



Hyndburn
Borough Council

Biodiversity Duty Report

March 2026

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Biodiversity, defined as the variety of all living organisms and the ecosystems of which they are part, underpins environmental resilience, climate adaptation, public health, and economic wellbeing. The natural environment within and surrounding Hyndburn is one of its key assets and provides essential ecosystem services including flood mitigation, urban cooling, carbon storage, recreation, and wellbeing benefits.
- 1.2. Under the Environment Act 2021, all public authorities in England are subject to a strengthened Biodiversity Duty, requiring them to consider what action they can take to conserve and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions.
- 1.3. This document constitutes Hyndburn Borough Council's first Biodiversity Net Gain Duty Report and covers the period 1 January 2023 to 1 January 2026 and is split into three sections:

Section 2: The Council's policies, objectives and actions to enhance and conserve biodiversity and what it has delivered

Section 3: The Council's future actions

Section 4: Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) information

- 1.4. Section 40A of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended by the Environment Act 2021) places a duty on public authorities to:
 - Consider what actions they can take to conserve and enhance biodiversity
 - Have regard to relevant national strategies, including the Environmental Improvement Plan
 - Periodically report on actions taken to comply with the duty
- 1.5. The duty is ongoing and applies across all functions of the authority. Section 103 of the Environment Act states that local authorities will be required to publish biodiversity reports, which summarise the action taken to comply with the duty, and a summary of the authorities' plans for complying with the duties over a period of five years.

- 1.6. Action that the Council takes for biodiversity will contribute to the achievement of national goals and targets on biodiversity. The Environment Improvement Plan published in January 2023, sets out government plans for significantly improving the natural environment. By 2030, the government has committed to:
- Halt the decline in species' abundance.
 - Protect 30% of UK land.
- 1.7. By 2042, the government has committed to:
- Increase species' abundance by at least 10% from 2030, surpassing 2022 levels.
 - Restore or create at least 500,000 ha of a range of wildlife rich habitats.
 - Reduce the risk of species' extinction.
 - Restore 75% of our one million hectares of terrestrial and freshwater protected sites to favourable condition, securing their wildlife value for the long term.

2. The Council's policies, objectives and actions

- 2.1. Whilst the publication of biodiversity reports is a new requirement, the Council does have several existing initiatives, strategies and policies that show how we are, and will continue to, meet the biodiversity duty.
- **Hyndburn Development Plan** - comprising the Hyndburn Core Strategy (2012), Development Management DPD (2018), Accrington Area Action Plan and emerging Local Plan 2040, contain a number of policies that seek to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
 - **Hyndburn Corporate Strategy** - prioritises making the Council's activities and operations Net Zero by 2030 and promoting making the most of the natural environment through enhancement of habitats, positive land management and partnership working.

- **Draft Climate Strategy and Action Plan** – builds on the requirements of the Corporate Strategy, setting out specific actions necessary to deliver priorities.
- 2.2. The recently published Lancashire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) will be taken into account when considering the Council's future actions for conserving and enhancing biodiversity.
 - 2.3. LNRSs identify areas where habitat creation, restoration or enhancement would be most beneficial for nature recovery and wider environmental outcomes. In particular, the LNRS will be a 'material consideration' in the planning system when determining planning applications and must be considered during the preparation of future Local Plans for the Borough.
 - 2.4. Table 1 below sets out the Council's objectives and actions taken during the reporting period to conserve and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions.

Table 1: Council's actions to enhance and conserve biodiversity

Ref	Objective	Action	Work Completed
O1	Embed biodiversity in decision-making	Ensure biodiversity considerations are integrated across Council policies, strategies, and decisions.	<p>A Scrutiny Green Review and a Climate Net Zero Working Group were established to increase transparency and gain momentum for the green agenda.</p> <p>The Council are part of a Lancashire-wide climate officers working group to understand best practice and learn from other authorities.</p>
		Provide training and resources for Councillors and Council employees about Biodiversity Net Gain and nature recovery.	Planning Officers have attended webinars, in-person training and bespoke training on BNG insofar as it relates to applications for planning permission.
O2	Improve evidence and monitoring	Develop a proportionate biodiversity baseline and monitoring approach	Baseline assessments have been produced for the emerging Local Plan site allocations and additional enhancement sites.
		Revise planning validation requirements to take account of BNG	<p>A revised Validation Checklist was consulted on for a period of 6 weeks in Spring 2025 and was adopted for Development Management purposes in June 2025.</p> <p>The Validation Checklist sets out requirements additional to the minimum statutory BNG information requirements.</p>
		Take the Local Plan through to adoption in 2026, incorporating support for the enhancement of biodiversity in the spatial vision,	The Local Plan has been subject to several stages of public consultation between 2018 and 2024. Following approval by Council, it was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination in March 2025. An independent Inspector was appointed to examine the Plan,

