Bath & North East Somerset
Ecological Emergency Action Plan

2023-2030

16 March 2023

TACKLING THE CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY

Bath & North East Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives

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Executive Summary

The Ecological Emergency

Globally, nationally and locally, nature is collapsing at an alarming rate. The world has lost 60% of its wild vertebrates, 83% of freshwater species and up to 76% of insects since 1970. In our region, populations of once common birds such as swifts and cuckoos have plummeted in the past 25 years alone.

This matters to all of us because of the vital role that wildlife and nature play in supporting our wellbeing, society and economy. Nature provides the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, and many of the resources we need to survive and maintain our quality of life. In total, more than half of the world's economy is moderately or highly dependent on nature.

Our work so far

Since declaring an Ecological Emergency, we have been working hard to reverse the decline in nature. We have created a Green Transformation Service to provide the capacity needed to tackle the Ecological Emergency, and we have introduced new planning policy to ensure developments make positive contributions to biodiversity, ahead of national requirements.

We have also been taking action on the ground via several initiatives and projects, including:

- Through the Bathscape Scheme, caring for **80 hectares of woodland and 100 grassland sites,** as well as creating **12 new flower-rich meadows,** by 2024.
- Securing funding to create **nature-rich areas across 34 hectares of green space** through 'Somer Valley Rediscovered'.
- Changing our management practices across **42 hectares of our parks and green** spaces to benefit pollinators, through the Let's Get Buzzing campaign.
- Planting **100,000 trees** across B&NES between 2019 and 2023.
- **Stopping the use of pesticides** to manage street weeds.

This is just the start of the action needed to help restore nature across Bath and North East Somerset.

Our Vision

Our Vision is to be Nature Positive by 2030

This will mean that Bath & North East Somerset Council will be making a positive contribution to nature recovery, across all our service areas and through all our decision making.

It will also mean that we are taking a regional and national lead in responding to the Ecological Emergency, working in step with communities and partners across the district to restore nature.

An Ecological Emergency Action Plan

This Action Plan sets out how we intend to build on our work so far to address the Ecological Emergency and become nature positive by 2030.

The Action Plan focuses on 45 actions that we believe will deliver the biggest impact for nature recovery. Of these, we have identified the following 10 as our top priorities due to their potential to make a particularly significant contribution to nature recovery:

Action no.	Description
1.2	Roll-out and embed a council-wide decision support tool to ensure potential impacts on nature inform all major decisions and projects across the council, mitigating impacts where necessary.
1.5	Ensure policies and guidance in the new Local Plan address the Ecological Emergency and improve access to nature, and consider adopting Building with Nature standards.
2.1	Identify and deliver opportunities for nature recovery and biodiversity net gain on the following sites: Entry Hill, Odd Down Sports Ground, The Approach Golf Course and Lansdown.
2.2	Package together and fund already-identified opportunities for improving the management of our parks and green spaces for nature.
3.3	Work with Bristol Avon Rivers Trust to restore the River Chew. This will involve identifying, costing and evaluating options for removal or retrofitting of weirs and other barriers to fish passage within the Chew Catchment, and accessing funding for priority projects.

Our Vision

Action no.	Description
4.1	Seek funding for a dedicated post (or posts) for the Neighbourhood Nature Areas scheme, supporting communities in active management of their local green and blue spaces for nature.
5.1	Produce a 'State of Nature' framework for B&NES, including an 'ecological baseline' and wildlife index for B&NES to measure progress against, and targets for nature recovery.
5.4	Survey the condition of Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs) within B&NES to identify those that lack management plans or are in unfavourable condition, and use this evidence to prioritise improvements in management.
6.6	Enable and support partners in engaging farmers and landholders on managing land for nature in strategic locations and directing them to funding to do so, focusing initially on the Somer Valley and the River Avon corridor.
6.7	Support farmers in creating farmer clusters within B&NES, enabling us to engage with farmers and landholders at a landscape scale; and work with the Duchy of Cornwall, FWAG SW and other partners to spread good practice from exemplar farms.

Reversing the decline in nature will take time, and we are still at the start of our journey. This Action Plan will be a live document that is updated as progress is made, further evidence comes to light, and new opportunities arise.

Introduction

What is the Ecological Emergency?

Looking up from the centre of Bath at the surrounding historic and beautiful landscape, standing at the edge of Chew Valley Lake, or taking a walk through St Catherine Valley, you would rightly be thankful that Bath and North East Somerset has such a rich and varied landscape. However, this outward appearance belies the troubling state of our natural environment.

