



# Biodiversity Duty Report




January 2023 to December 2025


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March 2026



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## Celebrating our top achievements and biodiversity highlights



### DESIGNATIONS AND PROTECTED SITES

- **11%** of Mid Sussex District is within the South Downs National Park
- Nearly **50%** of Mid Sussex District is within the High Weald National Landscape (AONB)
- **13** Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
- **6** Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)
- **50** Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)
- Nearly **16%** of Mid Sussex District is ancient woodland



### NOTABLE SPECIES PRESENT

- ✓ **Dormouse**
- ✓ **Brown hairstreak butterfly**
- ✓ **Orchids** – bee orchid, green-veined orchid, autumn ladies’ tresses, common spotted orchids, early purple orchid, helleborines
- ✓ **Great crested newts**



### BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

- ❖ **10** biodiversity gain plans approved
- ❖ **1** operational habitat bank



### GREEN SPACE ACTION TEAM

- Launched in March 2025
- **30** volunteers
- Nearly **500** volunteering hours completed
- Making a positive difference to biodiversity



### BLUE CAMPAIGN REWILDING

- Over **30** sites managed as part of the BLUE Campaign



# Introduction

This is Mid Sussex District Council's first Biodiversity Duty Report in accordance with the Environment Act 2021. It reports on actions taken by the Council to conserve and enhance biodiversity between January 2023 and December 2025.

## Background

The Environment Act 2021 introduced a strengthened 'biodiversity duty' which requires all public authorities in England to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

➤ [Complying with the biodiversity duty - GOV.UK](#)

As a public authority, Mid Sussex District Council must:

1. Consider what it can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
2. Agree policies and specific objectives based on its consideration.
3. Act to deliver its policies and achieve its objectives.

The action the Council takes will contribute to the achievement of national goals and targets on biodiversity. The [Environmental Improvement Plan](#) (EIP23), published in January 2023, sets out government plans for significantly improving the natural environment.

By 2030, the government has committed to:

- Halt the decline in species abundance.
- Protect 30% of UK land.

By 2042, the government has committed to:

- Increase species abundance by at least 10% from 2030, surpassing 2022 levels.
- Restore or create at least 500,000 ha of a range of wildlife rich habitats.
- Reduce the risk of species extinction.
- Restore 75% of sites of special scientific interest to favourable condition.

## Reporting

The Council must publish a biodiversity report. The end date of the first reporting period should be no later than the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026. After this, the end date of each reporting period must be within 5 years of the end date of the previous reporting period.

The intention of the biodiversity report is to:

- Help everyone understand how we are collectively meeting shared goals to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Allow the Council to showcase the action it is taking to improve biodiversity.
- Show other authorities and the public what they can do for nature recovery and share best practice.

As a local planning authority, the Council will also need to report on biodiversity net gain including:

- Actions carried out to meet biodiversity net gain obligations.
- Details of biodiversity net gains resulting, or expecting to result, from biodiversity gain plans approved.
- How biodiversity net gain obligations will be met in the next reporting period.

The government has published guidance that sets out what information must be included in a biodiversity report:

- [Reporting your biodiversity duty actions - GOV.UK](#)

## **Statutory biodiversity duty compliance**

This is Mid Sussex District Council's first Biodiversity Duty Report, prepared in accordance with section 40A of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, as amended by the Environment Act 2021.

The report explains how the Council has complied with its biodiversity duty during the reporting period from January 2023 to December 2025 by setting out:

- How biodiversity considerations have been integrated into the exercise of the Council's functions;

- The policies and objectives the Council has adopted to conserve and enhance biodiversity; and
- The actions taken, either alone or in partnership, to deliver those objectives.

The report also fulfils the Council's duty to report on the implementation of mandatory biodiversity net gain requirements, including actions taken, biodiversity gains secured or expected to be secured, and how these obligations will be met in the next reporting period.

## **Governance and Review**

This Biodiversity Duty Report has been prepared by officers of Mid Sussex District Council and is published to meet the Council's statutory reporting obligations under the Environment Act 2021. The report will be kept under review and will inform future service planning, policy development and partnership working in relation to biodiversity and nature recovery.

## About Mid Sussex District Council

Mid Sussex is a local government district in the south-east of England, situated within the county of West Sussex. It is a rural district and includes the towns of Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath and East Grinstead. Mid Sussex District is characterised by beautiful countryside. Nearly 50% of the district is within the High Weald National Landscape (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), and over 10% is within the South Downs National Park.

Mid Sussex District Council is already undertaking many actions that contribute to meeting the requirements of the biodiversity duty. These actions take place across the Council's functions. The Council's policies embed biodiversity and nature recovery as a priority and focus for the ongoing work of the Council. The Council contributes to partnerships that seek to protect and enhance biodiversity and promote nature recovery.

