

Borough Council of
**King's Lynn &
West Norfolk**



Bio Diversity Task Group

Agenda

Monday, 5th February, 2024
at 4.00 pm

in the

**Council Chamber, Town Hall and available
for the public to view on [WestNorfolkBC on
You Tube](#)**



**King's Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 1EX
Telephone: 01553 616200**

Friday 26th January 2024

Dear Member

Bio Diversity Task Group

You are invited to attend a meeting of the above-mentioned Task Group which will be held on **Monday, 5th February, 2024 at 4.00 pm** in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ** to discuss the business shown below.

Yours sincerely

Chief Executive

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**
2. **Minutes from the previous meeting** (Pages 4 - 5)
3. **Members Present Under Standing Order 34**
4. **Declarations of Interest** (Page 6)
5. **Urgent Business**
6. **To consider the recommendations of the Urban Wildlife Informal Working Group** (Pages 7 - 15)
7. **Biodiversity Net Gain** (Pages 16 - 39)

8. **Biodiversity Duty**

9. **Date of the next meeting**

To be confirmed.

To:

Bio Diversity Task Group: M Bartrum, A Bullen, S Dark, M de Whalley, P Kunes

Officers

Stuart Ashworth, Assistant Director, Environment and Planning
Martin Chisholm, Assistant Director, Operations and Commercial
Matthew Henry, Assistant Director, Property and Projects
Claire Wiggs, Ecologist

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK

BIO DIVERSITY TASK GROUP

Minutes from the Meeting of the Bio Diversity Task Group held on Monday, 18th December, 2023 at 4.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ

PRESENT: Councillor M de Whalley (Chair)
Councillors M Bartrum, A Bullen and S Dark

An apology for absence was received from Councillor P Kunes

1 **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

RESOLVED: That Councillor Dark be appointed as Vice-Chair

2 **MEMBERS PRESENT UNDER STANDING ORDER 34**

None

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

4 **URGENT BUSINESS**

None

5 **PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Assistant Director S Ashworth introduced Claire Wiggs, Senior Ecologist to the Task Group. He explained the background to the Group which had arisen following a Notice of Motion to Council in September 2020, and recommendations from the Urban Wildlife Group in 2022 and consideration of the Council's requirements under the Environment Act 2021 which required that public authorities who operated in England, including councils and local planning authorities, must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England.

The Task Group considered the draft Terms of Reference. Councillor Bullen encouraged that the Council should not do only what was required of it, but aspire to do above what was required of it. He reminded members that the Urban Wildlife Groups recommendations were beyond bio diversity.

RESOLVED: That the Terms of Reference be noted.

6

DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

The Assistant Director, S Ashworth had prepared a draft workplan for the Task Group to consider. The next meeting was to consider the recommendations of the Urban Wildlife Informal Working Group which had been referred to this group for consideration and incorporation wherever possible and consideration as to how to signpost and share the information with communities and businesses. The communications process was to be considered and discussed.

Councillor Bullen urged speed of consideration as the 2024 bird breeding season would be starting in a few weeks time.

Councillor Dark asked for an overview of the requirements of the Council's under the legislation on the subject. He also suggested that wherever work was being done by partner organisations that they be tapped into to ensure it could be dove tailed. Suggestions were made of Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Wildlife Trust and others. It was agreed to share contacts for relevant organisations/ and or Groups with officers. He also suggested that care had to be taken not to delay the recommendations coming out of the Group, but also that some may require budgetary allocation which may take some time to receive funding.

It was noted that there would be information given to the group on each matter as it was considered.

RESOLVED: That the work programme be agreed.

