

Lincolnshire County Council
Biodiversity Duty Report 2026



Lincolnshire County Council: Biodiversity Duty Report 2026

Introduction

This report covers the actions that Lincolnshire County Council has undertaken to comply with the Biodiversity Duty requirements of the Environment Act 2021. The Act requires that public authorities must consider the following issues:

- Consider what you can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agree policies and specific objectives based on your consideration.
- Act to deliver your policies and achieve your objectives.

As part of the preparatory work to comply with the Biodiversity Duty the County Council commissioned WSP in 2023 to produce a report on how the Council could comply with the legislation. This report identified actions, policies and procedures that the Council needed to consider on biodiversity. The following report sets out how Lincolnshire County Council complies with the Biodiversity Duty requirements.

Section 1: Policies, Objectives and Actions

1.1 Policies

Lincolnshire County Council has an extensive range of policies that cover the natural environment and biodiversity. These comprise of overarching strategic documents that include biodiversity (such as the Corporate Plan) to more detailed policy guidelines that set out how work should be conducted to protect and enhance the natural environment (such as the Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan). The text below provides an overview of the key policies:

Lincolnshire County Council: Corporate Plan – The current Plan was published in 2019 and was then updated in 2023. A new version is planned for early 2026. One of the key measures for success in the Plan is “Our green spaces, natural and built environment are protected for the future”.

Green Masterplan – This strategy was approved in 2021 and sets out the ambitions of the Council to improve its environmental performance. The strategy was based around three main principles of “Don’t waste anything”, “Consider the wider opportunities”, and “Take responsibility and pride”. The Green Masterplan included an initial action plan, which ran up to 2025 – setting out the objectives for the Masterplan.

Environmental Strategy / Policy – as stated above the period of the Initial Action Plan for the Green Masterplan has come to an end. A new Environmental Strategy is being developed for approval in 2026. This will link with the new Corporate Plan that is being developed for the Council.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy – the Greater Lincolnshire LNRS is due to be published in mid-2026. The Strategy will identify the protected nature sites in the county and the opportunities to

expand areas for nature and link up existing areas. The Greater Lincolnshire LNRS is one of 48 LNRS documents that are being developed across England.

Tree and Woodland Planting Strategy – was approved in November 2024 and sets out a target for tree planting within the county and looks at suitable tree and hedgerow species. The Strategy addresses the fragmented nature of woodlands within Lincolnshire and examines the future management of the public tree stock within the county.

Local Enforcement Plan / Biodiversity Net Gain Implementation – The Local Enforcement Plan is managed by the Planning Team at Lincolnshire County Council and includes a section setting out how the rules around Biodiversity Net Gain will be enforced.

Minerals and Waste Local Plan (M&WLP) – the current M&WLP was adopted in 2016 and is in the process of being updated. Key areas of the document cover how natural habitats will be protected and how sites will be restored once mineral working has ended. The new M&WLP is expected to be approved in 2026.

Lincolnshire Wolds National Landscape – Management Plan – The Wolds Management Plan sets out a five year management plan for the national landscape area. The document is approved by the local authorities that cover the Wolds area - Lincolnshire County Council, North East Lincolnshire Council, East Lindsey District Council and West Lindsey District Council. A new management plan in development and is expected to be published in 2026.

Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan – this Plan is updated annually and sets out how the highways network in the county will be managed. Volume 3 of the plan covers drainage issues and describes the approach that will be taken to maintaining the Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems on the highways network. Volume 6 covers the approach to arboriculture and how trees along the network will be managed.

Lincolnshire Development Roads and Sustainable Drainage Design Approach – this document covers the detailed design approach to roads in the county. The document has specific sections on Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and on tree planting requirements.

1.2 Objectives

The Council has a number of objectives and strategies that relate to the natural environment and biodiversity. These include:

Lincolnshire County Council Corporate Plan: The Corporate Plan includes the objective to “Create Thriving Environments”. The relevant objective is: “Our green spaces, natural and built environment are protected for the future”

Trees & Woodland Planting Strategy: The Strategy was approved in 2024 and has the overarching vision that “together, we can benefit wildlife and local landscape and help to tackle climate change by planting the right trees, in the right places, for the right reasons.”

1. Promote the benefits of planting of suitable trees, orchards, hedgerows and woodlands
2. Develop new and facilitate access to existing grant funding for tree planting

3. Work in partnership with District and Parish Councils, Government Departments, Charities, farmers and landowners and communities to increase suitable tree planting
4. Offer expert advice on tree and woodland planting
5. Promote and support development of woodland management plans to ensure woodlands provide multifunctional benefits while remaining resilient to pressures on tree health
6. Aid delivery of biodiversity net gain schemes with guidance from the Greater Lincolnshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Nature Reserve Management: The Council manages 29 nature reserve sites around the county. These tend to be former landfill sites that have been capped and designated as nature sites. There are also important coastal sites, such as Gibraltar Point and Saltfleet Nature Reserve. The Council aims to effectively manage the nature reserve sites. The sites are managed “for the benefit of the wildlife, flora and for the enjoyment of visitors.”

Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Policy: This Policy and the associated strategy describe how the highways network in the county will be managed. A key part of the network are the trees that located alongside the highways network.

The HIAM Policy commits the Council to “working with partners to enhance the natural environment in Lincolnshire” and commits the Council to consider “the potential impact of our works on the environment when delivering the right service to our local communities”.

Greater Lincolnshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy: The GLLNRS has been developed over 2024 and 2025 and identifies a series of priority habitats and associated actions to improve these habitats. The LNRS will be going to public consultation in early 2026 and should be approved by June 2026. Within the document there are extensive objectives for the improvement of the natural environment within Greater Lincolnshire.

1.3 Actions

This section of the report covers actions that Lincolnshire County Council has undertaken over the period from 2020 to 2025 to improve the natural environment:

LincWoods – The Council has been working with partners from across the county on tree planting projects. Lincolnshire has one of the lowest tree cover rates in the UK at just under 4% - compared to a national tree coverage rate of 13%. The Council has worked with landowners, farmers, businesses, parish councils and communities of Lincolnshire to support the planting of new:

- woodlands
- orchards
- hedgerows
- individual trees

As part of developing the LincWoods project the County Council has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Woodland Trust to jointly engage with landowners to plant trees and hedgerows at appropriate locations around the county.

Woodland Trust Press Release on the LincWoods project: www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/press-centre/2024/07/lincwoods-project-to-plant-200-000-trees-across-lincolnshire/

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In November 2025 the partnership with the Woodland Trust was extended for a further two years up to March 2028: www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/news/article/2555/lcc-extends-woodland-trust-partnership-

Coronation Living Heritage - Community Orchard Project - Between October 2023 and March 2025 the Council created over 30 community orchards across the county with funding from the DEFRA Coronation Living Heritage Fund. The project was developed as there had been a large scale loss of orchards over the last century. The Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan estimated that 60% of orchards in Lincolnshire had been lost since 1945.

These orchards present a new opportunity for local communities to join together to cultivate a variety of fruit and nut trees, offering social, health and wellbeing benefits by connecting people and allowing them to interact with nature. Planting within towns and villages will improve access to the countryside and gives people a sense of ownership, encouraging volunteers to provide ongoing maintenance, such as pruning. Environmental benefits will include increased biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

The map in Figure One shows the location of the Community Orchards around the county. The Council already had established orchards at Cross O'Cliff Hill in Lincoln and in Horncastle.

The Community Orchard Project continues in 2025 and beyond, in partnership with the Lincolnshire Co-Op for the creation of a further 10 new community orchards in the county.

