

**DARTFORD  
BIODIVERSITY  
REPORT**

**REPORTING PERIOD  
12 FEBRUARY 2024 TO  
31 DECEMBER 2025**

**MARCH 2026**

**DARTFORD**  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Dartford Biodiversity Report has been prepared in accordance with Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 as amended by the Environment Act 2021. This inaugural report covers the monitoring period covering 12 February 2024 to 31 December 2025 and documents the policies and actions undertaken by Dartford Borough Council in exercising its functions to further the general biodiversity objective of conserving and enhancing biodiversity in the area.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN CONSERVING AND ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY

- Development and adoption of the nationally award-winning Lower Darent Riverside Strategy, which lays the groundwork for nature-based solutions and landscape recovery and provides a best-practice example for other local authorities.
- Development and adoption of policies that support biodiversity conservation and restoration and decision-making and actions towards supporting biodiversity outcomes, e.g. Net Zero Strategy and preparation of Biodiversity Strategy.
- Implementing Biodiversity Net Gain through the planning system and approving the first Biodiversity Gain Plan for new development, with a second soon to be approved.
- Collaboration with Kent County Council to develop the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy and beginning of biodiversity activities being undertaken within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy framework.
- Preservation, protection and monitoring of ecologically sensitive areas and habitats and wildlife, including in Dartford Heath, Darenth Country Park, Longfield Chalk Bank, and East Hill Cemetery.
- Successful partnerships with local wildlife and conservation organisations and other strategic authorities such as Kent Wildlife Trust and North West Kent Countryside Partnership.
- Securing grants including the Urban Tree Challenge Fund and Kent County Council's Plan Tree project.
- East Hill Cemetery became the first cemetery in Kent to be recognized for its re-naturalising strategy.

## CHALLENGES FOR THE 2026-2030 REPORTING PERIOD

- Ongoing availability of funding and resources to deliver biodiversity actions. National support and certainty are required for long-term commitments.
- Ensuring Council-wide approaches to biodiversity are integrated and aligned.
- Local Government Reorganisation and navigating complex governance changes may affect coordination and delivery of biodiversity actions and outcomes as responsibilities are realigned, but is also likely to bring opportunities through critical mass of officer resource. It could also allow for a more strategic approach to biodiversity enhancement across existing Borough boundaries.

- Ongoing, increasing and uncertain effects of climate change.
- Growth and development are required to accommodate a growing population and housing need, which puts pressure on natural environments and habitats.
- Monitoring and reporting of biodiversity outcomes through shared tools, templates and guidance.

## INTRODUCTION

Under the Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 as amended by Environment Act 2021, local authorities now have a duty to enhance biodiversity as well as conserve it. This means that, as a public authority, the Council must:

1. Consider what it can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity
2. Agree policies and specific objectives based on this consideration
3. Act to deliver its policies and achieve its objectives

The amended legislation also requires local authorities to publish a Biodiversity Report. The report should detail biodiversity actions and implementation undertaken during the relevant reporting period. These reports provide a transparent account of progress towards biodiversity goals and will provide a baseline for monitoring biodiversity performance over five-year periods.

The purpose of the biodiversity report is to:

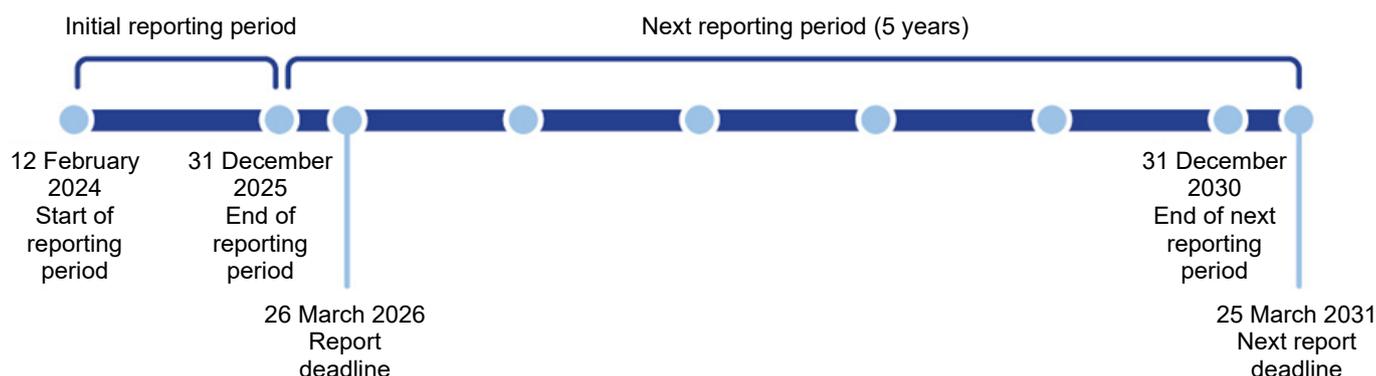
- help the public understand how we are collectively meeting shared goals to conserve and enhance biodiversity
- showcase the actions we have taken as a Council to improve biodiversity in our area
- share good practice about what can be done for nature recovery

## REPORTING PERIOD

This is the first biodiversity report prepared by the Council. It covers the monitoring period of 12 February 2024 to 31 December 2025, reflecting the period since biodiversity net gain came into effect.

After this, the end date of each reporting period must be within 5 years of the end date of the previous reporting period. Therefore, the next reporting period will cover 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2030.