7

FUTURE MEETINGS

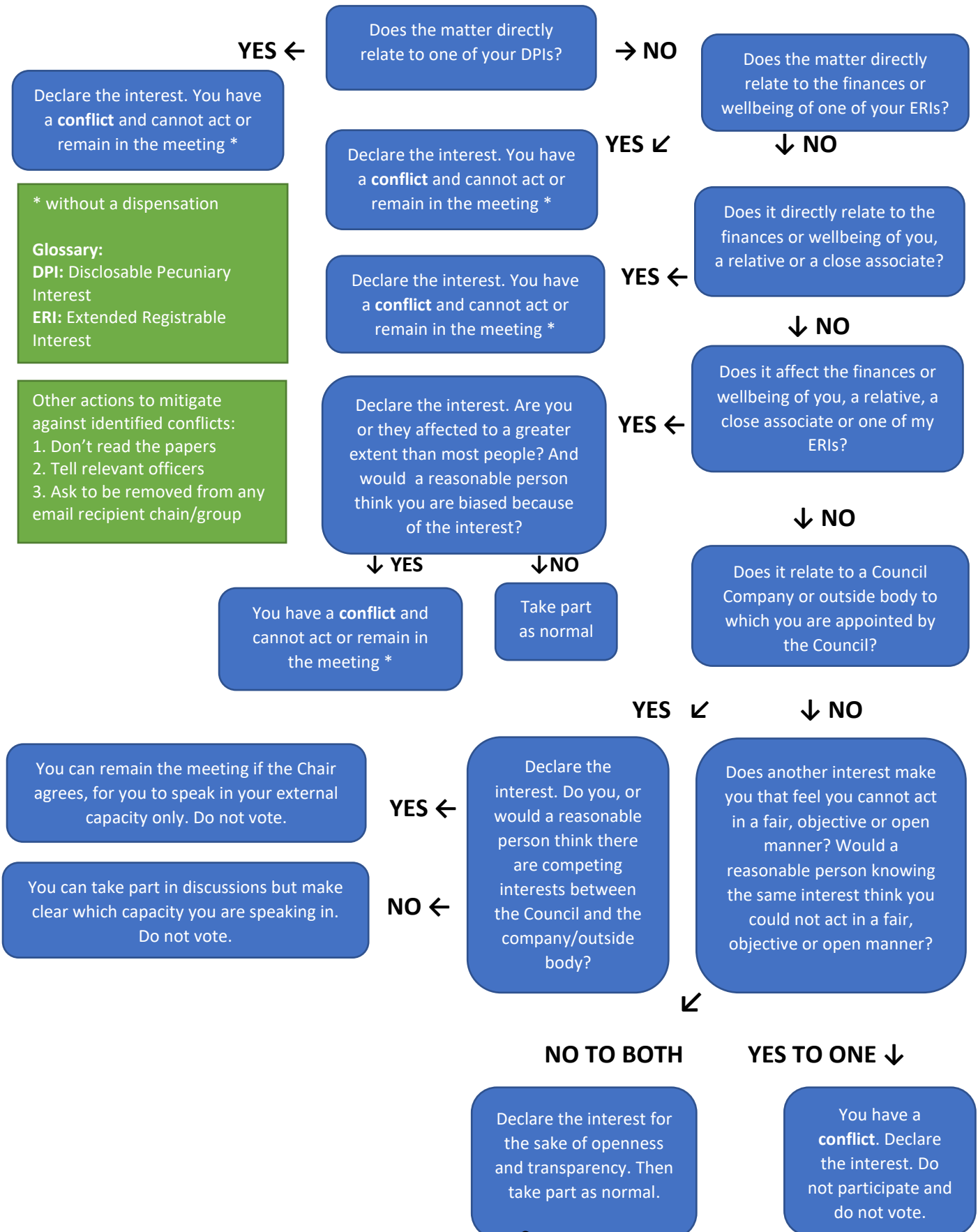
RESOLVED: It was agreed that future meetings be scheduled at around 6 weekly intervals and dates brought to the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 4.30 pm

DECLARING AN INTEREST AND MANAGING ANY CONFLICTS FLOWCHART



START



POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	Biodiversity Task Group		
DATE:	5 February 2024		
TITLE:	Recommendations of the Urban Wildlife Informal Working Group		
TYPE OF REPORT:	Policy development		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Climate Change and Biodiversity		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Stuart Ashworth – Assistant Director		
OPEN		WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	Yes

PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:
To report on the recommendations of the Urban Wildlife Informal Working Group (UWIWG), and to put together recommendations to be reported to Cabinet at the end of the Biodiversity Working Group cycle.
KEY ISSUES:
Recommendations of the Urban Wildlife Informal Working Group (UWIWG), and the implications associated with the recommendations.
OPTIONS CONSIDERED:
To make recommendations relating to carrying forward all or some of the UWIWG recommendations.
RECOMMENDATIONS:
1. That Members of the Task Group agree the recommendations/actions on the way forward on each of the 7 recommendations of the UWIWG, such recommendations/actions to be forwarded to Cabinet at the conclusion of the task group.
REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:
To allow the council to contribute towards improving biodiversity within the borough.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Urban Wildlife Informal Working Group was a working group put together to feed back to Environment and Community (E and C) Panel on the issue of urban wildlife. The working group made seven recommendations to E and C, and these are set out below. A copy of the report to E and C is attached as appendix 1. Following a brief Cabinet Report in January 2023, it was considered that it would be best if the recommendations were considered by the Biodiversity Task Group. This report sets out the seven recommendations and some commentary on suggested potential issues around them for the task group to consider.

2.0 Recommendations and associated comments from the Urban Wildlife Informal Working Group (UWIWG)

1. Encourage the use of bird boxes, bat boxes and hedgehog highways in new and existing Borough Council properties

To investigate the possibility of adopting a policy of giving the option of installing swift and bat boxes, bee bricks and hedgehog highways in new developments. The group acknowledge that it would be difficult to insist that this was included in new developments, but feel that people should be given the option of having them provided. The group also encourage installation of items to promote urban wildlife in existing council facilities where appropriate.

2. The Council to investigate providing wildflower seeds for redundant allotments and community orchards/gardens and encourage the planting of wildlife seeds in the community

The Group would like the Council to give consideration to planting wildflower seeds in redundant areas such as unused allotments and community areas. They ask that the Council use pollinators and flowers that benefit wildlife where possible. Parishes could also be encouraged to plant redundant areas.

3. The Council to encourage bird feeding stations and nest boxes in schools

This could involve the Men's Shed who have indicated that they would be interested in assisting with the provision of nest boxes for schools.

4. Support of a Nest Box Trail in King's Lynn

This is an initiative by Julian Moulton and his idea is to locate a variety of nest boxes throughout King's Lynn with a map and guide. Boxes could be located at playgrounds, public spaces and various buildings. This could be publicised by having a stand at town centre events.

5. Produce literature advising how residents can help support their urban wildlife and promoting the nest box trail in King's Lynn.

