

Bury Biodiversity Strategy 2023 - DRAFT

Foreword

We know the natural environment is important for our physical and mental health, for reducing flood risk, for improving air quality and many other reasons. It affects our quality of life and that of the wildlife we share it with.

Our natural environment faces many challenges, but also some opportunities. We've been through an industrial revolution yet the canals and reservoirs which served it are now some of our most important wildlife sites. We have increasing problems with invasive species such as giant hogweed, but the possibility of the return of species such as otter and beaver. Diseases such as ash die-back are a real threat but, working with local organisations such as the Wildlife Trust and City of Trees, we are planting more new trees than ever.

This is the Council's first ever Biodiversity Strategy. We want it to make a difference. Much work has been done through the Council's Community Climate Action Fund and the GM Green Spaces Fund but much remains to be done. All land and property owners or managers can help and your actions, offers and suggestions are welcome.

Cllr Alan Quinn

Cabinet Member Environment, Climate Change and Operations



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1. Introduction



The benefits of biodiversity are clear; a healthy natural environment is fundamental to the air that we breathe, the food that we eat and the water that we drink

Why biodiversity matters

- 1.1 Bury's natural or semi-natural environment is one of its key assets and a reason that people choose to live and invest here. From the wild moorland of the West Pennine Moors in the north to the extensive parks and public open spaces of the Irwell Valley in the south, the borough's natural environment helps define the character of its settlements, provides habitats for other species and provides relief for residents from air, noise and light pollution.
- 1.2 The Borough's natural environment is also where most of its biodiversity can be found. Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth. There is a complex interdependency between all the life-forms, of which the human race is just one.
- 1.3 The UK boasts more than 70,000 known species of animals, plants, fungi and microorganisms, but most assessments indicate that the abundance of its wildlife is declining¹. The State of Nature² report, published in September 2023 suggests there has been a 19% decline in the average abundance of species in the UK since the 1970s and 16% of species are now threatened with extinction. Growing pressure from urban development, agricultural intensification, introduced diseases, invasive non-native species, pollution and climate change threatens to further exacerbate the decline of the UK's nature over the coming decades.
- 1.4 The benefits of biodiversity and nature are clear; a healthy natural environment is fundamental to the air that we breathe, the food that we eat and the water that we drink. It is increasingly accepted that connection to nature positively affects our physical health and mental wellbeing. Biodiverse and natural areas also have a strong connection to the sense of place in neighbourhoods across Bury. Trees and other green infrastructure more widely can have a positive impact on air quality by removing pollutants from the air. The way in which green spaces are managed can also reduce the impact of flooding; for example, reducing the extent of impermeable surfaces in residents' gardens will both reduce flood risk and support the recovery of nature.

¹ <https://geospatialcommission.blog.gov.uk/2021/05/25/70000-species-in-the-uk-who-records-them-and-where-are-they-all-the-importance-of-knowing-what-species-are-where/>
² https://stateofnature.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/TP25999-State-of-Nature-main-report_2023_FULL-DOC-v12.pdf

National context

- 1.5 Scientific evidence clearly shows an alarming acceleration of biodiversity loss globally and has led to calls to address this before the damage becomes irreversible. Species diversity and abundance in the UK continues to decline and the UK failed to meet most of the Convention on Biological Diversity's 2020 Aichi targets for biodiversity.
- 1.6 In 2018, the government produced a 25 Year Environment Plan³. In 2023 it produced an update, committing the government to:
 - halt the decline in species abundance (through the launch of a Species Survival Fund and the creation, restoration and extension of 70 areas for wildlife through National Nature Reserves and Landscape recovery projects).
 - protect 30% of UK land and sea for nature (through the Nature Recovery Network).
- 1.7 By 2042 the government has committed to:
 - halt the decline in species abundance by 2030, and then increase abundance by at least 10% to exceed 2022 levels by 2042.
 - restore or create at least 500,000 ha of a range of wildlife rich habitats.
 - reduce the risk of species extinction.
 - restore 75% of terrestrial and freshwater protected sites to 'favourable condition'.

Greater Manchester context

- 1.8 The Greater Manchester Five-Year Environment Plan (2019-2024)⁴ identifies 5 priorities for the natural environment: Managing land sustainably, managing our water sustainably, achieving a net gain in biodiversity from new development, increasing investment in our natural environment and increasing our engagement with our natural environment. Greater Manchester Combined Authority has also produced Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance for Greater Manchester⁵ and published an Off-site Net Gain Scoping Study⁶ in 2021.

³ 25 Year Environment Plan (2018) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf
⁴ https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1986/5-year-plan-branded_3.pdf
⁵ https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/4244/gmca-bng-guidance-update_250221-final-edited.pdf
⁶ <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/5546/bng-offsite-scoping-study-december-2021.docx.pdf>





This biodiversity strategy provides a consideration of the current state of biodiversity in Bury

- 1.9 In March 2022, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (of which Bury Council is a member) declared a “biodiversity emergency” and set out a series of projects and initiatives across the city-region which seek to recover and restore biodiversity, reverse habitat loss and explore what more can be done.
- 1.10 In doing so, Greater Manchester launched a new Green Spaces Fund (run through the Greater Manchester Environment Fund) for community groups wanting to create new spaces or improve existing ones in their local area.

