

Appendix A

SCDC Doubling Nature and Zero Carbon Strategies

Actions for Biodiversity - Monitoring Data 2021-2025

On our own estate and through our operations

1. Add a step to the Housing Estates Inspection process to identify and take forward opportunities for tree-planting and other wildlife-friendly initiatives in appropriate locations.

Progress at 30/09/2021

The new Housing Estates Inspection process, which includes a step for identifying locations for tree-planting is now in place but has not resulted in many opportunities for tree-planting or wildflower strips. Other ways to identify these areas are now being explored. These include through informal estates inspections and in collaboration with parish councils and community groups.

Progress at 31/10/2022

We have received funding for tree-planting on two areas of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) land through a successful joint bid led by Cambridgeshire County Council to the Local Authority (LA) Treescapes Fund Tree. Work is in progress to deliver this.

We are accessing areas where we can reduce frequency of grass cuts in growing season for 2023, and alongside that considering areas where we could stop cutting altogether and allow wildflowers to grow, again for 2023 growing season. We are working up a pilot of an area where we don't use weedkiller to control weed growth

Progress at 01/05/2023

262 trees and hedge whips planted on two areas of HRA land through a successful joint bid led by Cambs County Council to the LA Treescapes Fund Tree.

We are assessing areas where we can reduce frequency of grass cuts in growing season for 2023, and alongside that considering areas where we could stop cutting altogether and allow wildflowers to grow, again for 2023 growing season. We are working up a pilot of an area where we don't use weedkiller to control weed growth.

Progress at 01/05/2024

With the support of our grounds maintenance contractor, 34 new standard trees and 228 whips were planted across two sites. We also have a three-year maintenance

programme in place. The trees on these two sites are being cared for via regular inspections by our grounds maintenance contractor through an agreed programme. Advised by Ecologist, nature enhancement (trees, wildflowers, bird box, habitat piles) provided on three HRA sites, ongoing maintenance by grounds maintenance contractor. Scoping exercise underway to identify HRA land suitable for nature improvements, and to establish management plan for these areas.

Progress at 01/05/2025

As part of the Shared Prosperity Fund Green Spaces Development project, 8 community green spaces were developed to encourage active use by local residents, including sites on SCDC HRA land. Work commenced on the first 4 sites in mid-2024 and included approx. 1.4km² of wildflower meadows, 40 orchard and ornamental trees, 200m² of assorted shrubbery and bed plants, and 9 new seating areas. These were completed early 2025. 10 new trees and additional shrubs were planted on a site in Great Shelford, and 6 trees, planters, wildflower strips and benches installed in Coton.

2. Complete the audit of trees on Council-owned housing estates and undertake recommended maintenance work

Progress at 30/09/2021

Two of four sections of the Tree Audit have now been completed. The third is due in November and the final one by the end of Q4. Urgent maintenance work has been completed or is in train. Less urgent work has been incorporated into a three year programme of tree surgery work

Progress at 31/10/2022

All four sections completed

3. Identify appropriate locations and set up three pilot schemes to establish wildflower strips or patches on Council housing estate land.

See Action 1 above.

4. Review management of awarded watercourses with a view to action to improve biodiversity

Progress at 30/09/2021

Principal Operations Manager (Environmental Ops) did a tour of the chalk streams in the Bassingbourn and Shepreth area. Budget has been approved to prepare a report with options for improving management of these streams for biodiversity. The completed report is expected by the end of the year.

Progress at 31/10/2022

Over the exceptionally dry summer period worked with The Wild Trout Trust to reduce maintenance on our chalk streams in order to preserve water levels. SCDC have also corporately joined the Wild Trout Trust. Moving forward we will be looking at supporting local nature conservation groups by exploring joint working initiatives that can enable groups to complete improvements to watercourses. Such joint working will look at using SCDC equipment to facilitate works that would be too costly for groups to purchase from a contractor.

Progress at 01/05/2023

SCDC have corporately joined the Wild Trout Trust (WTT) and are continuing work with the Trust to improve biodiversity on council managed watercourses and to support local groups. In April 2023 the WTT trained SCDC watercourse staff in water vole habitat identification, and SCDC will be assisting WTT in creation of new wild trout habitat in Melbourn by providing staff and equipment.