This could include links to local organisations who are interested in promoting Urban Wildlife along with links to useful websites, details of the best types of plants to encourage urban wildlife and helpful hints and tips to support urban wildlife in their own gardens.

6. Engage with local groups to participate in urban wildlife

Organisations such as Men's Shed, In Bloom and schools could be engaged to promote urban wildlife. Stands at events could promote the nest box trail and provide literature as mentioned in recommendation 5 above. Linking with recommendation 3 above, schools could be encouraged to become involved by promoting what they have done for urban wildlife, with the possibility of a competition. The Informal Working Group have also been approached by NVN (Nature Volunteer Network) who have offered to collect wild bird seed for bee highways in the Borough. They are careful only to collect 10-20% of the seed on any given wild plant. This is an example of a local organisation who wants to contribute and also a demonstration of the cooperation the Borough can encourage and develop between outside bodies interested in local wildlife.

7. Encourage Councillors to promote Urban Wildlife in their Wards and Parishes where appropriate.

This could include promoting the benefits of Urban Wildlife and signposting to relevant organisations. Councillors could suggest ideas to their Parishes such as bulk buying wild bird seed, which would bring the cost down to residents, and then could be sold at cost by Parish Councils. Councillors could also provide detail of good work in their Wards which could be circulated to other Councillors via the Members Bulletin and then cascaded down to Parish Councils as appropriate.

3.0 Recommendations/Actions

Recommendation/actions in response to 1.

- **That the council's project teams publish the measures that have been taken on current developments to incorporate enhanced levels of biodiversity.**
- **That an Action Plan be prepared, within 6 months, as to how the council will seek to enhance biodiversity in new council developments.**
- **That the council commit to all new developments being exemplars in biodiversity provision in order to set a positive example and encourage the private sector to incorporate such measures into their developments.**
- **That future design guides produced by the borough council include guidance on how biodiversity should be included within new developments.**

Recommendation/actions in response to 2.

- **That the council's Public Open Space team publish the measures that have been taken on current open spaces they maintain, to incorporate enhanced levels of biodiversity. This includes existing partnership working already taking place.**
- **That as part of an Action Plan to be prepared (see recommendation 1) as to how the council will seek to enhance biodiversity, the POS team will feed into that in relation to public open spaces.**
- **That the POS team give special consideration to pollinators and flowers that benefit wildlife where possible, when undertaking planting schemes.**

Recommendation/actions in response to 3.

- **The council contact (email) schools to encourage the use of nest boxes and feeding stations in schools, and signpost to best practice.**

Recommendation/actions in response to 4.

- **The council be willing to participate in this initiative, where nest boxes are placed on council properties.**

Recommendation/actions in response to 5.

- **Amend the biodiversity pages of the website to signpost best practice.**

Recommendation/actions in response to 6.

- **POS team to contact the Nature Volunteer Network (NVN) to investigate whether they could contribute wild bird seed.**

Recommendation/actions in response to 7.

- **Councillors to consider how to carry this element forward.**

4.0 Other issues for the task group to consider

4.1 The task group will need to consider and agree or otherwise the suggested recommendations/actions put forward by officers on the seven recommendations put forward by the UWIWG. Set out below are some suggestions of other issues that could be part of the discussion relating to the above recommendations.

4.2 Resources

4.2.1 Most of the above will require borough council resources, either officer time, or money, so that will need to be factored into any recommendations to Cabinet. At present there is no budget set aside for biodiversity, to pay for the likes of bird boxes and feeding stations, put forward as part of the UWIWG recommendations.

4.2.2 Attached at appendix 2 is the current list of actions being taken on our active housing sites. Clearly this illustrates that urban wildlife is already a consideration for the major housing team, and is already factored into scheme costs.

4.2.3 It is clear that there are already existing wildflower planting schemes going on with volunteer groups, such as with NVN in Downham Market, which can help with regards to resources.

4.3 Website

4.3.1 There is already a great deal of advice available to schools, parish councils etc. covering best practice for urban wildlife. That said, there is an existing Biodiversity page on the council's website, but that is focussed on planning processes, so members may wish to consider altering that emphasis to change it more of an encouraging and signposting good practice webpage.

4.4 Local Plan

- 4.4.1 In terms of an overall policy covering new developments, the new Local Plan, which is currently at Examination, does have policies dealing with biodiversity. Those policies are due to be tested at Examination, with Hearings due to reconvene in March, but ultimately it is unlikely to be adopted until around January '25. So in essence there is policy coming forward, although it will not be brought into force until the Local Plan is adopted.

5.0 Corporate Priorities

- 5.1 Relates to key priority 'protect our environment', and within protect our environment, that "we will increase biodiversity where we can and create wildflower and pollinator opportunities".

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 There will be resource implications associated with some of the recommendations. There is no budget currently set aside for biodiversity improvements.

7.0 Any other Implications/Risks

- 7.1 Not applicable.

8.0 Equal Opportunity Considerations

- 8.1 There are none.

9.0 Environmental Considerations

- 9.1 These are positive.

