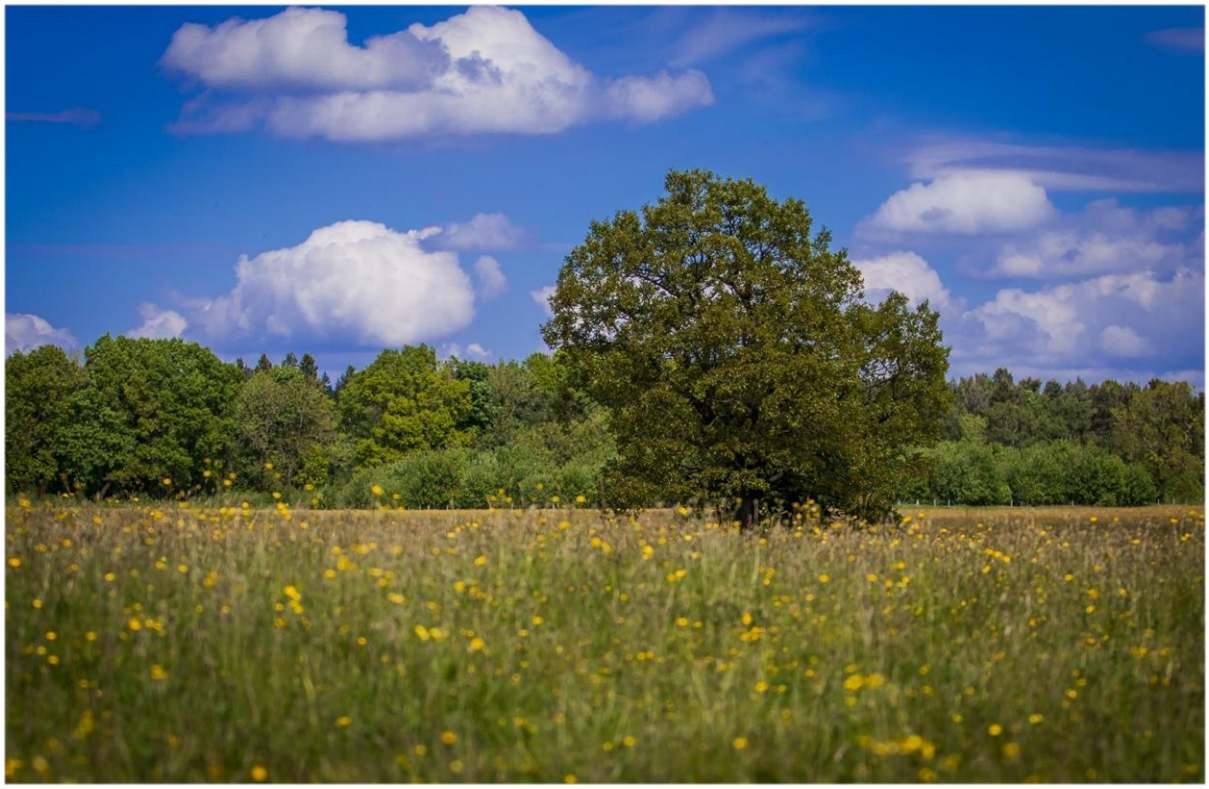
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Biodiversity Duty Report

2025/26



Pickard's Meadow

Photo Credit: Tony Raine

Executive Summary

This report demonstrates how Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has met the requirements of the enhanced Biodiversity Duty under the Environment Act 2021, and outlines the actions we will take to protect and enhance biodiversity between now and the next reporting period in 2031.

The Council is working to protect and improve nature across the Borough by restoring habitats, planting trees, creating wildflower-rich grasslands, improving rivers and wetlands, reducing chemical use, supporting important species such as great crested newts and water voles, and involving residents, schools and volunteers in hands-on environmental projects.

Through major partnership work, improved land management, and biodiversity requirements in new developments, more than 2,400 hectares of land across Stockton-on-Tees are now managed with nature in mind.

Despite challenges such as climate change, pollution and invasive species, the Council is committed to expanding its “Better for Nature” programme, increasing tree cover, improving data and monitoring, restoring more habitats and supporting the new Tees Valley Local Nature Recovery Strategy, creating a healthier, greener and more resilient Borough for people and wildlife.

Contents

Foreword

When we restore habitats, protect species, and allow nature the space to flourish, we strengthen the resilience of our environment and enrich the lives of everyone who depends on it. Every action, whether through strategic planning, community engagement, or practical land management, plays a vital role in reversing decline and nurturing the recovery of biodiversity.

The Biodiversity Duty highlights the excellent work that the Council is undertaking to support nature within the Borough. It not only showcases achievements to date but also provides a valuable opportunity to consider how Stockton on Tees' natural landscape will evolve in both the short and long term. This Duty reinforces our commitment to embedding biodiversity into decision making and ensuring that nature remains central to our future planning.

Across the Borough, grasslands, woodlands, and wetlands are being carefully improved through actions such as reducing mowing to encourage wildflowers, planting of new trees, and undertaking restoration projects to improve water quality and habitats. As our work continues to evolve, we remain excited and optimistic about the positive contributions future actions will bring to the natural environment within Stockton.

Councillor Nigel Cooke

Cabinet Member for Environment, Leisure and Green Spaces

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to demonstrate Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has met the requirements of the enhanced Biodiversity Duty, as part of the Environment Act 2021, and to provide further actions that will be undertaken in order to improve biodiversity outcomes within the Borough.

This report provides a holistic view of existing policies, strategies and action plans that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, alongside their local and regional partners, have delivered between the reporting period of January 2023 and January 2026. Alongside this, a number of future actions will be highlighted to demonstrate our commitment and ambitions towards improving biodiversity between publication and the next iteration of this report in March 2031.

The Council also see this as an opportunity to highlight exemplar work within the Borough and showcase to residents the measures which have been taken to protect and enhance nature.

About this Report

This report must set out how the Council have complied with the enhanced Biodiversity Duty within the Environment Act 2021 and how they look to comply with this over the next 5 years.

The guidance provided by Defra states that this report must cover the following:

- Policies and objectives that have been set out to meet the biodiversity duty and the actions completed to date
- Local, Regional and National legislation, targets and metrics that have influenced policies, objectives and actions
- How we plan to comply with the Biodiversity Duty in the next reporting period
- Any other information considered as appropriate

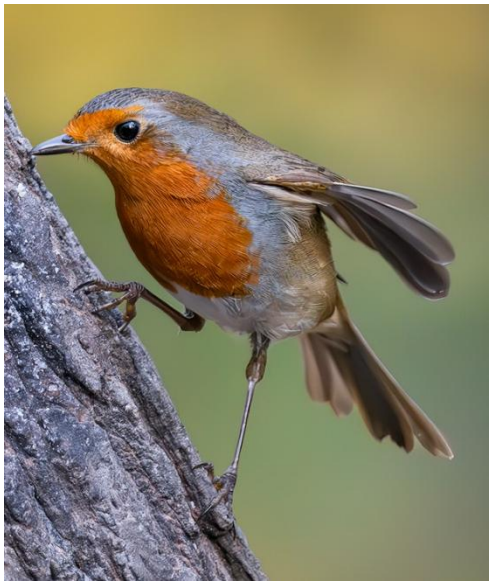
Reports from local planning authorities must also include:

- Actions carried out to meet Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) obligations
- Details of gains resulting, or expected to result, from biodiversity gain plans that are approved
- Plans to meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period

(Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2025)

What is Biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the number of different plants, animals, insects, fungi and microorganisms that can be found in a single location or area. These work together to make up ecosystems, where many work together in a perfect balance to provide food, clean air and water, medicine, shelter to each other and to humans. (World Wildlife Fund, 2026)



1 Photo Credit: Tony Raine

This balance is being increasingly disrupted by hotter summers, wetter winters, pollution, pests and disease, manmade infrastructure, pesticides, domestic pets and a reduction in habitat availability, resulting in significant decline in the number of different species we see and the amount of them.

This has meant that many species we have grown to see as iconically British, for example the Hedgehog, Red Squirrel and Water Vole, are now considered to be endangered. (Begum, 2020)

Hedgehogs and water voles face extinction in new Red List for British mammals | Natural History Museum

The UK has noted a significant decline in its biodiversity, with 19% decline in species abundance since monitoring began in 1970 (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2026), with a particular impact on birds, with a reduction of 43% and fewer butterflies being found in woodland, with a decline by 54% since 1990 (Joint Nature Climate Committee, 2025)

It has been widely reported that human intervention through conservation measures, monitoring and habitat creation, can support our native species and it is effective on all scales, from restoring national landscapes (University of Oxford, 2024) to providing pot-plants for pollinators. (The Wildlife Trust, 2026)

The Environment Act 2021 and enhanced Biodiversity Duty seek to establish how this can be delivered and mandate that all Councils have consideration for how they could be improving prospects and contribute towards meeting national targets for biodiversity. (Department or Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2025)

National Biodiversity Goals and Targets

The biodiversity duty has been developed to support the delivery of central government's Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 (previously referred to at the 25 Year Environment Plan), requiring all local authorities (excluding parish councils) and planning authorities to report on reasonable steps that have been taken and identified to contribute towards the protection and enhancement of biodiversity within their boundary area.

