

TITLE: East Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Report

Committee: Finance and Assets

Date: 29 January 2025

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Report number: AA130

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1.0 Issue

- 1.1. To approve the Council's Biodiversity Report, a report which is required to be prepared under s40A of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1. Members are requested to approve the East Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Report as found at Appendix 1.

3.0 Background/Options

- 3.1. All public authorities, including East Cambridgeshire District Council, must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This is known as the '**biodiversity duty**' as set out in S40(A1) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
- 3.2. This duty was updated recently (1 January 2023), and now means that, by law, the council must:
- **Consider** what it can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity
 - **Agree** policies and specific objectives based on its consideration
 - **Act** to deliver those policies and achieve those objectives
- 3.3. To demonstrate compliance with the biodiversity duty, the council must publish a **biodiversity report** covering the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2025 and then repeat this process at least once every five years.
- 3.4. That **biodiversity report** must provide a summary of:
- the actions taken to comply with the biodiversity duty
 - how the council plans to comply with the biodiversity duty in the next reporting period; and
 - the actions carried out to meet biodiversity net gain (BNG) obligations, together with proposed actions to meet BNG obligations in the future.
- 3.5. Attached at Appendix 1 is a copy of a draft biodiversity report recommended for approval. There are no comprehensive national guidelines as to what the report should contain, or any particular template to follow, though some brief guidance is provided on the .gov website, and this has been complied with in preparing the report.

- 3.6. In simple terms, the report comprises three elements.
- First, a summary of the ‘top 10’ headline successes we have achieved during the reporting period to help nature thrive
 - Second, some brief details on our progress with implementing Biodiversity Net Gain
 - Third, a brief rundown of proposed ‘top 10’ actions for the coming five years

4.0 Arguments/Conclusions

- 4.1. The report is the council’s first Biodiversity Report. Whilst the report could have been prepared more comprehensively (by providing more than ten ‘achievements’ or more ‘future actions’), it is considered a pragmatic, informative, simple report, which meets the statutory requirements whilst hopefully digestible to a wider audience.
- 4.2. The future actions are largely ones already committed to via the Corporate Plan, annual Corporate Actions or the annual ‘Top 20’ environment actions. Consequently, they are considered achievable (and within existing budget expectations).

5.0 Additional Implications Assessment

- 5.1 In the table below, please put Yes or No in each box:

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Financial Implications No | Legal Implications Yes | Human Resources (HR) Implications No |
| Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) No | Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) No | Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) No |

(a) Legal implications

- 5.2. A biodiversity report must be published by 25 March 2026 (NERC Act s40A(5)). If the recommendation is approved today, then we will have successfully met our duty. In the future, we will need to report as to the successes or otherwise in achieving the proposed actions set out in the report.

Other than potential reputational harm, there are no other legal implications for not actually achieving the actions we set out to achieve.

6.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 – East Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Report.

7.0 Background documents

None