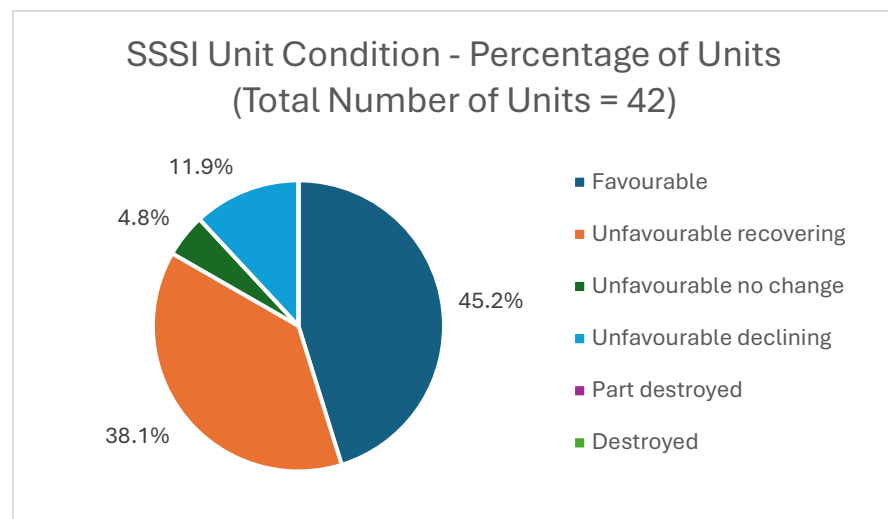
## Overview of nature in Mid Sussex District<sup>1</sup>

### Designations

Designated site or reserve		Area in Mid Sussex District (ha)	% of Mid Sussex District
<b>National</b>	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	16355.7	49.0
	National Park	3736.5	11.2
	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	639.7	1.9
<b>Local</b>	Local Geological Site (LGS)	225.0	0.7
	Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	164.9	0.5
	Local Wildlife Site (LWS)	1097.7	3.3
	Notable Road Verge	10.4	0.03
<b>Reserve/Property</b>	National Trust	1104.1	3.3
	RSPB Reserve	17.0	0.1
	Woodland Trust	39.6	0.1

<sup>1</sup> Data from the Biodiversity and Planning Impact Review 2024/25 prepared by the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre.

## SSSI Unit Condition



## Habitats

Habitat	Area in Mid Sussex District (ha)	% of Mid Sussex District
Ancient woodland	5297.1	15.9
Coastal & floodplain grazing marsh	1.2	0.0
Deciduous woodland	6209.8	18.6
Ghyll woodland	1239.2	3.7

Habitat	Area in Mid Sussex District (ha)	% of Mid Sussex District
Lowland calcareous grassland	243.0	0.7
Lowland fen	2.2	0.01
Lowland heathland	221.9	0.7
Lowland meadow	23.6	0.07
Reedbed	0.3	0.0
Traditional orchard	23.5	0.07
Wood-pasture & parkland	619.8	1.9

## Species

Species Data	Number of records in Mid Sussex District
European Protected species	5236
Wildlife & Countryside Act species	6973
Section 41 species	53294
Bats	3479
Notable birds	20877
Rare species (excluding bats and birds)	7853
Invasive non-native species	2236
Ancient or veteran tree	1419
Black Poplar	4

## Relevant strategies

Relevant strategies need to be considered in respect to how they affect the Council's compliance with the biodiversity duty. These relevant strategies are:

- Local nature recovery strategies
- Species conservation strategies
- Protected site strategies

### Local nature recovery strategies

Local nature recovery strategies were introduced by the Environment Act 2021. They are locally led to agree priorities for nature recovery, map the most valuable existing areas for nature and map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals.

West Sussex County Council is preparing the West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), in collaboration with East Sussex County Council who is preparing the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove LNRS.

Mid Sussex District Council, as a Supporting Authority, contributes to and participates in the Sussex LNRS Working Group and the Sussex LNRS Supporting Authority Group.

The Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategies are due to be published in Spring 2026.

➤ [Sussex Nature Recovery | Sussex Nature Recovery](#)

### Species conservation strategies

Species conservation strategies were introduced by the Environment Act 2021 and aim to safeguard the future of the species that are at greatest risk. The strategies find better ways to comply with existing legal obligations to protect species at risk and to improve their conservation status.

These strategies are in development.

### Protected site strategies

Protected site strategies were introduced by the Environment Act 2021 aiming to protect and restore species and habitats in protected sites. The strategic aim is to bring together key stakeholders to address on- and off-site pressures on protected sites.

There are no strategies currently published.

# **Actions taken to conserve and enhance biodiversity**

## Notes for the actions

Actions taken to conserve and enhance biodiversity have been grouped into three different categories, however, some actions may fall into more than one category.

### Policies, frameworks and processes

These actions include corporate policies and objectives to improve biodiversity and partnerships that support the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. It also includes activities and projects undertaken as part of the planning system.

### Managing land to improve biodiversity

These actions include activities that the Council undertakes as part of managing land. It includes the management of protected sites.

### Educate, advise and raise awareness

These are actions that the Council undertakes to raise awareness of biodiversity.

Actions that are undertaken in partnership are also highlighted.