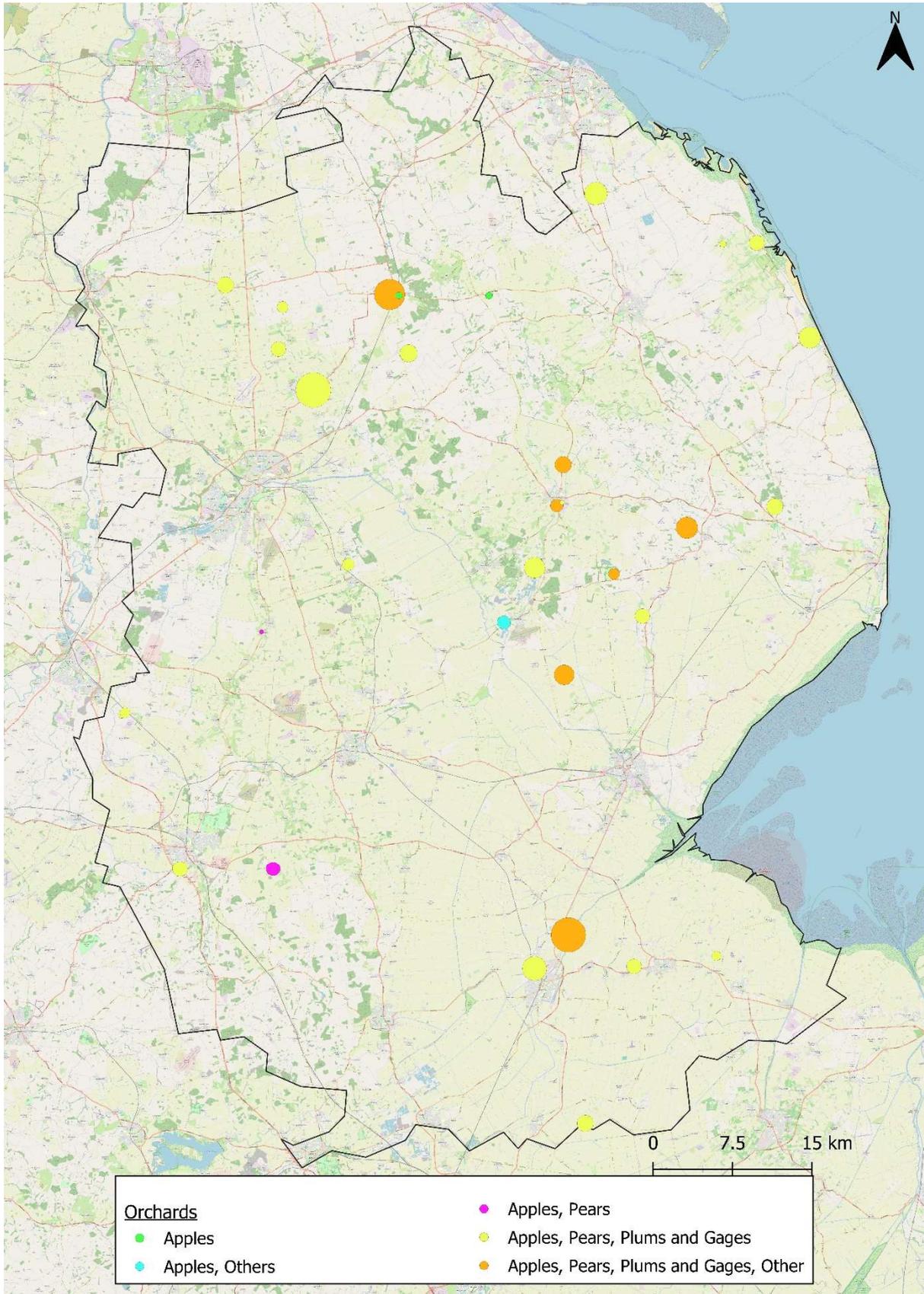


Figure One: Map of Community Orchards in Lincolnshire



Figure Two: Apple tree planting at the new Community Orchard in Dunholme

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Our Lincolnshire village now has a community orchard! After a lot of hard work (made easier by cheating with a digger) 24 heritage fruits trees, incl apple, pear, quince, gages are in! This is a legacy for the 2025 villagers to those who come after us.

In addition to the joy of looking great, we have a space for carbon capture, increasing bio-diversity and pollinating insects. I'm lucky to work for a [#BCorp](#) company [Maples Teesdale LLP](#) but it's important to live it and get out there and try to make a difference. Thanks to [Harriet Winspear](#) [Lincolnshire County Council](#) for the trees 🌱



Figure Three: Feedback on the Community Orchard at West Ashby

Treescaping Project: The County Council was successful in obtaining funding from the DEFRA / Forestry Commission Treescaping project. The project planted over 15,000 trees on a mixture of sites – including parish council land, Lincolnshire County Farms, highways land and on sites owned by private landowners.



Figure Four: Tree planting as part of the Treescaping Project at Castle Bytham Playing Field

Roadside Tree Planting

The Arboricultural Team manages the trees along the highway network across the county. The Team has an ongoing project to replace missing street trees. The Team carries out health and safety assessments of trees along the highway network. As part of these assessments they identify locations where trees have been removed over time.

The Arboricultural Team has annual funding to plant new trees to replace those that have been lost or removed.



Figure Five: Street Tree in Ancaster

Tree Management: The Arboricultural Team at the County Council provides support to the Highways Department on the management of trees across the highway network in the county. There are over 10,000 trees situated on Highways land and the Arboricultural Team and the Highways Department are responsible for ensuring that these trees and the trees outside the highway boundary, but within falling distance, do not present a hazard to our highway users.

Highway trees have many environmental and amenity benefits. They store carbon, provide shade, reduce noise, protect soil from erosion and provide habitats for wildlife. In urban areas they can enhance the space between buildings, reinforcing the area's character and appeal. However, it is also recognised that trees can cause damage to highways and property if not properly maintained. To ensure a good balance is reached the Arboricultural Team cooperates with arboriculturists, landscape architects and urban designers to preserve and enhance the range and quality of street trees.

The responsibilities of the Council for the management of trees along the highway are set out in detail in the “Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan” (HIAMP). This document is updated annually by the Highways Team.

The latest approved HIAMP can be seen at: <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/directory-record/61685/highways-infrastructure-asset-management-plan>

The HIAMP document provides extensive detail on the risk management process for the Council’s tree assets – but in general the process is:

- The Council has an inventory of trees along the highway, which is held on a database and is linked to a Geographical Information System (GIS)
- All highway owned trees and any private trees with defects within 25 metres of the highway are assessed with a system called Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (QTRA).
- A condition survey on Highway trees is conducted using the ALARP system (As Low as is Reasonably Practical). This survey identifies and ranks any work that needs to be carried out on health and safety grounds. This information is passed on to the Highways Team via Highways Confirm Asset System programme.
- Highway trees identified for safety work through the survey will be dealt with through the Highways term contract. For other trees, a safety report will be sent to the owning department for their action.

The longer-term object is to enhance and expand the trees dataset to the Highways Confirm Asset Management System. This will include inventory data and timescales for future cyclic maintenance and inspection. The intention is to inspect and catalogue all highways trees on a rolling 6 to 7 year programme.

Roadside Nature Reserves – the Council works in partnership with the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust to manage roadside nature reserves across the county. Since the 1930s over 90% of wildflower rich grassland has been lost and the roadside verges are an important refuge for the wildflower plants.

In total there are 65 roadside nature reserves - they cover over 80km (50 miles) and there are a team of volunteer Wayside Wardens, who are managed by LWT. When managed for wildlife, road verges can be rich in wildflowers and insects. They can provide a network of corridors along which bees and other pollinators can move.



Figure Six: A survey of Moorby Roadside Nature Reserve



Figure Seven: Roadside Nature Reserve Marker Post

In 2024 a total of 57 oak marker posts were installed to mark the boundaries of the roadside nature reserves within the Lincolnshire Wolds National Landscape.

Lincolnshire Coronation Coast National Nature Reserve – In 2023 the Council worked with partners to establish an extended nature reserve along the Lincolnshire Coast between Cleethorpes and Theddlethorpe. The project linked existing National Nature Reserves at Donna Nook and Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes. The coastal areas around these sites were given additional protection and designated as a National Nature Reserve.

The combined site is also renamed Lincolnshire Coronation Coast NNR. This site is the first new NNR declared as part of the King’s Series, which marks the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III.

The partners in the project are: Environment Agency, Lincolnshire County Council, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, Ministry of Defence, Natural England, North East Lincolnshire Council, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

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Coastal Country Park – The Coastal Country Park is a 3,500 hectare area of coastline extending from Chapel Point in the south to Sandilands in the north, with coastal habitats including beaches, sand dunes and a series of grazing marshes and reedbeds that are important for wildlife. The Council is working in partnership with the National Trust, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency, and East Lindsey District Council to develop a country park on the Lincolnshire Coast. The park includes a new 30 hectare nature reserve on the site of the former Sandilands Golf Course, which was bought by the National Trust. The County Council has added land that it owns in the area to the project.

The vision for the new reserve is to provide a space where everyone can enjoy the benefits of nature. In summer, visitors will be able to enjoy the colours of yellow flag iris and purple loosestrife while hearing the calls of squadrons of avocet; and, in winter, people will be able to admire the grace of a whooper swans' flight as they arrive from their summer breeding grounds in the sub-arctic.

Management of Nature Reserves - Lincolnshire County Council owns 29 countryside sites totalling approximately 1,600 acres. These include small picnic sites, extensive coastal land, traditional orchards, woodland, country parks, dis-used railways and former landfill sites. The two largest sites Snipedales Country Park and Gibraltar Point are leased to Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and managed via a Joint advisory group. Each of the nature reserve sites has a management plan, setting out how the site will be managed and developed to improve biodiversity levels.

