

Mole Valley District Council Biodiversity Action Plan 2025/26 & 2026/2027

1. The Pillars

Six key pillars have been identified that underpin the MVDC Parks and Open Spaces Biodiversity Strategy 2025-2028 and the Annual Action Plan 2025/2026 – 2026/2027. They help define the interventions and mechanisms that will help MVDC in ensuring that it delivers its function in a way that contributes to meeting the Environment Act 2021 General Biodiversity Objective of conserving and enhancing biodiversity.

The six key pillars of the action plan are illustrated below:

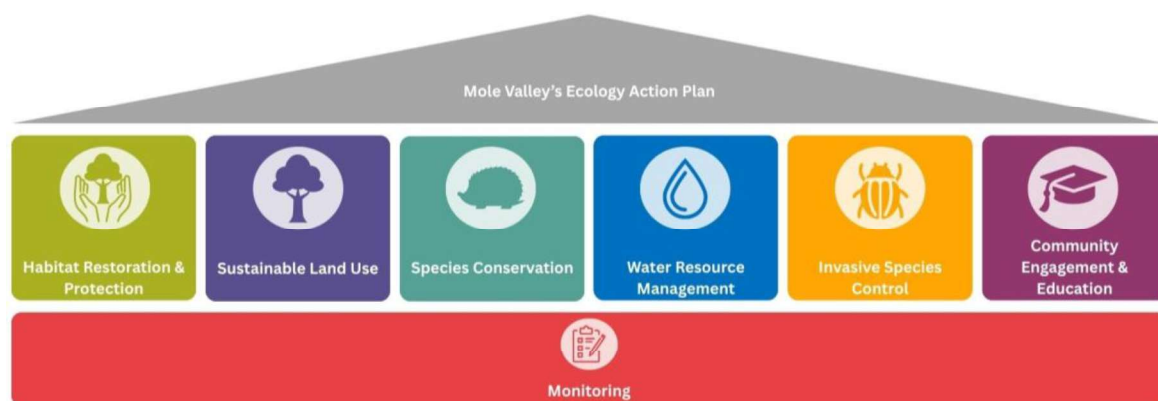


Figure 1: MVDC's Six Key Pillars

2. The Biodiversity Action Plan 2025/26- 2026/27

Using the list of potential interventions associated with each of the six pillars, as illustrated below, a range of actions are proposed for inclusion in the Biodiversity Action Plan for 2025/2026 - 2026/2027. A number of these interventions are long term and will need to span multiple years if the biodiversity benefits are to be realised.

These actions can be delivered within the existing Parks and Open Spaces budget. A suite of further projects are planned pending future funding opportunities.

