

East Devon District Council (EDDC) Biodiversity Reporting Duty 2023-2025

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Introduction

Under the Environment Act 2021¹ East Devon District Council (EDDC) has a legal duty to publish a biodiversity report. The report must cover a period from 01 September 2023 until 01 January 2026, with subsequent reporting periods not exceeding 5 years from its publication.

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 introduced.

This means that, as a public authority, we must:

- Consider what you can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agree policies and specific objectives based on your consideration.
- Act to deliver your policies and achieve your objectives.

By law, the biodiversity report must include:

- A summary of the action the LPA has taken to comply with the biodiversity duty;
- How it plans to comply with the biodiversity duty in the next reporting period; and
- Any other information deemed appropriate.
- For Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) - biodiversity net gain (BNG) information: actions undertaken to meet the BNG obligations.

This report outlines the actions, policies, and information required to meet the mandatory legal obligations. The structure is based on [.GOV guidance](#).

The reporting period covered is 01 September 2023 – 01 January 2026.

Section 1: Policies, objectives and actions

Mandatory requirement: Explain the policies and objectives you have set to meet your biodiversity duty

East Devon District Council (EDDC) have undertaken several actions to contribute towards the enhanced biodiversity duties through policy, draft plans, and projects. The Council Plan (adopted in April 2024) is the organisational strategy. Its priorities link to all cascading plans and strategies by the 'Golden Thread'. The Council Plan include priorities for carbon neutrality and ecological recovery.

In September 2023, EDDC Cabinet adopted a Nature Recovery Declaration. This formally recognised that the Nature Crisis and Climate Emergency are intrinsically linked. The adoption and commitments to the principles of the declaration was intended to ensure compliance with new duties under the Environment Act 2021.

EDDC have undertaken a significant amount of work to contribute towards the enhanced biodiversity duty. Key achievements include publishing the [Wild About Seaton Masterplan](#), [obtaining planning approval for Clyst Meadows](#), a new area of council owned and managed Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), the adoption of a [Tree, Hedge and Woodland Strategy \(THaWS\)](#), and [securing funding for nutrient mitigation projects](#). Other emerging policies including enhanced biodiversity and tree policies in the emerging local plan.

Consideration of Environment Act 2021 Strategies - Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

EDDC is a Supporting Authority and was an active stakeholder in the development of the [Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(LNRS\)](#). EDDC attended SA working groups, specialist working groups for bats, invasive species, and biodiversity net gain (BNG). EDDC provided comprehensive feedback on the draft LNRS prior to its public consultation. The LNRS is also recognised in planning policy in the emerging East Devon Local Plan.

Protected Site Strategies (PSS)

EDDC has attended national Planning Advice Service (PAS) workshops on the development of PSS. They have also been party to local Natural England (NE) stakeholder meetings on the development of an East Devon PSS, which is still in its development phase.

Species Conservation Strategies (SCS)

EDDC have been invited to attend as regional SCS on hazel dormouse – from spring 2026.

The actions you've completed, either alone or in partnership with others, that benefit biodiversity

Council departments including Street Scene, Development Management, Planning Policy, and Climate teams have actively contributed to long-term biodiversity actions, as well as partners and organisations such as the Triple Axe partnership, National Trust, Devon Wildlife Trust, Clinton Devon Estates, and East Devon and Blackdown Hills National Landscapes. [South-East Devon Wildlife](#) is a key organisation that to protect internationally important nature reserves including the Exe Estuary and East Devon Heaths located in East Devon.

The table below signposts the work undertaken in the period 2023-2025 which are considered to contribute towards the conservation and/or enhancement of biodiversity.