Over the past couple of centuries, humanity's use of land and resources has placed unsustainable pressure on nature, threatening the stability of ecosystems both globally and locally. The Global Footprint Network[1] and WWF estimate[2] that the average person in the UK lives at about 2.5 times the world's ecological limit; in other words, if every person on Earth consumed as much as the average UK citizen, we would need 2.5 earths to support the world's population. This is not sustainable or equitable.

One of the consequences is that nature has been collapsing at an alarming rate:

- Globally, we have lost 60% of wild vertebrates, 83% of freshwater species[3] and up to 76% of insects[4] since 1970.
- In the UK, we have seen long-term declines in insect species such as butterflies and moths (25% since 1970 for the latter), a 64% decline in the abundance of UK Priority Species, and a 54% decline in breeding farmland birds. 43% of bird species and 26% of terrestrial mammal species in the country are now threatened with extinction[5].
- And in the West of England region, figures from the BTO suggest that numbers of once common birds such as swifts and cuckoos have dropped by more than 95% in the past 25 years alone.

While evidence before 1970 is patchy, we do know that wildlife in the UK and locally had already been significantly depleted by this point[5].

In July 2020, B&NES Council declared an Ecological Emergency, recognising the severity of the degradation of the natural environment and loss of wildlife, and the urgency of action to restore nature.

Figure 1: Figures from BTO suggest that the population of cuckoo in the West of England has crashed in the period between 1995 to 2021. For every 100 cuckoos in the region in 1995, there may now only be four.

[1] Go to Footprint Network: Compare Countries.
[2] WWF (2021), Thriving Within Planetary Means.
[3] World Wildlife Fund (2018), 2018 Living Planet report.
[4] Hallann et al. (2017), More than 75 percent decline over 27 years in total flying insect biomass in protected areas.
[5] State of Nature Report (2019).

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What are the causes behind this?

A range of interacting factors are behind the decline in nature, including changes in land use and land management, the use of pesticides and other pollutants, the modification of our waterways, the presence of invasive non-native species, climate change, and a failure to factor in the costs of these impacts within our economic systems.

The biggest factor in the decline in wildlife in the UK and locally is the loss and degradation of habitats. Since the Second World War in particular, intensification and expansion of farming, alongside urban development has meant we have lost much of the space that nature needs to thrive. One of the most startling figures is that the UK lost 97% of its lowland meadows between the 1930s and 1980s. In addition, the removal of scrub and hedges, overgrazing, and the lack of good woodland management and protection have all contributed to nature's decline.

While the use of pesticides has helped to increase farming yields significantly over the past 75 years, they have also had a profound impact on wildlife. In the 1960s and 1970s, the widespread use of now-banned pesticides contributed to startling declines in birds of prey and songbirds. Newer generations of pesticides (such as neonicotinoids) are toxic to insects and other invertebrates on land and in water[6], with potential impacts on the populations of animals and plants that are dependent on insects for food and pollination.

The effects of climate change on wildlife are already being felt, with some species being pushed northward due to warming temperatures and others struggling with changes in the timing of the availability of their food sources. Additionally, invasive species, such as Rhododendron Ponticum and Himalayan Balsam, are altering our ecosystems and continue to spread[7], while introduced diseases such as Ash Dieback threaten the survival of our native plants and animals.

Figure 2: Although extensive grazing is often beneficial in maintaining species-rich grasslands and other ecosystems, overgrazing and grassland 'improvements' to improve yields reduce biodiversity. The area that is fenced off from sheep in this photo shows a much greater diversity of wildflowers and habitat structure than the area where sheep are present.

[6] Pisa, L.W., Amaral-Rogers, V., Belzunces, L.P. et al. Effects of neonicotinoids and fipronil on non-target invertebrates. Environ Sci Pollut Res 22, 68–102 (2015).

[7] On average, 10–12 new non-native species become established in the UK each year, with 10-20% of these causing serious adverse impacts. State of Nature Report, 2019.

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Rivers, streams and lakes face unique challenges

Our freshwater environment (including rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands) has been impacted by a unique combination of pressures in addition to those outlined above:

- Well-publicised pollution issues, such as run off from farms and urban areas, and sewage being discharged into rivers, harm river ecosystems and can kill freshwater wildlife;
- Modifications to waterways, such as the straightening of river channels and the installation of weirs, change the river ecosystem and can create barriers to fish completing their migration and reaching spawning sites (99% of British rivers have artificial barriers obstructing migrating fish);
- Pharmaceuticals and microplastics are present in increasing concentrations, and we do not fully understand the impacts this is having on wildlife;
- And both drought and water abstraction can lead to streams drying up and oxygen levels falling, in turn depleting or killing fish populations;

Due to these pressures, only two of the 18 waterbodies in B&NES are in 'good' ecological status.

