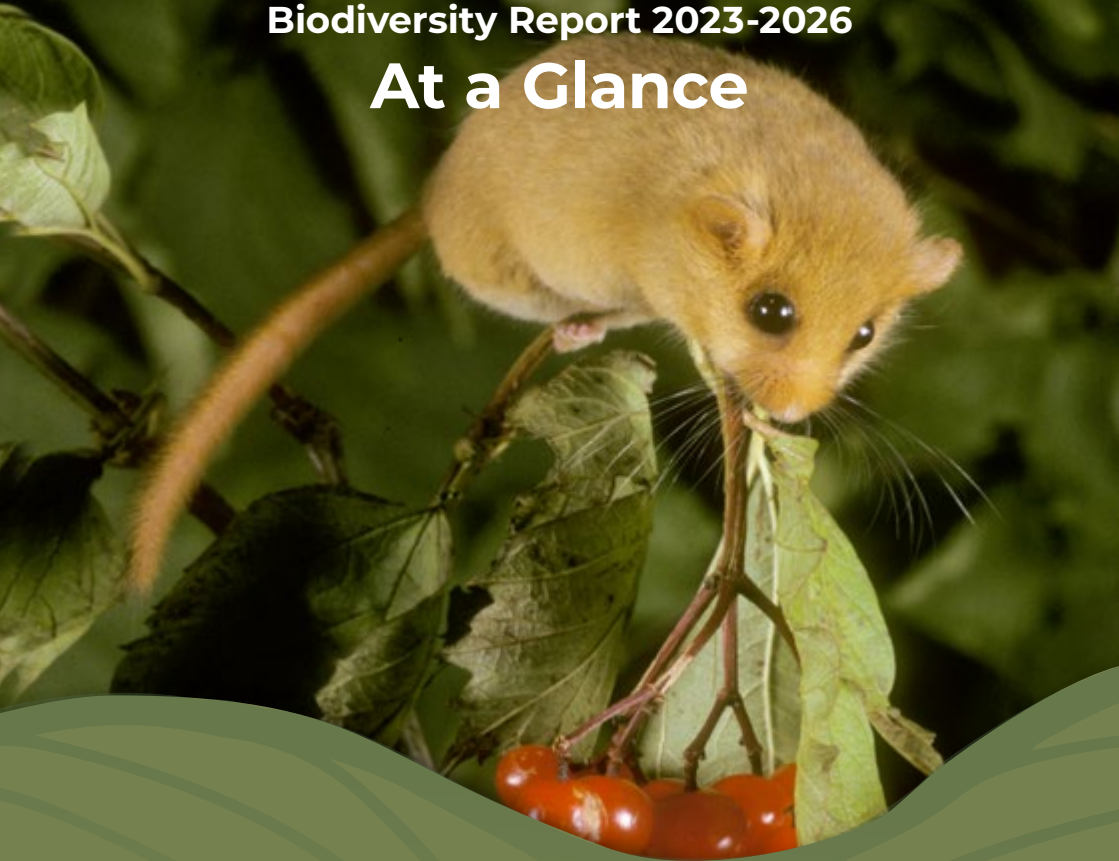




How Hampshire County Council is Conserving and enhancing biodiversity

Biodiversity Report 2023-2026

At a Glance



Hampshire
County Council

[hants.gov.uk](https://www.hants.gov.uk)



Purpose of the Report

This summary explains how Hampshire County Council has met its statutory Biodiversity Duty between January 2023 and December 2025. The report has been produced to show how nature recovery is being embedded across council services, land management, infrastructure planning,

public health and community programmes, as required under the Environment Act 2021. It highlights achievements, partnership work and future plans for improving Hampshire's natural environment.

Introduction

Hampshire is one of England's most environmentally diverse counties. From internationally important coastlines and chalk rivers to ancient woodlands, heathlands and farmland, our natural environment shapes the character, identity and quality of life of the county.

Nature underpins health and wellbeing, supports the economy, strengthens climate resilience and defines the places where people live, work and visit. Yet biodiversity is under increasing pressure from growth, climate change and rising demand on land and water. Protecting and enhancing Hampshire's natural assets is therefore both an environmental and a social responsibility.