Progress at 01/05/2024

Joint habitat improvement project with the Wild Trout Trust (WTT) and Cambridge Water conducted on the River Mel, to restore the chalk stream riverbed in Meldreth. This was publicised in the national and local media. The next phase is to look at a different section of the River Mel and the introduction of 60 Tons of gravel to improve trout habitat. Postponed due to poor weather conditions since August 2023. Small projects also being supported by waiving consent fees in favour of nature projects.

Progress at 01/05/2025

This year SCDC funded a section of gravel introduction to the River Shep in Angle Lane, Shepreth, improving habitat for wild trout. SCDC also engaged with the Histon nature group (HIGS) to explore support for a habitat improvement project at Long Meadow in Histon; SCDC have offered to help with earth works. This project will progress pending approval by County. Watercourses operatives now use electric alternatives for their smaller 2 stroke hand tools (hedge cutters / strimmers/blowers). This switch from petrol driven hand tools to battery derivatives will reduce carbon emissions from Watercourse activity. While not all tools will be replaced at this stage, the ambition is to move to a fully electric solution.

Through Planning

5. Progress planning policies related to doubling nature as part of wider work on green infrastructure on the Greater Cambridge Local Plan Preferred Options consultation and work on the draft plan.

Progress at 30/09/2021

First Proposals Local Plan includes 14 strategic scale green infrastructure initiatives, identified in the Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity

Mapping Final Report. Most of the strategic initiatives will support habitat enhancement and creation, they have been developed through discussion with Natural Cambridgeshire partners and Natural England

First Proposals also includes a proposed policy requirement for 20% biodiversity net gain (BNG)

Progress at 31/10/2022

Seven policy areas have been identified under the Biodiversity and Green Spaces theme for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan (Draft). These are:

BG/BG Biodiversity and geodiversity

BG/GI Green infrastructure

BG/TC Improving tree canopy cover and the tree population

BG/RC River corridors BG/PO Protecting open spaces

BG/EO Providing and enhancing open spaces CC/CS Supporting land-based carbon sequestration

In partnership with Natural Cambridgeshire and Natural England, 14 strategic green infrastructure initiatives have been identified and published alongside the First Proposals for the Local Plan.

Progress at 01/05/2023

Project planning is underway with our partners to identify the tasks needed to refine these initiatives and identify deliverable projects supporting them.

Progress at 01/05/2024

Training has now been given to planners and Planning Committees for the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements. BNG pre-application guidance is in place and on website, and BNG pre-application service has been launched. Successful bid to DLUCH Pro-Tech Innovation Fund to secure and develop software to monitor delivery of BNG. Software procurement underway. Training and briefing of agents forum undertaken.

Progress at 01/05/2025

The Local Plan timetable was updated in January 2025 following the publication of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework. The timetable confirms the next key stage for the local plan will be consultation on a draft local plan in Autumn 2025.

6. Draft and adopt a Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to update and strengthen guidance in the SCDC Biodiversity SPD (2009).

Progress at 30/09/2021

Drafted, public consultation complete, amendments to document and themes from consultation currently underway, revised timeline for adoption now is February 2022, anticipating no further delays to the publication of Environment Bill / Act.

Progress at 31/10/2022

The Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted by South Cambridgeshire District Council on 7 February 2022 and by Cambridge City Council on 11 January 2022.

7. Promote good practice in securing benefits to biodiversity through development

Progress at 30/09/2021

Already identified one case study from Cambridge, but are looking for more, likely will come in time.

Progress at 31/10/2022

We are currently collating information that can be used to demonstrate positive outcomes for biodiversity from development mitigation. This will be presented as single side narrative case studies with one or two photos.

Progress at 01/05/2023

Case study not yet published

Progress at 01/05/2024

The production of marketing materials by end September 2024 that set out Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) success across Greater Cambridge and highlight ongoing work with BNG providers to deliver significant positive outcomes for nature. Highlights include a 150-200% increase in measurable biodiversity from baseline

Progress at 01/05/2025

Biodiversity Net Gain briefings have been given to all City and SCDC Planning Committees in April 2024. A site visit to Lower Valley Farm was held for Members on 15th Aug 2024.

