



## Meeting the Biodiversity Duty

The Government expects local authorities to monitor their performance in fulfilling the biodiversity duty. To achieve success, a well-performing local authority will need:

- High-quality biodiversity data and information
- Access to professional ecological staff
- Good internal links and cross-departmental working
- Commitment to key initiatives such as biodiversity action plans
- Systems to monitor progress towards biodiversity targets
- Appropriate training to help staff and elected members incorporate biodiversity into a wide range of services.



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## BIODIVERSITY DUTY FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

### All local authorities have a statutory obligation to conserve biodiversity:

*“Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.”*

*Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 s.40*

The Duty encourages local authorities to **maximise opportunities** for conserving and enhancing the natural environment **through improvements to current services.**

Local authorities play a **leadership role** in achieving a rich and diverse natural environment. They are key partners in **shaping sustainable communities** for the future.



### Further information:

For general advice contact your local authority ecologist or the Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership.



Guidance for Local Authorities on Implementing the Biodiversity Duty <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/biodiversity/index.htm>

Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership and Biodiversity Action Plan for Hampshire <http://www.hampshirebiodiversity.org.uk/>

Data and information on Hampshire's biodiversity – Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/biodiversity/hbic>

Local Government Association's Greening Communities Campaign – biodiversity <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/22396> and the LGA/DEFRA Joint Environmental Prospectus <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/22204>

The Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership aims to raise awareness of Hampshire's natural environment and increase commitment to its conservation. The Partnership includes local authorities, Government agencies and voluntary bodies working together to conserve and enhance nature in Hampshire.



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### Conserving biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth. Conserving biodiversity means **protecting** and **enhancing** the natural environment and **restoring** areas that have become degraded.

- **Hampshire is rich in wildlife habitats** – ancient woodland, heathland, downland, wetlands and coast. Biodiversity is also the fabric of parks and gardens, road verges, school grounds and urban greenspace.
- **A diverse and robust natural environment is better able to adapt to a changing climate.** Biodiversity also helps to mitigate the effects of climate change through providing low carbon sources of energy such as woodfuel and providing ecosystems services such as flood management.
- The UK has **international responsibilities to protect biodiversity.** Local biodiversity initiatives contribute to the international target to halt biodiversity loss by 2010.
- Biodiversity is **critical to quality of life in our communities.** It underpins economic development and improves physical and mental health through providing relaxation, enjoyment and inspiration.

# INTEGRATING BIODIVERSITY INTO LOCAL AUTHORITY SERVICES

## Strategies and Policies

Local authorities can ensure that biodiversity and its benefits are integrated into policies, strategies and partnership arrangements. There are strong links between biodiversity and all environmental programmes, including the vision for the area enshrined in the sustainable community strategy.



- Corporate strategies
- Sustainable community strategies
- Local area agreements
- Sub-regional strategies
- Climate change
- Sustainable development
- Transport
- Asset management plans
- Environmental management systems
- Energy conservation
- Water strategies
- Procurement
- Waste management
- Minerals

### Sustainable community strategies

The state of biodiversity indicates whether we are achieving a sustainable future for Hampshire.

Sustainable Community Strategies set out the long-term ambitions of local authorities and their partners. Strategies should incorporate clear priorities and objectives for conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

Improving biodiversity is a cross-cutting outcome that links social, economic and environmental goals.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/biodiversity/lifesupport/index.htm>

## Management of Land and Buildings



Local authorities can protect and enhance biodiversity on their estate. They can also work in partnership with others to promote beneficial land management for biodiversity throughout their administrative area.

- Highways
- Rights-of-way
- Farmed estate
- Country parks
- Parks, greenspaces, cemeteries
- Housing estates
- Grounds of care units, museums, offices, leisure centres
- School grounds
- Green roofs and buildings
- Influence and advice to landowners

### Local Sites

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) are areas of nationally important habitat such as ancient woodland, chalk downland and heathland.

Management of SINCs – or 'local sites' – will be monitored in the performance framework for local authorities (NI 197). <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/nationalindicatorsupdate>

Local authorities can work in partnership with landowners to promote management of these areas for biodiversity.

## Planning and Development

### LDFs

Local authorities can use the preparation of the LDF to promote, objectives, targets and policies for biodiversity.

The Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership has produced guidance on integrating biodiversity into LDFs and associated supplementary planning documents, and a suite of model policies.

<http://www.hampshirebiodiversity.org.uk/>

Local authorities have statutory obligations for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in forward planning and development control. Key principles for biodiversity are set out in national planning legislation and policy guidance. These aim to ensure that



biodiversity is taken into account in local and regional planning.

- Local Development Frameworks
- Development control
- Planning guidance
- Development plans and briefs
- Green infrastructure
- Regeneration

### Health

Access to nature improves health and wellbeing. Research shows that experience of nature can:

- help recovery from illness
- alleviate stress and mental health problems
- improve community cohesion.

Protecting and restoring the natural environment has clear benefits to public health and wellbeing.

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/campaigns/health/default.htm>

## Community Engagement

Enabling access to biodiversity can help deliver a wide range of services such as social care, community development, health and recreation. Local authorities can promote access to nature and understanding of the natural world in schools, community programmes and through information services.



- Education
- Recreation and access
- Health services
- Social care
- Libraries, museums
- Information centres and services
- Promoting the local area for business and tourism

