

Report to CABINET

Biodiversity Duty Report

Portfolio Holder:

Cllr Elaine Taylor, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Cllr Peter Dean, Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure

Officer Contact: Emma Barton, Deputy Chief Executive (Place) and Nasir Dad, Director of Environment

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23 March 2026

Reason for Decision

To seek approval to publish the Biodiversity Duty Report (2026) in line with section 40A of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Recommendations

To give approval to publish the Biodiversity Duty Report on the Council's website.

Biodiversity Duty Report

1 Background

- 1.1 Oldham Council's Biodiversity Duty Report sets out how the Council's policies and objectives on biodiversity are being implemented.
- 1.2 The Environment Act 2021 introduced a strengthened 'biodiversity duty' into the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 which requires all public authorities in England to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- 1.3 Oldham Council as a public authority, must:
- Consider what we can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
 - Agree policies and specific objectives based on our consideration.
 - Act to deliver our policies and achieve our objectives.
- 1.4 There was a need to complete our first consideration of what action Oldham Council intends to take for biodiversity no later than 1 January 2024 – this report can be viewed [here](#)¹.
- 1.5 Following this initial consideration, Oldham Council was required to agree our policies and objectives as soon as possible after – this report was approved by Cabinet on 24 March 2025 and can be viewed [here](#)².
- 1.6 Following on from these reports there is now a requirement to publish a report on how these policies and objectives have been implemented. The first reporting period can include actions that have taken place since 1 January 2023 up until 1 January 2026. The Biodiversity Duty Report must be published by 26 March 2026.
- 1.7 Future Biodiversity Duty Reports will need to be published at least every five years thereon.
- 1.8 The Biodiversity Duty Report must explain:
- a summary of the action we have taken to comply with the biodiversity duty;
 - how we plan to comply with the biodiversity duty in the next reporting period; and
 - any other information we consider appropriate
- 1.9 Reports from local planning authorities must also include the following biodiversity net gain (BNG) information:
- the actions we have carried out to meet BNG obligations;
 - details of BNG resulting, or expected to result, from biodiversity gain plans we have approved; and
 - how we plan to meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period

¹ The First Considerations Report is available at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/7821/complying_with_the_biodiversity_duty_first_considerations_report

² The Policies and Objectives Report is available at https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/8234/complying_with_the_biodiversity_duty_%E2%80%93_our_policies_and_objectives_for_thriving_wildlife_in_oldham

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- 1.10 Other information that may be included in the Biodiversity Duty Report as set out in government guidance on [reporting your biodiversity duty actions](#)³ is optional.
- 1.11 This report links to the Oldham Corporate Plan Green and Growing priority as it seeks to enhance biodiversity and ensure communities and our environment thrive.
- 1.12 In terms of the purpose of the report there are limited implications for:
- (a) Community Cohesion Implications, including crime and disorder implications under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998: N/A
 - (b) Risk Assessments: The Council is required by law to publish the Biodiversity Duty Report by 26 March 2026.
 - (c) If relevant, Co-operative Implications, Human Resource Implications, IT implications, Property Implications, Procurement Implications and Environment and Health and Safety Implications: The report will be published on the Council's website.

2 Current Position

- 2.1 In line with the requirements of section 40A of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Government guidance the Biodiversity Duty Report has been prepared.
- 2.2 This report summarises progress on actions that have taken place since 1 January 2023 up until completion of this report (1 January 2026).
- 2.3 The Biodiversity Duty Report sets out Oldham Council's policies and objectives for Thriving Wildlife in Oldham. This summarises the report that was approved by Cabinet in March 2025 - Our Policies and Objectives for Thriving Wildlife in Oldham⁴. The policies and objectives are to:
1. Protect and restore core areas of wildlife;
 2. Promote nature recovery networks in areas of lower biodiversity;
 3. Optimise the Green Infrastructure functionality of existing open spaces to encourage wildlife;
 4. Promote multi-functional Green Infrastructure in allocated and potential development sites;
 5. Encourage habitat creation and enhancement in the Green Belt;
 6. Raise awareness and appreciation of biodiversity; and
 7. Consider biodiversity in corporate plans and decisions.
- 2.4 The Biodiversity Duty Report also summarises other policies and objectives that influence what we do in Oldham in relation to biodiversity. This includes:
- the adopted policies in Places for Everyone (PfE);
 - South Pennine Moors Special Area of Conservation (SAC) / Special Protection Areas (SPAs) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD);
 - Holcroft Moss Planning Obligations SPD;
 - The Oldham Plan 'Pride, Progress, Partnership';
 - The Corporate Plan 'Ready for the Future';
 - Oldham Green New Deal Strategy;

³ Reporting your biodiversity duty actions guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reporting-your-biodiversity-duty-actions>

⁴The Policies and Objectives for Thriving Wildlife is available at: https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/8234/complying_with_the_biodiversity_duty_%E2%80%93_our_policies_and_objectives_for_thriving_wildlife_in_oldham