Within the Nature Recovery Green Paper the Government has committed to:

By 2030:

- halt the decline in species abundance
- protect 30% of UK land and sea

By 2042:

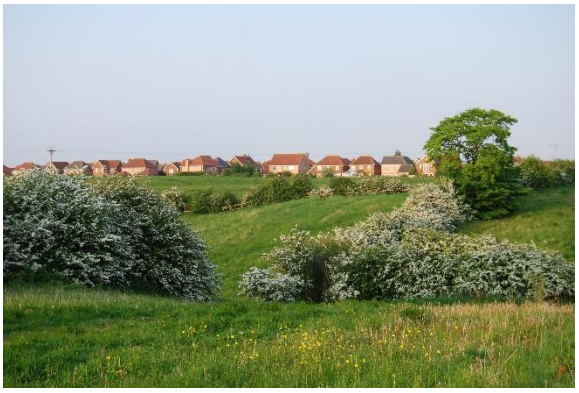
- increase species abundance by at least 10% from 2030, surpassing 2022 levels
- restore or create at least 500,000 hectares of a range of wildlife rich habitats
- reduce the risk of species extinction
- restore 75% of sites of special scientific interest to favourable condition
- Improve our marine environment with 70% of designated features in the Marine Protected Area network to be in favourable condition, with the remainder in recovering condition, and additional reporting on changes in individual feature condition
- Planting 180,000 hectares of woodland

Further information on the Governments Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 and further information on national reporting, can be found here: Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 - GOV.UK

About Stockton-on-Tees

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is a local authority in the North East of England, which covers 20,400 hectares, with an estimated population of over 206,800 (Office for National Statistics, 2025). The area boundary lies entirely within the Natural England National Character Area of the Tees Lowlands and includes the River Tees. (Natural England, 2026)

The Council's remit as a Unitary Authority is wide ranging, including management of a large estate in the Tees Valley area and delivering the local planning authority function for the Stockton-on-Tees borough area.



The Council is responsible for the management and maintenance of Council assets and public spaces, such as parks, woodlands, cemeteries, highways verges and countryside sites, along with a number of designated sites. A number of priority species are recorded within the Borough, including Water Voles and Great Crested Newts, which are require specialist management and annual reporting on designated habitats.

Meeting the Enhanced Biodiversity Duty

The Biodiversity Duty was first introduced as part of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, requiring all public authorities in England to have consideration for how they could enhance and protect Biodiversity. This has recently been amended and superseded by the Environment Act 2021, which strengthened the duty, often referred to as the 'Enhanced Biodiversity Duty'. (Department or Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2025)

The Environment Act 2021 also introduced Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain, meaning there is a greater responsibility for public authorities, developers and other organisations to showcase their commitments to enhancing spaces to improve biodiversity.

Additional considerations for nutrient neutrality through Environmental Delivery Plans has also been included within recent amendments of the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025, highlighting the Tees River catchment as a priority, however in its infancy the Council cannot comment on its delivery or impacts. An update will be included within future iterations of this report. (Wentworth, 2025)

Changes to nutrient neutrality in England - POST

Our Duty to Report

Under the Environment Act 2021, all public bodies in England are required to consider and integrate the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their functions. This further requires all public bodies to report every five years on how they comply with this duty and outline actions which have been taken to improve biodiversity.

The following report highlights the extensive work being delivered across Stockon-on-Tees, supported by a range of partners. Our commitment to enhance biodiversity is demonstrated through our actions to date, including our continued partnership working and our willingness to understand and adapt our ways of working based on emergent best practice. Our duty to report on biodiversity enhancement is a welcome opportunity to highlight local achievements.

To meet the requirements of the Biodiversity Duty, the Council should consider:

- How new and existing strategies, policies and projects affect compliance with the Biodiversity Duty, including how they can be integrated and support delivery of key actions. This should include how the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain, Local Wildlife Site management, Local Plans and wider requirements as part of the Environment Act 2021
- Review how land is currently managed and highlight areas which can be better managed to enhance and restore biodiversity
- To review internal processes which could adversely affect biodiversity, including procurement of external services and following best practice guidance on how to minimise our impact
- How we can better understand, collect and store environmental data to inform our strategies, policies and processes and celebrate our successes
- How we can share what we have learned with our communities and partners to create a joined-up approach to restoring biodiversity across the Tees Valley

- How to improve education, training and awareness of biodiversity loss and broader carbon literacy for communities, employees and partners

Biodiversity Report.pdf

Local Policies, Objectives and Actions

Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022-32

In 2022, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council adopted a Environmental Sustainability & Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022-32, (ESCR Strategy) which focuses on protecting and enhancing the environment, resource efficiency and climate adaptations.

Many of the actions delivered to date are informed by the ESCR Strategy, best practice for designated sites and advice from specialist partners.

Specific objectives relating to the biodiversity duty include:

- Capture and store carbon in woodlands and other natural habitats
- Protect, extend and connect areas of natural habitat and help address the decline in native species
- Take action to improve water quality
- Plan and adapt the built and natural environment to withstand the impacts of climate change (Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, 2022)

Stockton-on-Tees Plan 2024

Priority Three: A great place to live, work and visit

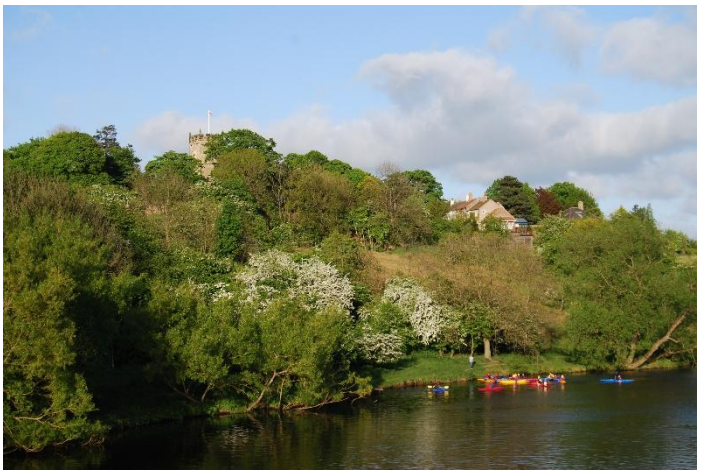
This priority aims to ensure the Council are working to achieve 'an environment that is well looked after, with outdoor spaces to enjoy and to connect amenities'

By strengthening our approach to biodiversity and green spaces, this priority also supports the creation of a healthier, more resilient natural environment. Protecting and enhancing habitats such as meadows, woodlands, wetlands, parks and hedgerows helps wildlife to thrive and increases the ecological value of our public spaces.

Managing land for nature not only boosts biodiversity but also provides ecosystem services, such as improved landscape quality, supporting climate adaptation, and ensuring that

residents can enjoy richer, more varied green spaces. (Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, 2024)

Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan



A strategic priority of the Local Plan is 'to enhance local identity and sense of place through the protection and enhancement of the Borough's natural and built environment, green infrastructure, biodiversity, cultural and heritage assets.' In addition to protecting and enhancing international, national (SSSIs) and locally designated ecological sites (Local Wildlife Sites), the local plan also recognises network of green wedge between existing settlements. As summarised within the current local plan 'Green wedges' play an important role in maintaining local character and the separate identity of built-up areas; this is achieved, in part, through ensuring that development within this designation does not lead to the physical or visual coalescence of built-up areas. Beyond this, green wedges fulfil a range of other purposes including providing recreational opportunities and supporting ecological networks. In order for development within the green wedge to be acceptable, criteria within this policy needs to be met.

In addition to this, it is directly stated that:

'To improve the quality of the water environment the Council will:

- Support ecological improvements along riparian corridors including the retention and creation of river frontage habitats;
- Avoid net loss of sensitive inter-tidal or sub-tidal habitats and support the creation of new habitats; and
- Protect natural water bodies from modification, and support the improvement and naturalisation of heavily modified water bodies (including de-culverting and the removal of barriers to fish migration)'

Other considerations within the Local Plan include:

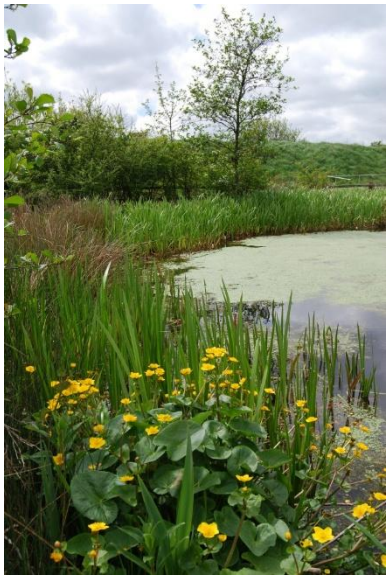
- Percentage of residential properties within flood risk areas
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 'favourable' condition
- Percentage of Local Wildlife Sites and Geological Sites in positive management
- Maintain Open Spaces, including allotments and play spaces, based on the estimated per 1000 residents
- Progress towards delivering the Green Infrastructure Strategy

Further information about the local plan can be found here: Local Plan - Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Please note that the Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan is due to be reviewed, therefore subsequent revisions to these priorities will be reflected within future iterations of this Biodiversity Duty Report.

(Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, 2019)

Biodiversity in Stockton-on-Tees



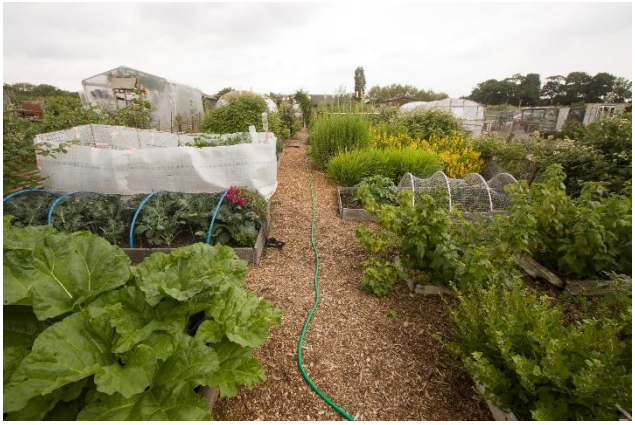
This chapter describes the current information held on land managed for biodiversity across Stockton-on-Tees, including other key landowners whose predominant focus is to manage their land for biodiversity. All figures for other landowners within the borough are estimates based on data available.

