

A Mole Valley which is  
Fairer, Greener and provides  
Opportunity for all



# MVDC Parks and Open Spaces Biodiversity Strategy 2025-2028

## Contents Page

|                                                                         |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>MVDC Parks and Open Spaces Biodiversity Strategy 2025-2028 .....</b> | <b>1</b>  |
| <i>Foreword .....</i>                                                   | <i>3</i>  |
| <i>Introduction.....</i>                                                | <i>4</i>  |
| <i>Biodiversity Strategy - Context .....</i>                            | <i>4</i>  |
| <i>Implementation.....</i>                                              | <i>5</i>  |
| The role of MVDC Parks and Open Spaces .....                            | 6         |
| <i>Planting Schemes.....</i>                                            | <i>7</i>  |
| <i>B Lines, Bee hives and bee friendly areas.....</i>                   | <i>7</i>  |
| <i>Habitat management and creation .....</i>                            | <i>7</i>  |
| Meadow areas .....                                                      | 8         |
| Heathland areas .....                                                   | 8         |
| Woodland and Wood Pasture .....                                         | 8         |
| Water bodies.....                                                       | 8         |
| Orchards .....                                                          | 9         |
| Scrub land.....                                                         | 9         |
| Grazing land.....                                                       | 9         |
| <i>Funding.....</i>                                                     | <i>10</i> |
| <i>Reviewing the Strategy and Monitoring Implementation .....</i>       | <i>11</i> |
| <i>The Pillars .....</i>                                                | <i>13</i> |
| Habitat Restoration and Protection.....                                 | 13        |
| Species Conservation: .....                                             | 15        |
| Invasive Species Control.....                                           | 16        |
| Sustainable Land Use .....                                              | 18        |
| Water Resource Management: .....                                        | 20        |
| Community Engagement and Education .....                                | 21        |
| <i>Alternative formats.....</i>                                         | <i>24</i> |
| Document history .....                                                  | 24        |

# Foreword

In October 2022, Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) declared an Ecological Emergency. This was in response to the state of ecological decline in the UK, which has been well documented, with huge losses of flora and fauna resulting in the UK being ranked one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, ranked 29th lowest out of 218 countries. On the global scale, we are living through a period of a catastrophic ecological loss.

Whilst we can't solve this catastrophe by ourselves, we have a moral and now a legal responsibility as a custodian of public land to make a contribution to conserving and enhancing biodiversity in our district. This also makes a key contribution to supporting the wellbeing of our residents today and in the future.

I am delighted to introduce Mole Valley's first Biodiversity Strategy for its Parks and Open Spaces. It represents the final element to complement our Climate Change Strategy and our Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. Whilst it plays a key role to securing progress against our Greener priority, but it assists in a number of ways to further our Wellbeing and Opportunity priorities.

Whilst MVDC has a long record of managing its open spaces with nature in mind, with sensitive planting, no mow areas and engaging local volunteers to help manage areas for nature conservation, this Biodiversity Strategy provides a framework, accompanied by an action plan, to delivery biodiversity enhancements in our district for the two years from 2025/2026 to and including 2026/2027 and to provide a foundation for the successor unitary authority to build upon in the future.

**Councillor Claire Malcomson**  
**Cabinet Member for Climate**  
**Mole Valley District Council**

# Introduction

## **What do we mean by biodiversity?**

Biodiversity is the variety of life within species, between species and of ecosystems, and is most commonly measured by species richness.”

## **Statutory Framework - The General Biodiversity Objective**

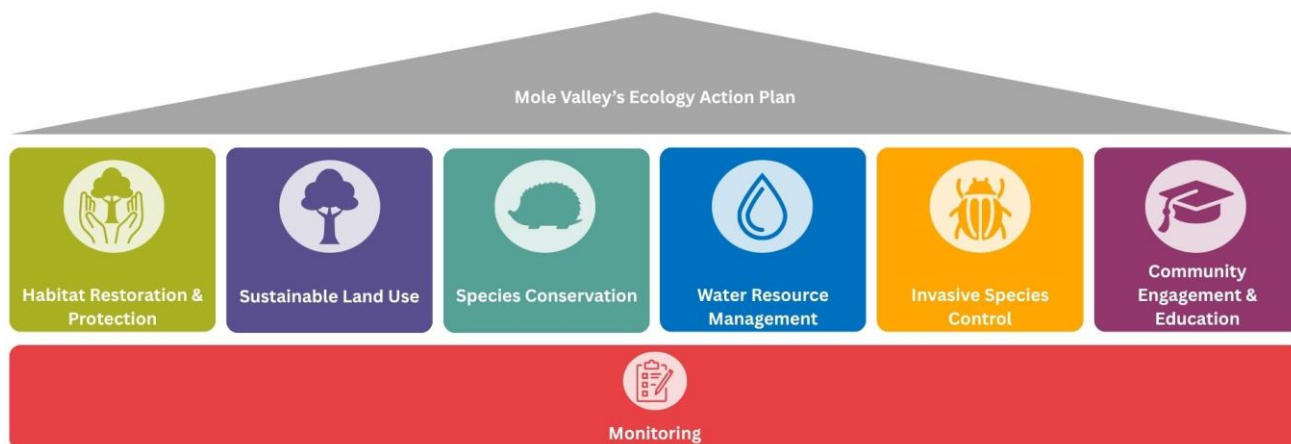
The Environment Act 2021 amended the public authority diversity duty set out in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act 2006) so that public authorities are required to not only have regard to conserving biodiversity but also to enhancing biodiversity when delivering their functions, known as the ‘general biodiversity objective’. That means that MVDC is required to consider what actions it can take to further the general biodiversity objective, identify those policies and specific objectives which will lead to biodiversity conservation and enhancements, and then take action accordingly.