### Partnership

The partnerships that the Council is involved with have been listed.

Actions that also involve working in partnership have been indicated as follows:

### Working in partnership

The following information is also recorded for each action.

### Status and future action

The status and future action has also been shown.

Information and data on biodiversity net gain is included in this report.

### Biodiversity net gain

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) was introduced in February 2024 and it will deliver measurable improvements for biodiversity by enhancing or creating new habitats in association with development. This section provides an overview of BNG data for the reporting period.

## Corporate policies and objectives to conserve and enhance biodiversity

### Mid Sussex Corporate Plan and Budget

<https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/about-us/finance-reports/>

The Council's Statement of Main Purpose is 'To be an effective Council for delivering value for money services and helping to create a strong economy, environment and community'.

### Sustainable Economy Strategy

<https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/environment-net-zero/sustainable-economy-strategy/>

The Sustainable Economy Strategy sets out how sustainable development in the District can provide economic prosperity while supporting the Council's journey to net zero.

The Strategy is guided by an overarching vision, framed by the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The Strategy and Action Plan sets out the Council's priorities. Objective 4 seeks to respond to the impacts of climate change through making best use of our natural assets by improving biodiversity, promoting nature recovery and increasing environmental resilience.

### High Weald AONB Management Plan

<https://highweald.org/aonb-management-plan/>

Almost 50% of Mid Sussex District is within the High Weald National Landscape (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is still the legal designation). The AONB Management Plan is the Council's policy for managing the High Weald National Landscape. It is a material consideration for planning purposes.

The planning system is a key tool in delivering biodiversity improvements. As a local planning authority, the Council can help to conserve and enhance biodiversity in its plan-making and decision-making.

### Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (Adopted March 2018)

<https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/3406/mid-sussex-district-plan.pdf>

The District Plan is the key planning document used by the Council when considering planning applications. It includes the strategy, proposed level of development and a number of planning policies.

Policies that contribute to protecting and enhancing biodiversity include:

- DP16: High Weald AONB
- DP17: Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC
- DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- DP38: Biodiversity

### **Sustainability Appraisal (SA) / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

The Council has undertaken a Sustainability Appraisal/ Strategic Environmental Assessment to appraise options for strategy, policies and sites against sustainability criteria and to assess impacts on social, environmental and economic objectives. Objective 7 Biodiversity and Geodiversity aims to conserve and enhance the District's biodiversity and geodiversity.

### **Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)**

The Council has undertaken a Habitats Regulations Assessment to determine whether the District Plan, in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The potential impacts arising from the District Plan that are likely to have a significant effect on Ashdown Forest are recreational disturbance to protected breeding birds from an increase in visitors to Ashdown Forest and atmospheric

pollution affecting the heathland habitat from increased traffic and associated nitrogen deposition.

Mitigation measures are necessary to counteract the effects of potential increasing recreational pressure on the Ashdown Forest SPA arising from new residential development within a 7km zone of influence around the Ashdown Forest SPA.

There are two parts to the mitigation: Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM).

### **Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)**

The purpose of SANG is to provide alternative greenspace to attract visitors away from the Ashdown Forest SPA. It aims to reduce overall visitor and recreational pressure on Ashdown Forest, and to provide for the needs of dog walkers in particular. Relevant development will need either to provide a SANG or make a financial contribution to a strategic SANG.

The Council manages two SANGs:

- [East Court & Ashplats Wood, East Grinstead](#)
- Hill Place, East Grinstead

### Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM)

#### Working in partnership

The SAMM Strategy aims to manage visitors on-site at Ashdown Forest. The Joint SAMM Strategy is a strategic co-ordinated approach to mitigation in partnership with Lewes, Sevenoaks, Tandridge and Wealden District Councils, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Natural England, and the Conservators of Ashdown Forest. The SAMM Partnership for Ashdown Forest is actively working to deliver access management projects to address issues arising from visitor pressure and undertake monitoring at both Ashdown Forest and the five currently operational SANG sites.

## Partnerships that support the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity

Mid Sussex District Council is an active member of the following partnerships.

### Adur & Ouse Catchment Partnership

<https://adurandousecatchment.org.uk/>

The Adur & Ouse Catchment Partnership works to improve the water environment and surrounding landscape of the catchment for both people and wildlife.

### Ashdown Forest Working Group

The Ashdown Forest Working Group agrees a strategic approach to air quality matters at Ashdown Forest to inform Habitats Regulations Assessments aiming to ensure that individual local authority assessments are aligned in the methodology applied to transport and air quality modelling. The Ashdown Forest Working Group has also commissioned air quality monitoring at Ashdown Forest.

### Ashdown Forest SAMP Partnership

The Ashdown Forest SAMP Partnership comprises the six local authorities surrounding Ashdown Forest that require SAMP mitigation from relevant development and the

Conservators of Ashdown Forest. The Ashdown Forest SAMP Partnership implements and manages the SAMP Strategy to facilitate the delivery of access management projects and monitoring.