Why does this matter?

The Ecological Emergency matters to all of us because of the vital role that wildlife and nature play in supporting our wellbeing, society and economy. Nature provides the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, and many of the resources we need to survive and maintain our quality of life.

For example, approximately three-quarters of all crop types grown by humans require pollination by insects; put simply, we would struggle to feed ourselves without insects providing pollination.

Figure 3: Pollinators, such as this tawny mining bee, play a crucial role in the growing of much of the food we eat: approximately three-quarters of all crop types grown by humans require pollination by insects. Image from the Woodland Trust.

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And deteriorating soil health is one of the biggest challenges facing farming and food security today, with large areas of soil in the UK considered to be degraded. Insects, worms and soil microbes break down organic matter, such as leaves, manure and other waste, returning it to the soil and providing the nutrients that plants and, therefore, our food need to grow. Without a healthy and biodiverse soil, this complex processes that underpin the natural world and our food are put at risk.

There is also much that remains to be understood on how ecosystems function; nature is not simple, and we simply do not know the consequences of further deterioration of the natural environment. There have been and will continue to be ecological 'tipping points' that lead to abrupt changes in the ability of nature to function and provide what we need to survive.

Nature and the economy

In total, over half of the world's GDP is moderately or highly dependent on nature[8]. But many of the services provided to us by nature are not priced into conventional economic decision-making: for example, no explicit cost is usually placed on the degradation of soil or of habitat loss incurred to produce a crop, or on the impact of worsening air quality from traffic generated by a new housing development[9].

B&NES Council is developing a decision support tool with people and nature at its heart, which will better integrate the impacts of decisions the council makes on these environmental 'externalities', such as biodiversity and pollution. This aims to help reduce our demands on nature and enable it to recover, ensuring everyone is able to enjoy a good quality of life and helping to ensure our collective wellbeing into the future.

Aside from these vital services, the world is a much poorer place without nature. Numerous studies show the importance of interacting with nature for our health and wellbeing, reducing the risk of physical ailments, such as cardiovascular diseases, and poor mental health.

What about the Climate Emergency?

B&NES has also declared a Climate Emergency, with an ambitious goal to be carbon neutral by 2030. While the climate and ecological emergencies are not the same, they are linked:

- They share some of the same causes, such as over-consumption of resources and changes in land use;
- Many of the solutions to tackling the Ecological Emergency, such as reducing consumption of meat and dairy or restoring habitats, will also help us to mitigate climate change;
- Nature-based solutions, such as well-placed woodland and wetland creation, can be important tools in adapting to the effects of climate change while contributing to nature's recovery and sequestering carbon; and
- Tackling climate change will also help reduce the pressure on nature.

[8] World Economic Forum (2020), *Nature Risk Rising: Why the Crisis Engulfing Nature Matters for Business and the Economy.*

[9] For further information and a more detailed explanation of how and why this is the case, see 'The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review'.

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The table below demonstrates some of the actions that will be important in tackling both the ecological and climate emergencies, and some that are primarily focused on one of the Emergencies.

Actions that largely focus on net zero	Actions that deliver net zero and nature recovery	Actions that largely focus on nature recovery
• Retrofitting of homes to reduce heating costs • Delivering more electric vehicle charging points • Increasing renewable energy generation, including solar and wind • Reducing embedded carbon in construction	• Encouraging environmentally-friendly diets and food choices • Habitat restoration and creation, including woodlands • Development of an environmental decision-making tool • Reducing consumption and encouraging a circular economy • Reducing car use in favour of public transport	• Reducing pesticide use • Improved management of grassland sites and verges, and hedgerows • Removing river barriers and restoring natural flows • Reducing agricultural, industrial and domestic pollutant run-off • Integrating wildlife-friendly spaces into developments

Introduction

An Ecological Emergency Action Plan

We know what we need to do to tackle the ecological emergency in Bath and North East Somerset: protect and sustain our existing nature-rich sites; create bigger, better and better-connected habitats at scale; and manage all our land and water sympathetically for wildlife.