For the purpose of this report, actions and future actions do not include areas managed by third parties, however the Council continue to work closely with these partners through projects and proposals for biodiversity enhancements across the borough.

Land Management

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

The land owned by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council covers 20,400 Ha, of which 1216.09 Ha is considered to be green space.



The figures below highlight land owned by the Council explicitly managed or biodiversity, including space held as amenity grass for recreation which continues to support connectivity of green corridors, allotments which are managed by individuals and cemeteries which are mapped into their habitat types.

Please note a small proportion of the below figures are based on non-publicly accessible land owned by the Council, which are currently managed within leases, however hold notable sized habitat areas and have been included for completeness.

Habitat Type	Size (Hectares)
Woodland	547.29Ha (43.7Ha is owned and managed by SBC, but outside of borough boundaries)
Non-amenity grassland	177.9Ha
Open water and wetland (excluding the River Tees)	42.8Ha

Amenity grass (maintained for recreation)	344Ha
Allotments	41Ha
Arable Fields	63.1Ha
Total	**1216.09 Ha**

Tees Valley Wildlife Trust

The Tees Valley Wildlife Trust own a substantial area of land managed for biodiversity within Stockton-on-Tees, including the management of a number of sites owned by the Council included in the figures above.

Sites managed by Tees Valley Wildlife Trust but owned by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council therefore not included in the below are Hardwick Dene and Elm Tree Wood.

Site Name	**Estimated Size (Hectares)**
Gravel Hole	4.2Ha
Portrack Marsh	29.6Ha
Preston Farm	21.5Ha
Bowesfield Farm	38.7Ha
Total	94Ha

Estimated Total Land Managed for Biodiversity

Please note that the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council figures include amenity grassland as detailed above.

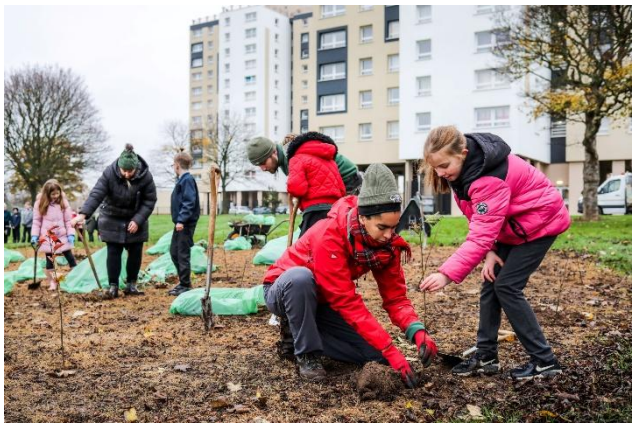
Land Owner	Estimated Total Area of Land Managed for Biodiversity (Hectares)
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	1216.09 Ha
Tees Valley Wildlife Trust	94 Ha
Forestry Commission	198.5 Ha
RSPB	650 Ha
Privately Owned Local Wildlife Sites	283.3 Ha
Total Land Managed for Biodiversity	**2441.89 Ha**

Designations

The borough has a number of designated sites, including those owned and managed by the Council and those owned by local organisations or individuals. The below information reflects the sites with designations across the whole of Stockton-on-Tees borough boundary area which have particular importance for biodiversity and additional considerations for their management.

Designation	**Number of Sites**
Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands	12
Local Wildlife/Geology Sites	58
Local Nature Reserves	12
National Nature Reserves	1 (Teesmouth NNR)
Ramsar Sites	1 (Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast)
Community Forest	1 (Tees Community Forest)
SSSIs	3
Listed Parks	1

Actions & Case Studies



This section demonstrates how the Council is actively meeting its Biodiversity Duty through practical action, partnership working, and the integration of nature recovery principles across our services. The following actions and case studies highlight the tangible steps taken to protect, enhance, and restore biodiversity across the Borough. They illustrate how the Council is embedding biodiversity considerations into everyday operations, ranging from land management and planning to community engagement and climate adaptation.

A number of case studies have also been selected, as they showcase innovative approaches, collaborative projects, and nature-positive interventions that support healthier ecosystems, increase landscape resilience, and enhance the quality and connectivity of green spaces across the district.

Actions

Better for Nature

Stockton Borough Council has committed to increasing the amount of greenspace managed for biodiversity, which is monitored by means of internal performance indicators and benefits from extensive habitat mapping of approximately 1,216.09 Ha of land assets. The Council currently manage 831.06ha of this greenspace explicitly for biodiversity (excluding amenity grass and allotments).

The Council have undertaken a number of different initiatives in order to increase the area of land managed for biodiversity in recent years, which are captured within the 'Actions' table, however have used *'Better for Nature'* branding to increase awareness of residents to the improvements being made and the impact this is having on their doorstep.

Stockton Council's '*Better for Nature'* initiative covers a range of environmental conservation work such as reduced amenity grass mowing, tree planting, woodland management etc., that is easily identifiable to residents of the Borough and provides opportunities for regular active community engagement.

Wetland Creation & Management

Billingham Beck Country Park

In 2024/25 a significant engineering project was undertaken at Billingham Beck Valley Country Park, which was led by the EA alongside National Highways, The Tees Rivers Trust and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council as an ambitious project to restore habitat, reconnect the watercourse to the natural floodplain and improve visitor access to the park.

This area is low lying and is therefore a natural floodplain, making it extremely fertile, creating valuable native meadow habitat for butterflies, dragonflies and wetland birds.

As part of the project, the historic weir was removed from the river, allowing 55km of open river for migrating fish and new channels were installed with design to create woody debris dams to divert water to retore wetland and other habitat in the wider floodplain.

Improved footpaths, landscaping and interpretation were installed alongside this to increase accessibility and develop greater awareness of the importance of the Beck amongst visitors.

Lustrum Beck

As part of the wider Tees Tidelands project, the Environment Agency led partnership project, Lustrum Beck has been identified as a critical area for nature recovery and a key habitat area for European Eels, Otters, Kingfishers and Water Voles. The wider project looks to support climate adaptation and improve habitats along the River Tees and its tributaries.

Through this project, around 1.5km of Lustrum Beck, which was previously heavily modified, has now been restored with a range of channel features including scrapes, berms, woody debris and backwaters. The works have provided additional habitat to support a greater range of species, including invertebrates, amphibians and wading birds.

Grassland Management

The Council's annual '*no mow*' initiative seeks to not only identify and re-establish remnant species rich grassland, but also to develop and expand them as a means of connecting areas of semi natural habitat. This programme has been designed to ensure these 'no mow' spaces are meaningful connected routes for pollinators and support native wildflowers and grassland habitats

Traditional grassland management, such as conservation grazing and hay cutting, is also carried out across several key sites, including the Wynyard Woodland Park and Billingham Beck Valley Country Park.

This work is delivered in partnership with the local agricultural community through agricultural licences and other agreements, ensuring habitats are managed sustainably while supporting local farming. The approach helps maintain species rich grasslands, prevents scrub encroachment and promotes a diverse mosaic of meadow habitats across the borough.

A number of other sites benefit from established native grassland meadows, including Honey Pot Wood, Portrack Meadow, The Holmes, Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park and Six Fields, but are cut via flail at the end of each Summer, where traditional methods are not suitable

Tree/Woodland Planting & Management

Tree Planting

In Winter 2024/25 the Council planted 220 standard trees, 7,500 tree whips, with a total of 228 volunteers supporting the Community Tree & Woodland Officer planting within their neighbourhoods.

In Winter 25/26 planted the authority planted 60 standard trees but delayed any additional whip planting until 26/27.

Where possible, we look to incorporate orchard and fruiting trees, as these provide both a benefit to our local residents, but also a food source for insects and birds.

Please note additional memorial trees are planted every year, with information collated alongside cemeteries and their management. This information can be found in the relevant section below.

Tree and Woodland Management

In addition to our tree planting programme, detailed above, the Council have a number of policies and processes in place to ensure we are working sustainably and in a way where biodiversity is always considered.

Where possible, trees are left as dead standing hardwood, particularly within woodland sites, as this provides valuable habitat, particularly for insects, birds and bats and adds to the overall soil health within woodlands. Where this is not suitable in higher footfall areas, trees are cut and left on site to provide similar benefits.

Where limbs of trees are removed and are not suitable to move on site, these are chipped and turn to mulch to suppress weeds on shrub beds, or spread as a sustainable method of replenishing areas of soil. This reduces our use of herbicides and artificial fertilisers.

Below are some examples of woodland management within the borough:

Wynyard Woodland Park

Wynyard Woodland Park has three distinct sections of woodland, which are managed according to their features and designations.

Thorpe Wood- Thorpe Wood is designated as one of the Boroughs Ancient semi-natural woodlands, defined by its age, mix of native deciduous trees and rich ground flora. This area of the park is sympathetically managed to ensure the character of the woodland is maintained and safeguarded for its diverse biodiversity and unique habitat. This is also the only area of the park where dogs are explicitly requested to be on lead to protect key habitats.

Tilery & Brierley Woods- Both of these areas have previously been used for commercial timber plantations, but have since been managed by our site Ranger and Volunteers for natural regeneration of native woodland. This is managed through halo thinning to retain particular specimen trees and removal of faster growing species to develop a sustainable woodland.

