

**NEWTON ABBOT TOWN COUNCIL****REPORT TO:** Community & Heritage Committee      **DATE:** 4<sup>th</sup> February 2026**REPORT AUTHOR:** Thomas Collard, Green Spaces Officer**AGENDA ITEM No.:** 8**REPORT TITLE:** Green Spaces Officer Update

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**1. Summary**

Over the past 12 months, significant progress has been achieved in managing allotment responsibilities, advancing the NATC Biodiversity Policy, and developing a new Green Spaces Policy.

**2. Allotments**

The strong working relationship with the Newton Abbot District and Co-Operative Allotment Association (NADCAA) has been maintained. Key updates:

- Four rounds of allotment inspections have been completed, resulting in the removal of long-term non-cultivators and the re-letting of plots to new tenants.
- Development of Accessible and Community Plots is ongoing, with the first plots at Vicary's Field and Decoy Field scheduled to open in 2026.
- Continued site maintenance, including significant tree works, upgraded water collection facilities, and enhanced security measures.
- Three break-ins at Decoy Field have prompted further security improvements in collaboration with NADCAA and the FMO team.
- Vicary's Field Transition Plan is underway, preparing for joint management between NADCAA and NATC from March 2026.
- A new Allotment and Community Garden Strategy has been produced to guide future development.

**3. Biodiversity Policy**

The Biodiversity Working Group convened for the first time in mid-2025 and has since developed a series of new policy actions. The following initiatives have been completed or are currently in progress:

- Commissioning of surface-level biodiversity audits across NATC-managed assets.
- Ongoing support for the Pesticide Free Newton Abbot (Green Futures) initiative, including:
  - Attendance at the Pesticide Free Devon Conference, where a workshop was delivered on pathways for local councils to become pesticide-free.
  - Continued partnership in the community pesticide collection scheme.
  - Support for a Green Futures presentation to Bishopsteignton Parish Council, contributing to their decision to adopt a pesticide-free approach.

- Grass verge management: a wildlife-friendly management trial is nearing commencement, informed by two phases of public consultation (May 2025 and January 2026) and advice from local ecologists.
- Development of a museum wildlife display focusing on the Dr Henry Mapleton entomology collection and NATC's pesticide-free work, scheduled for launch in March.
- Creation of a dedicated "Biodiversity" section on the NATC website.
- Launch of an iNaturalist project to support public recording of local wildlife observations.
- Funding and installation of a new rainwater collection facility at Decoy Field.

#### **4. Green Spaces Strategy**

New Green Spaces Strategy launched to guide future actions across NATC managed assets.