**Figure 1: Biodiversity reporting timeline**



## REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Section 103 of the Environment Act 2021 requires that the biodiversity report includes:

- a summary of the actions taken to comply with the biodiversity duty (see Section 2 and Section 3)
- how the Council plan to comply with the biodiversity duty in the next reporting period (see Section 4)

Reports from local planning authorities must also include:

- the actions carried out to meet biodiversity net gain obligations (see Section 5)
- details of biodiversity net gains resulting, or expected to result, from biodiversity gain plans approved (see Section 5)

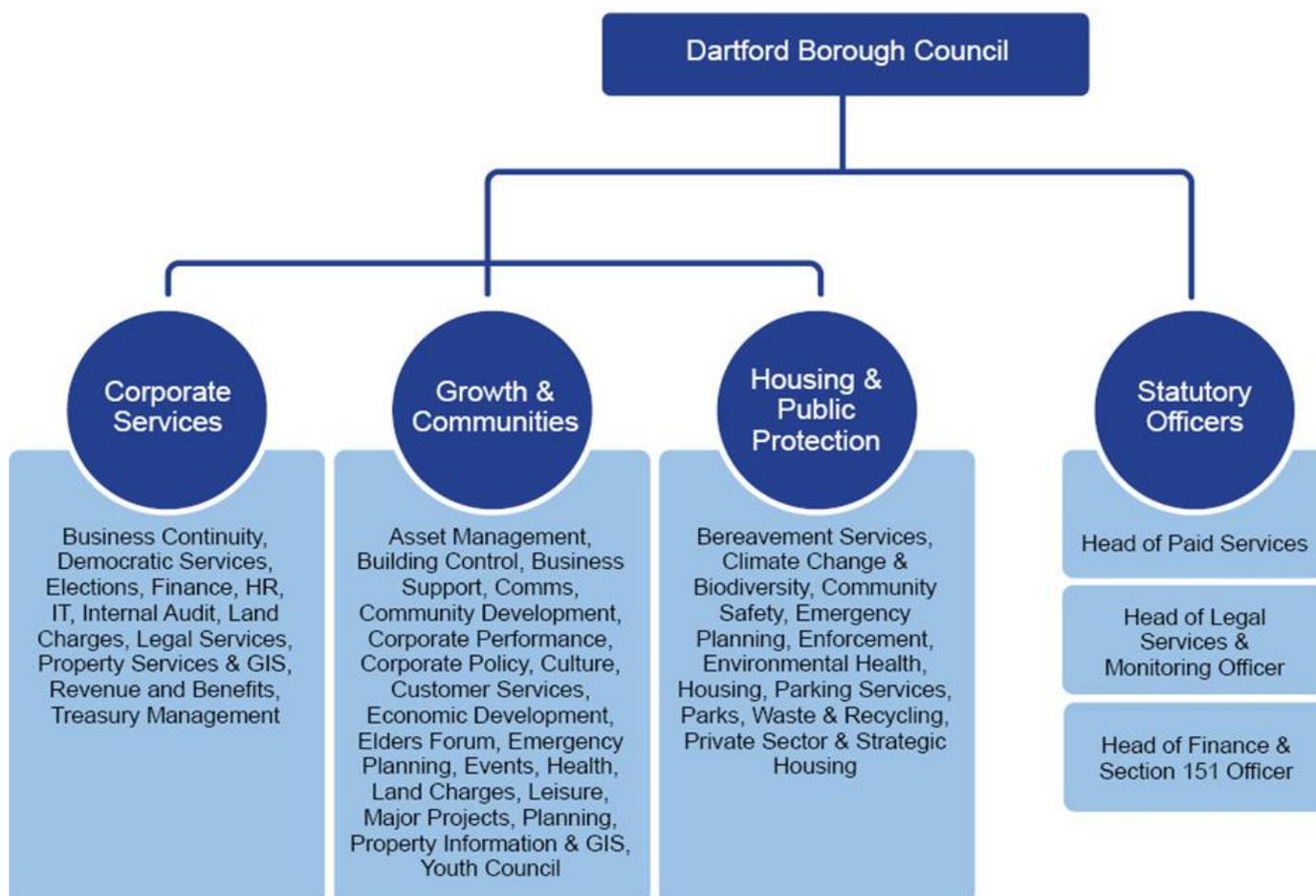
These items have all been addressed in this report in the relevant sections.

## SECTION 1: ABOUT DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Dartford Borough Council is a local government district with borough status located in north-west Kent, within the administrative area of Kent County Council. As a borough council, Dartford is responsible for managing and delivering district-level services to our community. It currently employs over 300 staff across three departments. The Council has grown from 296 staff at the end of 2023 to 334 at the end of 2025, an increase of 13% in two years<sup>1</sup>. The growth of Council staff is to meet the needs of a growing population in Dartford.

The structure of Dartford Borough Council is summarised in Figure 2, below.

**Figure 2: Dartford Borough Council organisational chart**



Dartford Borough Council seeks to embed nature recovery across all areas of the Council, acting as both a leader/deliverer and a partner that can work with landowners, environment organisations, other authorities and local communities.

Local authorities can affect biodiversity in the following ways:

- Develop policies that support biodiversity conservation and restoration
- Implement Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) through the planning system
- Support the development and delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)

<sup>1</sup> Overview & Scrutiny Committee Report, 15 July 2025: Drawdown - Dartford Borough Council Workforce Plan  
[Dartford Borough Council](#)

- Ensure sensitive ecological areas and habitats are protected and enhanced
- Support biodiversity conservation and improvement on Council-owned land and estates
- Promote and encourage nature-based solutions, restoration of natural processes and landscape recovery
- Raise awareness on the importance of biodiversity to the community

## SECTION 2: POLICIES, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS (WHOLE COUNCIL)

This section documents the policies and objectives Dartford Borough Council have set in order to meet our biodiversity duty, as well as completed actions that positively contribute to better biodiversity outcomes.

### COUNCIL POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

#### CORPORATE PLAN 2024-2027

The Council's current Corporate Plan focuses on seven key priority areas with associated actions and key performance indicators to ensure that council resources, decision-making and funding are channelled towards achieving them. One of these key priorities is Environment, which addresses preserving, enhancing and celebrating Dartford's local environment.

There are three objectives directly related to biodiversity in the Corporate Plan:

- Increase biodiversity and encourage sustainable development and lifestyles.
- Promote sustainable local environments and habitats, achieving biodiversity net gain and active and healthy living, at new developments and through greenspace (including urban parks and open space) and landscape protection and provision, enhancing the green grid of footpaths, public rights of way, cycle routes, wildlife corridors, rivers and countryside links.
- Existing green spaces, habitats, and tree coverage will be protected and enhanced, and new provision will be made, to absorb carbon dioxide, support biodiversity and reduce surface water runoff.

The inclusion of biodiversity in the Corporate Plan ensures that all service areas of Dartford Borough Council consider and work towards improved biodiversity outcomes.

#### THE DARTFORD PLAN 2024-2037

The Dartford Plan (adopted April 2024) is Dartford's Local Plan that sets out the development strategy for the borough to 2037, with the goal of achieving balanced and sustainable development.