Stoney Field

Stoney Field is a 4.7 Ha former agricultural field planted with native deciduous trees in 2001, including a small biomass trial plot of Goat Willow and Hybrid Black Poplar. As has woodland matured, the site is managed through light thinning every five years, rather than large interventions, to maintain visual amenity, improve structure and proactively inspect for issues such as ash dieback. The biomass plots are being gradually diversified by reducing willow and poplar and promoting naturally regeneration native trees through halo-thinning.

Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park- Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park is managed differently to other areas of the borough due to the potential ground contaminants from its former life as a landfill site. The park has extensive woodland cover, however, requires specific management and removal of self-seeded trees on restricted areas, as to not damage the capped contaminants within the park.

The extensive nature of the woodland areas means there is a regular programme of woodland thinning which is undertaken with our on-site Ranger with support from the volunteers. The site has a high number of Ash trees, which unfortunately has been increasingly susceptible to Ash Dieback, resulting in an increased amount of safety-related felling.

As with many of our woodland areas, we are encouraging natural regeneration of more resilient varieties of trees, to reduce the need for pathogen related removals.

Other

The Council holds international recognition, achieving ‘Tree City of the World’ status for 2025, with application pending for 2026, delivered by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and Arbor Day Foundation. This achievement demonstrates our ongoing commitment to urban forestry and tree management within Stockon-on-Tees.

Priority Species & District Level Licencing

Priority species in the Lower Tees Valley have been identified as Great Crested Newts and Water Voles, and monitoring programmes have been established in partnership with the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust and the Freshwater Trust respectively.

Working in partnership with the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, a number of District Level Licensing ponds have been created at Wynyard Woodland Park to create habitat which supports breeding for Great Crested Newts, with further proposals under the same scheme for Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park.

Water Vole have previously been actively monitored by the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust at Six Fields, by capturing footprints and assessing live video footage, showcasing an active population on the site.

Other Environmental Monitoring

Stockton Borough Council actively encourages the use of its greenspace for recognised and established monitoring programmes, such as the Butterfly Conservation transects and the British Trust for Ornithology surveys undertaken by the Teesmouth Bird Club. The Freshwater Trust also undertake annual eDNA monitoring for the presence of Great Crested Newts at Wynyard Woodland Park.

Education and Research

Stockton Borough Council actively encourages the use of greenspaces for education and research.

The Council are currently working in partnership with students at Liverpool University to investigate the relationship between Invasive Non-Native Species and the natural bacterial communities present in soils. Please note the outcomes of this study has not yet been determined, however could support in innovative and sustainable treatments for INNS across the UK.

The Council have also undertaken a number of engagement activities with communities and local primary schools in conjunction with Teesside University and Natural England to identify improvements that could be made to urban green spaces to support recreational use and environmental improvements. Children particularly highlighted the importance of trees and spaces for nature within their parks, showcasing the importance and effectiveness of early education around biodiversity and the environment.

Invasive Non-Native Species

Stockton Borough Council works closely with the Tees Rivers Trust to identify, monitor and treat INNS such as Himalayan Balsam, Floating Pennywort, Crassula etc. and also has an active management programme of species such as Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed.

Pollinating Insects

Stockton Borough Council has provided the Cleveland Bee Keepers Association with an apiary at Ropner Park in order to train beekeepers, which led to securing the DEFRA '*Bees Needs*' award in 2024.

The Council consults with Cleveland Bee Keepers Association in matters such as reduced mowing and invasive species monitoring to ensure there is not likely to be significant impact on local bee populations.

In addition to this, the Council have increased the number of wildflowers in the borough, both through reduced mowing and changing ornamental planting, to create a wider network of pollinator friendly plants. More information on our site operations and management can be found below in the relevant Action.

Nature Partnerships

Stockton Borough Council is an active member of the following local partnerships that comprises other Local Authorities and organisations throughout the Tees Valley, working to deliver a more strategic approach to nature recovery:

- Tees Valley Nature Partnership

- Your Tees Catchment Partnership
- Tees Estuary Nature Recovery Partnership

These partnerships bring with them a wealth of expertise across public and voluntary sectors, bringing key players around the table to discuss habitats, education and green finance, along with emerging issues directly impacting the Tees Valley.

The historic Local Nature Partnership directly supported the designation of a number of Local Wildlife Sites, such as Hartburn Beck (Water Voles) and Stillington Forest Park (Butterfly assemblage).

These ongoing discussions continue to be essential for continuous improvement of our estate across Stockton-on-Tees.

Volunteering

The Council are committed to offering volunteering opportunities for our residents to be involved in developing and managing their local green spaces, both supported and independently, giving flexibility and removing barriers to access.

The main routes to volunteering in green spaces are through the Preston Park Volunteers (Site Specific), Stockton Countryside Volunteers (Boroughwide) and through a number of local parks Friends' groups and voluntary organisations. Please note, that we do not currently collect this data from our partners, therefore data below reflects volunteers supported through Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council services only. This does not include other types of volunteering across the Council.

For the year of 2025/26 the number of volunteer hours are highlighted below:
Stockton Countryside Volunteers: 3625
Preston Park Volunteers: 432 hours
Preston Park Corporate Volunteers: 20 hours

In total the Council have supported **4077** hours of green space volunteering in 2025/26.

Other environmental engagement activities at Preston Park include:
Owl Walks (63 attendees)
Otter Walks (54 attendees)

For the year of 2024/25 the number of volunteer hours are highlighted below:
Stockton Countryside Volunteers: 2440
Preston Park Volunteers:

An acknowledgement should be given to our Friends' groups, litter picking groups, biodiversity monitoring volunteers, VCSE partners and other volunteers, who regularly contribute a significant number of hours towards improving our parks, green spaces and public realm and support us in providing high standards of habitat for biodiversity and improve our understanding of ecology within the borough.

Mapping & Data

The Council currently maps data within our managed green spaces based on habitat type. This means that we are able to accurately understand which areas of land are managed specifically for

biodiversity and able to differentiate from wider mown amenity grass which may be present within our Parks and green spaces.

This mapping allows us to think holistically about where land is underutilised and could be uplifted to support biodiversity or managed different to increase awareness and understanding of challenges facing biodiversity.

The data collected by the Council and partners is used to inform our strategies, policies and projects.

Stockton-on-Tees Environment Fair

The annual Stockton Environment Fair, held in the town centre to coincide with the national Great Big Green Week, is a key event in the local calendar and a major platform for showcasing community led climate action. Supported by coalition members, primarily local residents, the Fair brings together around 20 stalls featuring businesses, charities, grassroots groups and local projects working to improve the local environment and promote sustainable living.

Alongside the event, informal networking and social sessions are held roughly every six months, providing coalition members with opportunities to connect, share ideas, collaborate and raise awareness of emerging environmental issues.

Flood Alleviation Schemes and Sustainable Drainage Systems

As the Lead Flood Authority for Stockton-on-Tees, the Council continues to incorporate natural flood management projects and consider how green space management could benefit biodiversity through creation of wetland habitat.

All schemes continue to consider opportunity for BNG and how design can play a factor in reducing nutrient pollution into our waterways, including tributaries to the River Tees.

The Council will continue to follow best practice guidance and work with our environmental partners to ensure we are incorporating enhancements to biodiversity where practicable.

Cemeteries/Crematorium management/Memorial Trees

The Crematorium and cemeteries have significant biodiversity value, particularly with historic sites being managed sympathetically to include spaces for nature, including a substantial part of Oxbridge Lane Cemetery and smaller areas of Thornaby Cemetery. These spaces remain sympathetically managed to ensure they are not overgrown and access is still provided to graves.

The Crematorium itself also includes landscaped areas for reflection, adding further opportunity for pollinator corridors.

As a sustainable option, the Council also offer sites for memorial trees within our parks and green spaces, with 115 being planted since 2023, in addition to the more general tree planting programme outlined above. The Crematorium is now also offering memorial bulbs, which can be planted through the grounds in memory of a loved one, in addition to working with charity partners on bird boxes and bug hotels to improve the habitat opportunities on our sites.

Grounds Maintenance

A number of processes and operational considerations have been amended to improve the biodiversity of the borough and move towards a more sustainable service, whilst still maintaining high standards of complimentary green spaces for recreation.

The Council have significantly reduced the use of herbicides and glyphosate in recent years, with its use strictly monitored and applied on a case-by-case basis where it is deemed essential to prevent weed growth. As a rule, these are only sprayed on hard standing and explicitly are not used beside hedgerows, or trees.

There has also been a move away from ornamental bedding plants towards support planting of native wildflowers, in order to create more diverse habitat for pollinators. Where possible, these are planted to create green corridors and connect existing habitats.

As technology has improved around battery operated machinery, ongoing trials and investment is a priority for the Council, in a bid to reduce negative impact of petrol operated equipment on local air pollution. Successful trials in our town centres now mean that all handheld maintenance equipment operated is now full battery operated.

Playing Pitches

Currently there are a number of open playing fields identified through the Local Plan. These spaces remain as mowed amenity grass to ensure provision for sports in available within the Borough, however provide key connections and resting spaces for mammals (most notably water fowl) through our urban areas.

Waterfront Park Regeneration Project

Investing in large capital developments, there is often scope to improve our environmental credentials, particularly including an increased areas for habitat by investing in regreening schemes.

A recent example is the development of the Stockton Town Centre, Waterfront Park. A space which transforms the high street into public realm where residents have a greater opportunity to engage with our blue and green spaces.

This development has created green space and planted 150 standard trees, to add to the green corridor to connect with the Tees Barrage.