Our Biodiversity Duty

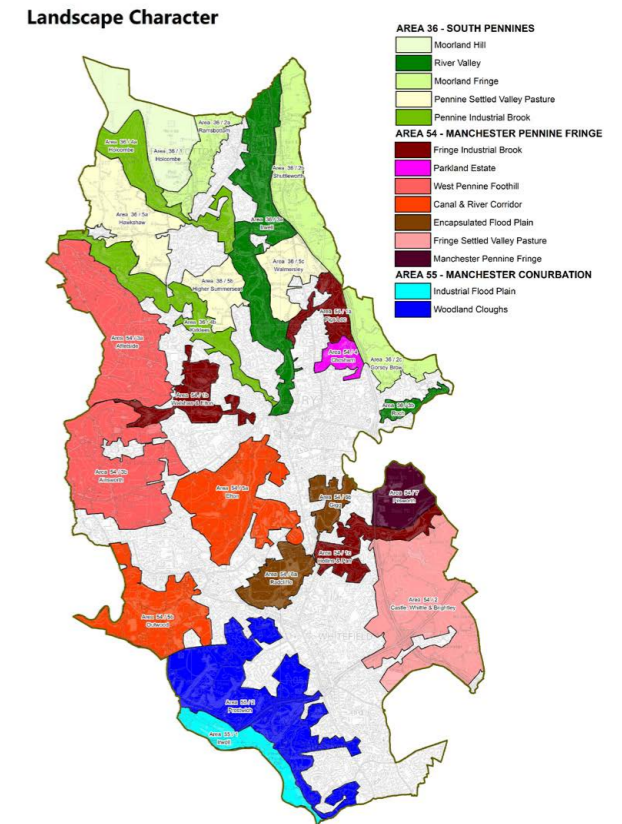
- 1.11 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, as amended by the 2021 Environment Act, gives public bodies the duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- 1.12 By way of response, this biodiversity strategy provides a consideration of the current state of biodiversity in Bury, the key issues, and what we can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. It outlines our objectives to conserve and enhance biodiversity in Bury and suggests future actions and policy directions.



Woodland in Philips Park. Photo by Gui Castro

2. The current state of Biodiversity in Bury

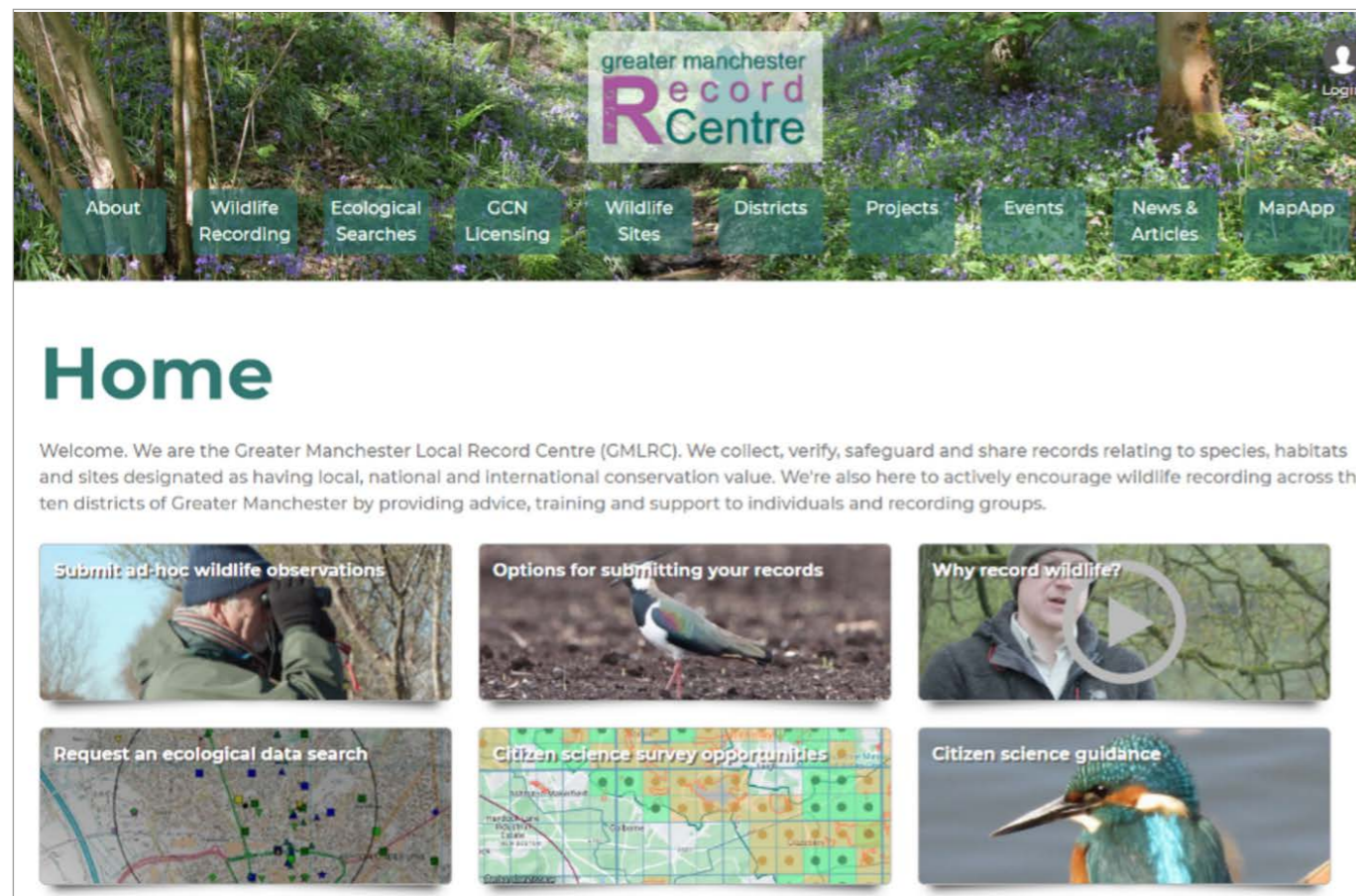
- 2.1 The Borough has a wide range of landscapes and habitats. The land is undulating but incised and drained by the valleys of the Rivers Irwell and Roch. The Borough’s highest point is in the north, on the plateau of Holcombe Moor, reaching 418 metres above sea level on Bull Hill.
- 2.2 The River Irwell flows south through the borough, before turning west at its confluence with the River Roch, then south again at its confluence with the Croal. These river valleys not only provide an important habitat for wildlife, but also act as a corridor through which species can move, extending potential territories and increasing population viability.
- 2.3 Terrestrial habitats include important areas of moorland (upland heath and blanket bog), as well as broad-leaved clough woodland, such as Ringley Woods, much of which is ancient. Over 15% of the borough is semi-improved neutral grassland, with significant areas of unimproved acid and neutral grassland.
- 2.4 Bury has one of the highest concentrations of ponds in Greater Manchester together with a number of important lodges and reservoirs. The Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal also runs through the Borough.
- 2.5 The Greater Manchester Local Record Centre (GMLRC)⁷, managed by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU), is responsible for local ecological data in Bury and the rest of Greater Manchester. It collects, verifies, safeguards and shares records relating to species, habitats and sites designated as having local, national and international conservation value.