Date	Policy / Strategic Area	Objective / Action
September 2023	Nature Recovery Declaration Nature Recovery Declaration for East Devon Cabinet Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet adoption of the Nature Recovery Declaration in September 2023 • To embed biodiversity in all council decisions • To deliver an East Devon Local Nature Recovery Plan and Local Opportunities Map • For EDDC to actively contribute toward the Devon LNRS as a Supporting Authority (SA)
2023-2025	EDDC Countryside Team (Wild East Devon)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing 12 nature reserve sites across the district including wetland, heathland, woodland, urban, and wildflower meadows • High level of social engagement, including Age UK and other school and disadvantaged groups. • 120k+ visitors to Seaton Wetlands in 2025 • Frequent social media updates, reports, and website detailing the work undertaken • Some key moments include dedicated episode of BBC Countryfile, success of artificial sand martin cliff, breeding avocets, 13 grey long-eared bat captures, bat and dormouse box monitoring schemes, bat walks, and EDDC Countryside Team selected as managers of EDDC newest country park (Clyst Meadows)
2023-2025	Green Infrastructure (GI) and South-East Devon Wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning approval obtained for Council owned 10ha Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) – Clyst Meadows - delivering Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). This will provide wider greenspace connectivity for the Clyst Valley Regional Park (CVRP). • Adoption of the South East Devon Wildlife – Joint Habitats Mitigation Strategy • Supporting Saving Devons Treescape Project
2023-2025	Other EDDC departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New swift boxes installed on EDDC headquarters • Street Scene Wildlife Improvement Policy • Climate Team - Climate Change Action Plan delivery • Enhanced biodiversity and tree polices in the emerging Local Plan (plan examination due 2026)
2023-2025	Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) LNRS Viewer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided support to the development of the Devon LNRS through regular SA meetings. • Attendance and contribution to specialist LNRS working groups for bats, invasive species, and biodiversity net gain (BNG) • Provided detailed (14 pages) of feedback on the draft LNRS prior to final consultation

April 2024	Adoption of Council Plan 2024-2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery are one of four key priorities • This included the delivery of a tree strategy, nature recovery strategy, promotion of sustainable development with BNG and good design
July 2024- March 2025	Tree, Hedgerow & Woodland Strategy (THaWS) for EDDC THaWS Cabinet Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet adoption of THaWS in March 2025 • Alignment with Devon Tree and Woodland Strategy • Ambitious target for 30% district canopy cover by 2034 • Several KPIs including development of Tree Champions
June 2024	EDDC Planning and Biodiversity website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDDC website page created detailing the requirements and expectation of biodiversity in the planning process.
June 2024	EDDC Phosphates on the River Axe website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDDC website page created with information on nutrient neutrality to enable sustainable development.
August 2024	EDDC Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDDC website page created with information for developers, habitat bank providers, and the public with relevant BNG information.
December 2024	Awarded Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund Round 2 for River Axe Special Area of Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully awarded c.£4m from MHCLG to facilitate sustainable development in the River Axe SAC catchment through mitigation interventions
February 2025	Planning Agent Forum update on BNG and Nutrient Neutrality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation to planning agent forum on the implementation of mandatory BNG and nutrient neutrality update.
March 2025	Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) – Habitat banks, monitoring, and fees Cabinet report Habitat Bank assessment framework and report appendix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established a defined monitoring contribution schedule to enable EDDC to monitor the delivery of BNG within the district • Published prioritisation framework for the establishment of habitat banks within the district
March 2025	Wildlife Improvement Policy adopted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy for wildlife improvements on EDDC/StreetScene managed land adopted

July 2025	Wild About Seaton Masterplan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed masterplan/blueprint of wide-ranging programme of action that will support the area's regeneration and long-term resilience focused on people, nature, and history
November 2025	Launch of Tree Champion scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiative designed to mobilise community volunteers in identifying land suitable for tree planting across the district as part of THaWS delivery
December 2025	Wild East Devon 2025 Annual Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key milestones achieved including visit by Countryfile, 120k+ visitors in 2025, record number of grey long-eared bats recorded
2023-ongoing	Draft East Devon Local Plan 2020-2042 Chapter 13 Policies (PB01–PB12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft local plan policies developed through consultations including: 20% BNG policy for major developments, LNRS/NRN policy, increased protection for local wildlife sites, hedgerows, trees, and development site enhancement features
2023-2025	Additional contributions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Agent Forum BNG presentation Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Species Survival Fund Expression of Interest (EOI) submitted (unsuccessful) Nature Towns and City Bid submitted (unsuccessful) Stakeholder engagement with Landscape Recovery (LR) Projects; Killerton, Heaths to Sea, Luppitt, and Upper Axe (outside of district but of relevance to the River Axe) Supporting, hosting, and delivering presentations to the Triple Axe partnership Regular meetings with Natural England officers on nutrient neutrality, BNG, air quality, Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRAs) Development Management (DM) officer training on BNG implementation, validation, and derogation tests. Working groups and/or input into: Lower Exe Catchment Partnership Group, Connecting People and Landscape Advisory Board, Saving Devons Treescape working group, Devon Local Nature Partnership Delivering Workshop on Biodiversity Gain Plan to Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) South West. Contribution to Environmental Policy Implementation Community (EPIC), Planning Advisory Service (PAS), and .GOV guidance on BNG and HRA.