Preston Park

Preston Park and Gardens are managed alongside the historic Preston Hall, as a site to showcase the heritage of the site, therefore some areas are cultivated and formally landscaped to reflect this. The site also benefits from extensive grounds, which have in recent times, been predominantly managed for recreation and as haven for wildlife to thrive amongst the urban environment.

Enhancements have been made within the site, including reducing mowing regimes of amenity grassland, increased native hedgerow planting, additional tree planting and invasive species management. Further detail can be found in the case study below.

Schools Climate and Sustainability Support

The Schools Climate Coalition, originally established with support from the Bright Minds Big Futures initiative to engage schools in environmental activity, has evolved to focus more directly on supporting teachers in sustainability roles.

Following the introduction of the Department for Education requirement for each school to appoint a School Sustainability Lead, a new School Sustainability Leads Network (SSLN) has been created, working in partnership with the national Let's Go Zero campaign, which the Council has supported since 2023.

The Council has also contributed to school tree-planting initiatives and continues to encourage schools to join the National Education Nature Park, helping pupils engage with nature and outdoor learning.

The Council continues to work closely with our schools to increase education about biodiversity and green spaces.

Creative Climate Coalition

The Creative Climate Coalition is comprised of around 15 freelance artists and local cultural and creative organisations, this coalition focuses on improving sustainability within their own practice while using performances, exhibitions and events to communicate climate and environmental messages to the wider public.

Overseen by Stockton Arts Centre (ARC) and meeting quarterly, the group includes organisations such as Tees Music Alliance, Festival of Thrift, Preston Hall Museum and Park, Tees Valley Museum Group and Tees Active Leisure, alongside individual creatives from across the Tees Valley.

Communities Climate Coalition

Recently relaunched and chaired by Catalyst, the Communities Climate Coalition now has around 65 members on its mailing list, bringing together individuals and organisations with an interest in becoming more sustainable.

Membership includes Parish Councils, VCSE organisations, litter picking groups, nature and wildlife organisations, and food distribution and growing initiatives. The group meets quarterly to share good news stories, explore opportunities for collaboration and offer mutual support, with strong links to wider Council teams through members' community focused activities.

Business Climate Coalition

The Business Climate Coalition brings together almost 70 businesses, ranging from SMEs to multinational companies across a wide range of sectors.

Meeting monthly, members share best practice, explore opportunities to improve their environmental performance and take part in site visits that showcase sustainability in action. Recent visits have included Teesside University's Net Zero Industrial Innovation Centre, Northumbrian Water's

wastewater treatment facility, Thirteen's Recycling Centre, Central Area Transmission System Terminal, the Northern Renewables Centre, Quorn Foods and Three Brothers Brewing.

The coalition has already supported new collaborations between local businesses and provides a valuable platform for TVCA engagement as part of the Local Area Energy Plan. Regular guest speakers from member organisations, national bodies and academia help provide a holistic approach to business sustainability.

This platform also gives opportunities for businesses to support local community projects and cross-coalition activities, including networking events to bring members together in an informal setting to discuss local environmental priorities.

CASE STUDY: Wynyard Woodland Park Habitat Restoration

Location: Wynyard Woodland Park
Area: 144.63 Ha (88% woodland)

A long-term- programme of habitat creation and restoration is ongoing to develop a high-quality mosaic landscape made up of wildflower meadow, naturally regenerating parkland, ponds- and the surrounding woodland site. The vision is to create a self-sustaining, ecologically rich system with seamless transitions between habitats, supporting a wide range of plant, invertebrate, amphibian, bird- and mammal species.

The project stands out for its holistic approach, creating a network of improvements, combining four major habitat types that interact and support one another. The approach taken has been sympathetic to the site and is an excellent example of how less intensive land management can be sustainable and deliver multiple benefits for people and nature.

Species rich wildflower meadow, enhanced through hay cuts and cattle grazing.

A rotational pond system, allowing natural succession while ensuring a continual supply of early stage pond habitat.

Restoration of the wider Brierley Wood, which provides both ecological connectivity and natural regeneration.

Natural regeneration of woodland and creation of open parkland has included large-scale willow thinning and halo thinning, opening the canopy to support woodland flora and slower growing native species, such as Oak.

Selective removal of self-seeded, faster growing trees, is used to support long-term woodland diversity and a to support veteran trees.

Sensitive Wildlife First Operations

Established woodland relies on careful management, with the Council's Countryside Rangers promoting wildlife-first operational practices. This includes using remote controlled machinery, which allows for precision, slower pace and reduced ground disturbance.

The site has significant support from a dedicated group of countryside volunteers, who go above and beyond to ensure common amphibians can be relocated to reduce disturbance and other small mammals, are spotted and allowed to relocate naturally.

The site has 51 mapped ponds, of which a number host a great crested newt population. Additional larger newt ponds were created in 2022 through the District Level Licensing Scheme, strengthening amphibian habitat across the site. This approach ensures long-term viability of amphibian populations.

The site showcases excellent examples of circular economy, supporting both biodiversity and recreation.

Timber is retained as habitat piles or left where it falls to support fungi, invertebrates, small mammals and birds.

Coppiced willow is used for wreaths, basketry, spoon carving and other crafts, linking habitat management with sustainable community use.

This combination of biodiversity value and resource reuse is a model of best practice.

CASE STUDY: Tees Tidelands Partnership- Billingham Beck Valley Country Park

In 2024–25, partners completed a £1.3 million river and wetland restoration at Billingham Beck Valley Country Park to boost biodiversity, improve water quality and reconnect the beck to its natural floodplain. The project delivered substantial ecological gains and climate adaptation including the removal of a historic weir to reopen approximately 55 km of upstream habitat for fish migration, alongside extensive wetland creation and natural flood management interventions. These works transformed a previously modified watercourse into a more natural, connected and climate resilient system and is regarded as one of the most significant fish-pass improvements in the local catchment.

The project was led by the Environment Agency in partnership with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Tees Rivers Trust, and National Highways, forming a strong cross-sector team. Delivery was aligned to the wider Tees Tidelands Programme, a £30 million initiative improving climate resilience and habitat connectivity across the Tees estuary.

Objectives

- Restore ecological connectivity by re-establishing natural floodplain processes and removing barriers to fish passage.
- Enhance biodiversity and water quality through creation of scrapes, shallow channels and wetland features
- Improve community access and experience through upgraded paths, landscaping and visitor infrastructure within the Country Park.

Wider Benefits

Two large woody debris dams were installed to emulate naturally fallen trees, diversifying river flows, slowing water and creating habitat refuges while still allowing fish migration. This system not only benefits biodiversity but also acts as a natural flood management system for local residents.

Reconnected floodplains slow and store water, trapping sediment and nutrients and contributing to improved ecological status in Billingham Beck and Thorpe Beck.

To integrate ecological improvements with visitor experience, additional works were delivered, including:

- New and resurfaced footpaths
- Improved drainage
- New steps, benches and gates
- Planting of 5,000 native trees and additional mixed hedgerow

These upgrades provide opportunities to learn about the local habitat, connect to nature and support long-term stewardship of the site.

CASE STUDY: Preston Park

A wide range of habitat management, species conservation and public engagement activities have been delivered across the extensive estate at Preston Park, building on the Councils development plan for the site, work focused on improving habitat condition, increasing biodiversity, enhancing ecological connectivity and engaging visitors and volunteers in practical conservation.

The site showcases its exemplary opportunities for habitat enhancement, showing how the historic estate can be of benefit to nature recovery.

Ambitious plans for the site and its ongoing management for biodiversity can be demonstrated through recent improvements, including:

- Planting 2,000 yellow rattle plugs and 300 cowslips significantly improving species richness
- Installing 210 metres of new hedgerow providing vital corridors for birds, small mammals and invertebrates.
- Proactive woodland thinning to improve structure, light levels and understory regeneration within woodland
- Establishing 200 metres of dead hedge
- Removal of snowberry, Himalayan balsam, and treatment of giant hogweed
- Planting willow and alder whips to reduce riverbank erosion demonstrates a strong approach to nature-based solutions

Public Engagement and Education Activities

Preston Park has developed itself a reputation amongst residents of Stockton, as the go-to location to learn about the environment, through its engaging and unique guided walks

This gives visitors the rare opportunities to see and learn about species which would otherwise be fairly aloof, such as Otters, Owls and Bats. Last year alone, 117 people attended wildlife walks at Preston Park, which shows excellent community participation and interest in local biodiversity.

They also run a number of school holiday activities, which has included sowing 500 acorns with local children as a way to inspire young participants and develop the next generation of environmental stewards.

Extensive Bird Monitoring Results

Due to Preston Parks extensive estate, excellent habitat management and its connections with local environmental schemes. This site benefits from an increasing number of volunteers monitoring and recording different species, particularly birds, which have included sparrowhawk, marsh tit, redwing, bullfinch, and long-tailed tit. This ongoing monitoring helps the Council to understand how best to manage its estate and where improvements could be best focussed.

The breadth and volume of ringing data demonstrate a well-established monitoring effort, supporting evidence led site management.

Biodiversity Net Gain

What is Biodiversity Net Gain?

Biodiversity Net Gain (also known as BNG) is mandatory in England under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Environment Act 2021.

Biodiversity Net Gain is a measure used to ensure that habitats and wildlife are left in a better state than they were before development. (Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, 2024)

Developers in England must deliver a 10% BNG uplift, which is determined based on ecological surveys which will consider the biodiversity value of existing habitat and advise on suitable mitigation or enhancements. This means a development will result in more or better-quality natural habitat than before it was built. (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2025)

2 Photo Credit: Sustrans

Biodiversity Units

For the purpose of BNG, biodiversity value is measured in standardised biodiversity units. This can be calculated using the statutory biodiversity metric tool, available here: Statutory biodiversity metric tools and guides - GOV.UK

A habitat will contain a number of biodiversity units, depending on things like its:

- Size
- Quality
- Location
- Type

Where developers cannot reasonably generate these units on their development site, units can be purchased and habitat enhancement of creation be made elsewhere via off-site units or as a last resort, government biodiversity credits.