The vision for Dartford and the planning policies contained in the plan are based on strategic objectives categorised into three priority areas. Objectives relating to the environment and biodiversity, under the 'Green and Attractive Environment' focus area, are:

- Securing quality and sustainable built design, public streets, and good open and amenity space provision in new development, and recognising and respecting heritage and green assets.
- Ensuring the Borough is able to adapt to the effects of climate change and contributes towards reducing Dartford's carbon footprint through an increase in the proportion of water efficient buildings, uptake of domestic and small scale renewable energy, and promoting environmental resilience, new greenspace and tree planting.
- Promoting sustainable local environments and habitats, achieving biodiversity net gain and active and healthy living, at new developments and through greenspace and landscape protection and provision, enhancing the Green Grid of footpaths, public rights of way, cycle routes, wildlife corridors, rivers and countryside links.

- Acting to ensure no increase in flood risk in the Borough, and creating attractive and accessible riversides, encouraging sensitive recreation and travel on and alongside the Rivers Thames, Darent and Ebbsfleet.

Additionally, Policy S3 addresses climate change and Policy M14 of the plan specifically addresses biodiversity and habitat regulations. Policy S3 ensures that existing green spaces, habitats, and tree coverage will be protected and enhanced, and new provision will be made, to absorb carbon dioxide, support biodiversity. Policy M14 gives significant weight to protecting the biodiversity value of locally designated sites, including Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves and Roadside Nature Reserves, ensures that priority habitats and species are conserved and enhanced, and dictates that development avoids any adverse impacts on existing biodiversity features. Where impacts cannot be avoided, they should be minimised, mitigated and, as a last resort, loss or damage should be compensated in accordance with the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy. Policy M14 also reinforces BNG provisions for development and ensures that national habitat regulations are adhered to.

The plan also identifies Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) as priority areas for habitat creation and restoration in the policies map. The BOAs include a variety of statutory and non-statutory wildlife sites, woodland, lakes, marshes, heathland, and brownfield sites which are known to provide important habitats for invertebrates.

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## PLANET DARTFORD: NET ZERO STRATEGY 2024-2030 AND ACTION PLAN

Dartford's Net Zero Strategy sets out the approach and actions that Dartford Borough Council will need to take to meet our ambitious net zero by 2030. Biodiversity is addressed under the key priority of 'Land Use and Biodiversity', the focus of which is to protect, enhance and increase green space for the benefit of people, wildlife, flood defence and carbon capture.

There are four targets directly related to biodiversity under this key priority:

- Target L&B1: Produce and adopt a Biodiversity Strategy
- Target L&B2: Continue to champion biodiversity net gain on new developments through the Local Plan
- Target L&B3: Improve access to open space, food growing and wildlife through land management, community gardening and habitat creation
- Target L&B4: Produce habitat management plans to enhance, restore to favourable conditions for effective sequestration of carbon

There are also two additional targets related to biodiversity that come under the key priorities of 'Communication and Engagement' and 'Governance and Finance':

- Target C&E1: Raise awareness of Climate Change and Biodiversity loss via the implementation of a Communications Strategy
- Target GF2: Incorporate climate change into our governance structure

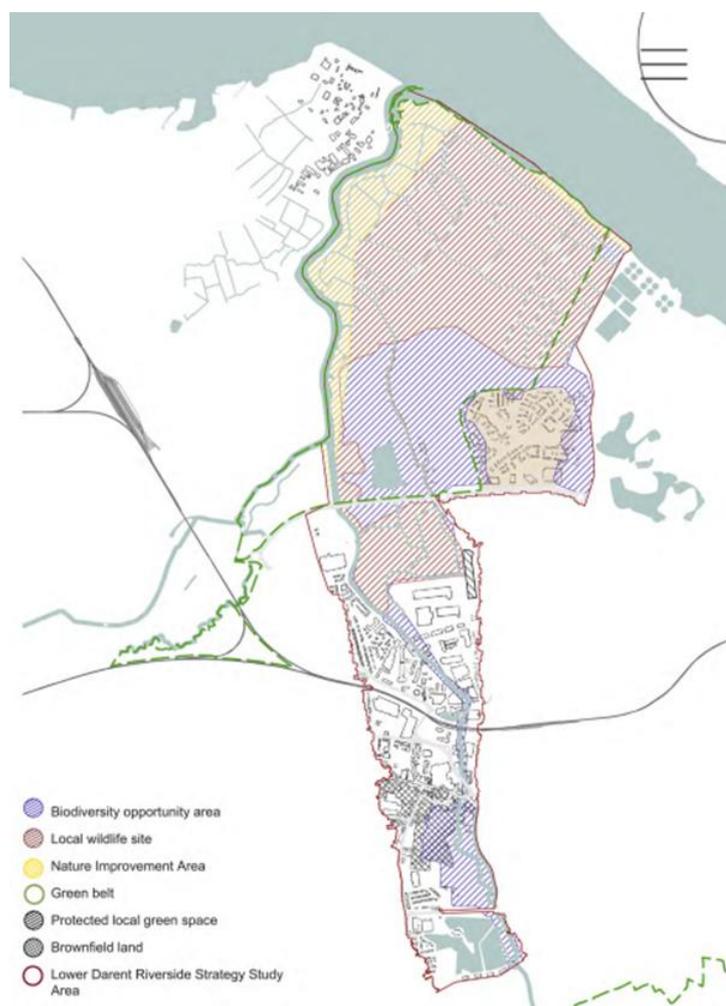
## LOWER DARENT RIVERSIDE STRATEGY

The Lower Darent Riverside Strategy is a practical strategy to address flood risks and climate adaptation while also enhancing biodiversity, community resilience, and sustainable development through Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and holistic design along the River Darent, located in the west of the Borough. The vision for the Strategy is to promote resilient development for people, place and biodiversity along the Lower Darent, while adapting to and mitigating flood risk and creating open, accessible and connected places along the river edge. The strategy aligns with the Dartford Local Plan, Thames Estuary 2100 Plan and the Kent Biodiversity Strategy.

The strategy is framed by four Design Principles. The 'Regenerating Nature' principle is specifically focused on restoring and enhancing existing biodiversity features and creating complementary habitats to increase habitat diversity and ecosystem resilience. The strategy's emphasis on biodiversity and sustainable practices contributes to the preservation and enhancement of the natural environment in the Lower Darent River area. The introduction and maintenance of diverse plant communities and habitats, coupled with responsible flood risk management, are intended to foster a healthier ecosystem well into the future.