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The Borough’s landscape character areas (source: Bury Council Landscape Practice 2009)

⁷ <https://gmlrc.org/>



GM Records Centre website



Brown Hare at Simister. Photo by Stuart Wilson

- 2.6 We know that some species have experienced significant decline in Bury, such as hares, lapwing, martins and swifts. On the other hand, some species have expanded, such as roe deer, fox, badger and some butterfly. And important habitats remain.
- 2.7 Bury's ponds and lodges support a diverse range of aquatic flora and fauna, including five species of amphibian, numerous damselflies and dragonflies, and many species of breeding and wintering wetland birds. They also provide important foraging areas for bats with nine species recorded in the borough.
- 2.8 Otter signs have recently been found on the River Irwell, and it is hoped this beautiful mammal will recolonise some of its former haunts over the coming years.
- 2.9 Parts of Bury remain a stronghold for farmland birds such as Skylark, Tree Sparrow, Grey Partridge and Barn Owl which live alongside Brown Hare, Rabbit and Fox.
- 2.10 Bury has an increasing problem with invasive species. Himalayan Balsam is now widespread, Japanese Knotweed is common and Giant Hogweed is a danger in many waterside locations.

In the animal world the arrival of Canada geese, grey squirrel, mink and signal crayfish have affected indigenous communities. Then there are diseases to contend with, such as ash die-back, chestnut canker and acute oak decline.

2.11 The biodiversity interest of the Borough is recognised in various site designations which receive some protection from policies in the Unitary Development Plan. Bury has:

- 2 Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- 49 Sites of Biological Importance
- 13 ancient woodlands
- 7 local nature reserves
- 6 protected species (badger, otter, barn owl, kingfisher, great crested newt, black necked grebe) plus several bat species and winter visitors.
- c112 km of wildlife links and corridors

2.12 Other features of wildlife interest that do not fall into the above categories gain some protection from Development Plan Policy EN6/3. All the policies are set out in Appendix (i).

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

2.13 SSSIs are of national importance for their wildlife, geology or landform and are designated by Natural England. Bury has two SSSIs. One is a small part of the West Pennine Moors SSSI and the other is at Ash Clough on the Bury/Bolton boundary.

2.14 West Pennine Moors is designated for the quality of its mosaic of upland and upland fringe habitats and is notable for its skylark and curlew populations. Ash Clough is a river cliff important for the geology exposed.

Site of Biological Importance (SBIs)

2.15 Bury currently has 49 Sites of Biological Importance, sometimes referred to as 'local sites', which are Bury's best sites for flora and fauna. They are surveyed and designated on behalf of Bury and the other districts of Greater Manchester by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit. They are a category of site described nationally as 'sites of local biodiversity interest' and are protected by Unitary Development Plan Policies EN6/1 and EN6/2.

Local Nature Reserves

2.16 Nature reserves are designated by Local Authorities under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act as places for people to enjoy and learn about nature. In December 1997 Bury Council adopted a target, recommended by English Nature, of having one hectare of local nature reserve per 1000 people.



