

# Redditch Borough Council Biodiversity Duty Report

## Executive Summary

This Biodiversity 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 Redditch Borough Council's biodiversity actions, achievements, and future plans.

## 1. Policies, Objectives and Actions

The Council has adopted multiple strategies embedding biodiversity considerations:

- Redditch Borough Local Plan No.4 (Policies 5 and 16)
- Leisure and Culture Strategy (2022)
- Open Space Study (2022)
- Parks and Open Space Strategy (2022)
- Green Infrastructure Baseline Report (2014)
- BNG Supply and Demand Assessment (2024)
- Tree management policy (2023)

Key actions completed include:

- Green Flag Awards for Morton Stanley Park and Overdale Park (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	2024/25 onwards	Parks Team
Submit additional Green Flag applications	2025/26 onwards	Parks Team
Develop BNG policies in emerging Local Plan	2024/25	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
Develop engagement activities to involve communities and schools for education and awareness of Biodiversity	2026 Onwards	Climate Change Manager

### 4. Biodiversity Net Gain Information

BNG became mandatory on 12 February 2024. Redditch Borough Council has:

- Monitored planning applications subject to BNG requirements
- Commissioned BNG Supply and Demand Assessment (2024)
- Identified Arrow Valley Country Park as a key offsite BNG supply site (84 units, rising to 96.6 units with LNRS multiplier)
- Explored policy options for a local hierarchy for offsite BNG delivery

### 5. Information about the Authority

Redditch Borough Council serves approximately 87,000 residents across 54.35 km<sup>2</sup> (21 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, partnerships and through community leadership.

Land holdings include Arrow Valley Country Park, Morton Stanley Park, Overdale Park, Brockhill Park & Batchley Pool. The council maintains the highway verges on behalf of Worcestershire County Council. The council's planning decisions shape biodiversity outcomes through Local Plan policies and development management.

## 6. Top Achievements

The council has been successful in achieving a number of awards that have a direct impact on improving biodiversity.

- Green Flag Awards for Morton Stanley Park and Overdale Park (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 local networks.

## 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

Redditch Borough Council has implemented a comprehensive approach to managing tree health and biodiversity resilience through its Ash Dieback Strategy (2025–28) and Tree Management Policy. The strategy prioritises risk-based inspections across high, medium, and low-risk zones, ensuring public safety while retaining ecological value. 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).