The study area contains three types of non-statutory designated sites, all located within the marshland area in the north of the site. These include Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, Local Wildlife Sites and Nature Improvement Areas and are identified in the map below. The strategy also includes eleven Toolkits that illustrate best practice river edge treatments.

**Figure 3: Non-statutory designated sites in the Lower Darent Riverside Strategy**



The Riverside Strategy has been formally recognised by the industry, having been a finalist in the Landscape Institute Awards 2025 and winner of the Silver Jubilee Cup (overall winner) and the Excellence in Planning for the Natural Environment award at the Royal Town Planning Institute Awards 2025.

The table below summarises priority areas and objectives/targets relevant to biodiversity that have been set in Council policies.

**Table 1: Summary of Dartford Council policies and objectives related to biodiversity**

Council policy	Priority area	Objectives/targets
<b>Corporate Plan 2024-2027</b>	Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase biodiversity and encourage sustainable development and lifestyles.</li> <li>• Promote sustainable local environments and habitats, achieving biodiversity net gain and active and healthy living, at new developments and through greenspace and landscape protection and provision, enhancing the green grid.</li> <li>• Existing green spaces, habitats, and tree coverage will be protected and enhanced, and new provision will be made, to absorb carbon dioxide, support biodiversity and reduce surface water runoff.</li> </ul>
<b>Dartford Plan to 2037</b>	Green and attractive environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect Green Belt land to maintain a distinct and enduring open environment.</li> <li>• Secure quality and sustainable built design, public streets, and good open and amenity space provision in new development.</li> <li>• Ensure the Borough is able to adapt to the effects of climate change and contributes towards reducing Dartford's carbon footprint.</li> <li>• Promote sustainable local environments and habitats, achieving biodiversity net gain and active and healthy living, at new developments and through greenspace and landscape protection and provision.</li> <li>• Ensure no increase in flood risk and create attractive and accessible riversides.</li> </ul>
<b>Lower Darent Riverside Strategy</b>	Regenerating Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restore or enhance existing biodiversity features and create complementary habitats to increase habitat diversity and ecosystem resilience</li> </ul>
<b>Net Zero Strategy 2024-2030</b>	Land Use and Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target L&amp;B1: Produce and adopt a Biodiversity Strategy.</li> <li>• Target L&amp;B2: Continue to champion biodiversity net gain on new developments through the Local Plan.</li> <li>• Target L&amp;B3: Improve access to open space, food growing and wildlife through land management, community gardening and habitat creation.</li> </ul>

- Target L&B4: Produce habitat management plans to enhance, restore to favourable conditions for effective sequestration of carbon.

<b>Net Zero Strategy 2024-2030</b>	Communication and Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target C&amp;E1: Raise awareness of Climate Change and Biodiversity loss via the implementation of a Communications Strategy.</li> </ul>
<b>Net Zero Strategy 2024-2030</b>	Governance and Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target GF2: Incorporate climate change into our governance structure.</li> </ul>

## ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE COUNCIL

### AS A LANDOWNER

Dartford Borough Council manages several large parks, open spaces and habitat sites around the Borough, including Dartford Heath, Darenth Country Park, Longfield Chalk Bank and East Hill Cemetery.

- Management plans have been prepared for both Dartford Heath and Darent Country Park, both of which incorporate a 5-year work programme. These management plans seek to enhance biodiversity through implementation of works. Surveys will be carried out to evaluate the impact of the works.
- East Hill Cemetery has become the first cemetery in Kent to be recognised for re-naturalising, due to the Council's work with the Caring for God's Acre project, a charity dedicated to conservation on burial grounds. Small wildlife areas have been created to help increase species abundance and diversity through wildflower meadows. Peat-free compost is now used in all planting and mowing has been reduced.
- Orchard and wildflower meadow planting has been ongoing during the reporting period. As part of Planet Dartford, local parish councils were provided with funding for additional planting in their areas. The first orchard wildflower area was planted January to March 2021, with additional windflower and mini tree orchards planted in winter 2022, winter 2023. Miyawaki forests (winter 2025) and increased hedgerows (winter 2023, 2024 and 2025) were also planted.
- Key sites within the Borough managed by the Council have been surveyed to build a database that tracks biological improvements as a result of management. Surveys are being rolled out across all sites with habitats of national importance, including Dartford Heath (Lowland Heathland and Acid Grassland), SSSI Chalk Grassland at Darenth Country Park, Longfield Chalk Bank, and East Hill Cemetery. The Council also undertakes an annual survey and record for orchids at a number of sites, including Darenth Country Park, Oakfield Lane and other smaller sites around the Borough.
- Ecology surveys have also been commissioned to assess Council-managed land for potential offsite BNG locations at Dartford Heath. Surveys are continuing to help monitor the effectiveness of land management and inform future management, and to share with Kent Biological Records Centre and other organisations to help inform species flow and abundance across Kent to link with the desired outcomes from the LNRS. Reptile and vegetation surveys have been undertaken and management plans developed.

## PARTNERSHIP AND GRANTS

The Council have been working with organisations across Kent to deliver biodiversity priorities within the context of relevant strategies and policies. Within the LNRS framework, this includes being awarded and delivering grants, such as the Urban Tree Challenge fund, exploring flood mitigation solutions in line with the Lower Darent Riverside Strategy, and ensuring the Council is utilising the Natural Capital approach<sup>2</sup>.

Work is also ongoing with Kent Wildlife Trust to identify new Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and extend boundaries of existing sites. These including extension of the Mabledon LWS, East Hill, The Bridge in Dartford and along the River Darent, and ensure that boundaries and management of existing sites is appropriate.

The North West Kent Countryside Partnership (NWKCP) work with local communities, landowners, statutory bodies and community organisations to conserve the area's countryside and green spaces through conservation and community projects. The Council works alongside NWKCP to deliver biodiversity improvements for Longfield Chalk Bank and deliver Wildlife Walks and Bat Walks. The Council also supports the group by providing a space at Darenth Country Park to host community wellbeing activities, including taming plants on site, growing fruits and vegetables, creating areas for wildlife, and coppicing trees.