Redisher. Photo by James Hall

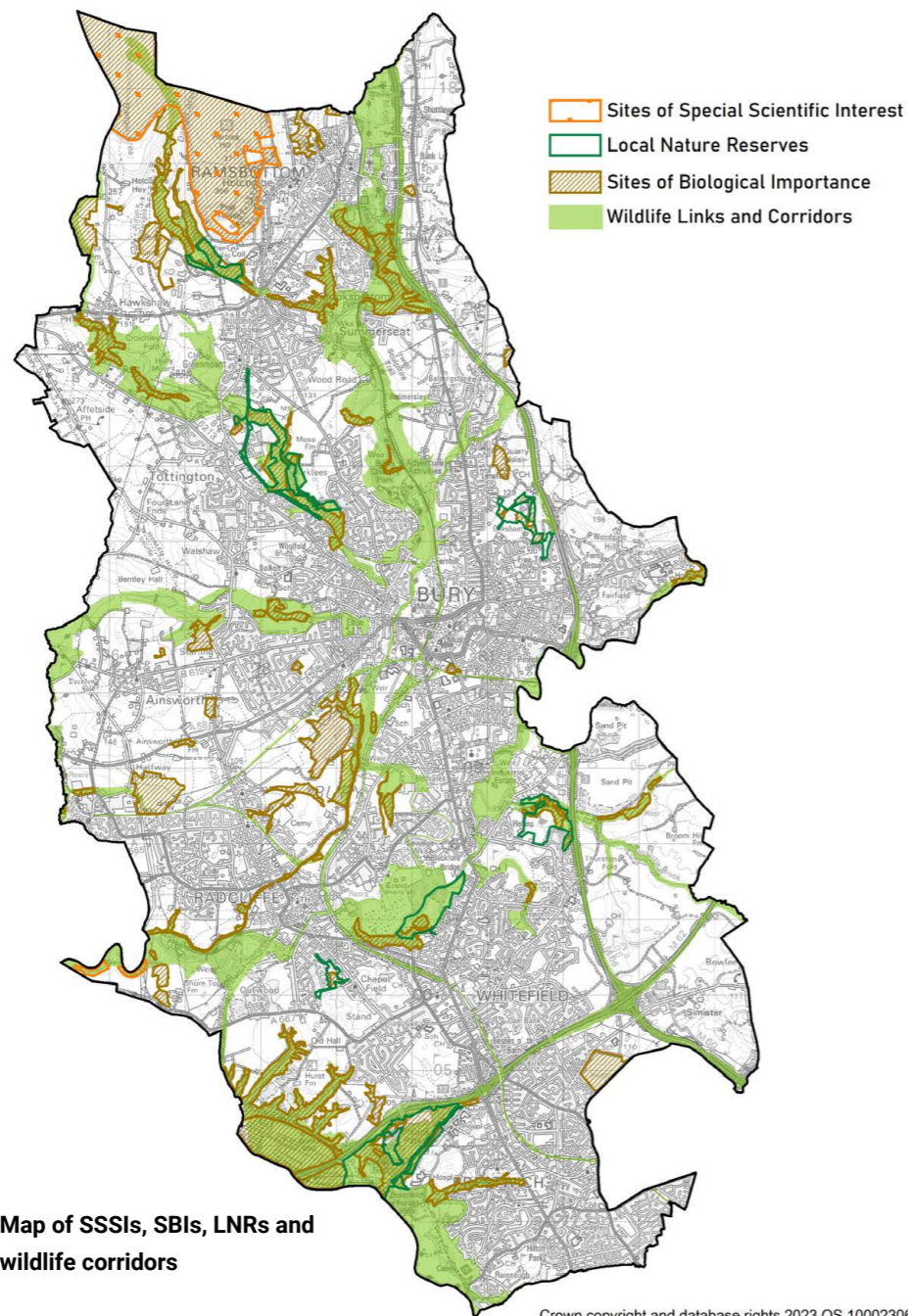
Bury currently has 49 SBIs which are the best sites for flora and fauna

2.17 Bury currently has seven declared local nature reserves, which are protected by Unitary Development Plan EN6/2 at the following sites:

- Philips Park
- Chesham Woods
- Hollins Vale
- Redisher Woods
- Kirklees Valley
- Chapelfield
- Springwater Park

Wildlife links and corridors

2.18 Bury's UDP identifies c112 km of wildlife links and corridors which join together the designated sites, making them more valuable than they would be as isolated sites, since they permit dispersal and extend the territory available to species.



Bury currently has six declared local nature reserves

3. What can we do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in Bury?

3.1 Without action, pressure from urban development, intensive land management practices, human disturbance, introduced diseases, invasive non-native species and climate change can be expected to further exacerbate the decline of the UK's biodiversity over the coming decades. Nevertheless, there are several things we can do in Bury as individuals, local community groups, businesses and the Council that can help conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Managing land for biodiversity

3.2 Bury Council is a major landholder in the Borough, so the way it manages its land – and its buildings - has a significant effect on local biodiversity. The land could have a variety of existing uses, from play areas to highway verges. Its 14 green flag-certified parks have management and maintenance plans that include proposals to increase biodiversity.