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- Oldham Local Plan Review; and
 - Oldham’s Green Infrastructure Strategy
- 2.5 The Biodiversity Duty Report then provides a summary of progress against actions that are either fully completed or are underway by the Council or through working in partnership with other stakeholders. The actions were identified in Our Policies and Objectives for Thriving Wildlife in Oldham report (2025).
- 2.6 Many of these actions are completed, underway or are a continued action. Some key outputs between 2023 and 2025 are:
- Increased land designated for nature – 10.9 hectares of Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) have been gained since 2023, with two new SBIs
 - Habitat Management Plans for Glodwick Lows Local Nature Reserve and Crompton Fold Wood SBI have been commissioned so that the sites can then be actively managed
 - The South Pennine Moors SAC/SPA SPD was adopted with effect from 8 May 2025
 - Holcroft Moss Planning Obligations SPD was adopted with effect from 8 May 2025
 - Green Corridor designations have been reviewed for the Local Plan review
 - Local Green Space designations are proposed in the Local Plan
 - Input has been given to the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and the Council gave approval to being content for the LNRS to be published at Cabinet meeting on 16 June 2025 leading to the launch of the GM LNRS on 5 September 2025
 - 1509 trees have been planted between 2023 and 2025
 - Over 6 hectares of woodland creation at Crompton Moor, Holts Valley, Glodwick Lows and Bishops Park
 - Six ‘Leaky Dams’ installed at Crompton Moor
 - Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans have been prepared for eight Council countryside sites to support the sites possible function as habitat banks⁵
 - Revised policies on biodiversity and green infrastructure and other policies that benefit biodiversity have been prepared for the Publication Local Plan
 - Officer support has been given to advise and assist on Saddleworth Neighbourhood Plan including policies to enhance biodiversity
 - Biodiversity is being embedded into transport schemes and plans
 - Volunteering opportunities are available related to nature recovery
 - ‘Biodiversity for Council’s’ training embedded into the Council’s internal training platform
 - Enhanced biodiversity secured through planning obligations and conditions
- 2.7 In addition, many of the actions form part of the Council’s daily statutory planning functions which will be continuous in terms of considering biodiversity in planning decisions and influencing nature recovery as part of pre-application discussions.
- 2.8 The report includes details of BNG from approved Biodiversity Gain Plans. This is a Defra BNG Reporting template which GMEU have assisted in completing.
- 2.9 The Biodiversity Duty Report also lists future actions. This mostly includes continuing to carry out the actions already identified. This list does not exclude additional actions from being undertaken.

3 Options/Alternatives

⁵ A Habitat Bank is an area of land where new habitats – like meadows, woodlands, hedgerows, and ponds – are strategically added and managed for the long term to help biodiversity flourish.

3.1 Option 1- To give approval to publish the Biodiversity Duty Report on the Council's website. The advantages of this option is that the Council will fulfil its legal duty set out in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. There are no disadvantages to this option.

3.2 Option 2 - To not give approval to publish the Biodiversity Duty Report on the Council's website. There are no advantages to this option. The Council will fail to meet the legal duty set out in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 to publish a report during the time specified.

4 **Preferred Option**

4.1 Option 1- To give approval to publish the Biodiversity Duty Report on the Council's website. The advantages of this option is that the council will fulfil its legal duty set out in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. There are no disadvantages to this option.

5 **Consultation**

5.1 The Report has been inputted into by Countryside Services and Strategic Transport. The report will be available to view publicly.

6 **Financial Implications**

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from the publication of the Biodiversity Duty Report.

(Mohammed Hussain)

7 **Legal Implications**

7.1 Section 103 of the Environment Act 2021 inserted a new section 40A into the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 requiring local planning authorities to publish biodiversity reports every 5 years. The biodiversity report must be published within 12 weeks of the end of the period covered by the report. (A Evans)

8. **Procurement Implications**

8.1 None
(SKapoor – Commercial Procurement Unit)

9 **Equality Impact, including implications for Children and Young People**

9.1 No



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10 **Key Decision**

10.1 Yes

11 **Key Decision Reference**

11.1 RBO-19-25

12 Background Papers

- 12.1 The following is a list of background papers on which this report is based in accordance with the requirements of Section 100(1) of the Local Government Act 1972. It does not include documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information as defined by the Act:

Name of File: Complying with the Biodiversity Duty: First Considerations Report⁶; and Complying with the Biodiversity Duty – Our Policies and Objectives for Thriving Wildlife in Oldham⁷

Records held in: Strategic Planning and Information

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13 Appendices

- 13.1 Appendix 1 - Oldham Council – Biodiversity Duty Report
- 13.2 Appendix 2 - Appendix 1 – Biodiversity Action Tracker
- 13.3 Appendix 3 – Appendix 2 – Medlock Valley Restoration Project
- 13.4 Appendix 4 – Appendix 3 – BNG Quantitative Data

⁶ The First Considerations Report is available at <https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/7821/complying-with-the-biodiversity-duty-first-considerations-report>

⁷ Our Policies and Objectives for Thriving Wildlife in Oldham report is available at <https://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/8234/complying-with-the-biodiversity-duty-%E2%80%93-our-policies-and-objectives-for-thriving-wildlife-in-oldham>