Visitor facilities vary according to site but include 4 cafes, 5 public toilets, 6 all ability tracks and several car parks. We work closely with Lincolnshire Access For All group who monitor the sites to ensure accessibility.

Levels of community involvement and volunteering varies largely due to location, with higher rates on urban fringe sites. Example activities include tree planting, coppicing and litter picking. A typical year would achieve an estimated 130 volunteer days.

All are managed for both people and wildlife, with each site having different weightings. The urban fringe sites focus more on people accessing the countryside, whilst the less disturbed sites are primarily managed for wildlife.

The land managed by the Council covers the following areas:

- Traditional Orchards: 4 acres
- Coast (beach, dunes, saltmarsh and freshwater marsh): 1,058 acres
- Woodland and grassland: 480 acres



Figure Eight: Volunteers at Mareham Pastures in Sleaford

Community Wildlife Grants - This is a funding scheme run by Lincolnshire County Council to support small, local projects that benefit wildlife and encourage people to enjoy the countryside. It is open to parish councils, charities, and constituted voluntary groups. The purpose of the grant is to help organisations protect or improve habitats, enhance access to natural areas, involve the community in environmental work, and promote greater understanding of local wildlife.

The scheme typically supports practical projects such as planting trees and hedges, improving woodland, laying hedgerows, creating small village nature areas, repairing dry-stone walls, improving paths or signage, producing wildlife information materials, or carrying out wildlife surveys. Grants range from £50 up to £500 and can cover as much as 75 percent of the project costs. The remaining contribution can be made up through volunteer time, which means that community involvement can effectively meet the match-funding requirement. All funded projects must be supported by receipts, and applicants must take responsibility for the future maintenance of whatever they create or improve.

An annual budget of £5,000 is allocated to this grant. Between April 2019 and April 2024, 57 grants were awarded total value £24,000, the value of the match funding was £50,000

Zero Carbon Parishes – this was a project that worked with parish councils on small scale environmental projects. The Impact Community Carbon Calculator Tool was used to provide each parish council with an estimate of their local greenhouse gas emissions - <https://impact-tool.org.uk/> . The Impact Tool was developed by the University of Exeter, Centre for Sustainable Energy and the Midlands Net Zero Hub.

The Environmental Strategy Team worked with the parish councils to identify small scale environmental projects within their communities. Many of the projects were related to energy efficiency and renewable energy, but there were some that addressed biodiversity issues. Examples include nest boxes for owls in Holbeach, tree planting in Heighington and improvement of the village pond in Corringham.



Figure Nine: Owl nest box in Holbeach Hurn

Section 2: Consideration of Other Strategies

This section of the report covers how the County Council has taken into account other plans and strategies as part of its biodiversity work across Lincolnshire.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) – Lincolnshire County Council is the Responsible Authority for the Greater Lincolnshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The Council has been leading the work on developing the LNRS with partners from North Lincolnshire Council, North East Lincolnshire Council, the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership and Natural England.

As of December 2025, the draft LNRS has been produced and is out for consultation with the supporting authorities, which are the district councils in Lincolnshire and the Greater Lincolnshire County Combined Authority. The LNRS will go to public consultation in January 2026 and is expected to be published by June 2026.

The Lincolnshire Coronation Coast National Nature Reserve Management Plan - The Lincolnshire Coronation Coast NNR Management Plan covers the whole NNR and is agreed by each of the managing partners. It sets the direction and desired outcomes for the NNR's core purposes of conservation, science and people, and it provides a framework for each partner's operational plan.

The County Council has taken the NNR Management Plan into account as part of the management of its own land within the NNR. The Management Plan describes how the “site is nationally and internationally important for a wide range of species with notably the intertidal mudflats around Donna Nook containing one of the largest grey seal colonies in Europe and many of the coastal habitats being particularly important for their usage in winter by thousands of migratory ducks, geese and wading birds. The saltmarsh supports a high density of breeding Redshank in summer, while the dunes and slacks particularly around Saltfleetby and Theddlethorpe Dunes are key habitats for Natterjack Toads, Marsh Helleborine and the nationally rare Marsh Moth. Scrub areas, often dominated by Sea Buckthorn, are important for migrant birds and support a small population of Turtle Dove. A few scattered saline lagoons are excellent examples of this rare and vulnerable habitat and contain nationally notable invertebrate assemblages including species such as the Lagoon Sand Shrimp.”

Nature Reserve Site Management Plans – each of the nature reserves that are controlled by the County Council have Site Management Plans. These set out the key features of the site and contain information on how the sites will be managed to improve their habitat value.

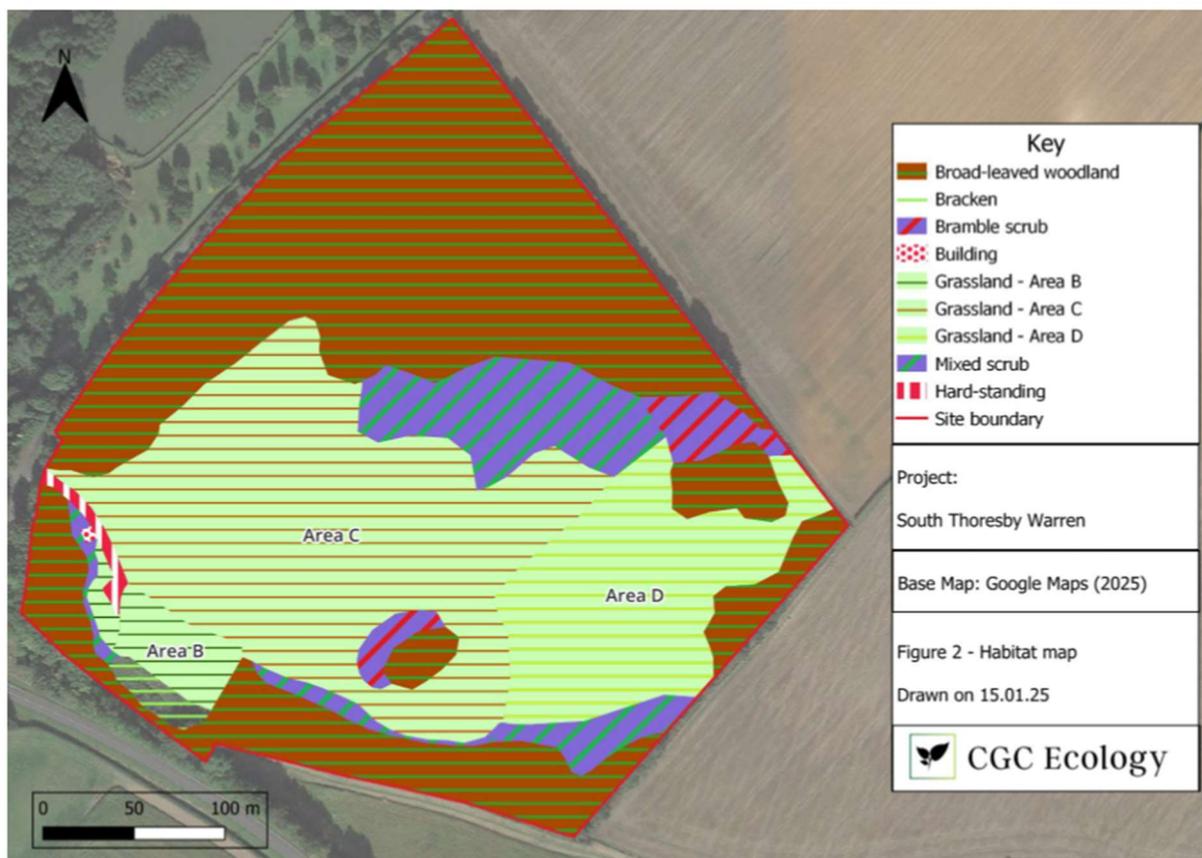


Figure Ten: Ecology Survey of South Thoresby Nature Reserve

Figure Ten shows an ecological assessment of the South Thoresby Nature Reserve, highlighting the key features and areas of interest of the site. The management plan for South Thoresby Nature Reserve contains general information on the ownership of the site, a description of the main features of the site, a description of the objectives of the management activity and details of the site constraints. The Plan goes on to set out the principles on which the site is managed, which are:

- To maximise wildlife value
- Ensure safe and easy access for all
- Encourage community involvement

Lincolnshire County Council Corporate Plan – as outlined in Section 1, the Corporate Plan includes a statement on the natural environment. This states that “Our green spaces, natural and built environment are protected for the future”. The Corporate Plan is a high level document that does not go into specific detail. However, this statement on the natural environment gives a framework for the wider work on biodiversity enhancements and the management of nature reserves.