10.0 Consultation

- 10.0 N/A

11.0 Background Papers

Local Plan review – policies covering biodiversity (draft policies LP18, LP19 & LP23)
Cabinet report on recommendations from the environment and community panel's urban wildlife informal working group - 17 January 2023
Environment and Community Panel report from the urban wildlife informal working group - 5 October 2021

POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL REPORT

REPORT TO:	Environment and Community Panel		
DATE:	5 th October 2021		
TITLE:	Report from the Urban Wildlife Informal Working Group		
TYPE OF REPORT:	IWG Report		
PORTFOLIO(S):	Environment		
REPORT AUTHOR:	Rebecca Parker, Democratic Services Officer		
OPEN/EXEMPT	OPEN	WILL BE SUBJECT TO A FUTURE CABINET REPORT:	Yes – if the Panel decide to make recommendations to Cabinet

REPORT SUMMARY/COVER PAGE

PURPOSE OF REPORT/SUMMARY:
At its meeting on 9 th June 2021 the Environment and Community Panel established an Informal Working Group to look at Urban Wildlife. This report presents the findings from the Group for the Panel to consider and make recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.
KEY ISSUES:
The purpose of the Group was to look at how the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk could encourage and support urban wildlife for the benefits of residents and wildlife.
OPTIONS CONSIDERED:
The Environment and Community Panel can decide whether or not to forward on the recommendations from the Informal Working Group to Cabinet for consideration.
RECOMMENDATIONS:
<p>The Urban Wildlife Informal Working Group recommend the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage the use of bird boxes, bat boxes, bee highways and hedgehog highways in new and existing Borough Council properties. 2. The Council to investigate providing wildflower seeds for redundant allotments and community orchards/gardens. 3. The Council to encourage bird feeding stations and nest boxes in schools. 4. Support of a 'Nest Box Trail' in King's Lynn. 5. Produce literature advising how residents can help support their urban wildlife and promoting the nest box trail in King's Lynn. 6. Engage with local groups to participate in urban wildlife and the creation of bee highways. 7. Encourage Councillors to promote Urban Wildlife in their Wards and Parishes
REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:
To promote urban wildlife in the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk.

REPORT DETAIL

1. Introduction

At its meeting on 9th June 2021, following a presentation from Councillor Bullen, the Environment and Community Panel established an Urban Wildlife Informal Working Group.

2. Membership

Members of the Group are Councillors Bullen (Chair), Bower, Hipperson, Kirk and Squire.

3. Meetings

The Informal Working Group held meetings on 30th June, 13th July, 28th July and 27th August 2021.

At their meeting on 27th August the Informal Working Group held a discussion with the Portfolio Holder for Environment to discuss their proposed recommendations to the Environment and Community Panel.

The Informal Working Group also presented an interim update to the Environment and Community Panel at its meeting on 31st August 2021.

4. Summary of discussions.

Items discussed at the Informal Working Group are available for Members to view on Mod Gov. Details are provided below on the discussions on the recommendations.

5. Further work of the Informal Working Group

Although the Informal Working Group have concluded their work, they ask that the Environment and Community Panel give consideration to keeping the Group established.

The Informal Working Group would like to continue to work with the Cabinet to implement any recommendations taken forward.

5. Recommendations

The Informal Working Group ask that the Environment and Community Panel recommend the following to Cabinet.

1. Encourage the use of bird boxes, bat boxes and hedgehog highways in new and existing Borough Council properties.

To investigate the possibility of adopting a policy of giving the option of installing swift and bat boxes, bee bricks and hedgehog highways in new developments. The Group acknowledge that it would be difficult to insist that this was included in new developments, but feel that people should be given the option of having them provided. The Group also encourage installation of items to promote Urban Wildlife in existing Council facilities where appropriate.

2. The Council to investigate providing wildflower seeds for redundant allotments and community orchards/gardens.

The Group would like the Council to give consideration to planting wildflower seeds in redundant areas such as unused allotments and community areas. They ask that the

Council use pollinators and flowers that benefit wildlife where possible. Parishes could also be encouraged to plant redundant areas.

3. The Council to encourage bird feeding stations and nest boxes in schools.

This could involve the Men's Shed who have indicated that they would be interested in assisting with the provision of nest boxes for schools.

4. Support of a 'Nest Box Trail' in King's Lynn.

This is an initiative by Julian Moulton and his idea is to locate a variety of nest boxes throughout King's Lynn with a map and guide. Boxes could be located at playgrounds, public spaces and various buildings. This could be publicised by having a stand at town centre events.

5. Produce literature advising how residents can help support their urban wildlife and promoting the nest box trail in King's Lynn.

This could include links to local organisations who are interested in promoting Urban Wildlife along with links to useful websites, details of the best types of plants to encourage urban wildlife and helpful hints and tips to support urban wildlife in their own gardens.

6. Engage with local groups to participate in urban wildlife.

Organisations such as Men's Shed, In Bloom and schools could be engaged to promote urban wildlife. Stands at events could promote the nest box trail and provide literature as mentioned in recommendation 5 above.

Linking with recommendation 3 above, schools could be encouraged to become involved by promoting what they have done for urban wildlife, with the possibility of a competition.

The Informal Working Group have also been approached by NVN (Nature Volunteer Network) who have offered to collect wild bird seed for bee highways in the Borough. They are careful only to collect 10-20% of the seed on any given wild plant. This is an example of a local organisation who wants to contribute and also a demonstration of the cooperation the Borough can encourage and develop between outside bodies interested in local wildlife.

7. Encourage Councillors to promote Urban Wildlife in their Wards and Parishes where appropriate.

This could include promoting the benefits of Urban Wildlife and signposting to relevant organisations. Councillors could suggest ideas to their Parishes such as bulk buying wild bird seed, which would bring the cost down to residents, and then could be sold at cost by Parish Councils. Councillors could also provide detail of good work in their Wards which could be circulated to other Councillors via the Members Bulletin and then cascaded down to Parish Councils as appropriate.

Appendix 2 – Existing ecological actions

Salters Road

Landscape and Ecological Management Plan

Salters Road	
Bird nest boxes	20 no
Bat roost boxes	10 no TBC
Wildlife fencing	Where appropriate
Bee Bricks	5 no

Southend Road

Ecology Survey Report

Southend Road	
Sparrow terrace box	1 no
Starling box	1 no
Swallow nest 'cups'	6 no
Swift box	2 no
Bat roost boxes	
Bee bricks	TBC
Wildlife fencing	Not necessary

Parkway

Parkway	
Sparrow terrace box	15 no
Tawny Owl Box	2 no
Swift box	6 no
Bird Box – small hole	7 no
Bird Box – open fronted	4 no
Bird Box – Crevice	3 no
Bat boxes – Crevice	6 no
Bat box - Cavity	6 no

Biodiversity Net Gain

16

Borough Council of
King's Lynn &
West Norfolk



Agenda

1. **Introduction** – What is net gain and why is it required?
2. **Inclusions and exemptions** – Which developments are subject to net gain?
3. **Timelines** – When will net gain become mandatory?
4. **What is required?**
5. **Calculations and credits** – The Biodiversity Metric, who can fill it out
6. **Key Legislation & guidance**– Anti-trash clause and irreplaceable habitats
7. **Q&A**

1. What is Biodiversity Net Gain?

The Environment Act 2021



“...an approach to development...that aims to leave the natural environment in a **measurably** better state than it was beforehand.”

How will it work?

Overview



Minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity post development



On-site or off-site as Biodiversity Units or as last resort via statutory credits system



National Biodiversity Gain Sites register



Required to use the Statutory Metric



Land providing habitats for BNG to be legally secured and maintained for minimum of 30 years

There are some exemptions and special cases

2. Which developments require net gain?

Inclusions

The following types of development will be included in BNG requirements:

- ✓ All major developments and most minor developments

Exemptions

The following types of development will be exempt from BNG requirements:

- X Householder applications
- X Permitted development
- X Development **impacting habitat** of an area below a 'de minimis' threshold of 25 metres squared, or 5m for linear habitats such as hedgerows and that does not impact priority habitat
- X Small scale self-build and custom house building
- X Biodiversity gain sites (where habitats are being enhanced for wildlife)
- X Urgent crown development & HS2

3. When will net gain become mandatory?

Time Line

12 February 2024 – commencement for all large / major Scale developments

2 April 2024 – commencement for small sites / minor developments – defined as:

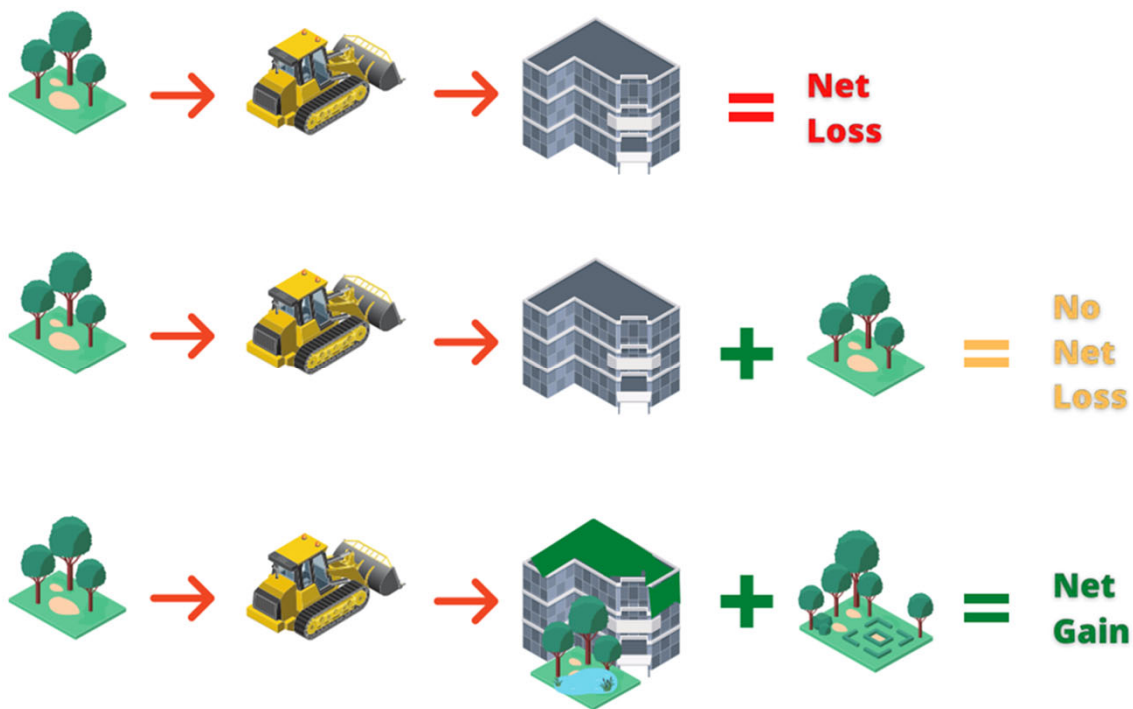
- (i) For residential:
- Where the number of dwellings to be provided is between one and nine inclusive on a site having an area of less than one hectare, or;
 - Where the number of dwellings to be provided is not known, a site area of less than 0.5 hectares.
- (ii) For non-residential: where the floor space to be created is less than 1,000 square metres OR where the site area is less than one hectare.

2025 - 2008 Planning Act Developments (NSIPs)

The BNG requirement will apply only to those applications submitted on or after BNG takes effect

4. What is it required?

A minimum 10% increase in biodiversity compared to the baseline which must be secured for 30 years



BNG Assessment Process

1. Biodiversity Net Gain Statement (Validation)

- How the project has followed the Rules and Principles of BNG
- How development intends to deliver BNG (onsite/offsite or both)

2. Biodiversity Metric (Validation)

- Calculates the before and after biodiversity value of a development
- Calculator & Guidance provided by government and its use to become a statutory requirement in January

3. A Biodiversity Gain Plan (Discharge of condition)

- Shows how the development has achieved BNG
- Details any off-site BNG units being used by the development

4. Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) (Discharge of condition)

Management prescriptions for 30 years and timeline for monitoring

Mechanisms for delivery

24

ON-SITE (UNITS)



Delivered through habitat creation/enhancement via landscaping/green infrastructure

OFF-SITE (UNITS)



Delivered off-site through habitat creation/enhancement, including via habitat banks, with public and private

STATUTORY CREDITS*



Delivered through large-scale habitat projects delivering high value habitats which can also provide long-term nature-benefits.

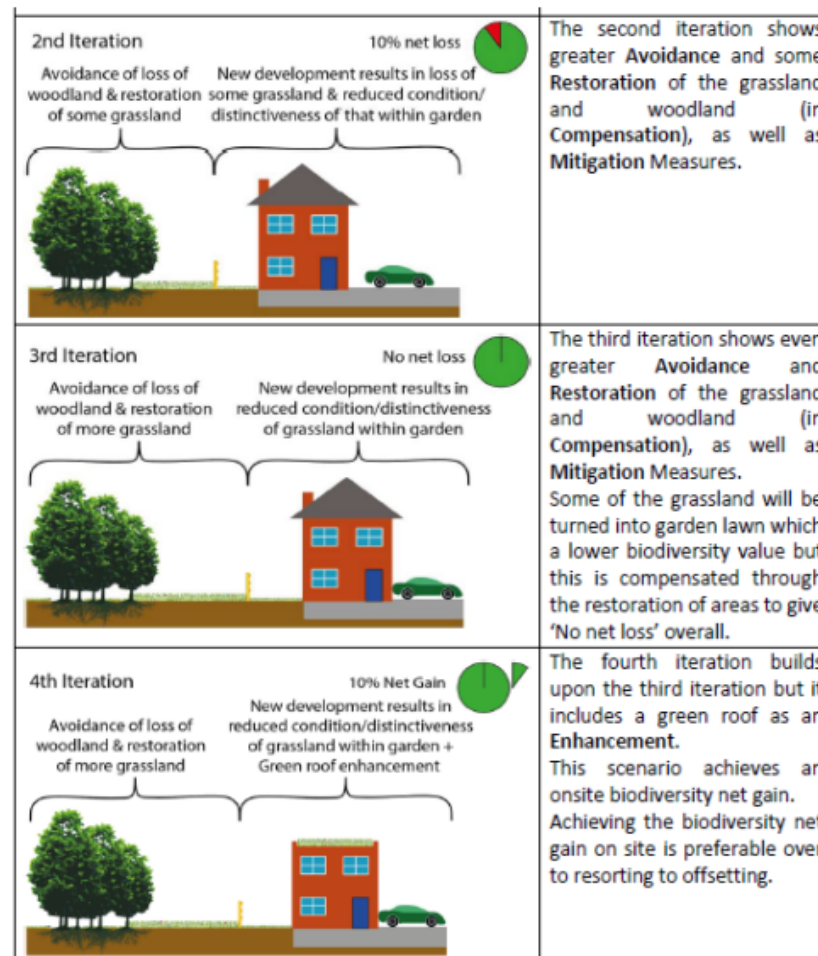
Securing BNG – on-site

Wherever possible, BNG should be **achieved onsite** via the creation or enhancement of habitat

25 On site habitat can be secured via conditions.

- The **long term management** (30 years +) must be stipulated
- There will be a requirement for **monitoring and reporting**

On-site may not be appropriate to the development of habitats being lost or just won't work on site. In which case off-site habitat creation may be required.



Securing BNG – Off-site

Where BNG can't be achieved onsite. The loss in biodiversity will need to be 'offset' by **creating new habitat somewhere else** (as near as possible to the development)

- All offsite BNG must be **registered** with Natural England via the National Register (approx. £500 registration fee)
- Will be secured through either s106 (landowner & council) or Conservation Covenants (landowner & responsible body) where the land is not owned by the applicant
- Must have evidence of purchase where offsite has been used
- Penalised if sites further afield are used
- Uses a multiplier to target optimum habitats

26

National Credit Scheme

Natural England will be providing an offsite Biodiversity Credits scheme as a last resort option

- The National Credit scheme is a last resort option while local markets develop
- ²⁷ Credit sales revenue will be received by Natural England and invested in habitat creation projects e.g. Wendling Breck
- [Statutory credit prices](#) have been published. Prices are set high to incentivise local schemes over national credits.
 - Low distinctiveness habits priced per unit at £42,000 rising up to £125,000 for some medium and high distinctiveness habitat credits. The top prices are £650,000 for lake habitats.



5. Calculations and Credits

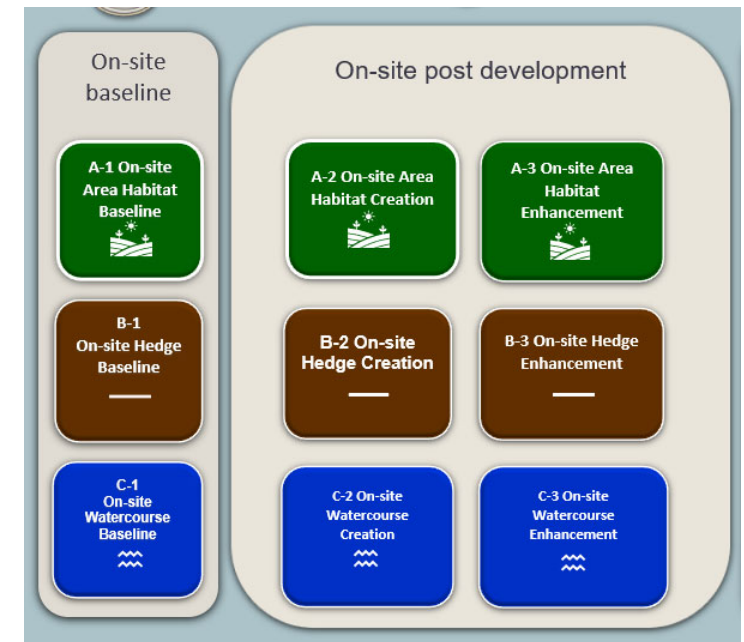
The biodiversity value of a site will need to be calculated using the statutory [Biodiversity Metric \(an Excel spreadsheet\)](#).

This must be completed by a competent person i.e. a **professional Ecologist** and will include a calculation of the pre development baseline and post development baseline.

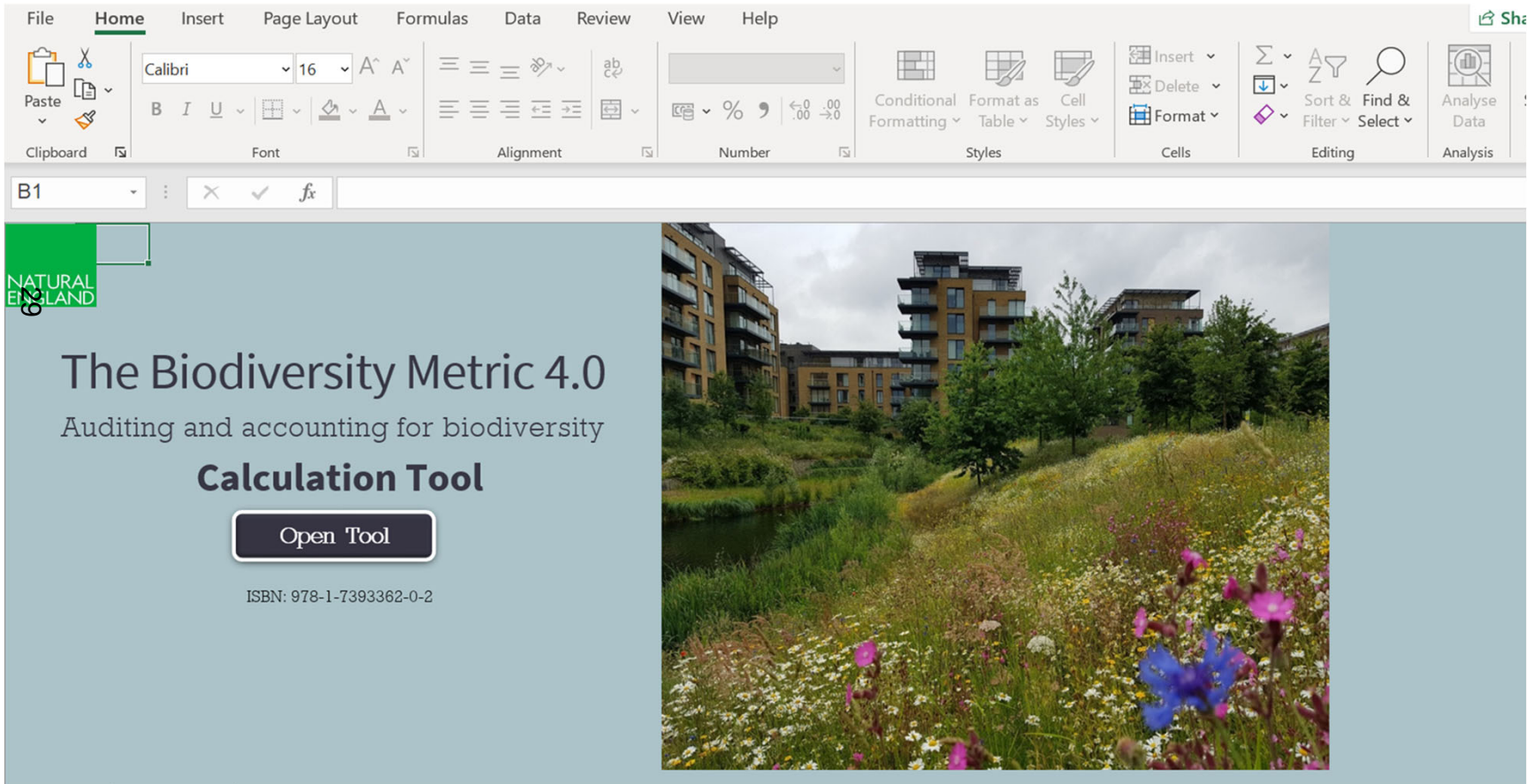
The Biodiversity Metric comprises three separate `modules` of the metric which are a proxy to describe broad type of biodiversity units. These units are:

1. Area habitats (**Green** in the metric)
2. Hedgerows and lines of trees (**Brown** in the Metric);
and
3. Watercourses (**Blue** in the Metric).

BNG applies to **each habitat type** that is present at the **baseline**



The Metric tool



The screenshot shows the Microsoft Excel interface with the 'Home' tab selected. The ribbon includes groups for Clipboard, Font, Alignment, Number, Styles, Cells, Editing, and Analysis. The active cell is B1. The main content area displays a slide with the following text:

NATURAL ENGLAND


The Biodiversity Metric 4.0

Auditing and accounting for biodiversity

Calculation Tool

[Open Tool](#)

ISBN: 978-1-7393362-0-2



The Small Sites Metric (SSM)

A [Small Sites Metric \(SMM\)](#) is available for small sites which is simplified calculator.

Such sites are defined as small sites where the following criteria are met:

For residential developments

- ✓ The number of dwellings to be provided is between one and nine (inclusive) on a site having an area of less than 1 ha
- ✓ Where the number of dwellings to be provided is not known the site area is less than 0.5 hectares

For non-residential developments

- ✓ Where the floor space to be created is less than 1,000 square meters, or where the site area is less than 1 ha

Note - There are exclusions where the small-site calculator is not appropriate, for example, where priority habitats are within the development site

Information Required

Calculation input	Area	Hedgerow	Watercourses
Habitat type	Required	Required	Required
Size	Square metres	Metres	Metres
Distinctiveness	Not required	Not required	Not required
Condition and target condition	Required for some created and enhanced habitats only	Required for some created and enhanced habitats only	Required for some created and enhanced habitats only
Strategic significance	Required	Required	Required
Area retained, enhanced or lost	Required	Not required	Not required
Length retained, enhanced, or lost	Not required	Required	Required

Photographs to evidence habitats

A walkover within 6 months of submission

Evidence of user persons competency

Competent Person

A competent person `the user` must carry out the habitat survey and complete the SSM calculation.

Users of the SSM should be competent in identifying:

- habitats present on site (pre-development)
- management requirements for habitats to be created or enhanced within the landscape design (post-development)

32

- The competent person does not need to be an ecologist for the SSM.
- A competent person is someone who can demonstrate they have acquired **through training, qualifications or experience, or a combination of these, the knowledge and skills enabling that person to perform specified tasks** in completing and reviewing metric calculations.
- Where required, evidence should be provided and be signposted within the ‘user comments’ section of the SSM.

Monitoring and enforcement

- **The planning enforcement regime** will be the principal way of enforcing delivery of BNG
- **Reporting required to government on BNG** as part of our enhanced duty under Environment Act

33

6. Key Legislation



Anti Trash

- The `anti-trash` clause aims to discourage the destruction of habitat prior to submission of an application in order to present an artificially low baseline.
- If after the **20th January 2020** works have happened and damaged habitats the baseline will be taken from before the works occurred.
- Assigning a high condition/distinctiveness is appropriate where the ecologist cannot access the it i.e. should be assumed to be good condition rather than moderate or low

34

7. Questions

Thank you for listening – Any questions?

Biodiversity Duty

36

Biodiversity duty

- Public authorities who operate in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England. This is the strengthened 'biodiversity duty' that the Environment Act 2021 introduces.
- This means that, as a public authority, we must:
 - Consider what we can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
 - Agree policies and specific objectives based on our consideration.
 - Act to deliver your policies and achieve our objectives.

37

Biodiversity duty

- The Local Authority:
 - Need to complete first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by 1 January '24 (yet to do this)
 - Need to agree policies and objectives as soon as possible after this
 - Must reconsider actions at least every 5 years
- The Local Planning Authority:
 - Need to report on Biodiversity Net Gain, first report due 1 January 2026

Biodiversity duty

- Way Forward

- No clear guidance on what constitutes first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity. Currently investigating this. Argument we are 'considering' what action to take now through the Biodiversity Task Group.
- There will need to be policies and specific objectives agreed by the council, after the task group has reported its findings.