Other important partnerships include:

- Working with KCC's Plan Tree project to secure grant funding for hedgerow and tree planting, part of a broader strategy at KCC to establish more trees in Kent
- Representation on the Kent Nature Partnership board alongside several other local authorities and NGOs
- Working with species groups such as the Butterfly Conservation Trust around elm tree distribution
- Working with the South East River Trust to explore ways of improving fish passage along the river through the Doorway to the Darenth project
- Working with the Darenth and Cray Catchment Partnership to discuss river works, concerns and projects
- Working with the Waterlife Recovery Trust on the Invasive Species Monitoring programme.
- Providing Community Infrastructure Levy funds to support local green infrastructure projects that benefit biodiversity, including at Beaconwood Country Park and at Dartford Heath.

<sup>2</sup> Defra, *Guidance Enabling a Natural Capital Approach guidance*, February 2026  
 Dartford Borough Council

## DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS (COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY)

The Council has awarded significant funding towards green infrastructure projects, summarised in the Dartford Infrastructure Funding Statement and Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Allocated strategic infrastructure projects as of 31 December 2025**

Project	Location	Project type	CIL allocation/ 2025 progress	Main delivery organisation
<b>Dartford Town Centre regeneration</b>	Dartford Town Centre	Highways & transport and travel; green infrastructure & open space and leisure	£7.441 million allocated 28 October 2021 and 20 February 2025	Dartford Borough Council
<b>Stone Recreation Ground upgrade</b>	Stone Recreation Ground, Hayes Road, Stone	Green infrastructure & open space and leisure	£3.8 million allocated 21 September 2023	Stone Town Council
<b>Beacon Wood Country Park improvements</b>	Beacon Wood, Southfleet Road, Bean	Green infrastructure & open space and leisure	£0.0546 million allocated 24 October 2024	Bean Parish Council

The community infrastructure fund has been established in partnership with Kent Community Foundation. The fund helps deliver neighbourhood-level projects in parts of the Borough without a parish council. Priorities for this funding include biodiversity-related activities, including:

- Improved local green spaces, river and waterbody and wildlife habitats, improvements to local parks, public gardens and allotments, bringing back redundant land or underused routes into use as public space/access or improved biodiversity.
- Management of Dartford Heath by volunteers

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND EVENTS

Bringing our community together is a key tenant of Dartford Council, and many events are held year-round. Biodiversity and environmental protection has been incorporated into our events programme in the following ways:

- Limiting the use of single use items at all events
- Limiting emissions/pollution by working with contractors committed to utilising the latest technological advances
- Reducing travel emissions by engaging contractors, staff and personnel that live locally where possible
- Policy to restrict non-biodegradable items (e.g. glitter) at Central Park
- Free public transport for large community events to reduce the number of private vehicles being used to access the event, e.g. arranging a small fleet of buses for our flagship event Big Day Out we are arranging a small fleet of buses servicing the Borough
- Improve water efficiency at large events such as Big Day Out by providing standpipes as opposed to giving out bottled water

- Health Walk Volunteers, managed by the Council, raise awareness of respecting biodiversity and the land where they walk

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## COMMUNICATION AND CHAMPIONING

The Communications team seeks to ensure key messages around biodiversity and environmental management are communicated effectively. The Lower Darent Riverside Strategy has also been promoted in partnership with ARUP (the consultant), especially within the landscape, urban design and planning industries, as a best practice strategy for flood management. The aim of this is to share with other local authorities the opportunities and benefits of nature-based solutions and how flood management can simultaneously deliver placemaking and biodiversity outcomes.

## SECTION 3: CONSIDERATION OF OTHER STRATEGIES

This section outlines how Dartford Borough Council has considered and contributed to other relevant strategies at the county and national level.

### KENT AND MEDWAY LNRS

The Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), prepared by Kent County Council (KCC) was published 28 November 2025 and is enshrined into law under the Environment Act 2021. It is one of 48 LNRS documents that cover the whole of England. The LNRS sets out priorities for nature recovery and recommended actions to deliver them, alongside recommended targeted areas for action to deliver the greatest outcomes for habitats and species.

The Council is a supporting authority for the LNRS, having worked closely with KCC during its development to provide input and ensure local priorities were reflected. There has been ongoing engagement with KCC during 2024 and 2025 whilst the strategy was prepared. Ongoing communication and engagement included:

- Meetings to discuss mapping during 2024 and 2025
- Ongoing email communications in 2024 and 2025
- Supplied mapping amendments for Dartford Borough area
- Agreed to have public consultation proceed in December 2024
- Submitted detailed response to consultation in March 2025

With the final LNRS published, the Council is now in the process of adding mapping layers to its internal GIS mapping. The Council will continue to work closely with KCC, Natural England, other partners and local authorities to discuss topics including green financing and how to link up work on landscape scale delivery. The LNRS will also be taken into account when existing Council strategies and policies are due for review or new policies are prepared, and will also guide the development of Dartford's Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.

### OTHER STRATEGIES

The Dartford Plan aligns with the Kent Biodiversity Strategy, which focuses on improving priority habitats. The plan aims to protect and improve the ecological quality of a number of important wetlands and water bodies in the Borough, including the River Darent and Dartford, which will contribute to achieving the objectives of the Water Framework Directive and the Darent and Cray Catchment Plan.

The Lower Darent Riverside Strategy was prepared with close consideration to the Thames Estuary 2100 Plan and the Kent Biodiversity Strategy. It also specifically aims to protect of species listed in the national Biodiversity Action Plan, Kent Biodiversity Action Plan and the Kent Rare and Scarce Species Inventory.

## SECTION 4: FUTURE ACTIONS

This section outlines how the Council plans to meet its biodiversity duty over the next five years to 31 December 2030 (the next reporting period) by identifying future actions we intend to take. Actions are required to be considered every 5 years. These identified actions are included in relevant Council policies and strategic documents, but delivery will rely on available funding and sufficient resources.

### BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

As set out in the Net Zero Strategy, the Council plans to scope and prepare a Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan in 2026 that provides a plan of action to ensure that plants, animals and ecosystems are conserved, protected and enhanced and that progress is tracked, using measurable targets. The Biodiversity Strategy will feed into site-specific management plans and tie into the LNRS. The team are also looking towards the LNRS, in particular species-specific concerns, and developing a site location map for disease resistant elm trees. This can help inform planning policy and planning applications.