Minerals and Waste Local Plan – the current Plan was adopted in 2016 and is therefore due for updating. The County Council has consulted on updating the Local Plan in 2024 and is progressing to the review and adoption of an updated plan in 2026.

Policy DM2 in the proposed update to the Minerals and Waste Local Plan is on “Biodiversity and Geodiversity”. It states that “Proposals for minerals and waste development shall protect and

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enhance biodiversity and features of geodiversity value. Proposals shall deliver a net gain in biodiversity.”

As part of the development of the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Recovery Strategy meetings have been held with the Planning Team to ensure that the policies in the Local Plan and the GLLNRS are co-ordinated. Section v of Policy DM2 states “in relation to species and habitats identified in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy – the development will contribute positively to the enhancement of the natural environment.

Section 3: Future Actions

3.1 Action Plan for the Next Biodiversity Duty Reporting Period

This section explains how Lincolnshire County Council plans to fulfil the biodiversity duty requirements over the next five years:

- **Partnership Working:** The County Council will continue to work closely with our partners on natural environment and biodiversity projects around the county. The Natural Environment Team will look to maintain and expand partnerships with Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership, Humber Nature Partnership, district councils, and unitary authorities. Opportunities to work with County Farms tenants on natural environment projects will be pursued.

Following on from the introduction of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy process opportunities to work with surrounding authorities on regional scale projects will be examined.

- **Consideration of the Biodiversity Duty Requirements in Future Plans and Policies:** As future plans and policies are developed the Biodiversity Duty implications will be considered during the policy development process. There are particular policies around planning activities where the Biodiversity Duty is particularly relevant and these will be given additional attention.
- **Site Management for Biodiversity:** The Council will continue to manage its nature reserve sites for the benefit of the natural environment. The management plans for the sites will be kept up to date and will be regularly reviewed. The Natural Environment Team will work closely with other departments at the Council to ensure that other assets are managed in a manner that protects the habitat value of the sites. The natural environment and biodiversity net gain will be considered in new developments that the Council undertakes.
- **Awareness Raising:** The Natural Environment Team will continue to look for opportunities to raise awareness of biodiversity related issues and the value of our nature reserve sites. The Team will work with the Communications Department at the County Council to promote our sites and to improve the online information available to the public on the sites. At each of the sites the information boards will be reviewed and updated as required.
- **Local Nature Recovery Strategy:** The LNRS contains priorities and actions for species and habitats around Lincolnshire. The Natural Environment Team will undertake a review and will determine how the Council can help to deliver the priorities and actions. Where possible existing projects and programmes will be adapted to incorporate objectives from the LNRS.
- **Tree Planting Delivery:** The Natural Environment Team will look to deliver the actions that are set out in the Tree and Woodland Strategy for Lincolnshire. A key part of this will be the successful delivery of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Woodland Trust. The Natural Environment Team will look to identify and secure additional funding for woodland and tree planting projects in the county.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Opportunities to conduct new habitat surveys of the nature reserve sites held by the Council will be followed up. Ideally, each nature reserve site would be assessed in the next evaluation period – this will be dependent upon the availability of resources to conduct this work.

The Team will develop a monitoring and evaluation plan to ensure that data is collected and reviewed on our sites. The information on Biodiversity Net Gain will be recorded as required by the regulations.

3.2 Biodiversity Net Gain

Meeting Biodiversity Net Gain Obligations

Biodiversity Net Gain became mandatory for large scale developments in February 2024 and for minor developments in April 2024. Prior to the commencement of the regulations the Council worked with the consultancy WSP to ensure that systems were in place to deal with the issue.

WSP produced separate guidance documents for developers and planners. These documents set out an approach to getting the most from the Biodiversity Net Gain process.

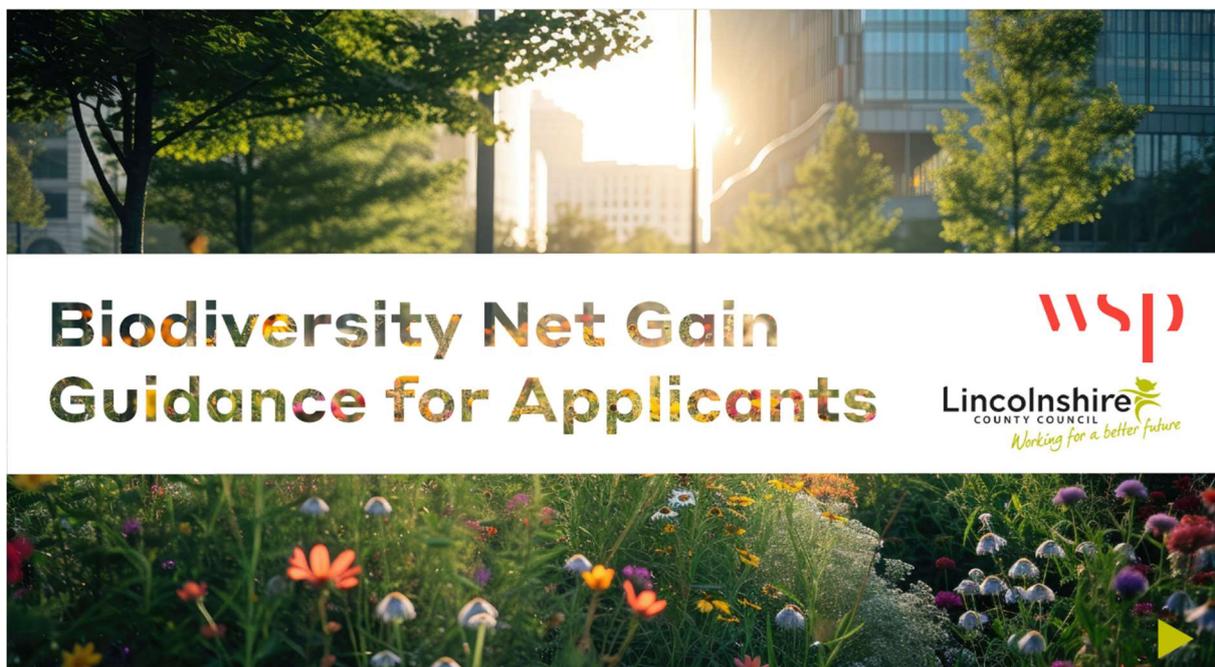


Figure 11: Guidance Document on Biodiversity Net Gain for Planning Applicants

A series of training sessions were held for Lincolnshire County Council staff in relevant departments. The training sessions covered BNG implications for Highways, Environment, Development Management and Corporate Property. These training sessions were led by WSP and allowed staff to cover the main BNG related issues that were facing them.

WSP conducted a habitat bank analysis of the County Council’s land holdings, looking at the potential biodiversity metric scores for the nature reserve sites and for a selection of County Farms land holdings.

For the South Thoresby Nature Reserve site the assessment identified a Biodiversity Unit score of 130.31 for the site and made recommendations that could increase the score to 161.31. This would give 31 Biodiversity Units – at the time these units were estimated to be worth £619,800-£929,700.



Figure 12: Part of the Habitat Bank Analysis for the South Thoresby Nature Reserve Site

Additional Biodiversity Net Gain Site Analysis: A company called AI Dash were engaged to look at a selection of the nature reserve sites for their Biodiversity Unit value. The AI Dash system uses a mixture aerial photography and satellite imagery to assess the habitat value of sites. The information from the images is reviewed with an artificial intelligence model to give an estimate of the Biodiversity Units available on the sites.

In 2024 the Council engaged an ecologist to conduct a full Biodiversity Net Gain analysis of the former RAF Woodhall site near Woodhall Spa. This involved using the Biodiversity Metric to score the habitat value of the site.

Monitoring Fees Guidance: In August 2025 a report was taken to the Environment Scrutiny Committee on “Guidance for developers on Biodiversity Net Gain requirements and monitoring fees when submitting planning applications”. The report sets out a process for the ongoing monitoring of Biodiversity Net Gain sites and how the associated fees will be charged.

Mycelia Software: The Planning Team has purchased a subscription to use the Mycelia Biodiversity Net Gain software. The Mycelia system can be used to log planning applications as

they are submitted and to record any Biodiversity Net Gain implications. The software then is a repository of data that can be used to monitor the delivery of BNG sites in the future.