As well as benefitting nature, taking this approach across the district presents a huge opportunity to enrich our society, wellbeing and economy:

- Expanding and creating habitats, such as woodlands and wetlands, will sequester carbon and help us to tackle the Climate Emergency, provide natural flood management, and improve our water quality.
- More and better-managed grasslands and scrubland will increase insect and pollinator populations, boosting our food and soil security.
- More nature-rich green and blue spaces where people live and work will lead to happier and healthier communities, reducing the burden on our health and care system.
- A thriving natural environment underpins a sustainable economy, can produce a flourishing green tourism industry, and creates skilled jobs in ecology and land management.

Meeting the challenge of the Ecological Emergency requires action from organisations, businesses, communities and individuals across the region. B&NES Council recognises it has an important role to play in tackling the Ecological Emergency, both through its own delivery and through supporting others to take action (see Figure 4).

We held a series of internal and external discussions and workshops (2021-2022) to better understand what the council's most impactful actions for nature could be. Building on these, this Action Plan details what we will do to tackle the Ecological Emergency and become Nature Positive by 2030.

Figure 4: As a local authority, B&NES Council has different spheres of influence, and in each of these its role is different. The diagram above shows how the role of the council in tackling the Ecological Emergency changes as its direct influence decreases from 'direct control' to 'engaging and communicating'.

Our Vision and Priorities

Our Vision is to be Nature Positive by 2030

Our vision is to be nature positive as an organisation by 2030. This means that B&NES Council will be making a positive contribution to nature recovery, with all parts of the council integrating the response to the Ecological Emergency into their decision-making. It will also mean that we are taking a regional and national lead in responding to the Ecological Emergency, working in step with communities and partners across the district to restore nature.

We have set out three guiding Priorities to inform the actions in this document, so that each action in our Action Plan contributes to one or more of these Priorities.

For an explanation of why we have chosen these three priorities and how we will monitor success in delivering against these, please see Appendix 1.

Increase the extent of land and waterways managed positively for nature across B&NES

Increase the abundance and distribution of key species across B&NES

Enable more people to access and engage with nature

Some of our work to date

B&NES Council formally declared an Ecological Emergency in July 2020, recognising the need for an urgent and decisive response to restore nature.

Since then, we have expanded our Green Transformation team to provide the capacity needed to tackle the Ecological Emergency and to deliver Strategic Green Infrastructure[10] (GI) Projects that will benefit both nature and people. And we have taken forward new planning policy for securing Biodiversity Net Gain[11], ahead of the Environment Act requirements, and has strengthened other planning policies to help protect and restore nature.

We have also been taking action on the ground via several initiatives and projects:

Bathscape (Strategic GI Project)

The Bathscape is the beautiful natural landscape surrounding the World Heritage city of Bath, with its undulating grasslands and woodlands offering a haven for residents, visitors and nature.

The Bathscape scheme was launched in 2018 with the aim of improving the management and use of the landscape for people and nature. So far, working in partnership with eleven organisations, we have sown eight new areas of flower-rich meadows, provided advice to better manage 47 hectares of woodland and over 40 grassland sites, created eighteen new walking trails, and much more.

Next steps: We will continue working towards our objectives of caring for 80 hectares of woodland and 100 grassland sites across the Bathscape, as well as creating 12 new flower-rich meadows by 2024, with a view to extending the Scheme beyond 2024.

[10] 'Green infrastructure' is a term used to describe the network of natural green and blue spaces in an area, including woodlands, grasslands, rivers and lakes, hedges, parks, gardens, allotments and amenity space.

[11] Biodiversity Net Gain is the requirement that all development must have a net positive impact on biodiversity of at least 10%. For more information.

Some of our work to date

Somer Valley Rediscovered (Strategic GI Project) and the Limestone Link

The Somer Valley Rediscovered project aims to improve biodiversity and people's access to and connection with nature in the Somer Valley, which covers Radstock, Midsomer Norton and Westfield, the large villages of Paulton and Peasedown St John, and the surrounding countryside and smaller villages.

A successful £1.1 million bid to the West of England Green Recovery Fund is providing the funding needed to create nature-rich areas across 34 hectares of green space in the Midsomer Norton and Radstock area, which will include tree planting, grassland restoration, and hedgerow expansion. We have also appointed a project manager for Somer Valley Rediscovered, who has been working with local communities and town and parish councils to shape this work.

Next steps: As well as delivering improvements across 34 hectares of green space, we will continue engaging local communities to identify further opportunities for restoring nature and improving the wellbeing of local communities.

Additionally, we are working in partnership on a wider vision for the Limestone Link, a corridor for nature and people connecting the protected landscapes of the Cotswolds and Mendip Hills.

WaterSpace (Strategic GI Project)

Through Waterspace, we are working in partnership with the Environment Agency, the Canal & River Trust, Wessex Water, South Gloucestershire Council and Bristol City Council to take a holistic and integrated approach to improving the River Avon corridor, from Dundas Aqueduct through to Bristol.