3.3 In recent years, the Council has taken a number of actions to manage its land in a way that benefits biodiversity:

- Using steam instead of chemicals to control weeds in green spaces.
- Ceasing to use glyphosate in schools and play areas except for the treatment of invasive or harmful species.
- Reducing highway spraying using glyphosate.
- Reducing grass cutting and identifying trial sites for wildflower seeding/re-wilding.
- Developing site management partnerships with 3rd sector organisations such as the Wildlife Trust (at Philips Park) and City of Trees (at Outwood).
- Supporting and working with local community groups and Bury Volunteer Rangers to improve the management of sites.
- Working with City of Trees to increase woodland in the Borough such as at Broad Oak, Redbank, Springwater, plus a number of schools and privately-owned sites.
- Working with the Environment Agency to plant trees and develop habitats as part of the Radcliffe and Redvales flood defence scheme.
- Working with a Community Interest Company to develop proposals and seek external funding for environmental projects. In the last year 4 local groups have been successful in attracting funding for their proposals from the Greater Manchester Greenspaces Fund.



Cutting back rhododendron. Photo by James Hall



Astley Tiny Fungi. Photo by James Hall

- 3.4 In the future, the Council could do more still for biodiversity by:
- Using its land as receptor sites for biodiversity net gain
 - Further changing maintenance or grazing regimes
 - Support residents, community groups and partners taking action for biodiversity on Council land.
 - Enhance native planting and semi-natural green spaces.
- 3.5 Sites which have been recognised as having existing biodiversity value merit special attention. Some of these sites are owned by the Council and others are in private ownership. We need to work with all landowners to encourage biodiversity-aware land management.

Advice and awareness

- 3.6 Although most people are well disposed towards the natural environment, people aren't always aware of the biodiversity that exists, how it functions and how it can be harmed. Some will welcome the opportunity or encouragement to get actively involved in improving biodiversity.
- 3.7 The Council works with local businesses, encouraging them to develop their environmental policies and practices.
- 3.8 The Council has supported and encouraged playschemes and forest schools on land it owns to encourage awareness of the natural environment. It works with Friends groups, Volunteer Rangers and with organisations such as the Wildlife Trust and City of Trees to organise activities and events. The Council intends to continue such work and expand it in the future.



Kingfishers. Photo by Stuart Wilson

Council policies and procedures

- 3.9 Biodiversity is a corporate issue. Many Council services will already be aware of this and taking action, but we must take all opportunities to improve policies and practices. Examples include:
- Parks – continuing to review management and maintenance plans for ways to benefit biodiversity.
 - Property – reviewing tenancies and licences to encourage biodiversity-aware land management practices.
 - Transport – air and noise pollution affect biodiversity so measures to reduce pollution and encourage low-carbon travel are beneficial.
 - Waste – litter and leachate can be harmful to biodiversity so Council management is important.
 - water – the quality of water in rivers and streams, and the morphology of watercourses has a bearing on what life they will sustain.
 - Procurement – the source of materials and use of local companies will have an impact on pollution.
 - Lighting – artificial light can have a negative impact on some species.

New development

- 3.10 New development will have an impact on biodiversity. The Council's UDP policies protect SSSIs, SBIs, LNRs and wildlife corridors from development requiring planning permission. If a proposal is judged to be harmful to the extent that the adverse impacts would outweigh the benefits of the proposal, it can be refused planning permission or mitigation can be required.
- More frequently, the Council works with developers to reduce the impact of development, for example by including greenspace, or taking positive measures to accommodate wildlife, such as providing nesting places for swifts and swallows or roosts for bats.

Preparing for biodiversity net gain

- 3.11 The 2021 Environment Act places a new duty on Local Planning Authorities to require a 10% increase in biodiversity value from new development requiring planning permission.
- 3.12 The Draft Places for Everyone Plan includes a policy requiring Biodiversity Net Gain.
- 3.13 Biodiversity Net Gain is due to become mandatory in January 2024 and we, with partners such as the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit, will begin monitoring and reporting on what is done to achieve biodiversity net gain, be it on or off development sites. The first report will be published before 2026.
- 3.14 The Greater Manchester Ecology Unit has undertaken a Needs and Supply Assessment for each GM district. The assessment estimates the potential off-site BNG need resulting from development in the borough, and the potential supply of BNG units on Council-owned land. We have used this to identify a number of council-owned potential sites across the Borough for biodiversity net gain and will utilise this evidence to inform the emerging Local Plan.
- 3.15 The Council has commissioned the Greater Manchester Environment Trust (GMET) to prepare costed habitat improvement and management plans for seven of these Council-owned potential BNG sites: at Old Kays, Brandlesholme, Chesham Woods, Hollins, Springwater Park, Outwood and Philips Park. The GMET is a partnership between the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Wildlife Trust for Lancs, Greater Manchester and North Merseyside, which exists to bring together public, private and third sector bodies, communities and funders to address environmental issues.
- 3.16 The Greater Manchester Ecology Unit provides ecological advice to Bury Council on planning applications that are required to provide biodiversity net gain. It is recruiting an officer to monitor and verify the provision of net gain over the mandated minimum 30-year period.
- 3.17 Relevant Councillors and Officers will receive training on this new duty.



The 2021 Environment Act places a new duty on Local Planning Authorities

4. Objectives, Policies and Actions

4.1 This Strategy aims to:

- improve our understanding and awareness of biodiversity
- consider biodiversity in all Council decision making
- bring about the recovery of nature in the Borough, in line with national and city-region objectives and targets.