BNG Planning Guidance: Working with WSP Consultants, Lincolnshire County Council has produced a concise guidance document for developers which:

- **Sets out Policy and Legal Framework:** Explains the statutory basis for BNG under the Environment Act 2021 and Town and Country Planning Act, including the requirement for a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity for most developments.
- **Provides Planning Process Guidance:** Outlines what applicants must submit at each stage of the planning process—validation, determination, and post-permission—including Biodiversity Gain Plans, metrics, and legal agreements.
- **Explains BNG Delivery Options:** Details the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy, prioritising onsite habitat enhancement, followed by offsite solutions and statutory biodiversity credits as a last resort. Small developments (<0.25 units) may purchase statutory credits directly.
- **Provides details of Monitoring and Enforcement requirements:** Sets expectations for 30-year habitat management, monitoring fees, and compliance mechanisms, including Section 106 agreements and conservation covenants.



Figure 13. BNG Planning Guidance

Biodiversity Net Gain in Planning

The tables below provide a summary of the biodiversity gains expected to result from gain plans approved during the reporting period. A spreadsheet providing a detailed breakdown of the information across habitat types is included as an Appendix to this report.

Table 1: Eligible planning permissions granted under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requiring biodiversity net gain

Consented applications requiring net gains	Number	Proportion (%)
Total number of planning permissions granted that require biodiversity net gain in the reporting period	19	Not applicable
Total number of planning permissions granted in the reporting period where an exemption to the biodiversity net gain condition applies	24*	Not applicable
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period	7	Not applicable
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through on-site units only	5	71.43
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through off-site units only	1	14.29
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through statutory credits only	0	0.00
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site and off-site units	1	14.29
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site units and statutory credits	0	0.00
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of off-site units and statutory credits	0	0.00
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period securing BNG through a combination of on-site, off-site units and statutory credits	0	0.00

* Excludes 14 Retrospective and 22 Section 73 applications

Table 2: Overall expected gains and losses across all biodiversity gain plans approved in the reporting period

Overall expected gains and losses	Area habitat	Hedgerow	Watercourse
Total number of pre-development biodiversity units approved on-site	8.18	0.07	0.00
Total number of post-development biodiversity units approved on-site	10.49	0.08	0.00
Total net unit change in biodiversity units, on-site	2.31	0.01	0.00
Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, on-site	28.25	10.71	0.00
Total number of baseline biodiversity units approved off-site	0.64	0.00	0.00
Total number of post-intervention biodiversity units approved off-site	0.90	0.00	0.00
Total net unit change in biodiversity units, off-site	0.26	0.00	0.00
Average percentage (%) change in biodiversity units, off-site	40.74	0.00	0.00
Total number of biodiversity units offset using statutory credits	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total net unit change in biodiversity units (including any units offset using credits)	2.57	0.01	0.00
Average percentage (%) change (including statutory credits)	29.16	10.71	0.00

Monitoring and enforcement: Lincolnshire County Council has not yet started receiving BNG monitoring data as the first gain plans were approved during 2025. In line with the Council's required monitoring and reporting frequency in years 1, 3, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 the first reports are expected from developers in 2026. Lincolnshire County Council currently subscribes to Mycelia BNG software and expects to make use of the monitoring functionality within Mycelia to assist with monitoring the implementation of BNG.

Section 4: Lincolnshire County Council Overview

Lincolnshire County Council is a largely rural, upper tier local authority that covers the majority of the historic county of Lincolnshire. The northern areas of the historic county are covered by two unitary local authorities – North Lincolnshire Council and North East Lincolnshire Council.

The County Council area is a two-tier local authority area. This means that some services are delivered by the upper tier authority County Council and some services are delivered by the lower tier district councils.

There are seven district councils within the Lincolnshire County Council area:

- Boston Borough Council
- City of Lincoln Council
- East Lindsey District Council
- North Kesteven District Council
- South Holland District Council
- South Kesteven District Council
- West Lindsey District Council

The population of the County Council area was estimated to be 769,474 inhabitants (ONS - Population estimates for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: 2023) and is the second largest county in England, covering over 5,937 km².

The County Council has five directorates, which cover the following services:

- Adult Care and Community Wellbeing - adult social care services, public health and Community Protection & Commissioning
- Children's Services - Safeguarding (Children's Social Care), Early Help, Children With Disabilities and Special Educational Needs, Educational Strategy, Inclusion, and Children's Health
- Fire and Rescue – fire service and the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership
- Place – Highways, Growth and Communities
- Resources – Finance, Corporate Property, Legal Services and Procurement

Governance

The County Council has 70 elected councillors. The Council is led by a Leader and Executive. The Executive is currently made up of nine councillors, from the majority political group, and is chaired by the Leader of the Council. Each Executive Councillor is allocated a portfolio which covers a particular area of responsibility.

Scope to Affect Biodiversity

This section covers the impact that the Council can have on biodiversity within its area and through its operations:

Land Managed by the Council

County Farms Estate – the Council has an estate of around 16,500 acres of farmland. The land is leased to tenants and was originally bought as a route into farming for new entrants to agriculture. The majority of the farmland is concentrated around Boston and Spalding in The Fens
Lincolnshire County Council: Biodiversity Duty Report 2026

and is made up of high grade agricultural land. The farmland is leased out to tenants and generates an annual income for the Council.

The County Farms Team works closely with the agricultural tenants and with the land agents Savills, who manage the tenancies. The Natural Environment Team has worked with the County Farm Tenants on tree and hedgerow projects. As part of the Treescapes project (described in section 1.3) trees were planted along tracks and field boundaries on the County Farms Estate.

As part of the LincWoods project some tenant farmers have taken advantage of the tree and hedgerow pack offer, which was delivered with the Woodland Trust. The packs include around 60 tree or hedgerow plants.

As the Biodiversity Net Gain regulations were coming into effect a survey was done of County Farms land to establish the potential value of the land to deliver Biodiversity Units. There was a significant potential value, but much of the land is on long term tenancies.

Nature Reserve Sites – there are 29 “Countryside Sites”, which are managed by the Council. The management actions for these sites are covered in section 1.3 of this report.

The larger sites at Gibraltar Point and Snipedales are managed by the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust. The smaller sites are mainly former landfill sites, that are now managed for nature. The Council has been managing these sites to increase the biodiversity value of the land. For example, the former landfill site at Bardney has had extensive tree planting across the site. The trees were planted at volunteer days.



Figure 14: Works to Improve Access at South Thoresby Nature Reserve

Highways Land – the land along the road network is managed to maintain visibility and safety at junctions and bends, in addition the aim is to provide a cut strip either side of the footway wherever possible within the highway. The management of the highways network is set out in the Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan.

The management of highway verges includes the network of Roadside Nature Reserves, which are described in section one of this report.

Highways Trees - The Arboricultural Team manages the trees along Highways Network and undertakes health and safety assessments of the trees. They then co-ordinate any remedial works that need to be carried out on the trees. As part of the assessments the team identifies opportunities to plant additional trees and fill in gaps in street tree planting.

Planning – The County Council is responsible for the planning application for the following areas:

- the management of waste
- the extraction of minerals and related development
- the extraction of onshore oil and gas and related development
- our own developments (known as Regulation 3), such as schools and libraries

The main planning guidance document is the Minerals and Waste Local Plan, which includes policies on biodiversity and geodiversity.

Section 5: Top Achievements

The work on natural environment at the County Council has led to the following significant achievements:

Greater Lincolnshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy: The County Council has been the lead authority on the production of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). The Council has worked closely with North East Lincolnshire Council, North Lincolnshire Council, the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership and Natural England on the development of the LNRS.

The LNRS sets out a list of priorities and actions for nature recovery across the county and will guide nature recovery efforts for at least the next decade. The development of the Strategy has involved a great deal of project co-ordination and engagement with local stakeholders. The final strategy document is due for publication in mid 2026.