Biodiversity Net Gain briefings have been given to a number of forums including: Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service, Parish Clerks Conference, RTPI Young Planners Conference and to development industry via Cambridge Forum for Construction Industry (CFCI)

By working with others

8. Work with Highways England to ensure positive environmental legacy from A428 Improvement works

Progress at 30/09/2021

Bid for funding from Highway England's Environmental Legacy Fund (Carbon Theme)

Progress at 31/10/2022

The bid to the Carbon Theme of Highway England's Environmental Legacy Fund was successful and Highways England are working with land agents to identify off-site partnership opportunities for biodiversity and carbon. Eight opportunities have been identified and are being reviewed internally by Highways England.

Progress at 01/05/2023

Highways England updated in May that they are engaging with Bidwell's and land-owners to see which of various proposals for carbon sequestration and biodiversity can be progressed. The proposals were outlined in a feasibility study funded from the Carbon Theme of Highway England's Environmental Legacy Fund.

Progress at 01/05/2024

A feasibility study for Biodiversity Net Gain was completed in March 2022. The A428 legacy working group continue to seek improvements with a particular focus on active travel.

Progress at 01/05/2025

The A428 Legacy Fund has completed three funding rounds and supported 37 projects. The fourth funding round is open at the time of writing.

By supporting community action

9. Review and relaunch the Wildlife Enhancement Grant (WES) scheme

Progress at 30/09/2021

WES funding incorporated into Community Chest Grant

Progress at 31/10/2022

The Wildlife Enhancement Fund has been incorporated into the Community Chest with £20,000 ring-fenced for Biodiversity themed applications for 2022-23. Applications funded under this theme went to Shepreth Parish Council for the planting of wild orchids (June), Duxford Community Centre Events to plant an Oak Tree in the grounds of the Community Centre (July) and Cambridge Past, Present & Future to create a pollinator garden at Wandlebury Country Park (September).

Progress at 01/05/2023

Community nature projects funded over previous 6 months from December 2022 to May 2023:

- Meldreth multi use community garden
- Whittlesford nature trails

- Fulbourncommunity herb bed
- Duxford community allotments biodiversity project
- Swavesey biodiversity planting

Progress at 01/05/2024

Two applications were approved by the Grants Advisory Committee. One to help enhance the natural environment on a wooded piece of land in Meldreth, the other to Girton Local Nature Recovery Plan Group for the parish memorial garden. Publicity has been carried out to increase application numbers.

Progress at 01/05/2025

Since 1/5/24, eight applications were approved by GAC: Cambourne Church- £1,200 for a Nature Garden, Willingham Action Group - £1,091.32 for a Community Orchard hedge laying project, Foxton Parish Council - £2,000 for the planting of six large trees, Carlton cum Willingham Churchyard conservation group-£164 for six nest boxes and a bird bath, Ickleton Lion Community Pub - £1,844.25 for a garden renovation project, Melbourn, Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Interest Company - £750 for some wildflower seeds, Cambridge Sport Lakes Trust - £1,900 for a tern nesting raft

10. Provide six free trees to every parish

Progress at 30/09/2021

1st scheme: 72 Parish Councils have applied and 169 trees have been ordered so far

Progress at 31/10/2022

2nd scheme completed with 58 parish councils taking part and 228 trees planted

Progress at 05/01/2023

3rd 2022 scheme completed with 49 parish councils taking part

Progress at 05/01/2024

4th scheme: 46 parish councils have participated. 146 trees have been received and planted by parishes across the district. Follow up press release completed with photos submitted.

Progress at 05/01/2025

The scheme delivered Nov/Dec 2024. 47 parish councils participated. 162 trees were ordered and planted. Parishes chose to plant their trees in a wide selection of spaces including recreation grounds, village greens, woodlands areas, cemeteries, nature reserves and community orchards.

