



# Biodiversity Policy

Date of adoption	Council 24 <sup>th</sup> January 2024 - Minute number 24/01(372)
Reviewed	C&H 2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2025 Biodiversity Working Group 20 <sup>th</sup> May 2026
Next Review Date	April 2027
To be reviewed by	This policy will be reviewed annually by the Community & Heritage Committee, together with a summary of how the policy has been implemented in the previous twelve months.

## Statutory Duty

Under the [2021 Environment Act](#), public authorities (including town and parish councils) who operate in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

[Government guidance](#) published in May 2023 clarifies that, as a public authority, town and parish councils must:

- Consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agree policies and objectives based on those considerations.
- Act to deliver those policies and objectives.

Newton Abbot Town Council recognises its responsibility to protect and enhance biodiversity throughout the parish and will continue to consider biodiversity implications within its decision making, land management, partnerships and community engagement activities.

## Why Biodiversity Matters

Biodiversity underpins healthy ecosystems, supports climate resilience and contributes significantly to the wellbeing of residents and visitors.

The protection and enhancement of biodiversity helps to:

- Support pollinators and wildlife populations
- Improve climate resilience
- Improve soil and water quality
- Reduce flood risk
- Enhance public spaces and wellbeing
- Encourage community engagement with nature

Newton Abbot Town Council recognises that biodiversity conservation must form part of the long-term sustainable management of the parish.

## Biodiversity in Newton Abbot

Newton Abbot is a historic market town with a wide range of green spaces, habitats and environmental assets which contribute significantly to biodiversity within the parish.

- Decoy Country Park – Green Flag award-winning country park and Local Nature Reserve.
- Courtenay Park – Green Flag award-winning park featuring a pond, sensory garden and bandstand.
- Bakers Park – Large open green space on the outskirts of Newton Abbot.
- Bradley Manor Estate – National Trust estate with meadow, woodland and river habitats.
- Forde Park – Formal town park featuring a tree trail connecting to Courtenay Park, including notable specimens such as Giant Redwood and Lucombe Oak.
- Sandringham Park – Community green space with sports pitches and recreational facilities.
- Stover Country Park – 114-acre country park with woodland, lake, marsh, heathland and grassland habitats, recognised as a dragonfly hotspot by the British Dragonfly Society.

## Town Council Responsibilities

The Town Council is responsible for grass cutting verges (devolved service from Devon County Council) and has responsibility for the clearing of footpaths throughout the parish area, in partnership with Devon County Council's Parish Paths Project. In addition, the Town Council owns various assets including:

- Newton's Place
- Golden Lion Square
- Victoria Gardens
- St Leonard's Clock Tower
- War Memorial
- Newfoundland Way Public Conveniences
- Town Quay
- Vicary Mill Leat
- 7 Allotment Sites
- Vicary's Community Garden

The Council recognises the importance of these spaces in supporting wildlife, improving habitat connectivity and providing opportunities for residents and visitors to engage with nature.

## Aims, Objectives and Biodiversity Principles

Newton Abbot Town Council will seek to conserve and enhance biodiversity throughout the parish through a combination of short, medium and long-term actions which support habitat protection, climate resilience, sustainable land management and community engagement.

The Council recognises that biodiversity improvement is an ongoing process requiring long-term commitment, partnership working and continuous review.

### Governance & Monitoring

- Consider biodiversity within Council decision making and policy development.
- Review biodiversity objectives and actions annually.
- Support measurable biodiversity improvements where possible.

### Planning & Development

- Encourage sustainable development and habitat protection through the planning process.
- Support biodiversity enhancements and sensitive design where appropriate.

### Land & Habitat Management

- Manage Council land using biodiversity-friendly practices.
- Support habitat creation, restoration and connectivity.
- Reduce environmental impact across grounds maintenance and land management activities.

### Climate Resilience

- Support sustainable drainage, water conservation and climate-resilient planting.
- Consider opportunities to reduce environmental impact across Council operations.

### Community Engagement

- Promote biodiversity awareness, education and community participation.
- Encourage wildlife recording, interpretation and access to nature.

### Partnerships

- Work collaboratively with local organisations, community groups and partner authorities.
- Support wider biodiversity initiatives and partnership projects across the parish.

## **Timeline of Biodiversity Achievements**

### **2016**

Newton Abbot Town Council adopted the Newton Abbot Neighbourhood Development Plan (Minute number 16/03(401)), which included policies supporting sustainable development, biodiversity enhancement, protection of trees and hedgerows, habitat management and the creation of green infrastructure, cycleways and footpaths.

### **2020**

The Council invested in Foamstream weed management equipment to support environmentally friendly grounds maintenance and reduce reliance on pesticides across Council-managed land and assets.

### **2022**

The Council adopted the Community Plan 2022–2032 (Minute number 22/07(275)), which identified adapting to and mitigating against climate change as a priority across Council activities and projects. The plan included objectives relating to green spaces, sustainability, active travel and community engagement.

### **2023**

The Council raised awareness of Hedgehog Highways through information sharing and provision of hedgehog highway surrounds and guidance for residents (Minute number 23/03(445)).

In November 2023, the Council resolved to prohibit the use of pesticides across all Council assets and services (Minute number 23/11(305a)), supporting pollinator protection and environmentally friendly land management practices.

### **2024**

Newton Abbot Town Council formally declared a Biodiversity Emergency on 24th January 2024 (Minute number 24/01(373)), recognising the importance of biodiversity protection and enhancement.

The Council continued partnership working with organisations including Green Futures Newton Abbot, Green Newton and Newton Abbot & District Co-operative Allotment Association in support of biodiversity and sustainability initiatives.

The Council invested in additional sustainable weed management equipment including Weedo and Citymaster machinery to support pesticide-free grounds maintenance operations.