Ref	Objective	Action	Work Completed
		key objectives, strategic planning and development management policies.	and Public Hearing Sessions were held between 16 and 25 September 2025. There remains the requirement to undertake consultation on the 'Main Modifications' to the Plan and to formally adopt subject to the Inspector's final report.
		Establish a baseline value for biodiversity on the main areas of council owned land and consider how to enhance its biodiversity value going forward.	<p>The Council engaged ecological consultants to undertake baseline assessments of the emerging Local Plan site allocations and additional enhancement sites in 2024.</p> <p>On the enhancement sites, the assessments will form the basis of further discussions relating to the identification of BNG receptor sites. They will also be used to inform applicants of biodiversity enhancement opportunities on allocated development sites.</p>
O3	To Make the Council's Activities and Operations Net Zero by 2030	Carry out annual carbon footprint studies and deliver on energy reduction / carbon insetting across all Council activities.	The Council commissioned One Carbon World to carry out a Carbon footprint study to help identify the Council's carbon emissions and was awarded the One Carbon World Carbon Neutral Gold Standard.
		Remove fossil fuel from Council owned assets focussing on high emitters and buildings at risk, such as the Market Hall.	<p>Successful Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding bid, used to decarbonise the Leisure Centre, Scaitcliffe House and part of the Crematorium by up to 74% of their carbon emissions.</p> <p>By securing £2.3 million investment from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme together with capital investment, the Council has successfully decarbonised the three highest emitting buildings: Scaitcliffe House (Co2 emissions by 67%), Hyndburn Leisure Centre (by 71%) and the Cemetery (by 10%).</p>

Ref	Objective	Action	Work Completed
			<p>Since 2022, the Council has decarbonised a number of buildings including the Leisure Centre and moved over to a 100% green renewable energy tariff for the remaining buildings. This has resulted in zero carbon emissions from electricity usage.</p> <p>The Council has converted 54 council vehicles (including bin lorries) from diesel fuel to Hydro-treated vegetable oil (HVO). The change will see up to a 90% reduction in Co2 emissions from the vehicles, meaning cleaner air for the local community and a smaller carbon footprint for the Council.</p>
		Prepare for and implement food waste collections.	Food waste collections will become mandatory from 1 April 2026.
		Implement BNG requirements into planning decisions, as required by the Environment Act 2021.	Statutory BNG requirements came into effect in Spring 2024 and all planning applications have since been determined in accordance with the requirements of the legislation.
		Promote and protect our green open spaces including our Green Flag accreditations to enable our communities to enjoy and participate in natural spaces.	The Council support sustainable actions such as not using pesticides in green flag parks, harvesting rainwater, use of natural oil in chainsaws, recycle green waste, recycle all paper, cardboard, plastic containers, tin and glass, allow areas to be re-wilded, replace old petrol tools with new electric tools, replace felled trees.

Ref	Objective	Action	Work Completed
			<p>Community planting of new wildflower meadow at Cutwood Park, Rishton.</p> <p>Implementation of differential mowing regimes in the Council's parks, with areas left to rewild.</p> <p>Work schedule to remove dead, dying, diseased or otherwise dangerous trees and their replacement on Council owned land.</p>
O4	To Protect and Enhance Green Open Spaces and the Natural Environment	Plant a tree for every household in Hyndburn (30,000 plus) and scale up woodland coverage from 9% to 12% across the borough for flood management and habitat connectivity.	<p>Over 14,000 trees planted on Council land between 2022 and 2025. External grants of around £150k have been secured for the costs of planting and other enhancements.</p> <p>Nearly 15,000 trees planted on privately owned land since 2023. External investment of some £176k has been secured from Woodland Trust and Countryside Stewardship.</p>
		Deliver Biodiversity Net Gain by creating and enhancing habitats in association with new development and ensuring the natural environment is left in a measurably better state than it was prior to development.	The Council funded natural solutions programmes delivered by external organisations (2x woodland programmes and river regeneration)
		Ensure the positive management and enhancement of nature reserves and woodlands,	The Council acquired the green site, Brookside (known locally as Bury Meadows), at the end of 2022 to tackle and achieve radical climate changes by improving biodiversity, habitat recovery and