### LOWER DARENT RIVERSIDE

The Riverside Strategy includes the design principle of Regenerating Nature and identifies a number of opportunities to enhance biodiversity and natural processes which will continue to be explored and implemented over the next 5 years where feasible. Examples of these proposals are mapped out in Figure 4 and include:

- Preserving and enhancing important habitats and species and communicate importance of them to the public (e.g. walking route with map/ information boards)
- Incorporate biodiversity and green space into public realm
- Aim for environmental net gain and solutions to encourage carbon sequestration such as riverside wetlands in urban areas
- Establish bankside and ditch re-profiling and vegetation management and put in place to initiate a diverse range of habitats, including water vole and otter habitat
- Diversifying plant communities, fostering a varied range of habitats

**Figure 4: Proposals for design principle Regenerating Nature**



The strategy also identifies sites-specific opportunities. These include:

- Re-establishing saltmarsh habitat to improve biodiversity at Dartford Marshes
- Maintaining quiet ecology zones free from recreational use for the protection of sensitive species at Dartford Marshes
- Enhancing the eastern tributary of the River Darent for quiet ecology at Central Park
- Introducing buffer zones either side of the streams retained and enhanced with water voles and otters at Central Park
- Chalk Stream enhancement at Central Park
- Natural river bank stabilisation techniques

More detailed explanations of these opportunities can be found in Part 5 of the Riverside Strategy.

## HABITAT MANAGEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

Continued management of important habitats across the Borough, to ensure the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity through the preparation of management plans and commissioning of surveys to review effectiveness.

Ongoing habitat improvement, creation and restoration projects will continue into the next reporting period across several Council-owned landholdings. These include but are not limited to hedgerow planting at Darenth Country Park, wildflower meadows, hedgerows, elm tree planting, and works within the river Darent. This ongoing planting will increase pollination corridors across the Borough.

Surveys will also continue in Darenth Woods (Ladies Woods), and other areas across the Borough showing ecologically enhanced areas, or potential areas, such as Stone Lodge.

## COMMUNICATION AND CHAMPIONING

The Council will continue to ensure key messages around biodiversity are communicated effectively over the next five years. The Council will also develop and implement a Climate Change Communications strategy that empowers communities to make informed decisions on climate change, earmarked for 2026. Policies in the Local Plan which seek to conserve and enhance bio-diversity, particularly where BNG is not required, will continue to be championed.

## SECTION 5: BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN INFORMATION

This section summarises the actions carried out by the Council to meet Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) obligations and results.

As local planning authority, the biodiversity duty is considered through:

- Strategic Environmental Assessment (for Local Plan)
- Environmental Impact Assessment (large/complex developments)
- Habitats Regulations Assessment
- Consideration of planning applications

BNG is now required for most planning applications (with some exceptions). The Council have undertaken the following actions to meet BNG obligations:

- Including reference to BNG in pre-application advice
- Ensuring that planning applications that are not exempt from BNG meet the requirements of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 at validation stage
- Recording exemptions and BNG applicable applications via bespoke BNG software and information management systems
- Assessing and recording submitted BNG Metrics with the assistance of specialist software and the advice of KCC Ecology to ensure that 10% gain is achieved
- Securing BNG on planning permissions, where relevant, via the statutory condition and additional conditions and/or legal agreements under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- Assessing and recording submitted Biodiversity Gain Plans (BGP)
- Monitoring the submission of Biodiversity Gain Plans and actively investigating cases where there is a breach of the statutory condition

### BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

One Biodiversity Gain Plan has been approved in the reporting period, with a second Biodiversity Gain Plan pending determination. Qualitative data is set out in Appendix 1, in line with the template by Defra. In summary this shows that:

- 10 planning permissions were granted that require BNG in the reporting period
- 583 planning permissions were granted in the reporting period where exemption to the BNG condition applied
- 1 BNG plan approved, securing BNG through on-site units only, however no BNG delivered on-site during the reporting period

## FUTURE ACTIONS FOR BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

The Council anticipates the need for additional dedicated resourcing to actively monitoring on-site delivery of BNG as more Biodiversity Gain Plans are approved in the next monitoring period. This will be delivered with the assistance of specialist software and assigning desktop monitoring to an Officer. Onsite monitoring will be delivered by Council officers supported by specialist ecology advice where necessary.

Onsite and offsite BNG locations will be added to the Council's GIS mapping. Tools to monitor Biodiversity Plans are being progressed once a technical position is filled.

In addition to this, the feasibility of the creation of a new habitat bank is being explored for Dartford Marshes, which will offer an offsite BNG locations for approved developments.

## APPENDIX 1: QUANTITATIVE DATA FOR BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

**Table 3: Eligible planning permissions granted under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requiring biodiversity net gain**

<b>ID</b>	<b>Consented applications requiring net gains</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Proportion (%)</b>
<b>A</b>	Total number of planning permissions granted that require biodiversity net gain in the reporting period	10	Not applicable
<b>B</b>	Total number of planning permissions granted in the reporting period where an exemption to the biodiversity net gain condition applies	583	Not applicable
<b>C</b>	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period	1	Not applicable
<b>D</b>	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through on-site units only	1	100.00
<b>E</b>	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through off-site units only	0	0.00
<b>F</b>	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through statutory credits only	0	0.00
<b>G</b>	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site and off-site units	0	0.00
<b>H</b>	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site units and statutory credits	0	0.00
<b>I</b>	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of off-site units and statutory credits	0	0.00
<b>J</b>	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site, off-site units and statutory credits	0	0.00

**Table 4: Overall expected gains and losses across all biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period**

ID	Consented applications requiring net gains	Area habitat	Hedgerow	Watercourse
A	Total number of pre-development biodiversity units approved on-site	0.77	0.03	0.00
B	Total number of post-development biodiversity units approved on-site	0.86	0.17	0.00
C	Total net unit change in biodiversity units, on-site	0.09	0.14	0.00
D	Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, on-site	11.64	474.51	0.00
E	Total number of baseline biodiversity units approved off-site	0.00	0.00	0.00
F	Total number of post-intervention biodiversity units approved off-site	0.00	0.00	0.00
G	Total net unit change in biodiversity units, off-site	0.00	0.00	0.00
H	Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, off-site	0.00	0.00	0.00
I	Total number of biodiversity units offset using statutory credits	0.00	0.00	0.00
J	Total net unit change in biodiversity units (including any units offset using credits)	0.09	0.14	0.00
K	Average percentage (%) change (including statutory credits)	11.64	474.51	0.00

