

# Biodiversity Report 2026

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL



## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Biodiversity report has been produced and published to satisfy the Councils Biodiversity Duty. The Report will demonstrate the actions that the Council has taken to comply with its Biodiversity Duty.

1.2 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) has been part of the development management process since early 2024, becoming mandatory for major developments from 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024 and for smaller sites from April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2024. At the time of preparing this report, there are some exemptions for self-build and custom build housing.

1.3 The reporting period of this report is from 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024 to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026. This report will encompass data from planning applications approved, awaiting decision and those awaiting an appeal decision within the reporting period.

1.4 This report will include;

- A summary of the actions the Council has taken to comply with the biodiversity duty
- How the Council plans to comply with the biodiversity duty in the next reporting period
- The actions the Council has carried out to meet BNG obligations,
- The details of BNG resulting, or expected to result, from biodiversity gain plans the Council has approved
- How the Council plans to comply with the biodiversity duty in the next reporting period



## 2.0 The Council's Policies, Objectives and Actions

2.1 The Council has a number of planning policies and objectives which address biodiversity.

2.2 The Council adopted its Local Plan in 2023 and has a number of policies which are relevant to addressing biodiversity:

- GEN 01 – Sustainable Development in Breckland
- TR 01 – Sustainable Transport Network
- ENV 01 – Green Infrastructure
- ENV 02 – Biodiversity Protection and Enhancement
- ENV 03 – The Brecks Protected Habitats & Species
- ENV 04 – Open Space, Sport & Recreation
- ENV 05 – Protection and Enhancement of the Landscape
- ENV 06 – Trees, Hedgerows and Development
- ENV 09 – Flood Risk & Surface Water Drainage
- ENV 10 – Renewable Energy Development
- EC 06 – Farm Diversification
- EC 07 – Tourism Related Development
- COM 01 – Design
- COM 02 - Healthy Lifestyles
- INF 02 – Developer Contributions

2.3 Within the adopted Local Plan (2023) Policy ENV 02 – Biodiversity Protection and Enhancement is of paramount importance to biodiversity. In respect of BNG the Policy states the following;

*“All development should demonstrate how net gains for biodiversity are being secured as part of the development, proportionate to the scale of development and potential impacts (if any).”*

2.4 This sets out that proposals should demonstrate how net gains are being secured. It is noted that this policy was originally first adopted in 2019, which is significantly ahead of the 2024 implementation of BNG. In 2019, it was not in full knowledge of how the BNG requirements would come forward, therefore, the policy is not over prescriptive as to how gains are to be demonstrated and secured as the necessary legislation had not been enacted at that stage.

2.5 It is noted however, that the Council is currently working on its Local Plan update and is intending to submit this for examination by Winter 2026. Therefore, the policies listed below cannot be given any significant weight in any planning decisions yet, however, as an expression of intent from the Council, they do provide a direction of travel in terms of the Councils intent to improve Biodiversity across the district and continue to abide by its Biodiversity duties.

2.6 Therefore the following policies are listed from the emerging Local Plan, noting that it is not yet the “final” version of the plan and therefore is still subject to change until inspected by the Planning Inspectorate and subsequently adopted by the Council;

- GEN 01 – Design and Sustainable development
- GEN 03 – Built Form
- HOU 17 – Water efficiency
- EC 05 – Farm Diversification



- EC 06 – Tourism Related Facilities and Attractions
- EC 07 – Tourist Accommodation, Camping, Caravanning and Holiday Lets
- ENV 01 – Climate Responsive Design
- ENV 02 – Green and blue infrastructure
- ENV 03 – Improving Biodiversity
- ENV 04 – Protection and Enhancement of the Landscape
- ENV 05 – Trees, Hedgerows and Development
- ENV 09 – The Brecks Protected Habitats and Species
- ENV 10 – Development in Nutrient Sensitive Areas
- ENV 11 – Agricultural Intensification
- ENV 12 – Open Space, Sport & Recreation
- ENV 13 – Local Green Space
- ENV 14 – Regenerative Farming
- ENV 15 – Agritech Development and Community Growing Spaces
- DES 01 – Promoting High Quality Design
- DES 02 – Integrating Development With Nature
- DES 03 – Distinctive Local Identity
- COM 01 – Healthy Lifestyles
- COM 02 – New development and Health Impacts
- INF 01 – Sustainable Transport
- INF 03 – Flood Risk & Surface Water Drainage
- INF 04 – Renewable Energy Development
- INF 06 – Developer Contributions

**2.7** It is noted that there are more policies currently within the draft Local Plan which are relevant to Biodiversity than the currently adopted plan. It is also noted that there will also be reference to Biodiversity within the allocation policies, however, as the allocations are still subject to change before submission, therefore, these are not listed in this report.

**2.8** The Council has also been involved in the recently adopted [Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#). The Strategy, whilst covering a wider geography across the whole of Norfolk is a material consideration for Biodiversity both at a strategic level and for planning applications.

**2.9** Whilst not a policy, Breckland Council has declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. The Council therefore considers this within relevant decisions making. This feeds into the Council's [Breckland 2035 Sustainability Strategy](#). The Strategy intends to get the Council to Net Zero by 2035. Included within the strategy is the commitment to improve both air and water quality. One of the other objectives of the strategy is “Strengthening of its planning position to protect the natural environment while ensuring that growth is still delivered in a sustainable way”



### 3.0 BNG Monitoring Outcomes

3.1 It should be noted that the following data is correct at the time of writing (March, 2026). Reporting on expected BNG gains will include planning applications awaiting a decision or those that are under appeal therefore, BNG gains will have a degree of uncertainty depending on the outcome of those applications.