Ref	Objective	Action	Work Completed
		including Brookside and Bullough Park.	<p>carbon capture throughout the site. Initial improvements and master planning work is underway.</p> <p>Upgrades to Bullough Park are underway, including wetland and woodland creation.</p> <p>The Council has created 3 Local Nature Reserves (LNR's) in Hyndburn, 2 of these being the biggest in the whole of Lancashire. These include Peel Park & the Coppice LNR and Woodnook Vale LNR in Accrington.</p>
		Identify potential sites on Council owned land which could be used as BNG receptor sites, engaging with Lancashire County Council, LNRS partners, and local stakeholders.	Early stage of consideration, with initial discussions taking place with Lancashire Wildlife Trust.
		Engage with landowners to encourage them to register their land on the National BNG Register to support the provision of BNG opportunities in the Borough.	None to date.
		Participate in the production of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Lancashire,	Lancashire County Council published the LNRS on Friday 16 January 2026 and it is now a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Ref	Objective	Action	Work Completed
		alongside other local and unitary authorities.	
		Peat Restoration Programme	Desk study and landowner contact completed which has identified 220 hectares of land that may have peat soils. Next stage is detailed landowner discussions and soil testing to explore the capacity for peat restoration work.

3. The Council's future actions

- 3.1. The following is a list of actions the Council aims to undertake over the next monitoring period which should be no later than 5 years after the end of the previous reporting period (so by 1st January 2031). The inclusion of actions at this stage does not mean that any firm commitment has been made, but signals that these actions will be considered and reviewed as part of the Council's Biodiversity Duty.
- 3.2. It should be noted that Lancashire will shortly be undergoing Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The government plans to replace the current two-tier system of district and county councils with new unitary authorities - single councils responsible for all local services. The new councils taking over all services from 1 April 2028.

Table 2: Council's future actions

Prepare and adopt a Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
Embed biodiversity considerations within governance and reporting structures
Implement of Masterplan proposals at Brookside, including grant bid submissions.
Expansion of differential mowing regime to other Council parks.
New locations for tree planting to be identified and planting implemented on Council land.
Further woodland planting schemes to be discussed with private landowners – planting schemes with 4 farms currently under discussion.
Further investigation into registration of Council land as BNG receptor sites.
Progression of the Peat Restoration Programme (completion of testing and development of delivery programme).
River regeneration scheme developed to conceptual design stage - consideration to be given to funding and delivery options.

4. Biodiversity net gain information

- 4.1. Separate to the Biodiversity Duty, The Environment Act introduced a mandatory requirement for a minimum of 10% 'Biodiversity Net Gain' (BNG) from Major development sites from 12th February 2024 and for small sites

2nd April 2024 (amended from November 2023) and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects from May 2026 to ensure that new developments enhance biodiversity and create new green spaces for local communities to enjoy. BNG is measured using Defra's biodiversity metric.

- 4.2. The Council has, and will continue to, work constructively with developers to ensure that developments avoid the most harmful impacts, take account of the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy, ensure that unavoidable harm is adequately mitigated, and that on-site biodiversity is integrated and enhanced as part of good design principals, taking into account the LNRS for Lancashire.
- 4.3. During 2024 the Council completed Biodiversity Baseline Assessments for all sites allocated for development within the emerging Local Plan 2040 which will cover the period 2021 to 2040. The Local Plan allocates land for housing and employment development in the Borough to meet identified needs. In summary, the assessments identified that:
 - Based on the loss of all existing habitats on each site, development of the six employment sites would result in a loss of 442.21 Habitat units and 13.04 Hedgerow units.
 - Based on the loss of all existing habitats on each site, development of the five gypsy and traveller sites would result in a loss of 11.51 Habitat units and 0.35 Hedgerow units.
 - Development of the nineteen housing sites would result in the loss of 782.81 Habitat units and 19.82 Hedgerow units.
- 4.4. This indicative habitat baseline provides an opportunity for the Council to predict the 'worst case' scenario loss of biodiversity due to development up to 2040. In consideration the Council is able to estimate the amount of 'habitat banks' that may be required within the Borough to account for the estimated biodiversity net loss.
- 4.5. The Council has considered its own land assets, with a view to creating local habitat banks. The Council has assessed 29 Council-owned sites, and completed 29 Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans, one for each site. In summary the total number of baseline habitat units was 2,256.54 and 5.68 hedgerow units.

- 4.6. Habitat creation and enhancement over a 30-year period could result in an increase of 718.62 habitat units and 9.32 hedgerow units. It was found that 3 sites would create the greatest habitat value uplift:
- Peel Park and the Coppice (+163.29 Habitat Units)
 - Woodnook Vale (+114.89 Habitat Units)
 - Brookside (+97.81 Habitat Units)
- 4.7. Further work is ongoing to investigate the potential to register Council-owned BNG gain sites.