Section 2: Future actions

Mandatory requirement: explain how your organisation plans to fulfil your biodiversity duty over the next 5 years following the end of this reporting period.

This section sets out EDDC plan for how we will continue to comply with our biodiversity duty over the next reporting period. Our forward programme is based on the best information available now. We recognise that external factors including Local Government Reform (LGR), evolving national policy, and uncertain future budgets could influence delivery timescales and priorities.

The actions outlined below represent our intended direction of travel and current commitments, including meeting our BNG obligations. It will be reviewed and adapted as needed to ensure we continue to conserve and enhance biodiversity in line with our statutory responsibilities.

This report will be reviewed and updated in accordance with the next statutory reporting cycle, no later than 2029–2030.

Period	Policy / Strategic Area
Spring / Summer 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formally endorse Devon Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) as a Supporting Authority Countryside team to take on lease of Offwell Woods Launch Habitat Bank call for sites Public consultation of East Devon Local Nature Recovery Plan Delivery of nutrient mitigation strategy
Autumn / Winter 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Bid for Seaton Wetland Expansion Adoption of East Devon Local Plan 2020-2042 Registration of first Habitat Bank in East Devon Formal adoption of East Devon Local Nature Recovery Plan Employ a Nutrient Mitigation Officer Deploy BNG monitoring software and reporting system
2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SANG delivery strategy adopted EDDC second new SANG (Percy Wakley Wood) opened Ecology Support Officer employed to monitor BNG delivery Setup new legal vehicle to trade ecosystem services generated Delivery of East Devon Local Nature Recovery Plan actions, e.g., parish/town biodiversity reporting 2nd/3rd Habitat Bank registered
2028	<p>Local Government Reform expected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commence Blackhole Marsh/Seaton Wetland expansion
2029	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidate work undertaken
2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake review of 2026-2030

Section 3: Biodiversity net gain information

Mandatory requirement: details of BNG resulting, or expected to result, from approved biodiversity gain plans.

17 Biodiversity Gain Plans (BGPs) were approved up to 01 January 2026.

All gain plans included Area units, seven included Hedge units, and one included Watercourse units. All sites delivered Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) onsite. A floating redline boundary was permitted in four cases.

Development site areas varied between 0.08 ha up to 10.24 ha, with an average of 0.89 ha and median of 0.16 ha. The small sites metric (SSM) was used to support three applications and the remaining 14 supported by the statutory biodiversity metric (SBM).

Two sites did not deliver significant onsite gains. The remaining sites did deliver significant onsite gains, these were primarily through creating medium distinctive habitats, such as individual trees, other neutral grassland, or mixed scrub.

The largest % gain (+151%) was for the creation of a non-priority pond on an area of modified grassland in poor condition.

Development types were predominantly agricultural developments (barns, tracks, and entrances) but also included some tourism developments, and the creation of a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).

No offsite biodiversity units or Statutory Credits were used to support any BGPs discharged.

No sites impacted upon Irreplaceable Habitats.

If the proposed 2025 BNG consultation threshold is amended to only scope in sites of 0.2 ha then 10 of the sites would be scoped out.

Area habitats

A cumulative total of 27.13 Area Biodiversity Units (BUs) is expected to be delivered through enhancement or creation of new habitats. The most frequent habitat created is individual trees, followed by enhancement of modified grassland, and creation of mixed scrub.

The minimum number of BUs created for any site is 0.1 with a maximum of 14.1 BUs being delivered, and an average of 1.6 and median of 0.07 BUs being delivered.

The % of BNG delivered on site varied from 10.21% up to 151%, with an average of 29.2% and median of 12.61%.

Hedgerows

A cumulative total of 16.2 Hedge Biodiversity Units (BUs) is expected to be delivered through enhancement or creation of new habitats. The most frequent habitat created is native and species-rich native hedgerows.

The minimum number of BUs created for any site is 0.03 with a maximum of 15.32 BUs being delivered, and an average of 2.7 and median of 0.19 BUs being delivered.

The % of BNG delivered on site varied from 11.33% up to 104.07%, with an average of 55.48% and median of 53.61%.

Watercourse

A single site is expected to deliver 8.3 Watercourse Biodiversity Units (BUs) through enhancement of existing ditches delivering a predicted 27.25% gain.

ⁱ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/part/6/crossheading/biodiversity-objective-and-reporting/enacted>