This includes Bath River Line, a new, riverside linear park in Bath that will connect green spaces and enable people to better enjoy the river environment, as well as proposals to improve biodiversity and access to nature along the River Avon between Bristol and Bath (WaterSpace Connected).

Next steps: We are submitting a funding case for the western section of the River Line (between Newbridge and Green Park). A second phase will consider the eastern section (from Pulteney Weir to Batheaston); this section of the route will be defined following further consultation.

Some of our work to date

Biodiversity Net Gain

The Environment Act will require all developments to deliver a minimum 10% 'net gain in biodiversity' from November 2023, which means that development must leave nature in a better state than before.

We have adopted a requirement for developments in B&NES to deliver biodiversity net gain in early 2023, ahead of the national requirements, to ensure we are accelerating action to recover nature.

Next steps: Our biodiversity net gain policy will be formally adopted in the spring of 2023 and has been influencing planning applications from 1 November 2022.

Let's get Buzzing

The Council's Let's Get Buzzing campaign has seen B&NES Council take the lead in changing our management practices across 42 hectares of grassland across our parks, open spaces and verges to create wildflower meadows, benefit biodiversity, and increase communities' access to nature-rich areas.

The scheme is popular and much of this work has been achieved with help from volunteers. We have now launched a Neighbourhood Nature Area scheme to support volunteers in adopting the management of areas of open grass to benefit wildlife.

Next steps: We want to manage more of our council -owned parks and green space for wildlife, and creating more wildflower-rich grasslands will be a vital part of this. We will continue to work with local communities to ensure we are creating nature-rich habitat in the right places and in the right way.

Some of our work to date

Trees and woodland

One of the key actions in tackling the Ecological Emergency, as well as the Climate Emergency, is increasing tree cover across the district. In 2019 we announced an aim to plant 100,000 trees across B&NES by 2023, which we are on track to deliver through planting trees on council land, planting street trees, tree giveaways and more.

We have also mapped the best opportunities for increasing tree and woodland cover across B&NES, helping us to target planting and woodland creation in the most appropriate areas for nature and people, and we have secured funding for a Tree Officer post to boost our efforts to get trees in the ground.

Next steps: We will continue efforts to plant trees on council-owned land and to support local groups in their efforts to get trees in the ground. During the second half of the 2022/2023 planting period, we will prepare for a new phase of action beyond 2023.

We are also continuing our work in partnership across the West of England to deliver the Forest of Avon Plan, with the ultimate ambition of doubling tree and woodland cover by 2050.

Reducing pesticide use

Following the council's declaration of an Ecological Emergency, and the concerns shared by many residents about the use of weedkiller, in 2021 we took the decision to stop the use of pesticides containing glyphosate on our streets and pavements. The annual spray has been replaced with manual removal of weeds and mechanically sweeping, until other viable treatment solutions can be identified.

Glyphosate is now only used in very restricted circumstances, focussed on invasive weeds, such as Japanese Knotweed or Giant Hogweed, and treatment of tree stumps using injection where necessary.

Next steps: We are exploring more efficient alternatives to digging out and sweeping weeds, such as the use of biodegradable foam or heat-based treatments, which will need to be assessed for their carbon footprint and cost.

B&NES Council's Ecological Emergency Action Plan

The Action Plan

The Action Plan below sets out how we intend to address the Ecological Emergency up to 2030. As resources are limited, we have focused on actions that we believe will make the biggest impact, while being realistic and achievable. And to keep the Plan as focussed and concise as possible, we have not included actions that are already embedded in our operations (such as our policy to restrict the use of pesticides to very restricted circumstances, and existing planning policies related to the natural environment).

Although the Plan focuses on what we can do as a council, many of the actions will involve working in partnership with communities, organisations and businesses across B&NES and beyond. We will continue to support and engage with the West of England Nature Partnership (WENP), the Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership (BACP) and Natural History Consortium, in particular, to ensure we are maximising opportunities for collaboration and partnership working. Appendix 3 provides more detail on our partnership working on the natural environment.

This is a live Action Plan that will be updated as progress is made, further evidence comes to light, and new opportunities arise. We recognise the importance of reporting progress against the Action Plan, which we will do on an annual basis.