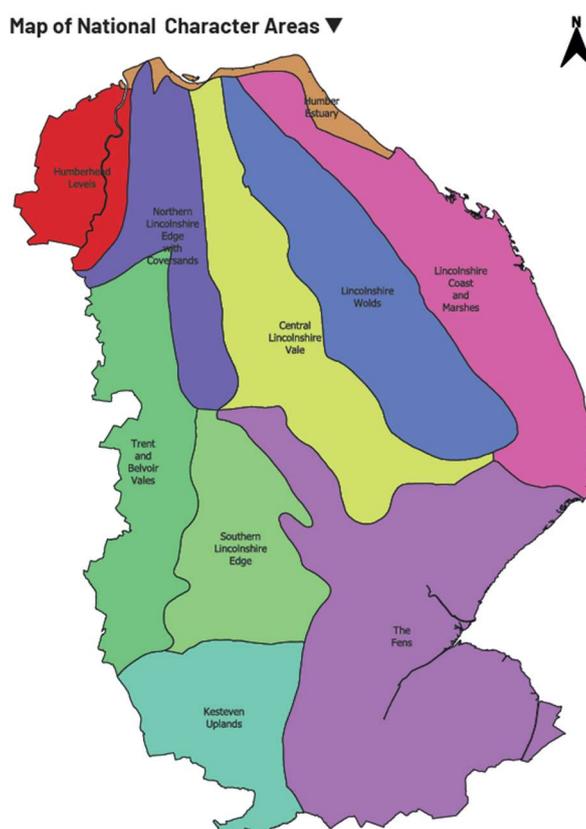


Figure 15: National Character Areas in Greater Lincolnshire – from the Greater Lincolnshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Tree and Hedgerow Planting Programme: Lincolnshire has one of the lowest levels of tree cover in England, with around 4% coverage compared to a national level of around 12%. The importance of arable agriculture in Lincolnshire has meant that many areas of woodland have been removed to make way for agricultural uses. Lincolnshire has lost over 60% of its traditional orchards since the Second World War. In addition, over 50% of hedgerows in the county have been lost since 1950.

The work on tree and hedgerow planting has been an attempt to try and reverse this decline in tree cover. The Council has looked for both national and local funding to enable tree planting projects to take place. The Tree and Woodland Planting Strategy was approved by the Council in 2024 and sets out series of actions to encourage the planting of the right trees in the right places. The Strategy led on to the strategic partnership with the Woodland Trust and the signing of a memorandum of understanding on tree planting.

To date over 120,000 new trees have been planted around the county and many more will be planted in the 2026 planting season. The tree planting projects have been an excellent way to engage with the public on natural environment issues. There have been successful engagement activities around the tree planting events and the Natural Environment Team has led on tree pack giveaway events for farmers and landowners.



Figure 16: Volunteer Tree Planting Event at Mareham Pastures in Sleaford

Lincolnshire Wolds National Landscape – Farming in Protected Landscapes: Throughout the year the Council has supported a number of biodiversity focussed schemes in the Lincolnshire Wolds National Landscape through the Farming in Protected Landscapes team. Playing a key role in the local assessment panel has enabled the authority to part fund schemes through the award of grants for 15 individual schemes covering:

- The control of invasive species in chalk streams
- Environmental conditions measuring in chalk streams
- Woodland pasture creation
- Tree planting
- Pond restoration, dam repairs and pond de-silting
- Bee conservation habitat creation
- Grassland management



Figure 17 A & B: Before and after photographs of Cadeby Ponds in the Lincolnshire Wolds. The project repaired dams and desilted the ponds.

Lincolnshire Coronation Coast National Nature Reserve (LCCNRR): The LCCNR covers 33 square kilometres along almost 30 kilometres of the Greater Lincolnshire coast containing a rich variety of sand dunes, salt marshes, mudflats and freshwater marshes which are of international importance.

The County Council partnered with North East Lincolnshire Council, Natural England, the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, RSPB and the Ministry of Defence to establish the expanded site. The

Nature Reserve combines land from existing nature reserve sites and the linking land that brings them all together.

The LCCNNR brings together the existing Donna Nook and Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes National Nature Reserves, adding a further 2,350 hectares of land managed for nature conservation, supporting many breeding and over-wintering birds, natterjack toads, special plants and insects. The new site is now two thirds larger, making it the ninth largest National Nature Reserve of the 220 in England.

Wildlife benefitting from the reserve include notable winter assemblage of wading birds and wildfowl and a range of breeding species in spring and summer. Special species include redshank, whitethroat, golden plover, natterjack toads, grey seals, and a diverse range of plants and insects such as the marsh moth – one of only two places in the country where they are found. The saltmarsh and lowland wet grasslands are very important in delivering natural solutions to manage climate change.

It is also a popular destination for visitors and the new National Nature Reserve partnership will be promoting responsible access and enjoyment of the sites. The reserve is close to the resort of Cleethorpes and the King Charles III England Coast Path runs through the site. The site will complement the area's already fascinating cultural and historical appeal with its evidence of shipwrecks, medieval landscapes, smuggling and salt making, and its inns and alehouses.

Improving Access at Nature Reserve Sites: The Natural Environment Team has been looking at opportunities to improve access for all visitors at the nature reserve sites managed by the Council. There is a circular all ability route around Chapel Six Marshes of approximately 600m (0.4 mile). The path is over one metre wide and hard surfaced. The route is either level or gently sloping. In 2022 the paths around the nature reserve were improved and wheelchair access to the hides was provided. Accessibility improvements were also made at the South Thoresby Nature Reserve site.

Actions for the Next Reporting Period: These are detailed in Section 3 of this report.

Section 6: Impact of Biodiversity Policies and Actions

The environmental and nature policies of Lincolnshire County Council have made a considerable contribution to conserving, restoring and enhancing the natural environment of the county. Examples include:

Local Nature Recovery Strategy: The County Council is the lead authority for the Greater Lincolnshire LNRS. The development of the LNRS has been a partnership project between the County Council, North East Lincolnshire Council, North Lincolnshire Council, the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership and Natural England.

The Council has led on the public consultation for the Strategy – this has included running workshop events for stakeholders, developing a website for the strategy and designing a public consultation questionnaire.

Management of County Council Nature Reserve Sites: The Council has managed its nature reserve sites with an aim to enhance the habitat value of the land. Many of the sites are former landfill waste sites, which had been capped off as they were filled and handed over to the Natural Environment Team to manage.

To improve the habitat value of the sites projects volunteer tree planting days have been held to create new habitat areas. In addition many of the sites have had new hedgerows planted around their boundaries.



Figure 18: Tree Planting at the Barlings Nature Reserve Site

Funding for Operation Water Vole: The County Council provided funding to the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust to support Operation Water Vole. The project is part of a wider scheme across the east of England to eradicate mink from waterways. The mink, that escaped or were released from mink farms in the 1980s and 90s, prey on water voles and as a result water vole numbers have become significantly reduced.

There are associated mink trapping projects in South Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. These neighbouring schemes help to create a buffer around Lincolnshire and stop the mink from recolonising areas that have been cleared.

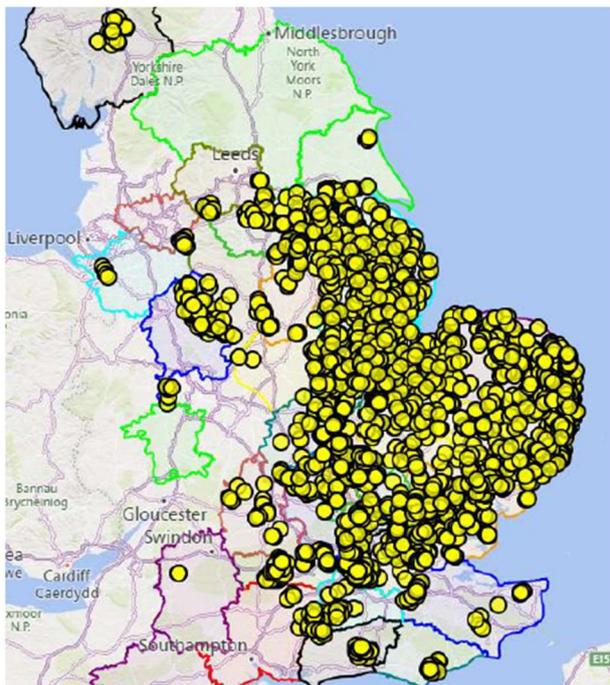


Figure 19: Mink Traps in England

(Source: Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership)

Mapping Sites of Special Scientific Interest: The Natural Environment Team has reviewed the land owned by the Council and the list of SSSIs in the county. The SSSIs were assessed as being in one of the following categories:

- Favourable
- Unfavourable declining
- Unfavourable no change
- Unfavourable recovering

The map below shows the SSSI sites that are owned by the Council. Some of the sites already have management plans – such as those along the coast. Opportunities to improve the condition of the County Council owned sites will be followed up.



Figure 20: The Condition of SSSIs Owned by Lincolnshire County Council at Gibraltar Point Nature Reserve

Ash Die-Back Disease Surveys: Ash trees are estimated to be the most common non-woodland tree in Lincolnshire, making up around 21% of the total of non-woodland trees. Ash dieback was first noted in the region in 2012 and has since spread significantly and is clearly visible in the Lincolnshire landscape.