As a major landowner, infrastructure provider and place-shaper, Hampshire County Council plays a significant role in influencing the condition and resilience of the county's landscapes. The

Council manages thousands of acres of countryside and public land, delivers transport and flood schemes, supports public health and wellbeing, and shapes strategic planning and investment decisions. Through these roles, there is both direct and indirect influence on nature recovery across Hampshire.

This Biodiversity Duty Report sets out how biodiversity is being embedded into decision-making across services — not treated as a standalone issue, but integrated into land management, infrastructure design and community support.

The approach aligns with the Government's Environment Improvement Plan and the ambitions of the Environment Act 2021. It reflects a commitment to long-term environmental resilience through partnership working, evidence-led action and coordinated governance.

Nature recovery cannot be delivered by one organisation alone. It requires collective effort across Council services, district and parish councils, environmental partners, businesses, landowners and local communities.

This report demonstrates the progress made to date and the foundations being established for the years ahead. Through coordinated action and shared responsibility, Hampshire can remain a county where nature thrives alongside sustainable growth, resilient communities and a strong local economy.



Credit: VisitHampshire



How is the Biodiversity Duty Report structured?

Hampshire County Council has structured its response around eight Biodiversity Core Themes, reflecting the breadth of its influence and providing a consistent framework for delivery and reporting. These are:

1. Governance and Integration
2. Habitat Protection and Enhancement
3. Nature-Based Solutions in Infrastructure
4. Trees and Canopy Expansion
5. Sustainable Land Management

6. Access, Participation and Wellbeing
7. Partnerships for Nature Recovery
8. Monitoring and Evidence

These themes are drawn directly from existing corporate strategies and policies, ensuring biodiversity considerations are embedded within mainstream decision-making rather than treated as a standalone environmental issue.

Summary of Activity Under the Eight Core Themes

The full report sets out in detail how biodiversity is being addressed across Hampshire County Council's functions. The summaries below outline what each theme covers within the main report and provide examples of the types of actions delivered between January 2023 and December 2025 to conserve and enhance nature across Hampshire.

1. Governance & Integration

Biodiversity has been embedded across council strategies, governance processes and service delivery. Key policies including the Strategic Plan, Climate Change Strategy and Local Nature Recovery Strategy now guide decision-making. Biodiversity considerations are included in business cases, procurement, infrastructure design and asset management.

2. Habitat Protection & Enhancement

Across the council's 3,000+ hectares of countryside estate, extensive work has been carried out to restore grasslands, woodlands, wetlands, heathlands, and coastal habitats. Species recovery programmes have supported Field Crickets, helleborines, butterflies, wetland birds and coastal wildlife, while designated sites have been managed to maintain or improve ecological condition.

3. Nature-Based Solutions in Infrastructure

Nature-based solutions - including Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), green infrastructure, naturalised flood management and environmentally sensitive

engineering - are now embedded in transport schemes, countryside projects, coastal management and public buildings. Sites such as Queen Elizabeth Country Park and the Stubbington Bypass demonstrate these principles in practice.

4. Trees & Canopy Expansion

Through the Hampshire Forest Partnership, over 123,000 trees and 13.5 km of new hedgerows have been planted since 2023. The programme includes disease-resistant elm trials, mini-forests, community orchards

and large-scale urban and rural tree planting. Woodland restoration and ash dieback resilience work continue across key sites.

5. Sustainable Land Management

County Farms and countryside sites have adopted regenerative farming, improved soil and water management, low-intensity grazing, agroforestry trials and circular nutrient systems. Over 1,770 hectares of farmland and extensive countryside sites are managed to support wildlife, carbon storage and sustainable food production.



6. Monitoring & Data

The Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre provides the core monitoring framework, maintaining over 11 million species records and supporting habitat surveys, SINC monitoring, mapping and digital tools. Monitoring also includes woodland inspections, coastal surveys, species transects, community science and long-term tracking of biodiversity trends.

7. Access, Participation & Wellbeing

Access to nature has been improved through better paths, boardwalks, engagement programmes, volunteering (over 50,000 volunteer hours), outdoor learning, wellbeing initiatives like Park Yoga, and nature-friendly projects in libraries and care settings. These programmes strengthen people's connection to nature and support healthier communities.

