing operational framework.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 Kent County Council has a statutory duty under the Environment Act 2021 to produce a Biodiversity Duty Report covering a five year period. The report sets out the activity undertaken across the council to actively enhance and create a sustainable natural environment.

8.2 The report demonstrates the breadth of biodiversity enhancement activity that is being delivered as part of the day-to-day operational activity of services and directorates. The report also highlights the continued commitment by Kent County Council to biodiversity and nature recovery.

9. Recommendation(s): - The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to note and endorse the draft Kent County Council Biodiversity Duty report.

10. Contact details

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