Appendix 1: Cambridgeshire County Council Report on Strengthened Biodiversity 2021-2026 (for publication)

This report outlines the actions taken by Cambridgeshire County Council to comply with its requirements under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) Act 2006 and updated obligations under the Environment Act 2021. It highlights progress made in conserving and enhancing biodiversity across local planning, land management, community engagement, and partnership working.	
Section 1: Our policies, objectives and actions	• Developed and adopted a Biodiversity Strategy that sets out objectives and actions for the Council to conserve and enhance biodiversity on all its estate. • Developed and adopted a Tree & Woodland Strategy that sets out objectives and actions for the Council to manage its own woodland, trees and hedgerows, better for nature and people as well as increasing canopy cover where appropriate. • Adopted key performance indicators for biodiversity and tree/woodland strategies. • Delivery/Implementation of biodiversity strategy working with colleagues in various council departments.
Section 2: Our future actions	• Collaborating with other partner organisations on the development of an implementation plan for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and how our own objectives/actions can contribute to this. • Implementation of our own Biodiversity and Tree and Woodland Strategies through actions plans, which included bringing all our protected sites into positive conservation management. • Minerals & Waste Plan (review) incorporate actions for how habitat creation/restoration can contribute to LNRS and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

	• Nature Recovery – From the Ground Up. A 4-year council funded project to engage local communities in developing parish nature recovery plans. • Woodland Creation Project – a 2-year Forestry Commission funded project to develop tree and hedge planting schemes. Working with Landowners, farmers and local communities with the aim of increasing canopy cover, in a County, that is second bottom in terms of tree cover.
Section 3: Biodiversity Net Gain	The Local Planning Authority has approved two Biodiversity Gain Plans (BGP) between the implementation of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (February 2024) and October 2025. Both Biodiversity Gain Plans secured all BNG on-site, with an average increase of 29% BNG (0.4 BNG units). One BGP delivers significant on-site gains. There are some due to be submitted in the next few months (October-December). • None of the approved Biodiversity Gains Plans have negatively impacted (on-site) irreplaceable habitats, nor used off-site BNG units / purchased statutory BNG credits. • One of the approved Biodiversity Gain Plans secured significant on-site BNG and will therefore require a 30-year habitat management and monitoring. However, this monitoring period has not started. • We have developed a habitat bank on part of our Rural Estate.
Section 4: Information about our Council	Cambridgeshire County Council is responsible for the following functions: • Education • Transport and Highways • Social Care (children, families, vulnerable adults) • Libraries and Heritage • Waste Management • Trading Standards

	• Climate and Environmental Strategy • Public Safety and Fire Services The size of the authority: Cambridgeshire County Council serves a population of over 650,000 residents across a diverse landscape that includes urban centre's, rural villages, fenlands, woodlands, and river valleys. The council is responsible for a wide range of services including education, transport, social care, and environmental management. The county covers approximately 3,389 square kilometres, making it one of the larger counties in England by area. An outline of its governance and management structures: Cambridgeshire County Council operates under a Committee system. The governance structure includes: • Full Council: Comprising elected county councillors representing divisions across Cambridgeshire. This body sets the overall budget and policy framework. • Committees: Including the Environment and Green Investment Committee, which oversees biodiversity strategy and climate-related initiatives. • Directorates: The council is divided into several directorates all of which have a role to play: ▪ Adults, Health & Commissioning ▪ Children, Education & Families ▪ Finance and Resources ▪ Place and Sustainability ▪ Strategy and Partnerships

	• Executive Director of Place and Sustainability: Oversees biodiversity and climate strategies, through the Natural and Historic Environment team, supported by officers such as the Biodiversity and Greenspaces Manager. For biodiversity specifically, the council works in partnership with: • Natural Cambridgeshire (Local Nature Partnership) • Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, which acts as the Responsible Authority for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), • District Council's and Cambridge City Council • Woodland Trust • Wildlife Trust BCN (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire) • Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Environment Record Centre (CPERC) • Farming & Wildlife Group (FWAG) • Forestry Commission • Parish Councils The council's biodiversity governance includes: • A Climate Change and Environment Board (which has supported a programme from July 2022-December 2025) and will continue for governance in the Economy and Climate and Natural and Historic Environment Teams • Integration of biodiversity KPIs into the council's performance management framework • A commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2045 and biodiversity enhancement across the council's estate by 2030

	Cambridgeshire County Council are playing a significant role in shaping biodiversity outcomes across the county. Here's a summary of how its actions are positively and negatively affect biodiversity across five key areas: **1. Land and Estates Management (including protected areas and sites)** **Positive Impacts:** • The Council manages a variety of habitats including woodlands, chalk grassland, fen reedbeds many of which are statutory and non-statutory protected sites. • Through its Biodiversity Strategy, the Council commits to enhancing these areas, restoring habitats, and integrating biodiversity into land management practices. • A Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) has been developed to guide habitat restoration and connectivity across landscapes. **Negative Impacts:** • Poor land management or neglect of ecological considerations could degrade habitats, especially in agricultural or urban fringe areas. • Infrastructure development on council-owned land without ecological mitigation could fragment habitats. **2. Planning and Development Decisions** **Positive Impacts:** • The Council enforces Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) policies, requiring developers to enhance biodiversity by at least 10% through habitat creation or restoration. • Working with planning colleagues on the review of the Minerals & Waste Plan to ensure all positive biodiversity policies are included. **Negative Impacts:**

