

Bromsgrove District Council Biodiversity First Duty Report

Executive Summary

This Biodiversity First Duty Report complies with Section 40 and 40A of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended by the Environment Act 2021). It includes mandatory and optional sections recommended by DEFRA guidance, providing a comprehensive overview of Bromsgrove District Council's biodiversity actions, achievements, and future plans.

1. Policies, Objectives and Actions

The Council has adopted multiple strategies embedding biodiversity considerations:

- Bromsgrove District Plan 2011-2030 (Policies BDP5A and BDP21)
- Leisure and Culture Strategy (2022)
- Open Space Study (2022)
- Parks and Open Space Strategy (2022)
- Green Infrastructure Baseline Report (2013)
- BNG Supply and Demand Assessment (2024)

Key actions completed include:

- Green Flag Awards for Sanders Park and Lickey End Recreation Ground (2025)
- Citizen Science biodiversity monitoring via iNaturalist
- Grass verge biodiversity initiative (70% verges managed for pollinators)
- Tree planting and species diversification
- Pesticide reduction and alternative weed control methods

2. How Other Strategies Were Considered

The Council actively engaged with Worcestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and will integrate its priorities into planning and land management operations.

3. Future Actions

Planned actions for 2026-2031 include:

Action	Timescale	Responsibility
Continue LNRS engagement and integrate priorities	2025 onwards	Planning & Leisure
Implement Parks and Open Space biodiversity recommendations	2025/26 onwards	Parks Team
Submit additional Green Flag applications	2025/26 onwards	Parks Team
Develop BNG policies in emerging Local Plan	2025/26	Planning Policy
Prepare and publish Biodiversity Duty Report	By 26/03/26	Climate Change Manager
Include in the council's climate change strategy monitoring and reporting on Biodiversity	February 2026	Climate Change Manager

4. Biodiversity Net Gain Information

BNG became mandatory on 12 February 2024. Bromsgrove District Council has:

- Monitored planning applications subject to BNG requirements
- Commissioned BNG Supply and Demand Assessment (2024)
- Identified challenges in offsite BNG delivery due to limited suitable land
- Explored policy options for a local hierarchy for offsite BNG delivery

5. Information about the Authority

Bromsgrove District Council serves approximately 101,685 residents across 217 km² (83.8 sq mi). Functions include planning, leisure, housing, environmental services, and community engagement. The Council manages parks, open spaces, and influences biodiversity through planning decisions, operational practices, and partnerships.

Land holdings include major parks (Sanders Park, Lickey End Recreation Ground), recreation grounds, and highway verges. Planning decisions shape biodiversity outcomes through Local Plan policies and development management.

6. Top Achievements

- Green Flag Awards for Sanders Park and Lickey End Recreation Ground (2025)
- Citizen Science biodiversity monitoring via iNaturalist
- Grass verge biodiversity initiative (70% verges managed for pollinators)
- Tree planting and species diversification
- Pesticide reduction and alternative weed control methods

7. How Policies and Actions Have Helped

The council has introduced a number of policies and actions that have contributed to improved biodiversity in parks, enhanced pollinator habitats through verge management, and reduced pesticide use. Working in partnerships such as with LNRS engagement have enabled the council to strengthen its landscape recovery.

8. Awareness and Education

The council has led a number of community engagement initiatives including Citizen Science projects using iNaturalist, signage on biodiversity-friendly verge management, and partnership communications through Bromsgrove Partnership Better Environment Working Group.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring includes ecological surveys for verge management, Citizen Science data collection, and Green Flag Award criteria compliance. The council will include in its new climate change strategy biodiversity as one of its key actions and performance monitoring requirements.

10. Highlights and Challenges

Highlights: Green Flag Awards, successful community engagement, partnership working. Challenges: limited land for offsite BNG, resource constraints for monitoring, balancing biodiversity with development.

Case Study: Managing Tree Health and Biodiversity Resilience – Ash Dieback Strategy

Context

Ash Dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) is a serious fungal disease affecting native European ash trees, leading to crown dieback and eventual tree death. Nearly **1,000**

species are associated with ash, including **69 species highly dependent on ash** (fungi, bryophytes, invertebrates, lichens). The loss of ash trees poses a significant biodiversity risk and impacts ecosystem functions such as nutrient cycling and carbon storage.

Council Response

Bromsgrove District Council has operational tree management practices and biodiversity duties in place, consistent with national guidance and British Standards. Ash Dieback actions are integrated into wider tree safety and biodiversity policies. Key actions include:

- **Risk-Based Tree Inspections**
 - High-risk zones (busy parks, roads): inspected every 12–18 months.
 - Medium-risk zones: every 2 years.
 - Low-risk zones: every 4 years.
- **Habitat Retention**
 - Retain standing deadwood and habitat piles where safe to support fungi, bats, and invertebrates.
 - Identify and preserve disease-tolerant ash for future propagation.
- **Replanting and Recovery**
 - Target: up to **100,000 trees over 15 years** using diverse species for resilience.
 - Apply **canopy volume approach** and **2:1 replacement ratio** to restore ecological function.
- **Community Engagement**
 - Public awareness campaigns: signage in parks, local media, and nature walks.
 - Citizen involvement: tree census, seed collection, propagation, and planting events.
- **Standards and Best Practice**
 - All works comply with **BS3998:2010 Tree Work – Recommendations** and **BS5837:2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction**.

Biodiversity Benefits

- Maintains habitat for specialist species during decline phase.
- Builds long-term resilience through species diversification.
- Enhances carbon sequestration and climate adaptation.

Future Commitments

- Annual ash dieback surveys and monitoring using Visual Tree Assessment (VTA).
- Integration of tree health data into GIS for strategic planning.
- Continued engagement with stakeholders (Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Friends Groups, Parish Councils).