The disease is expected to affect all of the hedgerow ash trees, which are by far the most

common tree in hedgerows. The loss of these ash trees will have a significant impact on the landscape and is likely to have a greater impact locally than Dutch Elm Disease; this will be an impoverishment of the Lincolnshire landscape and a safety consideration for highway managers.

The Arboricultural Team at Lincolnshire County Council has been monitoring ash trees around the county since 2018 to identify the spread of the disease. The Team has conducted regular surveys of the ash trees along the highway network in the county.

The table below shows the results from the 2023 survey. There is clear evidence that the impact of the disease is growing in the county, with 55% of ash trees showing disease in August 2023. The 2023 survey covered 2,304 ash trees along the highway network in the county. The results of the survey are shown in the table below:

Crown Affected Level	Percentage
Unaffected	45%
0 to 10% crown affected	38%
11 to 30% crown affected	12%
31 to 60% crown affected	3%
61%+ crown affected	2%

Figure 21: Results of the Ash Die-Back Survey in 2023

Based on the information provided on the disease by DEFRA, the Forestry Commission and the Woodland Trust the expectation is that at least 80% of the infected trees will die from being infected. It is likely that there will be an increased probability of branches falling from ash trees along the highway.

The Arboricultural Team and their contractors will continue to monitor ash trees along the highway network and at Lincolnshire County Council properties and will undertake remedial action as required.



Figure 22: An Ash Tree on Bluestone Heath Road with Ash Die-back Disease

Other Tree Diseases and Biosecurity: Ash Dieback Disease is just one of a number of tree pests and diseases that are threatening the tree stock of the United Kingdom. In addition, there are various plant pest and diseases that are common in Europe that could be introduced to the country through the importation of trees and plants.

DEFRA provides a list of tree pests and diseases – which has descriptions and guidance on the threats to trees: www.gov.uk/guidance/find-a-specific-tree-pest-or-disease

The Arboricultural Team follows the guidance from DEFRA and their supporting bodies on tree pests and diseases and follow reporting guidelines.

Biosecurity: In order to help stop the spread of organisms, such as the Ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*), Defra’s Plant Biosecurity Strategy for Great Britain (2014) introduced the development of certification schemes, such as The Plant Healthy Certification Scheme, to improve biosecurity in the UK horticultural sector (Plant Healthy, 2024).

When sourcing trees for new planting schemes, the Council ensures that the supplying nursery is Plant Healthy certified and value seed provenance in nursery selection. Any project supported by Lincolnshire County Council will aim to support local tree nurseries and avoid importing trees from abroad, as this increases the risk of introducing disease.

Section 7: Community Awareness and Education

Raising awareness of natural environment issues is a key objective for both the Natural Environment and Environment Strategy teams. The Teams have been involved with the following activities to promote biodiversity and conservation in Lincolnshire:

School Engagement: The Environment Strategy Team has an ongoing engagement programme with schools in the county on environmental issues. The programme has linked with the national Climate Ambassadors scheme which connects climate and environmental sustainability volunteers with nurseries, schools and colleges across the UK.

The Environment Strategy Team has supported schools to develop Climate Action Plans, which is a national requirement set out by the Department for Education. The Team has looked at improving biodiversity on school grounds through planting schemes and provision of nest boxes. Schemes to reduce air pollution through hedge planting have also been investigated. The Woodland Creation Officers have worked with schools to plant orchards on school grounds.

Waste Environment Day: The Waste Team at Lincolnshire County Council held an Environment Day for local schools in June 2025. The Natural Environment Team took part in this event and provided information for the pupils on the tree planting projects. The Team brought along various tree saplings for the pupils to identify as part of the display on the stand.

National Nature Park: Support has been provided to schools that are eligible for funding from the National Education Nature Park. This programme is a national scheme, which aims to embed nature-based learning in the curriculum and encourage children and young people all over the country to take action to improve their site for people and wildlife. The Team has promoted the funding to schools and worked with schools that qualify for the funding, which is targeted at deprived neighbourhoods.

Zero Carbon Parishes: The Environment Strategy Team has been running an engagement programme on environmental issues in rural areas of Lincolnshire. The project used the Community Carbon Calculator, which was developed by the Centre for Sustainable Energy and the University of Exeter: <https://impact-tool.org.uk/>

The Calculator gives a carbon footprint for a parish council area. The Team then worked with the parish council to identify projects that could reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the area. Many of the projects were related to energy efficiency, but there were some natural environment projects. These included provision of nest boxes, tree planting and community orchards.

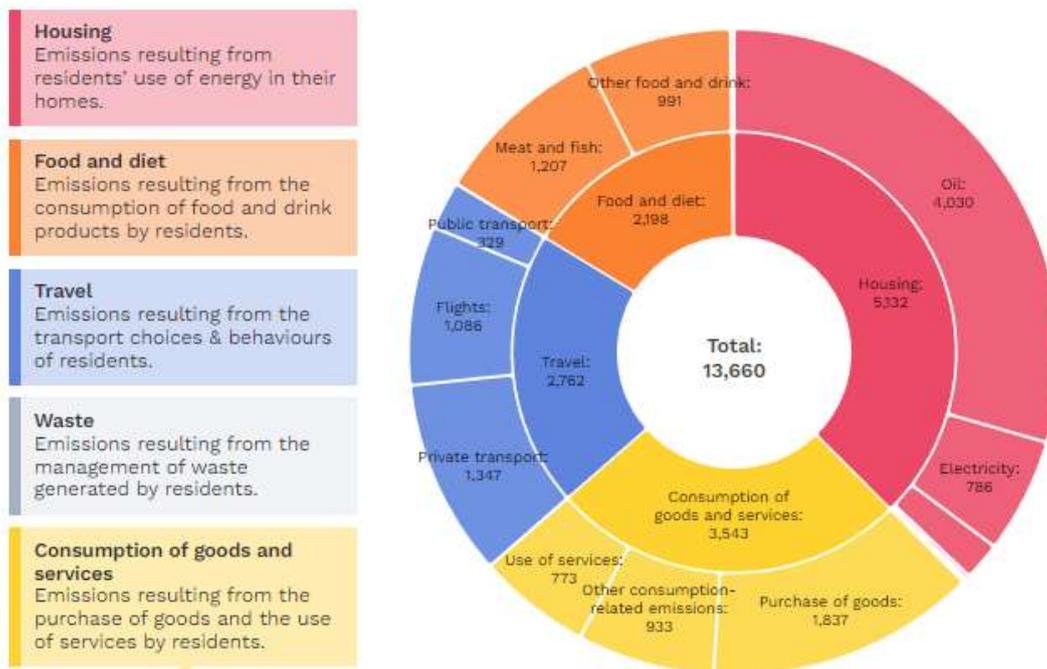


Figure 23: A Parish Council Carbon Footprint

Tree Pack Giveaways: As part of the partnership with the Woodland Trust, the Council's Woodland Creation Officers have led on holding tree and hedgerow pack giveaways. These are aimed at farmers and landowners and distribute the Woodland Trust packs. Each free tree pack contained 50 trees, stakes and tree guards and were mix of small-leaved lime, hornbeam, English oak, field maple, wild cherry and hazel.

The free hedge packs included 250 hedging plants, a native mix of hawthorn, hazel, dogwood, dog rose and blackthorn along with canes and spiral guards. Enough to create up to 50m of double-row hedgerow. There were three tree pack giveaway days in 2024 and two in 2025.

Improving Information at Nature Reserve Sites: A project to update and improve the information boards at the nature reserve sites has been running from 2023. The scheme has replaced the information boards as required at the various sites. The image below shows the new board for the South Thoresby site.



Figure 24: New Information Boards at South Thoresby Nature Reserve

Section 8: Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation will be an area of focus for the next reporting period of the Biodiversity Duty. The County Council is looking to review and then improve the information that it collects on its nature reserve sites. Monitoring and evaluation work that has already been undertaken includes:

Biodiversity Net Gain Surveys: As part of the preparations for the introduction of the Biodiversity Net Gain Regulations the Council commissioned a series of surveys to determine the value of the nature reserve and County Farms sites.

These surveys used the biodiversity metric to estimate a value for the site. This work is described in more detail in Section 3.2 of this report.

Site Surveys at Nature Reserves: The original management plans for some of the nature reserve sites included a full ecological survey of the site. These surveys were conducted in the early 2000s and included options for improving the habitat value of the sites. These recommendations have formed the basis of the management activity at the nature reserves.

Minerals and Waste Local Plan – Updated Plan Documents: As part of the process and consultation to update the Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan a number of reports relating to biodiversity and the protection of habitats have been produced. These include:

- **Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report** – this looks at how the LM&WLP complies with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
- **Sustainability Assessment of the Minerals & Waste Local Plan** – all local plans are required to have a sustainability assessment. The aim of the SA is to identify potentially significant effects that may or will be created as a result of the implementation of the Local Plan on issues such as: ‘biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors.’