8. Partnerships for Nature Recovery

The council works with over 50 organisations including Local Nature Partnerships, Bird Aware Solent, catchment partnerships, the Hampshire Forest Partnership, National Park Authorities and community groups. Collaboration enables landscape-scale action, shared evidence, funding and coordinated delivery across Hampshire.





Case Study: Integrated Transport Programme – Delivering Biodiversity Through Capital Schemes

Hampshire County Council’s Integrated Transport Programme demonstrates how highways and capital schemes can deliver biodiversity and environmental resilience alongside improved connectivity.

Between 2023 and 2025, several transport schemes incorporated Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and landscape-led design as standard practice.

The Stubbington Bypass included native tree and shrub planting to integrate the route into the surrounding landscape and strengthen

green infrastructure networks. Sustainable drainage features manage surface water runoff, improve water quality and create vegetated basins and swales that provide habitat value. By diverting traffic from Stubbington village centre, the scheme also supports improved local air quality and safer walking and cycling routes.

Other schemes include Brighton Hill Roundabout (SuDS and landscaping), A27 Delme (bus and cycle lane with drainage and planting), and A30 Hartford Bridge Flats (link road with integrated drainage and landscape design).

These projects demonstrate HCC’s commitment to embedding biodiversity and climate adaptation within routine infrastructure delivery.



Case study: Hampshire Forest Partnership - Ecological Corridors and Species Recovery in Action

The Hampshire Forest Partnership (HFP), established in 2022 to deliver the Hampshire Tree Strategy, is a key delivery mechanism for the Council's Biodiversity Duty and the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). During the reporting period, HFP enabled the planting of over 123,000 trees and 13.5km of hedgerows across Hampshire.

Through its flagship programmes, HFP reconnects fragmented landscapes.

Linking Leaves supports parish councils, charities and communities to plant trees and hedgerows in publicly accessible spaces, including community orchards and mini forests that act as stepping stones for nature in peri-urban areas. **Shoots Along the Routes** works with farmers and landowners to restore and create habitat corridors along field boundaries, rural routes and waterways. Together, these initiatives strengthen ecological connectivity, linking woodland, hedgerows, verges and watercourses into functioning wildlife corridors and delivering LNRS priorities for "bigger, better and more joined-up" habitats.

A distinctive component is the Elm Trials programme, through which 4,690 disease-resistant elm trees have been planted in partnership with over 270 organisations. Once a defining feature of Hampshire's landscape, elm was largely lost to Dutch Elm Disease. Its reintroduction supports species recovery, including habitat for the white-letter hairstreak butterfly, while increasing structural diversity and climate resilience within tree populations.

Hundreds of partners and thousands of volunteers have contributed, demonstrating how coordinated local action can deliver ecological corridors, targeted species recovery and long-term stewardship at scale.





Case Study: Health, Wellbeing and Nature

Hampshire County Council is embedding biodiversity and access to nature across multiple services to improve health and wellbeing, demonstrating a whole-council approach to delivering its Biodiversity Duty.

Through spatial planning and Healthy Places work, green and blue infrastructure is integrated into Local Plans, development proposals and regeneration projects. Policies promote multifunctional green networks, climate resilience and equitable access to nature, ensuring biodiversity and health outcomes are considered together.

Across residential care homes, respite units and day services, nature forms part of daily life. Sensory gardens, ponds, orchards, hedgerows, wildflower areas and bird and bat boxes support residents while enhancing habitat diversity. People with dementia, learning disabilities and complex needs participate in planting and horticultural activities, improving wellbeing and social connection.

Country parks contribute to preventative health through volunteering, green space access and initiatives such as free Park Yoga sessions attracting up to 130 participants, with survey data showing increased physical activity and improved mental wellbeing.

These examples show how biodiversity and public health objectives can be delivered together across Hampshire.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requires most new developments to deliver at least a 10% biodiversity improvement. Between 2023 and 2025, the council assessed BNG for school developments, minerals and waste applications and major transport schemes. Gains were delivered through habitat creation, hedgerow planting, wetland features and sustainable drainage. No statutory credits were used, and no irreplaceable habitats were lost.