4.2 Delivering these objectives will require policies and actions. We propose to carry through the policies for biodiversity contained in the Unitary Development Plan (see Appendix for detail) and update them for inclusion in the forthcoming Local Plan.

4.3 Proposed actions are set out below:

Table 1 Objective 1: Improve our understanding and awareness of Biodiversity

Action	Lead	Measure	Target date
Encourage public reporting of species to GM Records Centre	Bury Council/ Wildlife Groups/ GMLRC	Number of reports	2024
Update the Register of SBIs	GMEU/ Bury Council	Annual review adopted for planning purposes by the Council	2020 review adopted by end 2023
Update Council webpages on biodiversity	Bury Council	Updated webpages	2024
Support local communities in acquiring and spreading understanding	Bury Council/ GMCA/ GMET/ Wildlife Trust	Number of groups and sessions	Ongoing

Table 2 Objective 2: Consider biodiversity in all Council decision making

Action	Lead	Measure	Target date
Implement mandatory BNG requirement	Bury Council	Delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain, use of guidance, directory and register	January 2024
Contribute to production of a GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy	GMCA / Bury Council	Production and adoption	2024
Adoption of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan	Bury Council	Use of PfE policies in planning decisions	2023-2024
Update local planning policies for biodiversity through the Bury Local Plan	Bury Council	New Local Plan policies that reflect / reference / integrate the Biodiversity Strategy and LNRS	2026
Implement updated planning policies through the development management process	Bury Council	Use of Local Plan policies in planning decisions	2026
Adopt biodiversity recovery as a corporate objective	Bury Council	Environmental assessment section in cabinet reports	2024
Establish monitoring system for delivery of net gain agreements on offset sites in Bury defined	DEFRA, Greater Manchester Ecology Unit	Monitoring framework established for Biodiversity Net Gain sites	2024



Holcombe Moor. Photo by David Wiggins

Table 3 Objective 3: Bring about the recovery of nature in the Borough

Action	Lead	Measure	Target date
Encourage biodiversity-aware land management of all Council land	Bury Council	Changes in land management practices	ongoing
Identify public and privately-owned potential receptor sites for BNG	GMEU/ Bury Council	Completion of land audits	First 7 by June 2024
Encourage all landowners to accommodate BNG or Defra's Environmental Land Management Scheme	NFU/ DEFRA/ Bury Council/	Number of schemes	ongoing
Identify and produce management plans for Council-owned, potential BNG receptor sites	Greater Manchester Environment Trust	Production of first 7 plans and inclusion on the GM directory of receptor sites	2024
Deliver BNG on Council-owned sites		Number of sites on GM directory	2024
Seek external funding for priority sites, habitats and corridors	Bury Council/ partners/ community groups	Number of sites and lengths of corridor improved.	ongoing
Encourage householders and other property owners to encourage biodiversity.	Bury Council/ Wildlife Trust/ Property owners	The presence and abundance of key species.	ongoing
Support 'naturalisation' of watercourses to permit fish passage	Landowners/ Bury Council	Number of weirs removed or fish passes constructed	2030
Protect peatland by reducing use of peat	Bury Council	Amount of peat used	2028
Protect designated sites from invasive species	Landowners/ Bury Council	Number of designated sites with invasive species present	2026

Following the mandatory introduction of biodiversity net gain in November 2023 and the adoption of Bury Biodiversity Strategy, we will also produce, no later than 1 January 2026, a report on how the Council is meeting its biodiversity duty.

5. Reporting and Monitoring

- 5.1 Our biodiversity strategy actions will be monitored annually.**
- 5.2 Following the mandatory introduction of biodiversity net gain in November 2023 and the adoption of Bury Biodiversity Strategy, we will also produce, no later than 1 January 2026, a report on how the Council is meeting its biodiversity duty. This report will be updated at least every 5 years.
- 5.3 This report will summarise the actions we have taken, the progress underway, and how we have met our biodiversity net gain obligations over the reporting period.



Barn Owl at Radcliffe. Photo by Stuart Wilson

6. Appendices



Photo by James Hall

Legislation, guidance and policy

6.1 There are a number of acts of parliament, regulations and guidance that cover biodiversity. The 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act was a key piece of legislation, but the duty of care for biodiversity by public bodies was significantly strengthened by the 2021 Environment Act.

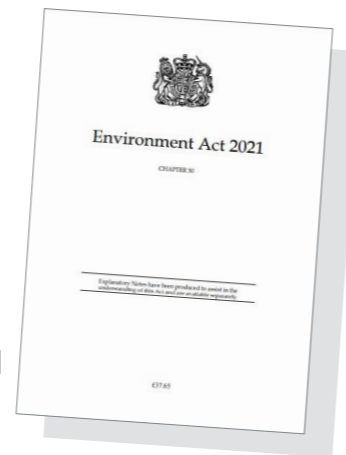
The Environment Act 2021

6.2 The Environment Act (2021) strengthens the duty on Local Authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity⁸ and requires us to consider what we can do in Bury in order to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

6.3 There are two main biodiversity components of the Environment Act, the first being the National Nature Recovery Network which will identify and reconnect wildlife-rich places. This aims to:

- Enhance sites designated for nature conservation and other wildlife-rich places - newly created and restored wildlife-rich habitats, corridors and stepping stones will help wildlife populations to grow and move.
- Improve the landscape's resilience to climate change, providing natural solutions to reduce carbon and manage flood risk, and sustaining vital ecosystems such as improved soil, clean water and clean air.
- Reinforce the natural and cultural diversity of our landscapes, and protect our historic natural environment.
- Enable us to enjoy and connect with nature where we live, work and play - benefitting our health and wellbeing.