The actions in the table below are organised under the following themes:

1. Mainstreaming nature recovery in leadership and decision-making
2. Increasing the extent of land and water managed positively or nature
3. Increasing investment into nature-based solutions and wildlife-friendly interventions
4. Enabling more people to access and engage with nature
5. Improving our evidence base and monitoring
6. Working in partnership

Each action has one or more Service Areas named against it, demonstrating which Service Area(s) within the council will be principally involved in its delivery. For every action, the Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery team will support the identified Service Area in its delivery.

A note on our Strategic Green Infrastructure (GI) Projects

The Strategic Green Infrastructure (GI) Projects being led by B&NES Council (Bathscape, Chew Valley Reconnected, Somer Valley Rediscovered and WaterSpace) each have their own programme of activities. Delivery of these Projects is a crucial part of our efforts to address the Ecological Emergency but, to avoid duplication, we have only included the most significant and new actions for nature's recovery related to these Projects in this Action Plan

For further information on the Strategic GI Projects, please go to the following links where websites exist:

- Bathscape
- Somer Valley Rediscovered
- WaterSpace, including Bath River Line

B&NES Council's Ecological Emergency Action Plan

Theme: Mainstreaming nature recovery in leadership and decision-making

Outcome	Action no.	Action	Service Area(s) involved	Timeline
The strategic approach and decision-making across the council are based on sustainable principles that contribute towards nature recovery	1.1	Integrate the Nature Positive vision & priorities into the strategic framework that will be set out in the next Corporate Straategy (2024-).	Strategy	2023
	1.2	**Roll-out and embed a council-wide decision support tool to ensure potential impacts on nature inform all major decisions and projects across the council, and conduct an analysis of our biodiversity footprint to support this.**	**Climate & Environmental Sustainability**	**2023-24**
	1.3	Produce and deliver an Ecological Emergency literacy training programme for council employees and members.	Business Change	2023-24
Council employees have a good understanding of the Ecological Emergency and the action they can take to address it in their work	1.4	Produce and deliver an Ecological Emergency literacy training programme for council employees and members.	Green Infrastructure (GI) & Nature Recovery	2023

B&NES Council's Ecological Emergency Action Plan

Theme: Mainstreaming nature recovery in leadership and decision-making

Outcome	Action no.	Action	Service Area(s) involved	Timeline
Our planning system is making a positive contribution to nature recovery and improves people's access to nature on their doorstep.	1.5	Produce a guidance note for renewable energy projects, including solar and wind developments, to embed management for nature into their schemes.	Climate & Environmental Sustainability	2023-24
	1.6	**Ensure policies and guidance in the new Local Plan address the Ecological Emergency and improve access to nature, and consider adopting Building with Nature standards.**	**Planning**	**2023-25**
	1.7	Evaluate the feasibility of setting a higher requirement for biodiversity net gain, above the mandatory figure of 10%.	Planning GI & Nature Recovery	2023
We are minimising the impact of our procurement and purchasing on nature.	1.8	Review and update the council's approach to food to integrate opportunities to reduce the impact of food production on nature.	GI & Nature Recovery	2023-24
	1.9	Incorporate standards related to nature recovery in the council's minimum standards for procurement.	GI & Nature Recovery	2023

B&NES Council's Ecological Emergency Action Plan

Theme: Increasing the extent of land and water managed positively for nature

Outcome	Action no.	Action	Service Area(s)	Timeline
The management of council-owned land maximises opportunities for nature recovery, while considering other uses and the needs of residents.	**2.1**	**Identify and deliver opportunities for nature recovery and biodiversity net gain on the following sites as a priority: Entry Hill, Odd Down Sports Ground, The Approach Golf Course and Lansdown, and then on B&NES Council's wider estate.**	**Commercial Estate** **Leisure** **GI & Nature Recovery**	**2023-24**
	2.2	**Package together and fund already-identified opportunities for improving the management of our parks and green spaces for nature.**	**Parks and Green Spaces** **Bereavement Services**	**2023-24**
	2.3	Design, fund and deliver a training programme for operational staff on how to better manage parks and green spaces for nature.	Parks and Green Spaces	2023-25
	2.4	Adjust cutting regimes of highways verges where there is scope for improved management for nature.	Highways Parks and Green Spaces	2023-24