**Table 5: Impact on Irreplaceable Habitat**

ID	Impact on irreplaceable habitat	Total
A	Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period where the on-site change negatively impacts irreplaceable habitats	0

**Table 6: Location of off-site biodiversity units**

ID	Location of off-site biodiversity units	Total	Proportion (%)
A	Number of off-site biodiversity units located inside LPA boundary or NCA of impact site	0.00	0.00
B	Number of off-site biodiversity units located outside LPA or NCA of impact site, but in neighbouring LPA or NCA	0.00	0.00
C	Number of off-site biodiversity units located outside of LPA or NCA of impact site and neighbouring LPA or NCA	0.00	0.00

Table 7: Results of monitoring biodiversity gains

<b>ID</b>	<b>Results of monitoring biodiversity gains where the LPA is part of the legal agreement</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Proportion (%)</b>
<b>A</b>	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans including the delivery of 'significant' on-site gains	0	0.00
<b>B</b>	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are meeting monitoring requirements and habitat delivery expectations for 'significant' on-site gains	0	0.00
<b>C</b>	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are meeting monitoring requirements but not meeting habitat delivery expectations for 'significant' on-site gains	0	0.00
<b>D</b>	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are failing to meet monitoring requirements for 'significant' on-site gains	0	0.00
<b>E</b>	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans where the status of monitoring requirements is unknown for 'significant' on-site gains	0	0.00
<b>F</b>	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans including the delivery of off-site gains, where the LPA are responsible for monitoring.	0	0.00
<b>G</b>	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are meeting monitoring requirements and habitat delivery expectations for offsite gains where the LPA is responsible for monitoring	0	0.00
<b>H</b>	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are meeting monitoring requirements but not meeting habitat delivery expectations for offsite gains where the LPA is responsible for monitoring	0	0.00
<b>I</b>	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans that are failing to meet monitoring requirements for offsite gains where the LPA is responsible for monitoring	0	0.00
<b>J</b>	Number of applications with approved biodiversity gain plans where the status of monitoring requirements is unknown for offsite gains where the LPA is responsible for monitoring	0	0.00

<b>ID</b>	<b>Enforcement actions taken in the reporting period</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Proportion (%)</b>
<b>A</b>	Number of enforcement actions taken during the reporting period associated with Biodiversity Net Gain policy	0	0.00

<b>ID</b>	<b>Tracking monitoring of biodiversity gains</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>A</b>	Please describe how you have collected information on monitoring (e.g., use of digital software to collect and analyse monitoring data/ manual checking of monitoring reports/ internal monitoring system etc.	N/A

Table 8: Composition of biodiversity gains - areas

ID	Habitat Type - Area	Total biodiversity units at baseline	Total hectares at baseline	Total biodiversity units post - development	Total hectares post-development	Net change in biodiversity units	Net change in hectares
A	Cropland	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
B	Grassland	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
C	Heathland and shrub	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
D	Lakes	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
E	Sparsely vegetated land	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
F	Urban	0.08	0.15	0.11	0.15	0.03	0.00
G	Wetland	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
H	Woodland and forest	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
I	Intertidal sediment	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
J	Coastal saltmarsh	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
K	Rocky shore	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
L	Coastal lagoons	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
M	Intertidal hard structures	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
N	Watercourse footprint	N/A	0.00	N/A	0.00	N/A	0.00
O	Individual trees	0.69	0.13	0.76	0.15	0.06	0.02
	Total	0.77	0.28	0.86	0.30	0.09	0.02

Table 9: Composition of biodiversity gains - hedgerows and lines of trees

ID	Habitat type - hedgerows and lines of trees	Total biodiversity units at baseline	Total kilometres at baseline	Total biodiversity units post - development	Total kilometres post - development	Net change in biodiversity units	Net change in kilometres
A	Species-rich native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
B	Species-rich native hedgerow with trees	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
C	Species-rich native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
D	Native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
E	Species-rich native hedgerow	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
F	Native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
G	Native hedgerow with trees	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
H	Ecologically valuable line of trees	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
I	Ecologically valuable line of trees - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
J	Native hedgerow	0.00	0.00	0.14	0.06	0.14	0.06
K	Line of trees	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
L	Line of trees - associated with bank or ditch	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
M	Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.00	0.00
	Total	0.03	0.03	0.17	0.09	0.14	0.06

**Table 10: Composition of biodiversity gains – watercourses**

<b>ID</b>	<b>Habitat type - watercourse</b>	<b>Total biodiversity units at baseline</b>	<b>Total kilometers at baseline</b>	<b>Total biodiversity units post - development</b>	<b>Total kilometers post - development</b>	<b>Net change in biodiversity units</b>	<b>Net change in kilometers</b>
<b>A</b>	Priority habitat	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>B</b>	Other rivers and streams	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>C</b>	Ditches	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>D</b>	Canals	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>E</b>	Culvert	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>

## APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF COMPLETE AND FUTURE BIODIVERSITY ACTIONS

**Table 11: Summary of biodiversity actions and future actions**

Council policy/area	Policy/target	Action	Completed actions	Identified future actions
<b>Planet Dartford: Net Zero Strategy &amp; Action Plan</b>	Target L&B1: Produce and adopt a Biodiversity Strategy.	Action LB1: Research and develop a Biodiversity Strategy	✓ Supporting and inputting into The Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and develop a Biodiversity Strategy including measurable targets (2026)</li> </ul>
<b>Planet Dartford: Net Zero Strategy &amp; Action Plan</b>	Target L&B2: Continue to champion biodiversity net gain on new developments through the Local Plan.	Action LB2: Champion the Local Plan policy M14	✓ Champion Policy M14 of the Local Plan which establishes requirements to conserve and enhance biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to champion Policy M14</li> </ul>
<b>Planet Dartford: Net Zero Strategy &amp; Action Plan</b>	Target L&B3: Improve access to open space, food growing and wildlife through land management, community gardening and habitat creation.	Action LB4: Increasing pollination corridor across the Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Creation of wildflower meadows, community orchards, hedgerows and planting trees</li> <li>✓ Increasing pollination corridors across the borough</li> <li>✓ Enhancement and restoration of differing habitat types</li> <li>✓ Changes to planting schemes within formal gardens</li> <li>✓ Creation of better-established plants that are best for pollinators and provide refuge for over wintering insects and food source for wildlife</li> <li>✓ Wildflower Walks &amp; Bat Walks provided in partnership with NWKCP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue manage habitats across the borough</li> <li>• Prepare management plans</li> <li>• Continue site surveys in Darenth Woods (Ladies Woods), and other areas across the Borough</li> <li>• Survey site to identify potential areas of ecological importance, such as Stone Lodge</li> <li>• Continue habitat improvement, creation and restoration projects such as hedgerow planting at Darenth Country Park, wildflower meadows, hedgerows, elm tree planting, and works within the river Darent</li> <li>• This ongoing planting will increase pollination corridors across the Borough.</li> </ul>
<b>Planet Dartford: Net Zero Strategy &amp; Action Plan</b>	Target L&B3: Improve access to open space, food growing and wildlife through land management, community gardening and habitat creation.	Action LB5: Continue to deliver campaigns to support a reduction in littering and fly-tipping	✓ 'Name & Shame' scheme launched to tackle environmental crime	

<b>Planet Dartford: Net Zero Strategy &amp; Action Plan</b>	Target L&B4: Produce habitat management plans to enhance, restore to favourable conditions for effective sequestration of carbon.	Action LB6: Ensure that vast habitat mosaic across the Borough can increase biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Management plans for Dartford Heath and Darent Country Park</li> <li>✓ Surveying at Dartford Heath (Lowland Heathland and Acid Grassland), SSSI Chalk Grassland at Darent Country Park, Longfield Chalk Bank, and East Hill Cemetery.</li> <li>✓ Annual surveying of orchids at Darent Country Park, Oakfield Lane and other smaller sites</li> <li>✓ Peat-free compost is used in all planting</li> <li>✓ Reduced mowing</li> <li>✓ See Action LB4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refine management plans into deliverable works on a quarterly basis.</li> </ul>
<b>Planet Dartford: Net Zero Strategy &amp; Action Plan</b>	Target C&E1: Raise awareness of Climate Change and Biodiversity loss via the implementation of a Communications Strategy	Action CE1: Develop and implement a Climate Change Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Key messages communicated effectively to the public</li> <li>✓ Improved environmental practices at Council events</li> <li>✓ Health Walk Volunteers raise awareness of respecting biodiversity and the land where they walk</li> <li>✓ Signage at key open spaces explaining the management of spaces to enhance biodiversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and develop a Climate Change Communications Strategy (2026)</li> <li>• Key messages are communicated effectively to the public</li> </ul>
<b>Lower Darent Riverside Strategy</b>	Regenerating Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Toolkit 3: Marshes Offline and Online Wetlands</li> <li>Toolkit 6: Urban ecological enhancements and channel narrowing</li> <li>Toolkit 9: Central Park chalk stream enhancement</li> <li>Toolkit 10: Floodable Spaces</li> <li>Toolkit 11: Slope stabilisation live willow stalking and root wads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Prepare, adopt and promote strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preserving and enhancing important habitats and species and communicate importance of them to the public</li> <li>• Incorporate biodiversity and green space into public realm</li> <li>• Aim for environmental net gain and solutions to encourage carbon sequestration such as riverside wetlands in urban areas</li> <li>• Establish bankside and ditch re-profiling and vegetation management and put in place to initiate a diverse range of habitats, including water vole and otter habitat</li> <li>• Diversifying plant communities, fostering a varied range of habitats</li> <li>• Re-establishing saltmarsh habitat to improve biodiversity at Dartford Marshes</li> <li>• Maintaining quiet ecology zones free from recreational use for the protection of sensitive species at Dartford Marshes</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing eastern tributary of River Darent for quiet ecology at Central Park</li> <li>• Introducing buffer zones either side of the streams retained and enhanced with water voles and otters in mind at Central Park</li> <li>• Chalk Stream enhancement at Central Park</li> <li>• Natural river bank stabilisation techniques</li> </ul>
<b>Kent &amp; Medway LNRS</b>	<p>Increasing the functional connectivity of high-quality habitats.</p> <p>Increasing the use of nature-based solutions to environmental and societal challenges.</p> <p>Land management and land use increasingly delivering nature recovery gains.</p> <p>Restoring, connecting and extending species-rich grassland.</p> <p>Safeguarding successional habitats from loss and damage.</p> <p>Bringing woodland, trees and hedgerows under active management and increasing cover and connectivity.</p> <p>Ensuring freshwater habitats are clean, sufficient and healthy and restoring catchments' functions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Surveys to assess potential BNG sites on Council-managed land</li> <li>✓ Reptile and vegetation surveys and management plans</li> <li>✓ Identify new Local Wildlife Sites</li> <li>✓ Awarded and delivering Urban Tree Challenge fund grants</li> <li>✓ Representation on the Kent Nature Partnership board</li> <li>✓ Working with species groups such as Butterfly Conservation Trust and Waterlife Recovery Trust</li> <li>✓ Working with the South East River Trust, Darent and Cray Catchment Partnership to discuss river works, concerns and projects</li> </ul>	

Providing for nature in urban environments.

Securing high functioning, natural and connected coastal habitats.

Species at the heart of habitat management, restoration, extension and creation.

**Biodiversity Net Gain**

N/A

N/A

- ✓ Including reference to BNG in pre-application advice
  - ✓ Ensuring that planning applications that are not exempt from BNG meet the requirements of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 at validation stage
  - ✓ Recording exemptions and BNG applicable applications via bespoke software and information management systems
  - ✓ Assessing and recording submitted BNG Metrics with the assistance of specialist software and the advice of KCC Ecology to ensure that 10% gain is achieved
  - ✓ Securing BNG on planning permissions via the statutory condition and additional conditions and/or legal agreements under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990
  - ✓ Assessing and recording submitted Biodiversity Gain Plans
  - ✓ Monitoring the submission of BGPs and actively investigating cases where there is a breach of the statutory condition
- Capture onsite and offsite BNG sites on GIS
  - Set up software for monitoring Biodiversity Gain Plans/BNG delivery
  - Explore habitat bank feasibility at the marshes