These documents will be updated as the Local Plan review process continues toward adoption of the Local Plan.

Nature Reserve Joint Advisory Committees: The County Council provides the administrative support for the Joint Advisory Committees for the Gibraltar Point Nature Reserve. The Committee has representation from both employees and councillors from the County Council. There is additional representation from East Lindsey District Council, Skegness Town Council, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and Natural England.

The Committee receives updates on visitor numbers to the nature reserve. The latest figures for 2025 are that over 180,000 vehicles used the car park and the Visitors’ Centre was fully booked for school visits. The Committee receives reports from the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust wardens on the biodiversity value of the site - including bird sightings and other habitat reports.

Tree Planting: As part of the various tree planting funding schemes there has been a requirement to keep a count of the numbers of trees planted and to review schemes. As part of the Treescapes

Project in 2021/22 the planting schemes were audited by the Forestry Commission, to check numbers planted and a check on the proportion of trees that had survived.

The Woodland Creation Officers have been reviewing schemes as they are submitted by applicants to ensure that they do not impact on habitat sites or on archaeological sites. The Team have been reviewing applications to the England Woodland Creation Offer as they are submitted. The Team reviews schemes and conducts follow up visits to schemes following planting.

Section 9: Biodiversity Challenges and Highlights

The work on natural environment has led to a variety of achievements across the reporting period. Significant achievements and highlights from the reporting period include:

Mapping Sites – as part of the Natural Environment programme at Lincolnshire County Council the biodiversity value of the sites owned by the authority has been reviewed. This includes:

- Irreplaceable Habitats
- Priority Habitats
- Habitats of Principle Importance
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest

This work has allowed the Natural Environment Team to gain a greater understanding of the sites that the Council owns and how they fit together at a landscape level. The maps have also led to prioritisation of which sites need additional interventions.

Management Plans and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessments – the work on site management plans has improved

Volunteer Days – the Natural Environment Team has been running volunteer days at the nature reserve sites for over a decade. The volunteer days have allowed local residents to be involved in the management of their local nature reserve sites. In 2025 the following volunteer events were held:

- Six volunteer days were held at Mareham Pastures in Sleaford. There were an average of 12 people attending each of the events.
- A volunteer day was held at South Thoresby Nature Reserve – 15 people attended the event
- Cross O’Cliff Orchard – A team of volunteers supports the community orchard at Cross O’Cliff in Lincoln. Across the year there were 25 volunteer days in total.
- The County Council funds the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust Coastal Ranger. The Coastal Ranger organises volunteer days in the Coastal Country Park.

Notable Species – the Lincolnshire Coast is an important area for both resident and migratory birds. The Coast is part of the East Atlantic Flyway, which links marine habitats on the west coast of Africa with the North Sea and Arctic Ocean. The County Council has numerous land holdings along the coast, which it manages directly or in partnership with the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust. The Lincolnshire Coast often see exotic migrant birds that have been blown off course. Examples of notable species sighted in late 2025 include:

- Great Grey Shrike
- Tundra Bean Goose
- Snow Goose
- Glossy Ibis
- Marsh Harrier
- Hen Harrier
- Slavonian Grebe
- Red-breasted Merganser
- Shorelark

Tree Planting – the work to increase tree cover across Lincolnshire has been a particular highlight. It has allowed the Natural Environment Team to engage with farmers and land managers on tree planting and to discuss other biodiversity related issues with them. The projects have led to engagement with the general public – with planting days and volunteer days at community orchard sites.

Funding from central government through the Treescapes project and the Woodland Creation Fund allowed the Council to employ new staff members that were focussed on bringing forward sites for tree planting. These projects then led on to the partnership with the Woodland Trust and the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Trust.

Improved Accessibility – Work has been undertaken to improve accessibility at some of the nature reserve sites managed by Lincolnshire County Council. The image below shows the progress at the Chapel Six Marshes Nature Reserve to make the paths accessible to all. The hides at the site were also improved to allow access to wheelchairs.



Figure 25: Accessibility Improvements at Chapel Six Marshes Nature Reserve

Challenges

Team Resources – the core Natural Environment Team at Lincolnshire County Council has 1.6 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff members. As a result, there is limited capacity to deliver large scale environmental projects. However, the team is committed to improving the natural environment across the county and has a consistent track record of delivery.

An additional FTE is based in the Planning Team at Lincolnshire County Council to support the implementation of BNG in the Planning System and also to provide ecological input to the large number of NSIP proposals across the County. Monitoring the delivery of BNG secured by both the Town and Country Planning system and the NSIP DCO process is expected to result in significant additional workload.

New Statutory Requirements – the Environment Act 2021 added considerable new responsibilities on to local authorities in the area of biodiversity and the natural environment. The Act established the requirement for Local Nature Recovery Strategies and introduced the Biodiversity Net Gain system.

Pressure from Development in Rural Areas – Lincolnshire has over twenty Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) in development during 2025/26. These include large-scale solar farms, electricity pylons for the national grid, energy substations and the South Lincolnshire Reservoir. In addition, several large-scale solar farms have already been approved.

These developments can potentially take land that was previously available for nature. The NSIP projects are due to be part of the Biodiversity Net Gain process from May 2026, although many of the projects have committed to Net Gain before this date.

There is additional pressure on nature from housing developments. There are urban extensions either in development or planned for Lincoln, Gainsborough, Grantham, Spalding, and Boston. All of these developments will be covered by the Biodiversity Net Gain regulations, but they increase the proportion of developed land in the county.

Management of Invasive Species - Lincolnshire County Council has provided funding to Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust to support a project to control the numbers of mink in the county. Following the release and escape of farmed mink in the 1980s and 90s the species had spread across the country. As a result, the numbers of water voles, which are preyed on by the mink had decreased by over 90%.

The funding has supported increased levels of mink trapping across Lincolnshire and links with a similar eradication project in East Anglia. The number of mink in the county is now in decline and this should allow water vole numbers to begin to recover. A recovery in water vole numbers has been seen in East Anglia, which is around two years with their mink eradication project.

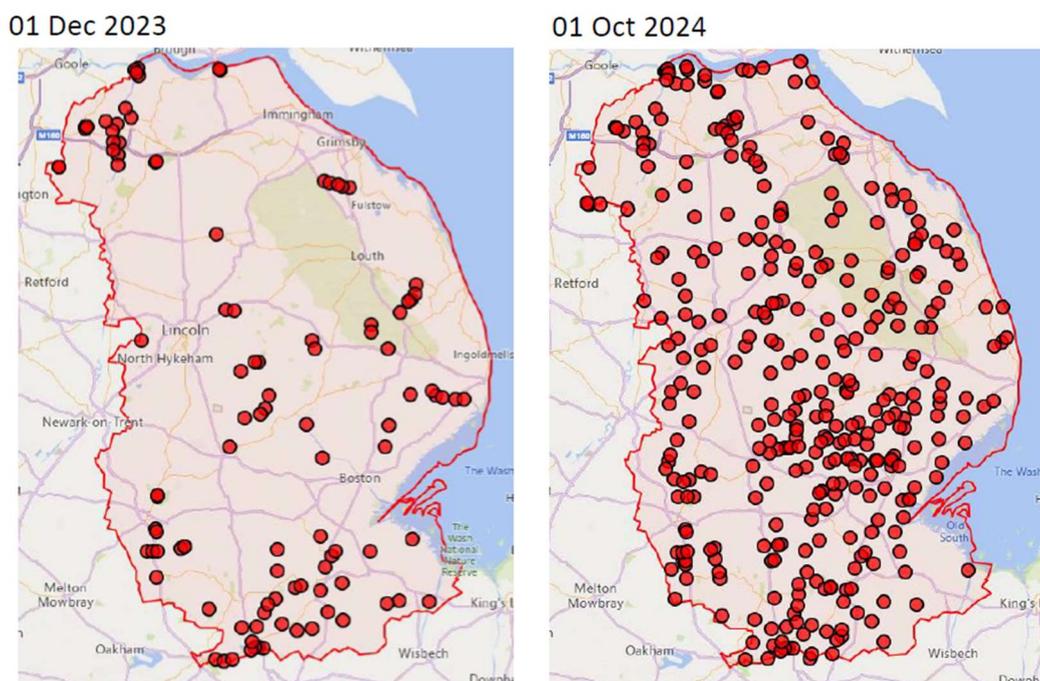


Figure 26: The Location of Mink Traps in Lincolnshire