### High Weald National Landscape Partnership

<https://highweald.org/>

The High Weald National Landscape Partnership seeks to ensure that actions taken today leave the High Weald National Landscape as a beautiful and functioning biodiverse landscape for future generations. The formal designation of the High Weald National Landscape is Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – an area of land protected for its outstanding natural beauty and landscape character. The Council is an active member of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee and the Officer Steering Group.

### NatureSpace Partnership

<https://naturespaceuk.com/>

Great crested newts and their habitats are legally protected in the UK and must be considered as part of the planning application process. The Council holds a district-wide licence

granted by Natural England allowing developers to be authorised to undertake works which may impact great crested newts. NatureSpace Partnership is the Council's delivery partner for the district licence. Under the District Licensing Scheme habitat compensation is delivered by the Newt Conservation Partnership, who take responsibility for the habitat creation as well as the long-term monitoring and management, so that developers don't have to. Compensation through the scheme delivers landscape-scale conservation for great crested newts.

### Sussex Nature Partnership Local Authority Network

<https://sussexlnp.org.uk/local-authority-network/>

The Sussex Nature Partnership leads a Local Authority Network in Sussex to connect with the work of the Sussex Nature Partnership and provides access to information and resources, knowledge sharing events and forums for sharing experiences and best practice. The Council is an active member of the Local Authority Network.

### Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre

<https://sxbrc.org.uk/home/>

The Council is a partner for the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (SxBRC). The SxBRC provides environmental information services encompassing biodiversity, geodiversity and other aspects of Sussex's natural capital.

### West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy

<https://sussexnaturerecovery.org.uk/>

West Sussex County Council is the Responsible Authority for preparing the West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and Mid Sussex District Council is a Supporting Authority. This Council is actively involved in the preparation of the West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy contributing to the Working Group and the Supporting Authority Group.

### Sussex Local Wildlife Sites Initiative

<https://lws-sussex.org.uk/>

The Council contributes to the Sussex Local Wildlife Sites Initiative, which aims to establish and maintain a functioning Local Wildlife Sites system for Sussex.

## The BLUE Campaign Rewilding Britain

The Council supports the BLUE Campaign’s ‘Rewilding Britain’ nationwide initiative to help combat biodiversity loss by allowing areas of open space to ‘rewild’. These areas are identified by blue heart information signs and blue heart symbols.

	2023	2024	2025
<b>Number of sites in Mid Sussex</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>15</b>

In 2024 the Blue Campaign areas were reviewed and this identified several sites that were not contributing to the biodiversity of Mid Sussex as much as others. The decision was made to expand more productive areas and put the less

productive areas back into standard amenity schedules.

Overall, the extent of the Blue Campaign areas was increased. In the table below, the blue highlighted rows indicate locations that continued and, in some cases, expanded in 2024 and 2025.

<b>Status</b>	Ongoing implementation
<b>Future action</b>	Yes

### Further information

[The BLUE Campaign Rewilding Britain - Mid Sussex District Council](#)

Blue Campaign Sites	Location	2024 Area (Square Metres)	2025 Area (Square Metres)
Albourne Hunters Mead 2	Albourne	79.75	
Ansty Recreation Ground	Deaks Lane, Ansty, RH17 5AF	239.87	848.97
Beech Hurst Gardens	Butlers Green Road, Haywards Heath, RH16 4BB	11007.03	13786.39
Brooklands Park		1707.623	1707.623
Burleigh Wood Estate Open Space	Burleigh Way, Crawley Down, RH10 4UQ	155.18	
Butlers Green Open Space	Butlers Green Road, Haywards Heath, RH16 4BQ	6192.258	6192.258
Constance Wood Recreation Ground	Hamsland, Horsted Keynes, RH17 7DX	14172.3	14172.3
Cuckfield Recreation Ground	High Street, Cuckfield, RH17 5LD	3895.494	3895.494
East Court Recreational Ground	College Lane, East Grinstead, RH19 3YW	916.06	