These habitats must be maintained for a minimum of 30 years, including where it is created off-site. (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2025)

Planning Services Biodiversity Net Gain Monitoring

The Environment Act (2021) amended the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) introducing the requirement for the consideration of 'Biodiversity Net Gain' in the processing of planning applications. As a consequence every grant of planning permission, subject to exemptions, includes a condition that requires new development to demonstrate it has achieved a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the baseline / pre-development value of the site. The biodiversity value of a site is calculated through site appraisal and completion of the 'statutory biodiversity metric' (produced by Natural England) by suitably qualified individuals.

Further guidance on Biodiversity Net Gain is available here.

Between 01/01/2023 and 12/02/2024, when mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain came in to force, the Council sought net biodiversity gains in new development wherever possible through the application of Local Plan policy ENV5.5 and policies within the National Planning Policy Framework.

The remainder of this section provides an overview of how the Council has achieved Biodiversity Net Gain since it became a mandatory requirement for new planning applications submitted after 12th February 2024.

Exemptions

The Council has screened planning applications against the regulations to understand whether they meet the following exemptions:

- **Temporary exemption for non-major development (until April 2024). 134 applications.** Development which is not defined as major development under Article 2 Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 is exempt until 2 April 2024. The exemption will continue to apply to section 73 permissions where the original permission which the section 73 relates to was subject to this temporary exemption.
- **Householder development. 753 applications.** Development which is subject of a householder application as defined within Article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.
- **Development granted planning permission by a development order under section 59 of the Town and Country Planning Act. 8 applications.** This includes development which is classed "permitted development", where planning permission is not normally required.
- **Development subject to the de minimis exemption. 83 applications.** Development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat, and 5 metres of linear habitats such as hedgerows.
- **Self-build and custom build development. 8 applications.** Development which:
    - consists of no more than 9 dwellings, and

- is carried out on a site which has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares, and
- consists exclusively of dwellings which are self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015.

- **Urgent Crown development granted permission under section 293A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. 0 applications**.
- **Development of a biodiversity gain site. 0 applications.** Development which is undertaken solely or mainly for the purpose of fulfilling, in whole or in part, the biodiversity gain condition which applies in relation to another development.
- **Development related to the high speed railway transport network. Not relevant to Stockton-on-Tees Borough / 0 applications.**

During the preparation of this report the Council has identified 28 applications where biodiversity net gain was not exempt and was a key consideration in the determination of the proposal.

Biodiversity Net Gain Overview

The table below provides all of the agreed biodiversity information relating to planning applications in the monitoring period, starting with the date that Biodiversity Net Gain came in to force (12th February 2024).

Table 1 – Summary of biodiversity net gain information in relevant planning applications between 12th February 2024 and 31st December 2025

Category	Habitat	Hedgerow	River
Onsite Baseline	272.58	18.77	0
Onsite Post Development	187.26	28.94	0
Onsite Net Unit Change	-85.32	10.17	0
Offsite Baseline	2.16	0	0
Offsite Post	96.89	0	0
Total Offsite Net Unit Change	94.73	0	0
Units From Credits	4.22	0	0

As the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain is a pre-commencement condition it is possible that applications can be permitted:

- Including details of the approach to Biodiversity Net Gain.

- Subject to the confirmation pre-commencement of the approach to Biodiversity Net Gain

Appendix A below summarises all schemes where the Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy has been agreed during the application process or prior to commencement.

Habitat Units

Change in habitat biodiversity units account for the majority of impact / change from new development. Overall, there is an on-site loss of habitat units following development, however, in accordance with the biodiversity duty this loss will be mitigated off-site whilst also achieving a 10% uplift against the baseline position.

The most significant on-site gains were achieved in the following developments which achieved the mandatory 10% uplift within the development site boundary:

- 24/1769/FUL – Solar Panel Scheme at Teesside Grange with a biodiversity increase to 12.16 units (circa +8 units) above the baseline of 3.98 units.
- 24/1628/FUL – Billingham Sports Hub. An increase in habitat units from 51.05 units to 57.61 units (+6.56 units).
- 23/0752/FUL – A battery energy storage development at Letch Lane, Carlton. An increase from 4.95 habitat units to 6.28 units (+1.33 units).
- 24/1031/FUL – Extensions and other development at KP Snacks increasing baseline habitat units from 10.39 units to 11.5 units (+1.11 units).
- 24/2073/FUL – redevelopment work at St John's Primary School, Wolviston. Increase from 2.15 units to 2.91 units (+0.76 units).

As noted above, a number of sites have resulted in a reduction in biodiversity units against the baseline position, or the 10% uplift has not been achieved on-site. In these circumstances the council has agreed the mitigation approach during the planning application, in accordance with government guidance on achieving biodiversity gains. Mitigation and gains have either been achieved through schemes submitted with the planning application, or will be agreed prior to commencement of the development.

The most significant on-site losses are at the following sites, most of which have previously benefitted from planning permission granted prior to biodiversity net gain coming in to force, or are allocated in the Local Plan. These sites include major economic growth proposals including Teeslink at Durham Lane Industrial Estate (loss of 77.56 habitat units) and Dynamo Park at Portrack Lane (loss of 4.7 habitat units). These schemes will mitigate the impact of the development off-site whilst achieving a 10% uplift. A further economic growth proposal has been agreed at Conoco Philips which involves the loss of 1.1 habitat units which will be off-set by 1.73 units secured by biodiversity credits.

The two residential developments with the most significant on-site losses are on locations that have previously been permitted and are identified for development in the Local Plan. Permission has been granted for an extension to the Harebell Meadows residential development at Greatham Avenue, which is a vacant development plot on a former brownfield

site (Corus Pipe Mill). The scheme has led to an on-site loss of circa 6.71 habitat units. The client will seek to secure offsetting units via a landowner within the Stockton area, secured by a Section 106 (S106) agreement.

At Little Maltby Farm in Ingleby Barwick a development for commercial units and residential development / older people's housing was permitted which resulted in a loss of 2.58 credits, which will be mitigated off-site. This site previously benefited from planning permission and is identified for development in the Local Plan.

Whilst these schemes are the most significant on-site losses of habitat credits, several other sites will also be meeting the biodiversity requirement off-site.

During the preparation of this report council officers have also identified a scheme where a development which was granted planning permission has commenced and completed without securing the biodiversity gains that were required. As the scheme relates to a temporary classroom on school site work is underway to secure the necessary mitigation retrospectively.

Hedgerow Units

All hedgerow biodiversity gains from new permissions were identified as being potentially achieved on-site. This equated to an increase of 10 additional units against a baseline of 18 units, an increase which is potentially far in excess of the 10% requirement. The largest increases were agreed at the following sites:

- 24/1628/FUL – Billingham Sports Hub. Increase from 0.16 units to 4.93 units a +4.77 increase. This development has not commenced.
- 23/0752/FUL – A battery energy storage development at Letch Lane, Carlton. An increase from 12.51 units to 14.26 units a 1.75 units increase.
- 24/2127/FUL – Additional housing development at Harebell Meadows (near Portrack Lane) with an increase from 0 units to 1.47 units.
- 24/2073/FUL – redevelopment work at St Paul's Primary School, Wolviston increase from 1.23 units to 1.91 units, an increase of 0.68 units.

River Units

The approved planning applications did not include the loss of, or generation of, 'river' based biodiversity units.

Permission Data

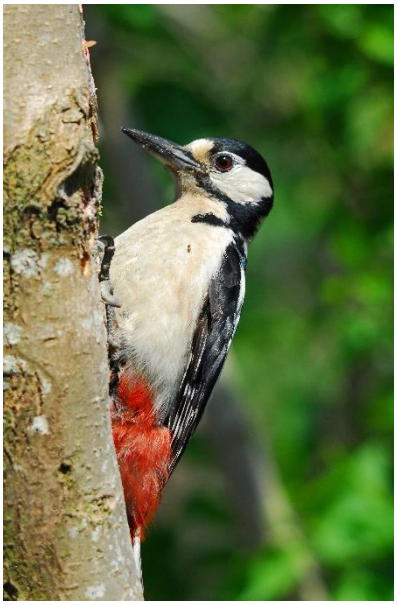
Appendix A below provides the detailed information recorded on the council's planning application register.

A Future for Biodiversity in Stockton-on-Tees

Vision for Nature Recovery

Despite ongoing pressures, the Council remain committed to creating a borough where biodiversity is considered an asset, which is managed and restored sympathetically to the benefit of all. We will continue to deliver our existing commitments to implement projects which increase climate resilience and work alongside our partners and VCSE organisations to better manage our estate for nature.

Over the next 5 years the Council will continue to be ambitious in how we improve our outcomes for biodiversity, showcasing best practice, thinking strategically and creating greater opportunities for partnership working.



3 Photo Credit: Kenny Crooks

Pressures

Nature recovery as a local authority comes with a number of pressures. To ensure the Council is able to manage these, the following list of common pressures has been used to develop our future actions, working to mitigate and adapt to ensure these do not impact on local biodiversity.