6.4 The second major element of the Environment Act is Biodiversity Net Gain. From January 2024 the Act will require all qualifying development to achieve a minimum of ten percent net gain in biodiversity. This requirement will be applicable to all developments except small sites⁹ in January 2024. Small sites will be expected to provide a ten percent gain in Biodiversity from April 2024.



Bluebells in Nuttall Park. Photo by Sophie Bleasdale

⁸ Section 102 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/section/102#section-102-2>

⁹ Small sites are defined for the purpose of the Biodiversity Net Gain exemption 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

- 6.5 This will provide a legal requirement that any impact on biodiversity caused by development initiatives, where it cannot be avoided, will not only be compensated but will have to demonstrate a 10% biodiversity net gain.
- 6.6 The net gain approach, however, does not override the mitigation hierarchy of avoid, mitigate, compensate. In other words development proposals cannot merely jump to the compensation phase; they must first seek to avoid any harm to biodiversity. Neither does it override the protection for designated sites, protected or priority species and irreplaceable or priority habitats.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

6.7 The National Planning Policy Framework states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and sites of biodiversity. It also states that policies and decisions should minimise impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity¹⁰.

Places for Everyone (PFE)

- 6.8 Once adopted, the Greater Manchester 'Places for Everyone' Joint DPD will form an integral part of Bury's wider development plan. The Plan will be a key tool in meeting Greater Manchester's ambition to become carbon neutral by 2038 and will work in tandem with the Five-Year Environment Plan 2019-2024 produced by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA).
- 6.9 The Places for Everyone (PFE) joint development plan document¹¹ has an overall aim of achieving a major net enhancement of biodiversity value across Greater Manchester. In order to achieve this each new development will deliver a "net gain in biodiversity".
- 6.10 Draft Policy JP-G9, as proposed to be modified in October 2023, states the following:

¹⁰ NPPF Paragraph 174. a) & d) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning-and-housing/places-for-everyone/>



The Plan will be a key tool in meeting Greater Manchester's ambition to become carbon neutral by 2038

Policy JP-G 9

A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Through local planning and associated activities a net enhancement of biodiversity resources will be sought, including, where relevant, by:

1. Increasing the quality, quantity, extent and diversity of habitats, particularly priority habitats identified in national or local biodiversity action plans and those that support priority species;
2. Improving connections between habitats, to protect and enhance the provision of corridors, ecological networks (including Nature Recovery Networks) and stepping stones that enable the movement of species, especially as the climate changes;
3. Enhancing the management of existing habitats, including through habitat restoration, avoiding habitat fragmentation and combating invasive species;
4. Protecting sites designated for their nature conservation and/or geological importance, with the highest level of protection given to international and then national designations;
5. Facilitating greater access to nature, particularly within urban areas;
6. Supporting the development and implementation of the Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Recovery Network; and
7. Safeguarding, restoring and sustainably managing our most valuable soil resources, tackling soil degradation/erosion and recovering soil fertility, particularly to ensure protection of peat-based soils and safeguard 'best and most versatile' agricultural land.

Development will be expected to:

- a) Follow the mitigation hierarchy of:
 - i. Avoiding significant harm to biodiversity, particularly where it is irreplaceable, through consideration of alternative sites with less harmful impacts, then
 - ii. Adequately mitigating any harm to biodiversity, then
 - iii. Adequately compensating for any remaining harm to biodiversity
- b) Avoid fragmenting or severing connectivity between habitats;
- c) Achieve a measurable net gain in biodiversity of no less than 10%
- d) Make appropriate provision for long-term management of habitats and geological features connected to the development;
- e) Development proposals should be informed by the findings and recommendations of the appropriate biodiversity/ecological assessment(s) in the PfE evidence base and/or any updated or appropriate biodiversity/ecological assessments submitted as part of the planning application process.

Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

- 6.11 In August 2020, the government announced that five local authorities would test how the recovery of England's landscapes and wildlife can be driven locally. To do this, "Local Nature Recovery Strategy" (LNRS) pilot studies were set up in each of the five areas to help map the most valuable sites and habitats for wildlife in their area and identify where nature can be restored.
- 6.12 Greater Manchester was one of these pilots. The Greater Manchester LNRS¹² pilot ran from autumn 2020 to summer 2021. It brought together stakeholders across the city-region to set out local priorities for restoring and linking up habitats to tackle the biodiversity emergency and agree the best places to do that and, at the same time, deliver wider benefits for people and the environment.
- 6.13 As a member of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, we have been involved in the preparation of the Pilot LNRS for Greater Manchester (2021). The pilot report and the prototype strategy produced as part of the pilot does not have a formal status like documents such as the Greater Manchester 5 Year Environment Plan. This pilot can be used to inform the risks and opportunities that development may have on a specific area and to help mitigate habitat loss or enhance habitat.
- 6.14 A formal local nature recovery strategy (LNRS) for Greater Manchester will be prepared by GMCA. This will be a locally led strategy for nature and environmental improvement required by the Environment Act 2021. The strategy will provide an overview of how certain habitats fit into the wider network or mosaic of the city-region.
- 6.15 We will continue to support the production and delivery of the first formal LNRS for Greater Manchester. The LNRS will be a key document to help us understand how we can improve habitats on land we own and manage and we will utilise this as a key evidence base document for the production of local planning policies.
- 6.16 Over the coming months, we will be involved in the early stages of the LNRS' production, which will include evidence gathering, stakeholder engagement, and workshops to agree core nature recovery areas, opportunity areas, and mapping methods. It is expected that a draft LNRS for Greater Manchester will be published for public consultation in Summer 2024.
- 6.17 The LNRS will:
 - agree priorities for nature's recovery;
 - map the most valuable existing areas for nature; and
 - map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals.