**Manage land to improve biodiversity**

**Educate, advise and raise awareness**

<b>Blue Campaign Sites</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>2024 Area (Square Metres)</b>	<b>2025 Area (Square Metres)</b>
Heath Road Car Park	Heath Road, Haywards Heath, RH16 3BB	160.88	
Herontye Drive, Open Space two	Herontye Drive, East Grinstead, RH19 4LR	4862.956	4862.956
Humphry's Field Recreation Ground	Borers Arms Road, Copthorne, RH10 3LH	403.78	1165.16
Imberhorne Lane Recreational Ground	Imberhorne Lane, East Grinstead, RH19 1NQ	1189.14	
John Pear's Recreational Ground	Wall Hill Road, Ashurstwood, RH19 3TQ	1974.5	1974.5
Lindfield Common	Black Hill, Lindfield, RH16 2HE	7905.068	7905.068
Maple Drive Open Space	Maple Drive, East Grinstead, RH19 3UR	325.71	
Maple Drive Pond Site	THE POUND, BURGESS HILL, RH15 8PF	137.31	
Newlands Open Space	Newlands, Balcombe, RH17 6HX	91.311	
Nursery Close Open Space	Nursery Close, Hurstpierpoint, BN6 9WA	574.85	
Oaklands	Oaklands	3154.26	3154.26
Railway Lands North Open Space	Leylands Road, Burgess Hill, RH15 8AL	14830.73	14830.73
Railway Lands South Open Space	St Wilfrids Road, Burgess Hill, RH15 8BH	0	4686.31
Royal George Recreational Ground	Royal George Road, Burgess Hill, RH15 9TD	1341.33	4893.03
Shepherds Walk		106.3	
Shepherds Walk 2 Open Space	Shepherds Walk, Hassocks, BN6 8EE	1459.5	
St Edwards The Confessor	Burgess Hill	1186.08	1186.08
Vale Road Open Space	Vale Road, Haywards Heath, RH16 4JG	1417.3	
West Common Open Space	West Common Drive, Lindfield, RH16 2AP	1386.61	
Whitemans Green Open Space	Whitemans Green, Cuckfield, RH17 5DB	1072.56	
Wisden Avenue Open Space	Wisden Avenue, Burgess Hill, RH15 8TL	1243.28	
Woodvale Lane Open Space	Woodvale Lane, Haywards Heath, RH16 3UQ	1886.44	

Species list

The following table shows the species found across all the BLUE Campaign sites in Mid Sussex.

Plant species				
agrimony	cranesbill, cut-leaved	herb robert	plantain, ribwort	stitchwort, greater
apple tree	cranesbill, dovesfoot	hogweed	poppy	stitchwort, lesser
arum lily	cuckoo flower	holly	prunus/plum	sweet vernal grass
barley	daisy	ivy	primrose	thistle
bedstraw	dandelion	ivy-leaved toadflax	purple toadflax	thistle, spear
betony	deadnettle, red	knappweed	quaking grass	three-cornered leek
bindweed	deadnettle, white	knotgrass	ragged robin	trefoil
blackthorn	dock	lords & ladies/cuckoo pint	ragwort	trefoil, birdsfoot
bluebell	dock, broad-leaved	male fern	red bartsia	trefoil, lesser
bracken	dock, curled	marsh woundwort	red campion	various meadow grasses
bramble	enchanters nightshade	mallow	red valerian	vetch
bristly ox tongue	fern	meadow foxtail	rose spirea	vetch, common
brome	fleabane	meadow grass (Poa)	rush	violet
bugle	forget-me-not	meadow sweet	rye grass, perennial	wild garlic
burdock	fungi	meadow vetchling	st johns wort	wild strawberry
buttercup	foxglove	medick, black	salad burnet	willowherb
buttercup, creeping	garlic mustard	medick, spotted	scarlet pimpernel	willowherb, broad-leaved
buttercup, meadow	goats rue	moss	sedge	willowherb, greater
camomile	grass, sweet vernal	mugwort	selfheal	willowherb, rosebay
cat's-ear	grass, timothy	nipplewort	shepherds purse	willow sapling
celandine	grass vetchling	oak sapling	silverweed	winter heliotrope
centaury	green alkanet	orchid, unknown	sorrel	wood anemone
chickweed	ground ivy	orchid, bee	sowthistle	wood sorrel (Oxalis)
cinquefoil	groundsel	orchid, common spotted	spearwort	woody nightshade
cleavers/goosegrass	hairy tare	orchid, early purple	speedwell	yarrow
clover	hazel	orchid, green-veined	speedwell, creeping	yellow archangel
clover, red	hawks beard	orchid, lady's autumn tresses	speedwell, germander	yellow flag iris

**Manage land to improve biodiversity****Educate, advise and raise awareness****Plant species**

clover, white	hawkbit	oxeye daisy	speedwell, heath	yellow rattle
cocksfoot	hedge garlic	pignut	speedwell, thyme-leaved	yorkshire fog
common horsetail	hedge woundwort	pineapple weed	spurge	
cow parsley	herb bennet	plantain, greater	stinging nettle	

**Fauna**

ants	lacewing	cranefly	red tailed bumblebee
bee	ladybird	cuckoo spit	ringlet
beetle	large white	damsel fly	shield bug
bumblebee	marble white	demoiselle	skipper
butterfly	meadow brown	dragon fly	slug
brimstone	micro moth	fly	small copper
bug	mole hill	frog hopper	snail
caterpillar	moth	fox	sparrow
chalk hill blue	orange tip	gatekeeper	speckled wood
chiff chaff	painter lady	grasshopper	spider
comma	peacock	holly blue	wasp
common blue	red beetle	hoverfly	

## Local Nature Reserves (LNR)

The Council manages five of the six Local Nature Reserves in the District:

- Bedelands Farm, Burgess Hill
- Ashenground and Bolnore Woods, Haywards Heath
- Blunts Wood and Paiges Meadow, Haywards Heath
- Scrase Valley, Haywards Heath
- Eastern Road, Lindfield

The Local Nature Reserves managed by the Council continue to be a source of important habitats and biodiversity for the local area. Each Local Nature Reserve has its own management plan supported by Friends Groups and volunteer groups.