Mole Valley Biodiversity Strategy

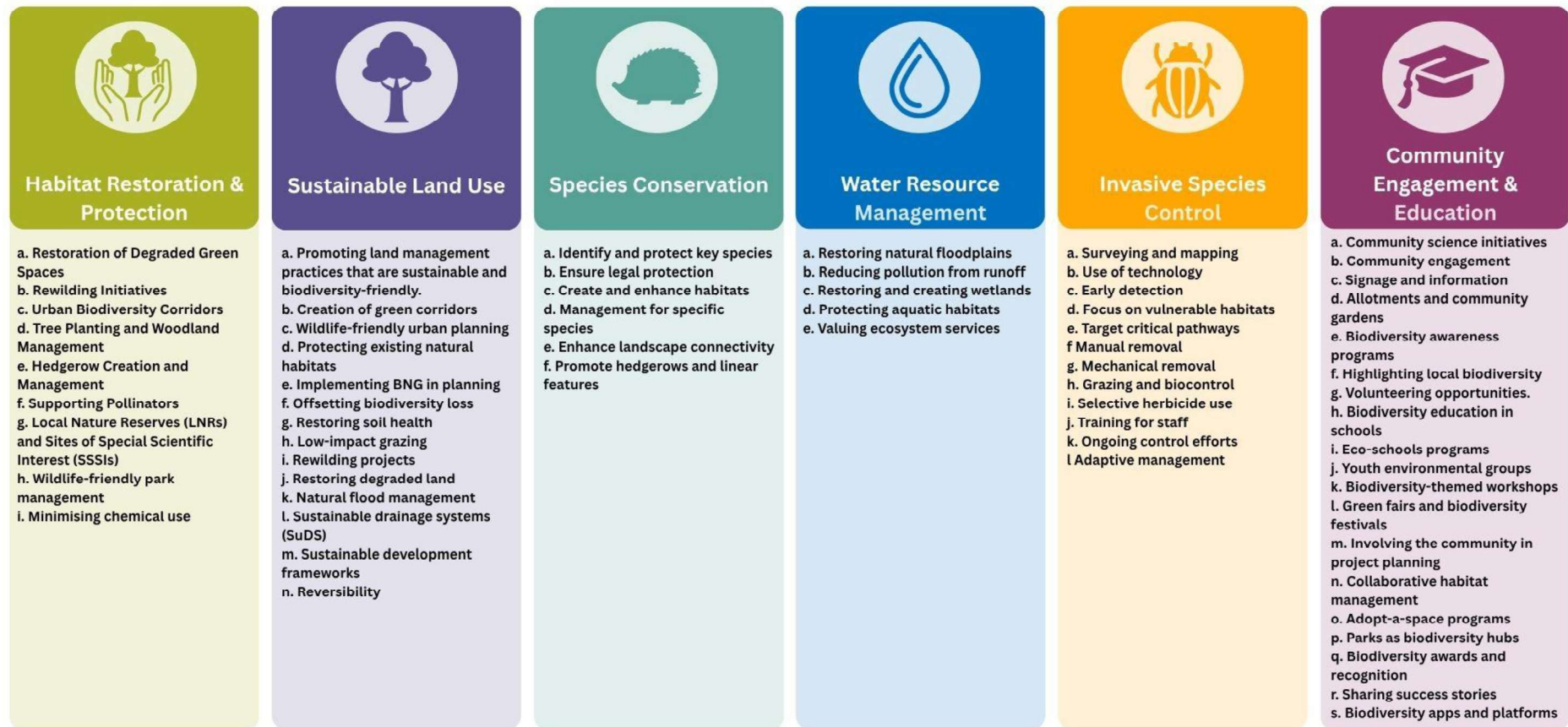


Figure 2: MVDC's project bank of interventions associated with each of the six pillars

Key Pillar	Action Plan 2025/26- 2026/27
Habitat Restoration and Protection	• Introduce wildlife friendly planting into existing shrub beds at the following sites: ○ Park Gardens ○ Mansion Gardens ○ Leatherhead War Memorial ○ Dorking War Memorial ○ Ashted Recreation Ground ○ Ridgeway Gardens ○ KGV Memorial ○ Meadowbank ○ Pippbrook Grounds Outcome(s) ➤ Creating pollinator friendly environments, maintaining flowering plants for longer to support bees, butterflies and other insects critical to biodiversity ➤ Enhance visual appeal, supporting resident and visitor wellbeing ➤ Raise awareness of the importance of urban biodiversity through Sustainable Mole Valley ➤ Citizen Science opportunity to participate in species surveys
	• Introduce drought tolerant and nectar rich plants at the upper entrance to Pippbrook Council Chamber, to diversify the existing planting on the sedum roof and provide a food source for insects and birds from July onwards when the current planting has died back. Outcome(s) ➤ Creating pollinator friendly environments, maintaining flowering plants for longer to support bees, butterflies and other insects critical to biodiversity ➤ Raise awareness of the opportunities available to landowners, agents and occupiers of integrating biodiversity opportunities in their facilities management practices

	➤ Enhance the public experience when accessing the civic heart of the Pippbrook campus, and enhancing kerb-appeal in connection with the proposed letting of space at Pippbrook to new occupier(s)
	• Introduce bird boxes across a variety of sites with size and species chosen to suit the local conditions • Install natural beehives in areas with no public access • Create bee banks to support ground nesting bees • Install hibernacula in a variety of such wetter areas and areas adjacent to ponds/water to support amphibians overwinter and suitable habitats such as grasslands, hedgerows and scrub which provides access to food sources and shelter. Outcome(s) ➤ Providing a range of different habitat opportunities, ○ Mitigating the loss of habitat arising from the loss of old trees and hedgerows and modern building methods; ○ Creating space to help arrest, if not increase in the number of, and diversity of wild bee populations; ○ Support amphibians and reptiles overwinter ➤ Opportunity to work with the local community and third sector groups and schools to engage in volunteering and complement existing educational initiatives.
	• Consult on the introduction of additional bee hives, and the pros and cons of this form of intervention at • Barnett Wood Lane allotments • Little Bookham allotments • Coldharbour allotments Outcomes ➤ Highlight the risk of disturbing existing wild bee populations whilst exploring the possibility of bee keeping ➤ If implemented, providing potential employment and business opportunities to local bee-keepers ➤ An opportunity to find out more about bee-keeping