Peel Tower from Nuttall Park.
Photo by Sophie Bleasdale

¹² https://gmgreencity.com/resource_library/local-nature-recovery-strategy/

Bury Development Plan

- 6.18 We are currently in the process of preparing a new Local Plan that will guide future development in the borough.
- 6.19 Together, the Places for Everyone (PfE) joint development plan and the Local Plan will form the main elements of Bury's overall development plan and, once adopted, these documents will both be used as the basis for determining future development proposals for the next 20 years or so.
- 6.20 Whereas PfE will deal with strategic planning matters that are of significance across the Joint Plan area (such as identifying future levels of housing and employment growth), Bury's Local Plan will contain a range of locally-specific planning policies and identify local sites where development should be built as well as areas where development should be restricted or controlled.
- 6.21 Until a new Local Plan is adopted, the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) provides some important protection for sites with designation for biodiversity value. It includes the following policies:

EN6/1 - Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves and Grade A Sites of Biological Importance) Planning permission will not be granted for development in or in the vicinity of a designated or proposed site of national or county/regional importance (Site of Special Scientific Interest or National Nature Reserve or Site of Biological Importance which has been identified as of national or county/regional importance i.e. Grade A) which would destroy or adversely affect, either directly or indirectly, the nature conservation interest of the site, unless it can be demonstrated that other material considerations outweigh the special interest of the site.

EN6/2 - Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (Local Nature Reserves and Grade B and C Sites of Biological Importance) Planning permission will not be granted for development which would damage either directly or indirectly, the nature conservation interests of sites of particular ecological significance (Local Nature Reserves or Grade B and C Sites of Biological Importance) unless conditions can be imposed that would acceptably mitigate those impacts.

EN6/3 – Features of Ecological Value The effect of land use changes on existing features of ecological or wildlife value will be taken into account when assessing development proposals. Any proposal should seek to retain such features and incorporate them into the development.

EN6/4 - Wildlife Links and Corridors The Council will seek to consolidate and, where appropriate, strengthen wildlife links and corridors, and will not permit development which would adversely affect identified areas. In particular, the Council will seek to ensure that new development within or adjacent to identified links or corridors contributes to their effectiveness through the design, landscaping and siting of development proposals and mitigation works, where appropriate.

Species Conservation Strategies and Protected Sites Strategies

- 6.22 Under s109 of the Environment Act 2021, Natural England can publish species conservation strategies to safeguard the future of the species that are at greatest risk. The strategies will find ways to comply with existing legal obligations to protect species at risk and to improve their conservation status.
- 6.23 Protected site strategies (Environment Act 2021 s110) take a new approach to protecting and restoring species and habitats in protected sites. Protected site strategies will provide ways to overcome pressures arising from plans or projects in the strategy area.

Bury Climate Action Strategy and Plan

- 6.24 The Bury Climate Action Strategy (2021)¹³ makes it clear that for Bury to meet its carbon-neutral target, green and blue spaces need to be enhanced and improved for sustainable use and biodiversity.
- 6.25 The action plan (2021)¹⁴ sets out actions for the natural environment that the council can participate and lead on including but not limited to:
- Working toward planting 3 million trees within 5 years in Greater Manchester – work is ongoing with Cities of Trees to increase tree-planting within the Borough
 - Enhancing natural capital – many green spaces are now not actively managed and are left to grow naturally to promote biodiversity and reduce maintenance related emissions
 - Managing Council owned land and road verges to increase biodiversity and draw down carbon pollution including reductions in pesticide use and increased wildflower planting
 - Work with schools to better use green spaces and promote biodiversity
 - Keeping up to date with carbon offsetting opportunities and consider the practicality and reliability of using these means to meet our target – the Greater Manchester Environment Fund has been established as a way of managing funding for biodiversity and carbon offsetting projects
- 6.26 It also suggests actions that individuals can take such as:
- Utilising your garden to encourage wildflowers and biodiversity
 - Consider joining one of the local community groups within your local park to help us maintain them to a high standard
 - Check out local projects that are ongoing and get involved with them
 - Adopting environmentally friendly ways to get rid of weeds and stop using weedkiller

¹³ [bury-climate-action-strategy](#)

¹⁴ [bury-climate-action-plan](#)



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River Irwell at Burrs. Photo by Sophie Bleasdale



Swans on nest. Photo by Barry Aldous



Bury
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