B&NES Council's Ecological Emergency Action Plan

Theme: Increasing the extent of land and water managed positively for nature

Outcome	Action no.	Action	Service Area(s) involved	Timeline
We are continuing to increase tree and woodland cover on our estate, and we are managing our existing trees and woodland to improve their condition for nature.	2.5	Produce a B&NES Tree and Woodland Strategy for 2023-30, including plans for increasing tree and woodland cover, and improving woodland management on our own estate.	Parks and Green Spaces GI & Nature Recovery	2023
Our Strategic Green Infrastructure Projects are delivering large-scale interventions for nature recovery across B&NES.	2.6	Create an improved 45-hectare nature park at Somerdale, Keynsham as part of WaterSpace Connected.	GI & Nature Recovery	2023-24
	2.7	Extend the Bathscape Partnership Scheme to 2025 and develop the project through to 2030.	GI & Nature Recovery	2023-25
	2.8	Deliver 34 hectares of improved, nature-rich green space in and around Midsomer Norton, Westfield and Radstock as part of Somer Valley Rediscovered.	GI & Nature Recovery	2023-25
	2.9	Establish the Chew Valley Reconnected Partnership (CVRP) to coordinate activity among stakeholders and communities to enhance the natural environment of the Chew Valley	GI & Nature Recovery	2023-24

Theme: Increasing investment into nature-based solutions and wildlife-friendly interventions

Outcome	Action no.	Action	Service Area(s)	Timeline
Nature-based solutions are being used to reduce pollution from roads and urban areas.	3.1	Identify priority areas for nature-based solutions to localised flooding and runoff of pollutants from the road network and developments; and facilitate partners, including Bristol Avon Rivers Trust and FWAG SW, delivering targeted solutions with landowners.	Highways Maintenance GI & Nature Recovery	2023-24
	3.2	As part of the development of the Local Plan 2025, require developments to deliver Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) that meet adoptable standards and benefit wildlife.	Highways Maintenance Planning	2023-25
The number of artificial barriers to fish passage has been reduced and rivers are in a more natural state.	**3.3**	**Work with Bristol Avon Rivers Trust to restore the River Chew. This will involve identifying, costing and evaluating options for removal or retrofitting of weirs and other barriers to fish passage within the Chew catchment, river habitat restoration, and accessing funding for priority projects.**	**GI & Nature Recovery**	**2023-30**

Theme: Increasing investment into nature-based solutions and wildlife-friendly interventions

Outcome	Action no.	Action	Service Area(s)	Timeline
Development and infrastructure projects are integrating positive interventions for wildlife as a matter of course, including bats and nesting birds, and are minimising any negative impacts on wildlife.	3.4	Pilot bat-friendly lighting to reduce the impact on light pollution on wildlife along the Avon River corridor (as part of WaterSpace) and use this to inform our approach to street lighting.	GI & Nature Recovery Highways Maintenance	2023-24
	3.5	Produce a toolkit of ecological interventions for highways, infrastructure and regeneration projects that are easy to deliver at low cost and that can contribute to delivery of biodiversity net gain.	GI & Nature Recovery Regeneration and Housing	2023-24
There is greater investment into nature-based solutions across the district, enabling us to accelerate nature recovery while tackling climate change and meeting other societal challenges.	3.6	Scope out opportunities for the use of nature-based solutions for climate change mitigation (carbon sequestration) and adaptation across the district, and options for funding/ financing these.	Climate & Environmental Sustainability GI & Nature Recovery	2023-24
	3.7	Use the Invest in B&NES website, as well as other established channels of communication, to better communicate the opportunities to invest in nature for businesses.	Business and Skills	2023

B&NES Council's Ecological Emergency Action Plan

Theme: Enabling more people to access and engage with nature

Outcome	Action no.	Action	Service Area(s)	Timeline
Communities are supported in managing their local green and blue spaces for nature through the Neighbourhood Nature Areas scheme.	**4.1**	**Seek funding for a dedicated post (or posts) for the Neighbourhood Nature Areas scheme, supporting communities in active management of their local green and blue spaces for nature.**	**Parks and Green Spaces** **Bereavement Services**	**2023-24**
Individuals and communities are aware of the actions that they can take to tackle the Ecological Emergency and of the benefits that this could provide to them.	4.2	Create a dedicated council webpage on the Ecological Emergency, and use this as a hub to communicate the work we are doing to address the Ecological Emergency and how residents can contribute towards nature recovery.	GI & Nature Recovery	2023
	4.3	Embed tackling the Ecological Emergency within the Bath World Heritage Site Management Plan, explore opportunities for celebrating our natural environment as heritage, and better integrate the Ecological Emergency within communications related to heritage.	Heritage GI & Nature Recovery	2023-24
We are maximising opportunities to improve people's health and wellbeing through access to and engagement with nature.	4.4	Work with partners to establish a social prescribing network within B&NES and make available grants for providers of nature-based activities to build their capacity.	Public Health	2023-24