Pressure	**Impact on Biodiversity**
Land use and development	Conflicts and changes in land use have resulted in reduced and fragmented habitat across the UK, reducing connectivity for mammals and pollinators. This also includes intense mowing regimes for recreation and agricultural monoculture, which result in reduced diversity of plants and flowers.
Pollution	Water and air pollution is a growing concern from unsustainable land management practices, vehicle use, fly tipping, misconnected sewage, unregulated sewage discharge and intensive farming. The Tees Valley is known for its industry, which also contributes to local air and water pollution, including airport, chemical and manufacturing.

	Smaller scale but persistent pollution, such as littering, domestic pet flea and worming treatments, dog fouling, also pose a growing concern for biodiversity on local sites.
Climate Change	Changes to our climate result in differing weather patterns and quickly changing climate, meaning wildlife is unable to adapt. Increasing extremes of our climate has been seen to result in hotter, drier summers and wetter, more mild winters. This has a significant impact on bird migration patterns, nesting seasons, hibernating mammals, pathogens, damage to habitat from floods/fires and timing of flowering/fruiting plants. Marine ecosystems are known to be more sensitive to changes in climate, as they are unable to adapt or relocate.
Invasive Non-Native Species and Pathogens	As Invasive Non-Native Species become more prevalent amongst our landscapes, these outcompete space and resources from our native wildlife. Some common examples include Grey Squirrel, American Mink and Japanese Knotweed. Where INNS plants are not managed, these can become a monoculture and impact food chains for other mammals and insects which would otherwise have foraged there. Pathogens are also a significant threat to native wildlife, with invasive species and monoculture itself, bringing a higher risk of new diseases that UK native wildlife is not adapted for. Warmer temperatures, also increases the reach of where these pathogens and INNS can survive across the UK, meaning areas which were previously not affected, now see rising cases of pests and diseases.
Financing	As a local authority, there are increasing pressures on funding with a wider reach than ever before. Working in partnership, exploring alternative green finance models and cross departmental working, all play a part in how the Council can better understand how it can play a part in improving biodiversity within Stockton-on-Tees and the wider Tees Valley.
Land Ownership	There are thousands of different landowners across Stockton-on-Tees, so developing a joined-up approach to managing land for biodiversity can be challenging. Connecting habitats and treating INNS cohesively will result in greater opportunities for habitat restoration and nature recovery.

Data & Research	Current datasets are limited in some areas, so our knowledge of best practice and actual numbers of priority species is restricted to what we know. Growing this data set and engaging with research to understand where habitat is best restored, will give strong foundations to improve biodiversity locally.

Priorities

The Council will continue to deliver priorities that deliver the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023, but also align to regional and local priorities and projects for nature recovery.

Priorities for the Council include:

- Creation and restoration of habitats, including woodland, native grassland, watercourses and hedgerows
- Manage existing woodland and plant new trees to improve climate resilience and increase canopy cover, including benefits realisation of natural flood management
- Increasing education and awareness of biodiversity within our communities and showcase best practice delivered by the Council and its partners
- Supporting development and delivery of priorities and measures highlighted within the Tees Valley Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Improving data sets and research to inform strategies, policies and projects

Future Action Plan

Department	Pressure Mitigation	Action
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure, Regeneration & Inclusive Growth	Land Use & Development/ Data & Research	The Tees Valley Local Nature Recovery Strategy is due for publication in 2026. As a Supporting Authority, policies and initiatives will be amended and developed to reflect the areas of benefit for local nature recovery which will be highlighted within this publication.
Community Services,	Pollution	Introducing battery operated machinery and hand tools within our green space operations to build upon existing successful pilots within the Borough

Environment & Culture		
Community Services, Environment & Culture	Climate Change	Review canopy cover across the borough and produce a strategic tree planting plan to target the most impactful locations for tree planting.
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure	Land Use & Development/ Land Ownership	Explore opportunities for expanding our green wedges and green corridors through public and privately owned land, including alignment with the Business Coalition.
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure	Data & Research/ Financing	Continued working with key organisations, Defra arm's-length bodies and partnerships within the Tees Valley to continue best practice and opportunities for investment, examples include Tees Valley Nature Partnership, Tees Estuary Recovery Partnership, Your Tees Catchment Partnership, Tees Valley Combined Authority, Environment Agency, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, Natural England and Foresty Commission.
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure, Community Services, Environment & Culture	Climate Change	Continue to prioritise native tree planting and/or appropriate climate resilient varieties which support local ecosystems and provide wider ecosystem services to Stockton-on-Tees.
Community Services, Environment & Culture	Pollution	Continue reduced use of herbicides and peat within our public realm and green spaces, whilst also trialling best practice to eliminate use where suitable.
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure, Community Services, Environment & Culture	Land Use & Development	Ensure we are leaving dead standing hard wood in woodland areas, where suitable. Where public safety deems this not suitable, alternative provisions should be made to keep this on site.
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure, Community Services, Environment & Culture	Invasive Non-Native Species and Pathogens	Working with partners to reduce prevent spread and reduce abundance of invasive species and plant disease, including Himalayan Balsam, Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed, Ash Dieback.
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure	Land Use & Development	Expand our 'Better for Nature' initiative to include all formal parks, giving all residents access to engage with nature and

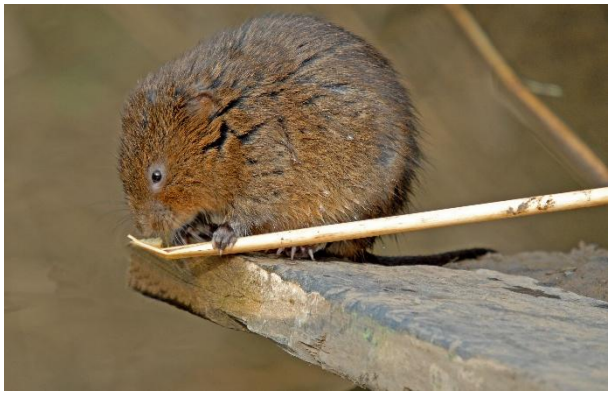
		providing pollinator corridors through traditionally amenity grassland areas.
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure	Land Use & Development	Continue proactive woodland thinning programme to ensure healthy thriving existing woodlands for flora and fauna
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure	Land Use & Development/ Land Ownership	Increase land managed for biodiversity in Stockon-on-Tees.
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure	Data & Research	Review procurement and internal project management templates to ensure consideration for biodiversity and environmental impact is included, where possible.
Community Services, Environment & Culture	Land Use & Development	Continue to follow biodiversity improvement plans for Preston Park, including 110m of hedge, 12 fruit trees, 500 new trees planted to enhance and hedge laying
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure, Community Services, Environment & Culture	Land Use & Development	Expand Citizen's Science and green space volunteering offer to increase education and awareness of the environment and biodiversity
Environment, Leisure & Green Infrastructure, Regeneration & Inclusive Growth	Financing	Explore opportunity to establish a habitat bank and alternative green finance models to support our investment into habitat creation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Council take a number of approaches to monitoring and evaluation, along with a range of data sets available through our partners. Below includes opportunities to demonstrate metrics and other opportunities for reporting.

Examples of data currently collected include:

- Funding- Value (£) invested into green or blue projects to benefit biodiversity, directly through the capital programme, S106 or external grant funding



4 Photo Credit: Kenny Crooks

- Biodiversity Net Gain- Number of units and type of habitat created
- Local Wildlife Sites- Number sites positively managed for biodiversity
- Habitat Creation/Restoration- Hectares of new/restored habitat
- Trees/Woodland- Percentage total canopy cover, number of trees planted, hectares of managed woodland
- Engagement and Education- Number of schools engaged, number of residents engaged through co-production or other consultation, number of greenspace volunteers, number of training courses completed

Appendix

Appendix A – Sites where Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy has been agreed

Reference / Address	Onsite Baseline			Onsite-Post Development			Onsite Net Change			Offsite Baseline			Offsite Post-Intervention			Offsite Net Change			Units from Credits			Total Net Unit Change			Overall Total % Change		
	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River
23/0752/FUL -Land East Of The Carrs Angling Lakes, Letch Lane, Carlton, TS21 1ED	4.95	12.51	0.0	6.28	14.26	0.0	1.33	1.75	0.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.33	1.75	0	26.87%	13.99%	0%
24/0730/FUL – Stockton, Riverside College, Harvard Avenue, Stockton On Tees, TS17 6FB	4.63	0.15	0.00	5.28	0.32	0.00	0.65	0.17	0.00													0.65	0.17	0	14.04%	113.33%	0%
24/0847/FUL - Land North Of Lidl, Yarm Road, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 3RU	1.86	0.79	0.00	2.15	1.15	0.00	0.29	0.36	0.00													0.29	0.36	0	15.59%	45.57%	0%
24/0910/FUL - HMP Holme House, Holme House Road, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 2QU	1.10	0.00	0.00	1.21	0.40	0.00	0.11	0.40	0.00													0.11	0.4	0	10.00%		0%
24/1031/FUL - K P Snacks Limited, Macklin Avenue, Cowpen Lane Industrial Estate, Billingham, TS23 4DU	10.39	0.61	0.00	11.50	0.69	0.00	1.11	0.08	0.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				1.11	0.08	0	10.68%	13.11%	0%
24/1351/FUL - Land To The West Of Thornaby Pavillion, Thornaby, TS17 9EW	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.32	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				0.07	0	0	28.00%		0%
24/1368/FUL - Flanges Limited, Blue House Point Road, Portrack Industrial Estate, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 2PL	0.29	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.29	0.00	0.00										0.32	0	0	0.03	0	0	10.34%		0%
24/1454/FUL - Land Off Roundhill Avenue, Ingleby Barwick, Stockton-on-Tees, TS17 5FZ	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.31	0.00	0.00	0.31	0.00	0.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				0.31	0	0	Zero baseline units - % cannot be calculated		
24/1628/FUL - Land South Of Marsh House Avenue Northfield School Site, Marsh House Avenue, Billingham, TS23 3HB	51.05	0.16	0.00	57.61	4.93		6.56	4.77														6.56	4.77		12.85%	2981.25 %	0%
24/1769/FUL -Teesside Grange, A67 From Urlay Nook Road To Airport, Eaglescliffe, Stockton-On-Tees, TS16 0QH	3.98	0.00	0.00	12.16	0.00	0.00	8.18	0.00	0.00													8.18	0	0	205.53 %		0%
24/1971/FUL - Morrisons Petrol Filling Station, Newmarket Avenue,Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees,TS17 7BQ	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.15	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00													0.0211	0	0	16.12%		0%
24/2073/FUL - St Pauls Roman Catholic Primary School, Wolviston Mill Lane, Billingham, TS22 5LU	2.15	1.23	0.00	2.91	1.91	0.00	0.76	0.68	0.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				0.76	0.68	0	35.35%	55.28%	0%