3.2 The figures which follow have been rounded for reporting purposes.

### 4.0 Key Statistics

4.1 Breckland is a rich and diverse nationally significant landscape including key environments of heathlands, dry grasslands, conifer woodlands, wetlands and chalk streams. These biodiverse environments support the establishment of rare and ecologically significant species found in few other parts of the UK. The population of stone-curlew, nightjar, woodlark, and its diverse assemblages of invertebrates such as Twin-spotted Major Soldierfly, Weevil and Marsh Carpet Moth and key plant species such as Spiked Speedwell, Fingered Speedwell and Proliferous Pink which are critical for soil maintenance and reducing soil erosion. BNG net gain is crucial to maintain and preserve these environments and subsequently the biodiversity.

4.2 Within the monitoring period, Breckland District Council had **91** open planning applications which are BNG liable within the reporting period. **79 (87%)** have been approved with conditions and **12 (13%)** are awaiting a decision. **71 (78%)** of these planning applications are from minor site planning applications and **10 (11%)** are from major site planning applications. The remaining **10 (11%)** applications are outline applications.

4.3 Of the applications that have been approved, no planning application have reported irreplaceable habitat at baseline. Of the **79** applications that have been approved and are BNG liable within the reporting period, **76 (96%)** applications recorded a habitat at baseline, **35 (44%)** applications recorded a hedgerow habitat at baseline and **3 (4%)** recorded a watercourse habitat at baseline.

### 5.0 The Statutory Biodiversity Metric (SBM)

5.1 The SBM is a planning tool used to support compliance with the BNG duty within Breckland. The metric is provided by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

5.2 At the application stage, onsite habitats are recorded and assigned a value that represents the baseline habitat condition. This valuation takes into account the size, type, and condition of each habitat. Within the metric, habitats are categorised into three unit types: habitat units, hedgerow units, and watercourse units. The SBM is structured into modules that address each unit type separately.

5.3 The SBM was last updated on 3 July 2025, incorporating refinements to definitions and enhancements to the accompanying guidance to support effective and consistent use of the tool.



## 6.0 Net Gain

6.1 **Table 1** sets out how a 10% BNG net gain has been achieved in the applications that have been approved from 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024 to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026:

	Onsite Mitigation	Combined Onsite and Offsite Mitigation	Offsite Only
Major Sites	5	1	0
Minor Sites	64	6	0

**Table 1:** BNG mitigation onsite and offsite by major and minor sites.

## 7.0 BNG Post Intervention Units

7.1 **Table 2** sets out post intervention BNG units distributed by on-site and off-site mitigation within habitat types. Note that this includes applications that have been approved from 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024 to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026:

	Habitat Units	Hedgerow Units	Watercourse Units
On-site	245.870	41.556	4
Off-site	8.85	0.32	0

**Table 2:** BNG units post intervention by habitat type for onsite and offsite mitigation.

## 8.0 BNG Net Change Units

8.1 **Table 3** sets out Net Change in units from baseline reporting to post intervention BNG units distributed by on-site and off-site mitigation within habitat types. Note that this includes applications that have been approved from 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024 to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026:

	Habitat Units	Hedgerow Units	Watercourse Units
On-site	4.770	15.780	2.44
Off-site	6.01	0.23	0

**Table 3:** BNG change units by habitat type for onsite and offsite mitigation.



## 9.0 Off-site Credit Purchases

- 9.1** The Spatial Risk Multiplier (SRM) is key element of the BNG metric and subsequently the Biodiversity Duty Act 2021. The primary purpose of the Spatial Risk Multiplier is to ensure that credits purchased for BNG applications in Breckland contribute to ecological benefits within Breckland. BNG credits that are purchased within a neighbouring LPA or NCA and mitigation beyond neighbouring LPA or NCA will have an additional 1.5x or 2x compensation requirement applied for BNG mitigation respectively.
- 9.2** Breckland is covered by 3 National Character Areas (NCA's) this includes The Brecks, South Norfolk and High Suffolk Clayland's and Mid Norfolk.
- 9.3** At the time of writing, there are 7 LPA's which share district boundaries with Breckland and subsequently would be considered neighbouring LPA's.
- 9.4** The table below outlines the percentage breakdown of units purchased in, neighbouring or outside LPA's or NCA's.

	% of credits purchased
Credits purchased within the local planning authority (LPA) boundary or within the National Character Area (NCA)	83
Credits purchased from a habitat bank outside LPA and NCA area but within a neighbouring LPA/NCA area	17
Credits purchased from a habitat bank outside LPA and NCA area and outside neighbouring LPA and NCA area	0

**Table 3:** Distribution of BNG credits purchased broken into proximity from the Breckland boundary.



## **10.0 Reporting in the next period**

- 10.1** It is expected that at the time of the next reporting period that some of the applications which have been approved will have been implemented and created. Additional applications will likely lead to better identification of trends in biodiversity improvements in Breckland. A monitoring officer will continue to monitor the changes in BNG applications.
- 10.2** Furthermore, through the ongoing development of Breckland's Local Plan, consideration will be given to policy making to support the objects of our Biodiversity Duty. The Council will also seek new opportunities for BNG credits within Breckland to enable development whilst delivering biodiversity gains within the local authority.
- 10.3** The Monitoring officer will continue to engage with Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to identify best practice methods for meeting Breckland's Biodiversity Duty.