Theme: Enabling more people to access and engage with nature

Outcome	Action no.	Action	Service Area(s)	Timeline
	4.5	Incorporate actions to improve people's access to nature within the developing Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Bath and North East Somerset.	Public Health	2023
There are more and better opportunities for people to enter a career in the natural environment.	4.6	Create apprenticeships, work placements and/or other opportunities for work within the GI & Nature Recovery team, land management and/ or ecologists within B&NES.	Business and Skills GI & Nature Recovery	2023-25

Theme: Improving our evidence base and monitoring

Outcome	Action no.	Action	Service Area(s)	Timeline
We have a framework in place that enables us to monitor changes in the natural environment and evaluate the success of our actions for nature recovery.	**5.1**	**Produce a 'State of Nature' framework for B&NES, including an 'ecological baseline' and wildlife index for B&NES to measure progress against, and targets for nature recovery.**	**GI & Nature Recovery**	**2023**
	5.2	Trial repeatable techniques for monitoring wildlife populations (such as insect traps or standardised bird counts) on sites owned or managed by B&NES Council, to help evaluate of the effectiveness of interventions for nature.	GI & Nature Recovery	2024-26
	5.3	Continue to monitor change in tree canopy cover across B&NES, updating the figure at least every three years based on a baseline of 16.5% in 2020.	GI & Nature Recovery	2023

Theme: Improving our evidence base and monitoring

Outcome	Action no.	Action	Service Area(s)	Timeline
Evidence on the natural environment is used to target action to recover nature and improve people's access to nature.	**5.4**	**Survey the condition of Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs) within B&NES to identify those that lack management plans or are in unfavourable condition and use this evidence to prioritise improvements in management, with an initial focus on SNCIs under B&NES Council ownership.**	**GI & Nature Recovery**	**2023-26**
	5.5	Combine access to green space mapping with data on multiple deprivation to identify priority areas for improving access to good-quality green space.	Public Health GI & Nature Recovery	2023
We are better and more regularly monitoring people's engagement with nature.	5.6	Include questions in the council's Voicebox survey from 2023 onwards that monitor people's interest in and engagement with nature.	GI & Nature Recovery	2023-30
We are efficiently reporting our progress on tackling the Ecological Emergency within the council and externally as required.	5.7	Develop and implement a single corporate reporting approach that aligns reporting to government on the implementation of the enhanced NERC duty on Local Authorities with internal reporting on delivery of the Ecological Emergency Action Plan.	Gi & Nature Recovery	2023

B&NES Council's Ecological Emergency Action Plan

Theme: Working in partnership

Outcome	Action no.	Action	Service Area(s)	Timeline
Communities are supported in leading on nature recovery in their locality.	6.1	Produce guidance and a template to support parish and town councils in producing Local Nature Action Plans, and ensure these are linked with Avon Wildlife Trust's Wildlife Champion Network	GI & Nature Recovery	2023
We are continuing to work closely with partner organisations to deliver strategic opportunities for nature recovery.	6.2	Support the Forest of Avon Trust and Avon Needs Trees in delivering the 'Great Avon Wood' within B&NES, providing a new woodland for nature and people, and in their work to establish more trees and woodlands across B&NES.	GI & Nature Recovery	2023-25
	6.3	Engage with the Beaver Management Group to identify opportunities for restoring biodiversity, re-naturalising waterways and delivering nature-based solutions to flooding, as well as potential challenges, related to the beaver population in B&NES	GI & Nature Recovery	2023-25
	6.4	Work with National Trust and local residents to establish a nature-rich, accessible wildlife corridor from Bath to Bathampton Meadows.	GI & Nature Recovery	2023-30

Theme: Working in partnership

Outcome	Action no.	Action	Service Area(s)	Timeline
	6.5	With partners, ascertain the need and capacity for a sustainable strategy for long-term restoration and management of key grassland sites across B&NES or the wider West of England region.	GI & Nature Recovery	2023
We are working in partnership with farmers, landholders and other partners to improve the management of land for nature across B&NES.	**6.6**	**Enable and support partners in engaging farmers and landholders on managing land for nature in strategic locations and directing them to funding to do so, focusing initially on the Somer Valley and the River Avon corridor.**	**GI & Nature Recovery**	**2023-30**
	6.7	**Support farmers in creating farmer clusters within B&NES, enabling us to engage with farmers and landholders at a landscape scale; and work with the Duchy of Cornwall, FWAG SW and other partners to spread good practice from exemplar farms.**	**GI & Nature Recovery**	**2023-25**

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www.bathnes.gov.uk

TACKLING THE CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY

Bath & North East Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives