



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

Thursday 19 June 2025

Biodiversity Duty Consideration Report & Action Plan

Cabinet Member:	Councillor C Healy, Cabinet Member: Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability
Lead Director:	James Dunn - Director: Prosperity & Investment
Service Area:	Prosperity and Investment
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Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	June 2025
Report considered by:	SMT – 13 May 25 Business Briefing - 22 May 2025 Cabinet – 19 June 2025

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1.1 Note the importance of protecting and restoring biodiversity for the borough and its residents.
- 1.2 Approve the commitment to safeguard, enhance and improve biodiversity in accordance with the Biodiversity Duty.
- 1.3 Adopt the Biodiversity Duty Consideration Report & Action Plan.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 To adopt the Biodiversity Duty Consideration Report & Action Plan.

3.0 Background

3.1 Biodiversity is the biological diversity, or variety of life on earth. It includes all species of plants, animals and fungi at all levels, encompassing everything from genetic diversity to ecosystems.

3.2 The planet is undergoing a global extinction event which is primarily caused by human activities. The state of the UK's biodiversity is in the worst 10% of the world and 13% of the remaining species here are threatened with extinction.

3.3 The Council is a significant landowner and has wide ranging impacts within and outside the borough. As such it has taken its responsibilities seriously with actions including :

- Prioritising the protection of the borough's natural environment and take a leading role in tackling the climate emergency
- Being designated as a Tree City of the World
- Being signatories of the West Midlands' Biodiversity Pledge
- Declaring a climate emergency in 2019 and reducing its carbon emissions by over 60%
- Protecting green spaces through a range of statutory and non-statutory designations:
 - c.26ha of SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest);
 - c.614ha of LNR (Local Nature Reserves);
 - c.100ha of proposed LNRs;
 - c.626ha of LWS (Local Wildlife Sites), and;
 - c.624ha of Green Guarantee sites.

3.4 In January 2023 the UK government published its [Environmental Improvement Plan](#). This set out how it was intending to meet its international obligations, by 2030, including:

- protecting 30% of UK land for biodiversity
- halting the decline in species abundance by 2030

3.5 Similarly it commits to the following by 2042:

- increase species abundance by at least 10% from 2030, surpassing 2022 levels
- restore or create at least 500,000ha 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

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- 3.6 In advance of these commitments the Environment Act 2021 set out many requirements to deliver a step-change in nature conservation across England. These include [Section 102](#) of the Environment Act 2021, which has amended the pre-existing Biodiversity Duty on public bodies in England (Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006), to include conserving and enhancing biodiversity.
- 3.7 [Section 40 Duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity](#) now states:
- “(A1) For the purposes of this section “the general biodiversity objective” is the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in England through the exercise of functions in relation to England.*
- (1) A public authority which has any functions exercisable in relation to England must from time to time consider what action the authority can properly take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective.*
- (1A) After that consideration the authority must (unless it concludes there is no new action it can properly take)—*
- (a) determine such policies and specific objectives as it considers appropriate for taking action to further the general biodiversity objective, and*
- (b) take such action as it considers appropriate, in the light of those policies and objectives, to further that objective.”*
- 3.8 [Section 103](#) of the Environment Act further amends the pre-existing Biodiversity Duty by inserting [Section 40a](#), which prescribes a requirement for monitoring and reporting.
- 3.9 The timetable for completing consideration, creating a plan along with monitoring, reporting and review is set out within the Environment Act.
- 3.10 Along with these specific modifications, the Environment Act also includes several other significant changes with regard to biodiversity and Local Government including Biodiversity Net Gain, Local Nature Recovery Strategies and a new national body to oversee environmental compliance (Office of Environmental Protection).
- 3.11 The appendices of this report include a Consideration Report and accompanying Action Plan for the Councils duty.
- 3.12 The Consideration Report sets out the national and local context for the Action Plan including a review of existing corporate strategies and action.
- 3.13 The Action Plan follows the [government's published guidance](#) to identify topics, which have then been divided into SMART-based actions with accountability allocated appropriately.

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- 3.14 In preparation of this report progress was presented to the Environment Scrutiny Committee on 12th February 2025.
- 3.15 The actions identified to address the topics have been collated within the Action Plan which is presented in Part 2 of the document.
- 3.16 The Council is required by the Environment Act to publish it's first [monitoring report on the delivery of it's Biodiversity Duty](#) by 26th March 2026. It will also need to include specific elements of the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain by Development Management. From there on, our corporate Biodiversity Duty plan must be reviewed and reported at least once every five years.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

- 4.1 The Council's response to it's initial consideration, on how it will conserve and enhance biodiversity, is presented in a two-part document comprising a Consideration Report and an Action Plan.
- 4.2 The Consideration & Action Setting document provides TWC's legal and local context to the Biodiversity Duty and process it intends to take deliver it.
- 4.3 The Action Plan sets out specific activities and their expected outcomes. Some of these will inevitably be ongoing duties and others will have specific dates of delivery.
- 4.4 Monitoring of the actions will be published in line with government requirements.

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Do not produce a Consideration Report and Action Plan.
- 5.2 Produce and adopt a different approach to inform reporting.

6.0 Key Risks

- 6.1 The TWC draft documents produced for adoption have strived to align closely with central government's guidance. However, as further guidance and precedent documents emerge there could be a need to update documentation.
- 6.2 Non-delivery of specific actions within an adopted plan may be open to external criticism.
- 6.3 Non-inclusion of actions may be open to external criticism.
- 6.4 Delay in the adoption of a Consideration Report and Action Plan will not allow TWC to meet it's statutory reporting duties.

7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 A key outcome of the Council Plan is to work towards the protection and enhancement of habitats and wildlife. However, the founding forest city ethos of the town of Telford has demonstrated that the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity contributes fundamentally to the Council's vision of protect, care and invest to create a better borough and assists in the delivery of all five of the Council Plans' priorities.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 The Biodiversity Duty does not come with any additional funds. Therefore, the compilations of actions, their delivery and monitoring must be carried out using existing resources.
- 8.2 Indicative estimates of resource to deliver actions have been identified. These include opportunities for changes to existing practices which could release monies for reinvestment into delivering other actions.
- 8.3 It is expected that other partnership initiatives, such as Green Pledge, and Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy will also contribute to conserving and enhancing the borough's biodiversity.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 9.1 The documents for adoption are to fulfil legal duties under Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021

10.0 Ward Implications

- 10.1 The Consideration Report and Action Plan covers many council service areas. These will be active across all wards.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

- 11.1 Many studies have shown the significant benefit of biodiversity to human health, social wellbeing and economic growth, not least the HM Treasury's internationally respected "[The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review \(2021\)](#)".
- 11.2 Additional research since this review by [Oxford University concluded](#) that damage to the natural environment is slowing the UK economy and could lead to a 12% drop in GDP, which would be bigger than the global financial crisis or Covid-19.
- 11.3 TWC's Health and Wellbeing Board' strategy for 2023-2027 has identified a "Green and Sustainable Borough " as one of its eight priorities. It also quotes the 2022 residents' survey that found that *for improved open green spaces is the most important priority to them for improving cultural, leisure and sports facilities and service.*"

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- 11.4 Therefore, actions proposed should benefit the health and wellbeing of residents of all ages and continue to promote inward investment to the borough.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 12.1 Environmental degradation, including biodiversity loss, has greater impact on those in society who are more vulnerable. This has a number of drivers often connected to economic status, health and age. Therefore, preventing and reversing this degradation is likely to have a greater proportional benefit on those groups.
- 12.2 Actions proposed have tangible local benefits that are accessible to all.

13.0 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

- 13.1 Many of the actions set out will have wider environmental co-benefits including:
- reduction in carbon emissions
 - capture of carbon
 - local climate cooling
 - flood prevention
 - air pollution reduction
 - air pollution capture
 - water pollution reduction
 - water conservation

14.0 Appendices

- A TWC Draft Biodiversity Duty Consideration Report & Action Plan; Part 1. Consideration and Action Setting
- B TWC Draft Biodiversity Duty Consideration Report & Action Plan; Part 2. Action Plan

15.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Director	01/05/2025	06/05/2025	JD
SDM	01/05/2025	06/05/2025	VH
Finance	01/05/2025	27/05/2025	AM