- Introduce new Meadow Areas and B-lines at

- Meadowbank
- Dorking Cemetery
- Pippbrook Campus
- Cradhurst Recreation Ground
- Chrystie Road Recreation Ground
- Bookham Grove Open Space
- Kennel Lane Recreation Ground
- Ashted Recreation Ground
- Brockham Green

- Introduce B lines at

- King George V Recreation Ground
- Merebank
- Cannon Court
- Old Barn Hall
- Lower Road Recreation Ground

Outcomes

- Improved habitat for amphibians and invertebrates
- Enhancement of existing assets supporting wider wellbeing benefits for residents and visitors

Sustainable Lane Use –	• Explore potential grazing opportunities in the following locations: • Ashtead Park • Pixham Field • Milton Heath and the Nower • Milton Gore Coldharbour • Chart Park • Inholms Lane Claypit • River Lane fields Outcomes ➤ Reintroducing natural disturbance with animals like cattle, pigs, horses and sheep, provided they are free from chemical treatment and are introduced in controlled numbers, can reinvigorate the ecology of the site. ➤ Restoring soil health ➤ Protecting existing natural habitats ➤ Sheep grazing can improve the quality of the grassland sward without mechanical intervention
Species Conservation	• Continue to manage existing scrubland at the following sites • Ranmore Road BMX site • Meadowbank (adjacent to Tutts Close and West of Meadowbank Stadium) • Holmwood Park balancing pond • Riverside Leatherhead Outcomes ➤ Whilst they might be seen as scruffy, they provide vital nectar, fruit, shelter/habitat and breeding sites. ➤ They can support rare and niche species, such as the Nightingale which is listed as of conservation concern and at risk of disappearing altogether (Red List) (Ranmore).

	• Introduce selective new enclosed fenced areas with associated hedgerow creation to provide a habitat for birds, insects and small mammals. Management techniques such as coppicing and layering further support their biodiversity value. The first site identified for this intervention is the Nower. Outcomes ➤ Whilst they might be seen as scruffy, they provide nectar, fruit, shelter and breeding sites. ➤ They can support rare and niche species, protected from disturbance by dogs and cats, and users of the public open space. Elsewhere this management approach has resulted in the Nightjar, Turtle dove, Yellow Hammer and Lesser Whitethroat, hedgehogs and dormice overtime all benefitting from the habitat provided by overgrown hedgerows and dense scrub.
	• Explore possible introduction of new water features in the following locations (where ponds were historically present) • Woodfield Ashtead (new seasonal pond) • Introduce new pond at Pixham Lane Grazing site • Create seasonal pond at Thorncroft Manor Leatherhead Outcomes ➤ Provide a rich habitat which supports a wide range of other species ➤ Potentially alleviate localised standing water/flooding of adjacent paths/track ➤ Restores historic natural features.
	• Explore introduction of new orchard planting in the following locations • Pixham Grazing • Kennel Lane Recreation Ground • Mansion Gardens • Ashtead Park Outcomes ➤ Provide a vital habitat for specialised invertebrates and support a wealth of other species ➤ Blossom of traditional orchards provides a valuable early source of nectar for insects in early spring when other sources are scarce

	➤ Traditional large rootstock orchards provide vital habitat as trees mature to provide niche aerial habitats with standing deadwood and can helping to link, species connectivity, to adjacent veteran trees. ➤ Provides an historic cultural connection to the past and character of landscape and the potential for ecological continuity when planted near historic fruit trees i.e. Pixham Grazing.
Water Resource Management	• Explore collecting water run-off from sites such as Pippbrook roof • Explore water collection from sheds on our allotments Outcomes ➤ More sustainable irrigation of plants ➤ Reducing costs through no longer needing a bowser and vehicle
Invasive Species Control	Working with our grounds maintenance contractor, continue to minimise use of herbicide, building on the existing practice to reduce concentration levels and only applying in those contexts where there is no other proven alternative. Continue to regularly monitor vulnerable habitats and critical pathways for invasive species and work with volunteers to manually remove them
Community Engagement and Communication	• Working with the Climate Action team, continue to communicate and engage with residents, communities and businesses to mobilise biodiversity conservation and enhancement across MVDC • Support the update and promotion of Sustainable Mole Valley • Provide content to support regular Social Media updates and blog posts • Seek to support and promote events and activities of partners in the MVDC community • Explore working with local groups such as The Patchworking Garden Project or Leatherhead Community Hub to enrich planting in parks and open spaces Outcome ➤ Greater awareness of the opportunities to conserve and enhance biodiversity, and highlighting opportunities for individuals, organisations and businesses to contribute