Biodiversity Net Gain – Statistics

- 4.8. The following tables provide a summary of eligible planning permissions granted under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requiring biodiversity net gain during the report period, and details of BNG resulting, or expected to result, from biodiversity gain plans that the Council has approved.
- 4.9. As set out in the BNG The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024, there are several exemptions to the mandatory requirements. This includes:
- Development below a de minimis threshold
 - Householder Development
 - Biodiversity Gain Sites
 - Small Scale Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding
- 4.10. From the date on which the mandatory BNG requirements came into force (Major development sites from 12th February 2024 and for small sites 2nd April 2024), the Council has granted a total of 27 planning applications to which the mandatory BNG requirements apply. In such circumstances, the developer must create a 'biodiversity gain plan' that shows how BNG will be achieved.
- 4.11. During this period, only 1 Biodiversity Gain Plan has been approved.

Table 3: The number of eligible planning permissions granted under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requiring biodiversity net gain

	Jan – Dec 2024	Jan – Dec 2025	Total
Total number of planning permissions granted in the reporting period where an exemption to the biodiversity net gain condition applies	103	99	202
Total number of planning permissions granted that require biodiversity net gain in the reporting period	11	16	27
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period	0	1	1
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through on-site units only	0	1	1
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through off-site units only	0	0	0
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through statutory credits only	0	0	0
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site and off-site units	0	0	0
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site units and statutory credits	0	0	0
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of off-site units and statutory credits	0	0	0
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site, off-site units and statutory credits	0	0	0
Number of Biodiversity Gain Plans approved that are meeting monitoring requirements and habitat delivery expectations for 'significant' on-site gains	0	N/A Habitat creation not yet completed.	N/A Habitat creation not yet completed.

Table 4: The overall expected gains and losses from biodiversity gain plans approved during the reporting period

Overall expected gains and losses	Area Total or Average	Hedgerow Total or Average	Watercourse Total or Average
Total number of pre-development biodiversity units approved on-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	0.10	0.00	0.00
Total number of post-development biodiversity units approved on-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	0.11	0.12	0.00
Total net unit change in biodiversity units, on-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	0.01	0.12	0.00
Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, on-site	11.94	Cannot be calculated	0.00
Total number of baseline biodiversity units approved off-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total number of post-intervention biodiversity units approved off-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total net unit change in biodiversity units, off-site broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	0.00	0.00	0.00
Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, off-site	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total number of biodiversity units offset using statutory credits broken down by area/hedgerow/watercourse	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total net unit change in biodiversity units (including any units offset using credits)	0.00	0.00	0.00
Average percentage (%) change (including statutory credits)	0.00	0.00	0.00

Table 5: The composition of gains split by area habitat type

Habitat Type - Area	Total biodiversity units at baseline	Total hectares at baseline	Total biodiversity units post - development	Total hectares post - development	Net change in biodiversity units	Net change in hectares
Cropland	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grassland	0.10	0.05	0.07	0.01	-0.03	-0.04
Heathland and Scrub	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lakes	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sparsely Vegetated Land	-	-	-	-	-	-
Urban	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.04
Wetland	-	-	-	-	-	-
Woodland and Forest	-	-	-	-	-	-
Intertidal sediment	-	-	-	-	-	-
Coastal Saltmarsh	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rocky Shore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Coastal Lagoons	-	-	-	-	-	-
Intertidal Hard Structures	-	-	-	-	-	-
Watercourse footprint	N/A		N/A		N/A	
Individual Trees	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.01	0.04	0.01
Total	0.10	0.05	0.11	0.06	0.01	0.01

Table 6: The composition of gains split by hedgerow and line of trees type

Habitat type - hedgerows and lines of trees	Total biodiversity units at baseline	Total kilometres at baseline	Total biodiversity units post - development	Total kilometres post - development	Net change in biodiversity units	Net change in kilometres
Species-rich native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch	-	-	-	-	-	-
Species-rich native hedgerow with trees	-	-	-	-	-	-
Species-rich native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch	-	-	-	-	-	-
Native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch	-	-	-	-	-	-
Species -rich native hedgerow	0.00	0.00	0.12	0.03	0.12	0.03
Native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch	-	-	-	-	-	-
Native hedgerow with trees	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ecologically valuable line of trees	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ecologically valuable line of trees - associated with bank or ditch	-	-	-	-	-	-
Native hedgerow	-	-	-	-	-	-
Line of trees	-	-	-	-	-	-
Line of trees associated with bank or ditch	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	0.00	0.00	0.12	0.03	0.12	0.03

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. This Report demonstrates that Hyndburn Borough Council has given due regard to biodiversity in line with its statutory duty under the Environment Act 2021.