### Biodiversity outcomes

**Bedelands Farm, Burgess Hill** – The Council’s contractors and volunteers have been making leaky dams with the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust (OART). This helps to create more wetland habitats, prevent bank erosion and flooding. This is also a site of wildflower seed harvesting of native meadow flower species which is then used on other LNR sites as appropriate.

**Ashenground and Bolnore Woods, Haywards Heath** – Dormouse surveying to confirm their presence indicating good practice to achieve such a species.

### **Blunts Wood and Paiges Meadow, Haywards Heath** –

Coppicing works in order to diversify the woodland structures and allow fungi and flowers to thrive on dead wood and exposed ground. Dead hedging also takes place creating deadwood habitats and keeping visitors to desire lines and paths.

**Scrase Valley, Haywards Heath** – Extensive removal of invasive Himalayan Balsam to allow native biodiversity. Planting of black poplars to increase the presence of a rare native UK tree. The orchard at Scase Valley improves biodiversity and provides food production for the community with the community.

**Eastern Road, Lindfield** – Dormouse surveys to confirm their presence and consideration in future management plans. Planting/regeneration of the site with a variety of native UK tree species after Ash Dieback felling and removal.

<b>Status</b>	Ongoing implementation
<b>Future action</b>	Yes

### Further information

[Nature Conservation and Landscape - Mid Sussex District Council](#)

Manage land to improve biodiversity

Educate, advise and raise awareness

## Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)

Working in partnership

The Council manages six Local Wildlife Sites:

- Burgess Hill Railway Lands, Burgess Hill
- Bedelands, Burgess Hill
- Blunts Wood and Paiges Wood, Haywards Heath
- Scrase Valley, Haywards Heath
- Ashplats Wood, East Grinstead
- Catt's Wood Complex and Meadows, Haywards Heath

### Biodiversity outcomes

<b>Status</b>	Ongoing implementation
<b>Future action</b>	Yes

### Further information

[Nature Conservation and Landscape - Mid Sussex District Council](#)

## Master Plan Project 2023-2026

### Introduction

Planned improvements for parks and open spaces include comprehensive playground enhancement initiatives and the development of park master plans to shape vibrant green spaces for both current and future generations.

Six large parks have master plans and the execution of these plans is now underway, with three of them due to be completed in Spring 2026.

### Current projects (to be completed in 2026):

- Victoria Park, Haywards Heath
- Mount Noddy, East Grinstead
- Hemsleys Meadow and Finches Field, Pease Pottage

### Ongoing implementation:

- Brooklands Park, East Grinstead
- London Road Recreation Ground, Hassocks
- St John’s Park, Burgess Hill

### Working in partnership

Blakedown Landscapes has been appointed to deliver the upcoming improvements.

### Biodiversity outcomes

The Council is aiming to restore the landscape in three Council parks including Hemsleys Meadow and Finches Field, Victoria Park and Mount Noddy. The scope includes, but is not limited to, hard and soft landscape improvements, new site furniture, new play equipment, signage and interpretation and external drainage work.

Hemsleys Meadow and Finches Field is a vast field where not only landscape improvements are to be implemented but also an impressive biodiversity project is underway.

Please refer to the diagram and planting schedule below.

Qty	Botanical Name	Form
<b>TREES</b>		
3	Betula pubescens	Multi stem
6	Acer campestre	Semi mature
2	Acer campestre	Multi stem
9	Alnus glutinosa	Semi mature
4	Betula nigra	Semi mature
2	Betula nigra	Multi stem
3	Betula pubescens	Semi mature
3	Corylus avetlana	Multi stem
5	Quercus robur	Semi mature

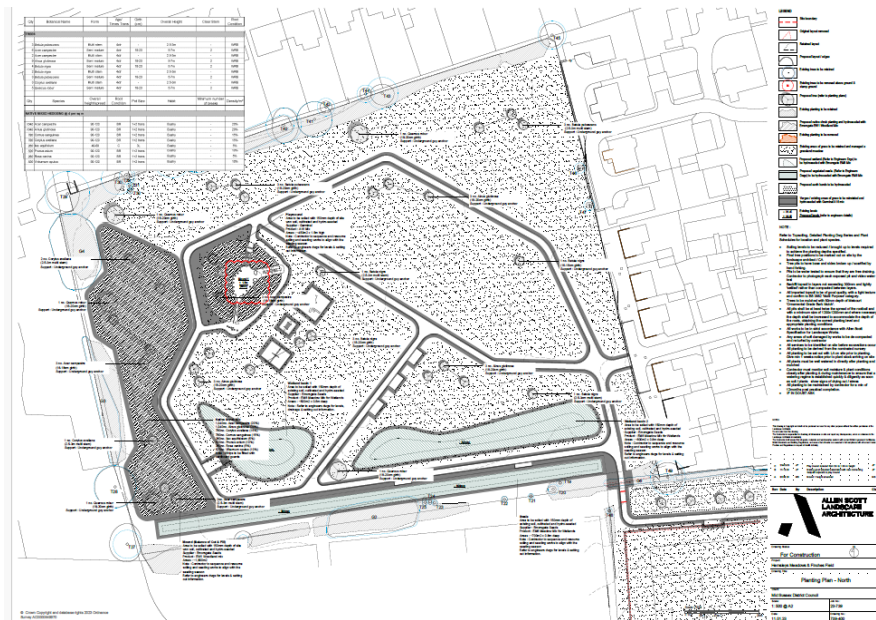
**Manage land to improve biodiversity**  
**Educate, advise and raise awareness**