### **2025**

The Council employed a Green Spaces Administrative Officer to support the delivery of biodiversity projects and policy objectives.

A rainwater harvesting station was installed at Decoy allotments using Council funding to support water conservation objectives, with further opportunities continuing to be explored at additional allotment sites.

An iNaturalist umbrella project was established across Council allotment sites and Newton Abbot to encourage wildlife recording and community engagement with biodiversity.

A biodiversity information page was created on the Council website to support public awareness, engagement and access to biodiversity-related information and resources.

The Council supported Green Futures pesticide collection initiatives and attended the Pesticide Free Devon Conference, including facilitating a workshop relating to the role of local government in pesticide-free initiatives.

The Council introduced a Sustainable Procurement Policy in September 2025 and continued transitioning operational equipment toward battery-powered alternatives where practical. Composting, shredding and mulching of green waste generated through maintenance activities also continued.

## **2026**

The Council introduced a Wildlife-Friendly Verge Trial following ecological advice and community engagement exercises undertaken in May 2025 and January 2026.

The “Insects Uncovered” biodiversity display was launched within Newton Abbot Museum to support public engagement, education and awareness of local biodiversity.

Bee hotels were installed within Victoria Gardens and swift boxes and callers were installed at St Leonards Clock Tower to support urban wildlife habitats.

## **Summary**

The achievements outlined above demonstrate the Council’s ongoing commitment to biodiversity enhancement. Building on this progress, the following action plan identifies priorities for delivery during 2026–2027.

## Biodiversity Actions 2026-2027

Theme	Action	Priority	Status	Latest Update
Governance & Monitoring	Produce an annual biodiversity monitoring report measuring habitat creation, species records, volunteer engagement and biodiversity improvements	High	New	Proposed by Biodiversity Working Group May 2026
Planning & Development	Continue providing biodiversity-focused comments on planning applications and tree works	High	Ongoing	GSO undertaking arboriculture qualification
Planning & Development	Consider biodiversity net gain and habitat protection when reviewing planning consultations	High	Ongoing	Responses aligned with Community Plan and Neighbourhood Plan
Planning & Development	Encourage sensitive lighting design and discourage unnecessary floodlighting where appropriate	Medium	Ongoing	To be considered through planning consultation responses where applicable
Land & Habitat Management	Continue biodiversity-friendly verge and grassland management	High	Ongoing	Verge sowing and preparation undertaken April 2026
Land & Habitat Management	Expand wildflower planting across appropriate Council-managed land	Medium	Ongoing	Pilot areas established following ecological advice
Land & Habitat Management	Install biodiversity enhancement features at Council-managed sites including bee hotels, bat boxes, swift boxes, ponds, deadwood habitats and pollinator planting	High	New / Ongoing	Additional actions approved May 2026
Land & Habitat Management	Carry out biodiversity audits of Council landholdings	Medium	Ongoing	Surface-level audit completed
Land & Habitat Management	Increase native tree and hedge planting across Council-managed land	Medium	New	Proposed by Biodiversity Working Group May 2026
Land & Habitat Management	Consider biodiversity enhancements when managing Council buildings and assets	Medium	Ongoing	Includes opportunities for integrated habitat features where appropriate

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Latest Update</b>
Land & Habitat Management	Ensure grounds maintenance specifications and contracts support biodiversity-friendly management practices	High	Ongoing	Incorporated into ongoing management reviews and verge management discussions
Land & Habitat Management	Support appropriate management of invasive non-native species on Council-managed land	Medium	Ongoing	Included within land management considerations
Climate Resilience	Investigate rain gardens, wildlife ponds and sustainable drainage planting opportunities	Medium	New	Proposed by Biodiversity Working Group May 2026
Climate Resilience	Expand rainwater harvesting facilities at Council sites and allotments	Medium	Ongoing	Vicary's Allotment under consideration
Community Engagement	Continue developing biodiversity information and educational resources	Medium	Ongoing	Website and biodiversity display updated periodically
Community Engagement	Expand community biodiversity engagement activities and workshops	Medium	Ongoing	Wildflower verge consultations undertaken
Community Engagement	Support and expand iNaturalist recording projects	Medium	Ongoing	Workshops proposed with allotment association
Community Engagement	Promote biodiversity education and engagement opportunities with local schools and community groups	Medium	Ongoing	Opportunities to be explored through future projects and partnerships
Community Engagement	Encourage access to nature through maintenance of public footpaths, walking routes and green space information	Medium	Ongoing	Public footpath maintenance and online walking resources continue
Community Engagement	Install interpretation signage at biodiversity project sites	Medium	New	Proposed by Biodiversity Working Group May 2026
Community Engagement	Investigate development of a Newton Abbot Green Trail	Medium	New	Further exploration agreed May 2026
Partnerships	Continue partnership working with Green Futures Newton Abbot, Green Newton, Rotary and other organisations	High	Ongoing	Ongoing collaborative projects and initiatives

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Latest Update</b>
Partnerships	Review relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategies, species conservation strategies and biodiversity guidance where appropriate	Medium	Ongoing	To inform future biodiversity initiatives and policy development
Future Assets & Opportunities	Consider biodiversity opportunities when reviewing future devolved assets and public spaces	Medium	Ongoing	“Think Green” approach proposed by Working Group

<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>
6 to 12 months	2 to 4 years	4 + years

## Reference list

Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services. (n.d.). Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a78c263ed915d04220651ea/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf> [Accessed 11th Nov. 2023].

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Local Nature Action Plans: guidance for town and parish councils 2. (n.d.). Available at: <https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/Local-Nature-Action-Plans-guidance-for-town-and-parish-councils.pdf> [Accessed 19 Dec. 2023].

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