



Enhancing Biodiversity - September 2023

The new biodiversity duty

Under the Environment Act 2021, there is a new 'biodiversity duty' for public authorities in England.

Under the Act authorities must consider what they can do to conserve and **enhance** biodiversity in England. Parish Councils are bound by this new duty which replaces an earlier one.

Public Authorities must:

- consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity
- agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration
- act to deliver the policies and achieve their objectives.

An authority must complete their first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by 1 January 2024.

They must agree their policies and objectives as soon as possible after this.

They can and should reconsider their actions on a quarterly, annual or regular basis and must reconsider the actions they can take within 5 years of when they completed their previous consideration.

Other strategies

According to the Act, Public Authorities need to check if a number of strategies affect how they comply with their biodiversity duty including:

- local nature recovery strategies
- species conservation strategies
- protected site strategies

They need to understand how or if they are relevant to their organisation, be aware of how these strategies affect land that is owned or managed by them, or actions they could take to conserve and enhance biodiversity and consider how they can contribute to the strategy where appropriate.



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Nature recovery strategies

These are locally led strategies for nature and environmental improvement established by Environment Act 2021. Each local nature recovery strategy will:

- agree priorities for nature's recovery
- map the most valuable existing areas for nature
- map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals

In Buckinghamshire, the Nature Recover Strategy is being led by Buckinghamshire Council following its involvement in a pilot. It is anticipated that the LNRS process for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes will take place over the next 12-18 months and will use lessons learned from the pilot.

Species conservation strategies

Established by the Environment Act 2021, species conservation strategies aim to safeguard the future of the species that are at greatest risk.

Protected site strategies

Established by the Environment Act 2021, protected site strategies take a new approach to protecting and restoring species and habitats in protected sites.

National targets

The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP23) sets out government plans for improving the natural environment.

By 2030, the government has committed to:

- halt the decline in species abundance
- protect 30% of UK land

Further targets have been set for 2042.

Developing an action plan

The Government advises that if an authority already has a strategy that monitors its environmental performance, that it can include its biodiversity actions as part of this.



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However, authorities should consider creating a new document if there is not a suitable, existing document. In it actions could be recorded and results studied.

There are other important initiatives including biodiversity net gain if a public authority is involved with development plans and decisions.

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