Qty	Species	Overall Height/spread
<b>NATIVE MIXED HEDGEING @ 4 per sq m</b>		
1040	Accer campestre	90-120
1040	Ainus glutinosa	90-120
780	Comus sanguinea	90-120
780	Corylus avellana	90-120
260	Llex aquifolium	40-60
520	Prunus avium	90-120
260	Rosa canina	90-120
520	Virbumum opulus	90-120

<b>Status</b>	Ongoing implementation
<b>Future action</b>	Yes

**Further information**

[Green Spaces Engagement Hub | Mid Sussex District Council](#)  
[Community Engagement Hub](#)





## SPOTLIGHT: A place for nature at the Mid Sussex District Council office campus

In August 2025, staff undertook a 'bioblitz' of the Oaklands campus habitats. This was an informal wildlife survey where staff took mobile phone photos and uploaded them to iNaturalist.org, the online software used to record, identify and map species of wildlife. Verifiable records are transferred to local biodiversity record centres, meaning the data can be of use in a planning and wider conservation context.

In 30 minutes, four members of staff submitted 83 observations of 43 different species. It has been recommended that another survey takes place in the spring/early summer when the peak number of plant and insect species will be present. This will give a better representation of the range of species present on the Oaklands campus.

While an iNaturalist bioblitz is not a professional ecological survey, community science actions like these do provide valuable data to help tell the story of local wildlife populations, and to offer insight into the significance of overlooked habitats.

In terms of the habitats at Oaklands, the remaining grasslands host species which are uncommon, while some are considered rare. The grasslands support some common species of fungi such as blusher (*Amanita rubescens*) but also waxcap fungi (Hygrophoraceae). Waxcaps are indicative of ancient

grasslands (400 years old) which have not been ploughed, fertilized or developed.

Records on iNaturalist have identified the following selected species of interest on the Oaklands campus (click the species name for the iNaturalist record):

[Parrot waxcap](#) (*Gliophorus psittacinus*)

[Blackening waxcap](#) (*Hygrocybe conica* complex)

[Deceiving bolete](#) (*Suillellus queletii*)

[Mosaic puffball](#) (*Lycoperdon utriforme*)

[Common centaury](#) (*Centaurium erythraea*)

[Green-winged orchid](#) (*Anacamptis morio*)

Other orchids that have been found on the Oaklands campus include common spotted orchid, bee orchid and autumn lady's tresses.

In terms of managing the Oaklands campus in a way that can sustain and allow species and habitats to recover, the continuation of cut and collect mowing regimes is vital to avoid decaying grass cuttings to reduce the diversity of species.

## Information boards

The Council has installed information boards in some of its green spaces to raise awareness about special features of a site including biodiversity and nature.

Information boards installed at the Hill Place SANG provide information about the ancient woodland, grasslands and ponds on the site.



## Education initiatives

Education initiatives include:

- Blackboards at local cafes for people to record sightings and highlight species to visitors.
- The Green Space Action Team volunteer groups work at Local Nature Reserves and parks.

## Mid Sussex District Council website

The Council's website includes information on biodiversity and nature.

- [Nature Conservation and Landscape](#)
- [Biodiversity Net Gain](#)
- [Wildlife and Planning](#)
- [Protecting Ashdown Forest](#)

## Raising awareness with contractors

Glendale (the Council's parks maintenance contractor) has also worked with its own employees to explain the importance of biodiversity and has improved practises including hedgehog protection stickers on power tools.

<b>Status</b>	Ongoing implementation
<b>Future action</b>	Yes

## Volunteering opportunities

The Council supports a number of ‘friends of groups’. All of these groups carry out various conservation, accessibility and health and safety improvements. The current groups are:

### East Grinstead

- **The Compass Garden** – Mount Noddy Park
- **Ashplats Conservation Group** – East Court

### Haywards Heath

- **Beech Hurst Steering Group** – Beech Hurst Gardens
- **The New Friends of Scrase Valley Orchard** – Scrase Valley Nature Reserve
- **Friends of Ashenground** – Ashenground and Bolnore Woods
- **Friends of Blunts Wood** – Blunts Wood and Paiges Meadow
- **Friends of Eastern Road Nature Reserve** – Eastern Road Nature Reserve

<b>Status</b>	Ongoing implementation
<b>Future action</b>	Yes

### Further information

[Volunteering - Mid Sussex District Council](#)