	• If planning decisions prioritise development over ecological concerns, they can lead to habitat loss, fragmentation, and reduced species populations. • Inadequate enforcement or monitoring of BNG commitments may result in ineffective biodiversity outcomes. **3. Advice Provided** **Positive Impacts:** • The Council offers biodiversity checklists and guidance notes to developers, helping them incorporate nature conservation into their proposals. • Advice on protected species and ecological surveys ensures legal compliance and ecological sensitivity. **Negative Impacts:** • Inconsistent or unclear advice could lead to misunderstandings or non-compliance. • Lack of capacity or expertise in ecological matters may limit the effectiveness of guidance. **4. Raising Awareness Within the Community** **Positive Impacts:** • Initiatives like the Natural Cambridgeshire Partnership and public forums help educate and engage residents on biodiversity issues. • Community involvement in local nature reserves and green space projects fosters stewardship and appreciation of biodiversity. • Public events to raise awareness. Supporting the LNRS survey in all libraries. Library Development Officer attending planning meetings on Citizen Science on nature recovery in urban environments at David Attenborough Centre. Hosting talks from Cambridge University and

	Cambridge Zero in Milton Road library on Climate Hope: Adapt and Conserve. Planning to plant trees in March and Linton Library grounds. **Negative Impacts:** • Limited outreach or engagement may result in low public awareness or support for biodiversity initiatives. • Failure to communicate the importance of biodiversity could hinder behavioural change. **5. Operational Environmental Impact** **Positive Impacts:** • The Council's operations, when aligned with its Biodiversity Strategy, can support ecosystem services and climate resilience. • Sustainable procurement, waste management, and green infrastructure can reduce ecological footprints. **Negative Impacts:** • Routine operations (e.g., road maintenance, construction, waste disposal) can negatively affect habitats if not managed sustainably. • Pollution, noise, and light from council activities may disturb wildlife.
Section 5: Our top achievements	• Completed biodiversity audits for all our protected sites with management actions identified to bring them into positive management condition • Adopted a biodiversity and tree and woodland strategies and set up action plans related to these • Created a BNG habitat bank on our rural estate. • Commenced a Nature Recovery: From the Ground Up Project

	• Commenced a Woodland Creation project The delivery of these strategies and projects will be our priorities during the next reporting period
Section 6: **How we have considered other strategies**	• The Combined Authority in Cambridgeshire is the Responsible Authority for the LNRS, but the County Council were commissioned to lead on the coordination of producing the document as well as being a Supporting Authority.
Section 7: How have our policies, objectives and actions helped the environment	• We have proactively managed our Local Nature Reserves to improve their condition as well as working with local communities to 'connect with nature'
Section **8: How you've raised awareness and educated the community**	• Activity through Friends Groups – we have five fully constituted Friends Groups that assist with the management of our Local Nature Reserves. • Volunteering activity – we run a programme of corporate and external groups volunteering days • Commenced the Nature Recovery: From the Ground Up Project to establish Parish Nature Recovery Plans • Delivered annual programme of events and activities on CCC owned local nature reserves

	• Submission of management of council owned Local Sites SBI – NI197, which shows that 47% of our sites are in positive conservation management. • Protected Road Verges - Working in collaboration with Highways we manage 67 sections of road verge for biodiversity. These verges have been selected based on the presence of rare species and have different cutting regimes from the rest of the network to conserve the botanical interest. We are currently reviewing this PRV scheme in the hopes of expanding it even further.
Section 9: Monitoring and evaluating your actions	How we are or plan to measure our actions to improve biodiversity • CCE 2026-28 Target 6: Complete audits and conservation plans for 67% (23) of our 34 important Biodiversity sites, detailing the required actions for each site. • CCE 2026-28 Target 7: Increase the hedgerow planting by 2052 meters by 2028 on its own assets.

Section 10: Biodiversity highlights and challenges	Our main achievements for biodiversity over the reporting period are: • We have led on the production of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough LNRS • Published and adopted a Biodiversity Strategy and Tree & Strategy • Completed biodiversity audits on all our statutory and non-statutory sites and started to implement management plans to bring them into positive conservation status • Run a programme of volunteer days on our nature reserves • Started a Nature from the Ground Up Project to involve local communities in the delivery of the LNRS • Started a Woodland Creation Project to increase tree canopy across the County The main challenges will be over the next 5 years include: • economic and resource pressures • delivering cross-cutting actions • preventing further loss of habitats and species • effective management of invasive non-native species • pressures for space • the need to meet targets • Local Government Reorganisation