Reference / Address	Onsite Baseline			Onsite-Post Development			Onsite Net Change			Offsite Baseline			Offsite Post-Intervention			Offsite Net Change			Units from Credits			Total Net Unit Change			Overall Total % Change		
	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River
24/2132/LA - Quarry Road Allotments, Quarry Road, Eaglescliffe, TS16 9BD	0.11	0.00	0.00	0.17	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.00													0.0587	0	0	53.85%		0%
25/0254/FUL - Land North West Of Soccer Sensations, Westland Way, Preston Farm Industrial Estate, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 3TG	0.67	0.00	0.00	0.74	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.00													0.07	0	0	10.45%		0%
25/0564/FUL - The Hermitage , The Spital, Yarm, Stockton-On-Tees, TS15 9ER	1.77	0.65	0.00	1.96	0.72	0.00	0.19	0.07	0.00													0.19	0.07	0	10.73%	10.77%	0%
25/0579/FUL - Conoco Phillips Petroleum Company, Seal Sands Road, Seal Sands, Middlesbrough, TS2 1UH	6.410	0.00	0.00	5.322	0.00	0.00	-1.088	0.00	0.00										1.729			0.641	0	0	10.00%		0%
25/0672/FUL - Land East Of Durham Lane, Eaglescliffe, Stockton On Tees	117.02	2.03	0.00	39.46	2.36	0.00	-77.56	0.33	0.00	0	0	0	89.34	0	0	89.34	0	0	0	0	0	11.78	0.33	0	10.07%	16.26%	0%
25/1143/FUL - The Grangefield Academy, Oxbridge Avenue, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 4LE	0.63	0.00	0.00	0.76	0.00	0.00	0.13	0.00	0.00													0.13	0	0	20.63%		0%
25/1260/FUL - Land At Knowles Farm, Forest Lane, Kirklevington,TS15 9NG	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.80	0.00	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.00													0.09	0	0	12.68%		0%
25/1586/FUL - Land North Of Cheltenham Road, Wetherby Close, Portrack Interchange Business Park, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 2AD	6.80	0.00	0.00	2.10	0.05	0.00	-4.70	0.05	0.00	2.16	0	0	7.55	0	0	5.39	0	0	2.16			2.85	0.05	0	41.91%		0%
25/1588/FUL - Mandale Retail Park, Ross Road, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 2LX	0.015	0.00	0.00	0.007	0.00	0.00	-0.008	0.00	0.00										0.0095	0	0	0.0165	0	0	10.00%		0%
26/0134/LA - St John The Baptist Church Of England Primary School, St John's Way, Stockton-on-Tees, TS19 0FB	0.73	0.26	0.00	0.87	0.30		0.14	0.04														0.14	0.04		19.18%	15.38%	0%
24/2127/FUL - Land North Of Greatham Avenue, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 2QE	15.59	0.00	0.00	8.883	1.469	0.00	-6.705	1.47	0.00										8.264			1.5589	1.47		10.00%		
24/0977/OUT - Little Maltby Farm, Low Lane, High Leven, Yarm, TS15 9JT	4.536			1.957			-2.578												3.03			0.45			10.00%		
24/1208/FUL - Navigator Terminals Seal Sands, Seal Sands Road, Seal Sands, Middlesbrough, TS2 1UA	22.8	0	0.87	22.43	0	0.87	0.367	0	0										2.646			2.28	0	0	10.00%		10.00 %
25/1090/FUL - Land North Of George Stephenson Court , Westland Way, Preston Farm	2.597			2.597															0.259			0.259			10.00%		

Reference / Address	Onsite Baseline			Onsite-Post Development			Onsite Net Change			Offsite Baseline			Offsite Post-Intervention			Offsite Net Change			Units from Credits			Total Net Unit Change			Overall Total % Change		
	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River
Industrial Estate, Stockton-On-Tees, TS18 3FB																											
24/1462/FUL - Whitehouse Innovation Park , New Road, Billingham, Stockton-on-Tees, TS23 1LE	0.13			0.1439			0.0139															0.0139			10.7%		

Glossary

Please note, all definitions are given in context of this document and refer to the natural environment to support the interpretation of this document. Other definitions may be applicable in alternative contexts.

Biodiversity	The variety of different plants, animals, amphibians, fungi and microorganisms within an area.
Species	A group of plants, animals, fungi or microorganism which are genetically similar and have the ability to reproduce and create fertile offspring.
Abundance	The number of one type of plant, animal, fungi or microorganism in one place.
Biodiversity Net Gain	A phrase commonly used within development, to demonstrate there has been a measurable increase (or net gain) in biodiversity within an area. Developers must deliver BNG of 10%, meaning they must baseline their site and uplift biodiversity by at least 10% following their development. They are also required to maintain this habitat for a minimum of 30 years.
Climate	Climate is the long-term pattern of weather in a particular area. This is usually tracked over 30 years.
Climate Change	Changes in climate can be seen over an extended period of time. These happen naturally, however fossil fuel use is known the accelerate this, meaning we can now see extreme changes in our climate much more frequently. This can make it difficult for plants and animals (including humans) to adapt.
Mandate	Command given by an elected group ie government to perform an action, often determined through law.
Monitoring	Collecting and analysing data or information to track progress or outcomes
Invasive Non-Native Species	Species which are not originally native to the UK, which outcompete native wildlife for resources
Local Nature Recovery Strategy	A spatial plan and supporting document outlining areas which are best for nature recovery
Nature Recovery	To improve opportunities for native plants and wildlife which might otherwise be in decline, endangers or threatened with extinction. Often this involved proactive conservation and habitat improvements.
Fossil Fuels	Energy sources which are derived from fossilised organic matter. These are usually high in carbon and release this as gas when burned.
Crop Yields	The measurable amount of plants grown for food or other agricultural uses in a specified area of land. A higher yield means there are more crops harvested from one specific area.
Monoculture	Monoculture is when a single plant is grown in an area, this can increase risk of whole areas being wiped out by pests or disease.
Natural flood management	Natural Flood Management involves using natural processes and characteristics of a landscape to reduce the risk of flooding.
Local Wildlife Site	Areas are designated as Local Wildlife Site due to an area being particularly important for wildlife. These usually include essential habitat for rare species.

Site Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	A designation created in areas which are unique and include features of special interest to Wildlife, Geology or Landform.
RAMSAR	An international treaty on the preservation of designated wetlands. This seeks to protect wetlands of international significance.
Tree Canopy Cover (also known as Urban Tree Canopy Cover)	A measure of the cover of trees within a town or city, focusing primarily on the reach of a trees leaves.
Habitat	A home or place where plants and animals would naturally live (usually referring to the natural environment eg woodland).
Green Finance	Private funding provided to support exclusively environmental projects or improve climate resilience.
Nature Based Solutions	This phrase is usually referring to projects which are delivering benefits to humans or the environment by utilising nature or natural processes, rather that traditional hard engineering. An example would be planting trees for increased shade, planted SuDS to reduce flooding or saltmarsh restoration or act as a natural buffer during harsh storms.
Habitat Bank	A habitat bank is an area of land set aside for environmental enhancements, specifically being funded by off-site BNG unit contributions.
Pathogen	A microorganism which causes disease, often resulting in damage or death.
Climate Resilience	The ability for plants and animals to change in order to survive the impacts of a changing climate ie hotter summers
Green Corridor/Green Wedge	Green spaces designed to connect existing habitats or green spaces, these often include walking or cycling routes. A Green Wedge is specifically set aside to ensure towns do not merge, but also has the same properties as a green corridor.
Adaptation	To change to fit a new environment or adjust to changing conditions.
Mitigation	To reduce the severity or seriousness of a hazard or risk through proactive measures, in this case, interventions which protect and enhance biodiversity or reduce impact of climate change.
Conservation	Management and restoration of existing ecosystems to prevent loss or further damage.
Restoration	Returning habitats to their original condition.
District Level Licensing	The District Level Licensing scheme was introduced by Natural England to fund installation of new breeding ponds for Great Crested Newts and support the restoration/creation of habitats for resident populations.
Watercourse	A natural or artificial channel of water, which includes rivers, streams, ditches or other culverted waterways.
Ecosystem Services	The direct and indirect contributions that the natural environment gives to sustain human life, including clean air, fresh water and food (and its pollination).
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and usually businesses with less than 250 employees. They make up 99.8% of the UK private business sector, with the majority being considered Micro Businesses, with less

	than 9 employees (Government Commercial Function, 2026).
VCSE	Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise are not for profit, non-governmental groups, which often include charities and social enterprises.

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