11. Explore options for delivering support for parish councils and community groups to create and deliver Local Nature Recovery Plans

Progress at 30/09/2021

Local nature recovery plans will be supported by funding for projects aimed at increasing biodiversity, which will be made available to community groups through the Community Chest.

Progress at 31/10/2022

Natural Cambridgeshire are developing a suite of resources to support local nature recovery. We are in discussion with them about supplementing this with advice and information specifically aimed at parish councils.

Progress at 05/01/2023

Natural Cambridgeshire's Local Nature Recovery Toolkit is being promoted alongside SCDC's Community Chest Biodiversity grant in relevant SCDC publications e.g., South Cambs Magazine. ZCC Newsletter

Progress at 05/01/2024

Case studies of visits to five community nature projects have been included in the ZCC newsletter and published on the website alongside directory of community projects. Directory of local nature projects and relevant contacts included on website to enable peer-to-peer support/discussion for community nature projects.

Progress at 05/01/2025

Preparation is underway to deliver a webinar on Biodiversity Duty for Parish and Town Councils in May 2025, presenting Local Nature Recovery Plans as one framework for a response to the Duty.

Six local case studies on nature and biodiversity were added to the new SCDC website.

12. Continue to support volunteers to play an active role in conserving and enhancing their local trees and woods through our role as registered Tree Warden network co-ordinator for this area with the Tree Council.

Progress at 30/09/2021

Tree Warden position vacant; recruitment ongoing

Progress at 31/10/2022

The Tree Warden scheme was impacted from the pandemic and the previous Tree Officer leaving. It is understood that the Tree Warden Network is self-sustaining with the long-term ambition to re-engage when SCDC Planning Tree Services have availability to take up.

Progress at 05/01/2023

Tree Protection Officer continues to support volunteers through the Tree Warden network.

Progress at 05/01/2024

A review of the process to designate and record Tree Protection Orders (TPO) across the district has commenced with two pilots (Harston & Boxworth). This work is ending, and a report will be prepared setting out the learning from these. A report has been produced by the Trees Team that highlights this work and is currently being assessed.

Progress at 05/01/2025

25% of existing TPOs have been checked and amended where necessary

13. Run a second Climate and Environment fortnight of online events highlighting successful community action and inspiring and encouraging further action.

Progress at 30/09/2021

A second fortnight of online events will take place early in 2022 to be planned from January 2022.

Progress at 31/10/2022

Six events held in February and March during a fortnight of Climate and Environment sessions including on Electric Vehicles, planning for climate change, community action and cycling. 198 people registered for the events in total and recordings of the events were put on the websites so that they could be accessed afterwards.

Autumn programme has included a Green Connect visit to Gamlingay Ecohub and a webinar on the Circular Economy.

Planning has started for a Climate Conference next year to connect climate stakeholders within the district and encourage work on getting to net zero.

Progress at 01/05/2023

Webinars on climate and nature topics were held quarterly

Progress at 01/05/2024

First Climate conference held November 2023

Case studies detailing visits to five community nature projects have been included in the ZCC newsletter and published on the SCDC website alongside directory of community projects.

Progress at 01/05/2025

Sustainable Shepreth shared a case study of their work, including biodiversity work, at the 2024 Local Climate Action Conference included nature projects. A Biodiversity Duty webinar is planned for 28 May 2025 with a local case study provided by Duxford Parish Council.

Six local case studies on nature and biodiversity were added to the new SCDC website.

14. Promote gardening for nature to our residents to increase awareness and better enable residents to preserve and enhance nature within their own spheres. (Action added in 2023)

Progress at 01/05/2024

Four seasonal 'gardening for nature' articles in S. Cambs Magazine. Allotment toolkit updates with information for allotment organisers on improving/supporting nature on allotment sites.' Help a Hedgehog' video produced and shared to staff and via SCDC social media. Councillors attended local events, including West Wickham's 'Gardening with Climate Change' event and chairing of the speaker panel at Histon and Impington Eco Fest.

Progress at 01/05/2025

Local charity Climate Change Gardening were funded via the ZCC grant to build an event kit to engage with gardeners and encourage them to adopt climate friendly practices.

A 'gardening for nature' article was included in the Summer 2024 edition of S. Cambs magazine.