Forward Plans for 2026–2028

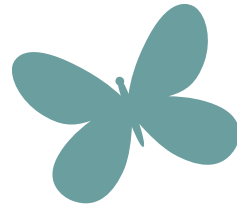
Hampshire County Council will continue embedding biodiversity across all directorates, supported by the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hampshire. Priorities include:

- Strengthening governance, data systems and biodiversity reporting tools.
- Restoring over 300 hectares of habitat through new stewardship agreements and woodland management plans.
- Expanding tree, hedgerow and woodland creation, including disease-resistant elms and community planting programmes.
- Embedding nature-based solutions in all infrastructure, flood resilience and development projects.
- Supporting access, wellbeing, volunteering and community nature projects.
- Strengthening partnerships to deliver landscape-scale nature recovery.



Get Involved

There are many simple and rewarding ways you can play a part in supporting and protecting nature within your local community. To get started, simply explore the links below – they'll connect you with Hampshire County Council's initiatives, events, outdoor spaces, and practical steps you can take right in your area.



Hampshire Forest Partnership

[Get involved | Environment | Hampshire County Council](#)

[Join the Million Trees Challenge | Environment | Hampshire County Council](#)

[The Young Tree Grower's Guide | Environment | Hampshire County Council](#)

[Mini Forest Handbook | Environment | Hampshire County Council](#)

[Disease-resistant elm trials | Environment | Hampshire County Council](#)

[Farmers and landowners | Environment | Hampshire County Council](#)

[Linking leaves | Environment | Hampshire County Council](#)

[Shoots along the routes | Environment | Hampshire County Council](#)

Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Environment

[Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hampshire | Environment | Hampshire County Council](#)

[Land, planning and environment | Environment | Hampshire County Council](#)

[Environment | Environment | Hampshire County Council](#)

[Nature Recovery Hampshire | Environment | Hampshire County Council](#)

[Road Verges of Ecological Importance \(RVEI\) | Environment | Hampshire County Council](#)

[Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre \(HBIC\) | Environment | Hampshire County Council](#)

County Farms

[County Farms Service | Environment | Hampshire County Council](#)

Agroforestry Guides

[cricket-bat-willow-silvopastoral-systems.pdf](#)

[walnut-silvopastoral-systems.pdf](#)

[apple-silvoarable-systems.pdf](#)

[walnut-silvoarable-systems.pdf](#)

Hampshire Countryside Service

[Hampshire Countryside Service | Things to do in Hampshire | Hampshire County Council](#)

[Hampshire Country Parks and Farms | Things to do in Hampshire | Hampshire County Council](#)

[Corporate team days | Things to do in Hampshire | Hampshire County Council](#)

[Pollinator Pledge | Things to do in Hampshire | Hampshire County Council](#)

[Volunteering | Things to do in Hampshire | Hampshire County Council](#)

[Basingstoke Canal | Things to do in Hampshire | Hampshire County Council](#)

[Blackwater Valley | Things to do in Hampshire | Hampshire County Council](#)

Request Highway Tree Planting

[Request Highway tree planting | Transport and roads | Hampshire County Council](#)

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Cover Dormouse – stock image

Page 2 White-letter hairstreak butterfly – stock image

Page 4 Volucella Zonaria, the hornet mimic hoverfly – Hampshire County Council image library

Page 5 Basingstoke Canal near Odiham – Steve Wallis

Page 7 Marsh Harrier at Titchfield Haven National Nature Reserve – Steve Payce

Page 8 Common Sandpiper at Titchfield Haven National Nature Reserve – Steve Payce

Page 9 Wildflower planting Stubbington bypass – Hampshire County Council image library

Page 10 Shelterbelt planting near Cheriton along the A272 – Hampshire County Council image library

Page 11 Disease Resistant elm, Ulmus wingham planted along River Test – Houghton Club and Stockbridge Fisheries

Page 12 Walking through woodland – Steve Wallis

Page 14 Planting oak trees at the New Forest Showground - New Forest National Park Authority image library