## SPOTLIGHT: Green Space Action Team

### Working in partnership

Mid Sussex District Council and its ground maintenance partner, Glendale, are working with local people to conserve and nurture award-winning green spaces in the district. Green Space Action Team volunteers, led by Glendale’s Countryside Rangers, combine their passion for nature and the outdoors with practical projects to cultivate and develop local parks, wild land and nature reserves. As part of a reciprocally beneficial arrangement, while the volunteers help with seasonal practical tasks like deadheading, weeding and mulching, in return Glendale’s Rangers provide unique opportunities for important community connection, physical activity and the health benefits of working in beautiful spaces while learning new skills. Launched in March 2025, the Green Space Action Team meets weekly in different locations, currently focusing on Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath, and now has 30 volunteers. The contract’s Rangers provide guidance and training, and the tools needed for the practical tasks, along with advice on species identification for local flora and fauna. The volunteers, who span all ages and life stages, bring their own skills and enthusiasm, and have made a significant positive difference, helping Glendale and the Council better maintain the spaces they manage.

Nearly 500 volunteering hours were carried out in 2025.

## Future priorities and next reporting period

In line with government guidance, this section sets out how Mid Sussex District Council intends to continue to comply with the biodiversity duty in the next reporting period (2026–2031).

Building on the actions described in this report, the Council's future focus will include:

- Continuing to embed biodiversity considerations across all relevant Council functions;
- Implementing mandatory biodiversity net gain requirements for both major and minor development, including the effective use of registered off-site biodiversity gain sites where appropriate;
- Contributing to the preparation and subsequent delivery of the West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy, including aligning local action with identified priorities and opportunity areas;
- Managing Council-owned land to strengthen habitat condition, resilience and connectivity, informed by emerging evidence and best practice; and
- Working in partnership with neighbouring authorities, statutory bodies, land managers, community groups and volunteers to support nature recovery across the District.

The Council recognises that the scale and pace of delivery will be influenced by resources, data availability and external dependencies. These factors will be kept under review, and learning from implementation during this reporting period will inform future policy development and operational practice.

# **Biodiversity net gain**

## Biodiversity net gain

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) has been a mandatory statutory requirement since February 2024. This section records information and data on BNG.

Biodiversity net gain is an approach to planning and land management that leaves the natural environment in a better state than it was before. BNG will deliver measurable improvements for biodiversity by enhancing or creating new habitats in association with development.

BNG is required under a statutory framework and subject to some exceptions, every grant of planning permission needs to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat. This increase can be achieved through onsite biodiversity gains, registered off-site biodiversity gains or statutory biodiversity credits.

Further information can be found at:

- [Biodiversity net gain - GOV.UK](#)

The Council also has a webpage for biodiversity net gain.

- [Biodiversity Net Gain - Mid Sussex District Council](#)

<b>Status</b>	Ongoing implementation
<b>Future action</b>	Yes

The tables below provide an overview of biodiversity net gain data for the reporting period.

Planning permissions 12/02/2024 – 31/12/2025		Number
Total number of planning permissions granted that require biodiversity net gain		67
Total number of planning permissions granted where an exemption to the biodiversity net gain condition applies		1337
<i>Of which the exemption is ...</i>		
Biodiversity gain site		0
De minimis		169
Householder development		1107
High speed railway network		0
Development which is not major development *BNG became mandatory for small sites on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2024		14
Retrospective planning permission		25
Self-build/custom development		22

Biodiversity gain plans 12/02/2024 – 31/12/2025		Number
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved		10
Total number of biodiversity gain plans approved securing BNG through ...		
On-site units only		4
Off-site units only		4
Statutory credits only		0

## Biodiversity net gain

A combination of on-site and off-site units	2
A combination of on-site units and statutory credits	0
A combination of off-site units and statutory credits	0
A combination of on-site units, off-site units and statutory credits	0

### Habitat bank

A habitat bank is a gain site not linked to a particular development and usually provides biodiversity units for more than one development.

There is one registered and operational habitat bank in Mid Sussex. This habitat bank has been secured by a conservation covenant with a responsible body. The biodiversity gain site's register number is BGS-281024001.

The habitat bank is located within the High Weald National Character Area (NCA) and High Weald National Landscape (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

The available biodiversity units are:

#### Very high distinctiveness habitats

- Lowland meadows
- Species-rich native hedgerow with trees – associated with bank or ditch

#### High distinctiveness habitats

- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland

#### Medium distinctiveness habitats

- Mixed scrub
- Other neutral grassland
- Ponds (non-priority habitat)
- Other woodland; broadleaved

#### Low distinctiveness habitats

- Native hedgerow

#### Further information

- [BNG | Ardingly Habitat Bank | Environment Bank | Mid Sussex LPA](#)

### Looking ahead

The Council will continue to review and refine its biodiversity net gain processes to ensure statutory requirements are met efficiently and transparently. This will include ongoing monitoring of approved biodiversity gain plans, engagement with developers and responsible bodies, and consideration of further opportunities to support habitat banking and off-site delivery within the District where this aligns with local nature recovery priorities.