It also introduced a new requirement on local planning authorities and local authorities to produce biodiversity reports setting out actions taken under the section 102 Environment Act 2021 general biodiversity objective. The first report will be considered by Cabinet in March 2026.

Biodiversity remains a key priority for the UK Government and a revised statutory Environment Improvement Plan (EIP) is expected to be published during 2025.

## Biodiversity Strategy - Context

This Biodiversity Strategy focuses on what Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) can do in its capacity as landowner and custodian of public open space and parks as well as of those open spaces where there may be no public access. It is also relevant to those sites held on charitable trust where MVDC is the sole corporate trustee. It is split into six key themes or pillars which provide a framework as to the nature and the range of potential interventions available to MVDC as landowner.



It should be noted that other relevant strategies include MVDC's Asset Management Strategy, Climate Change Strategy, the Climate Adaptation Strategy, and Tree Planting and Replacement Strategy.

MVDC also has another role as the Local Planning Authority and through the adopted Local Plan 2020-2039, it has adopted a policy requirement for development to deliver 20% biodiversity net gain (BNG) which is over and above the statutory requirement of 10%.

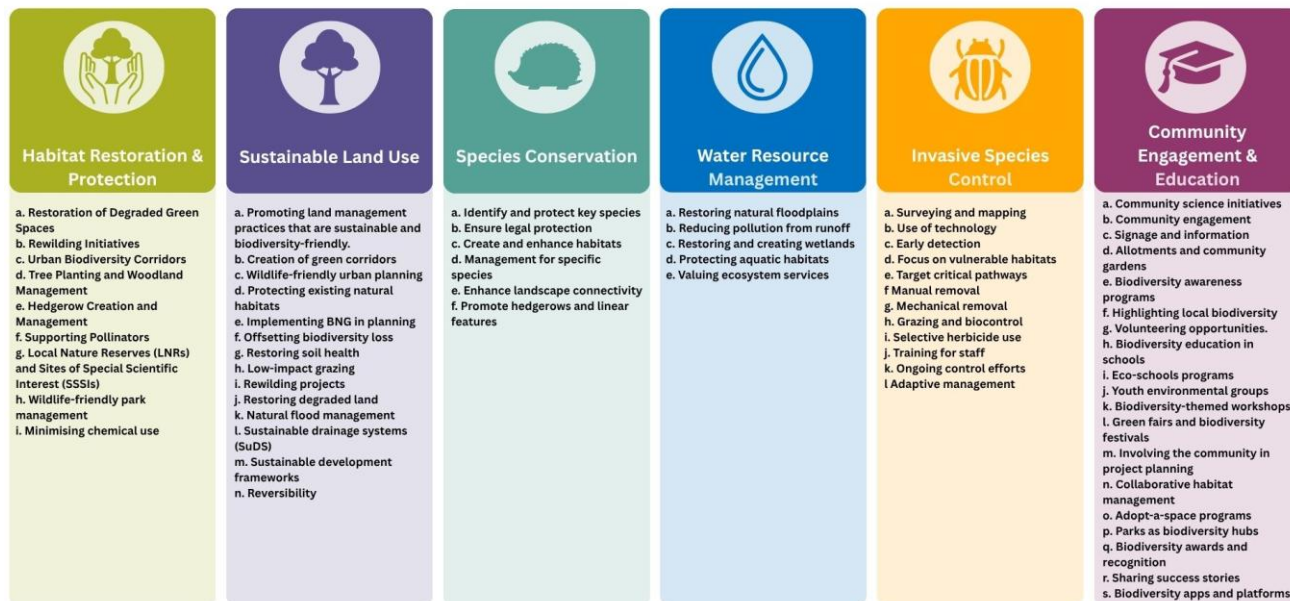
## Implementation

Within each pillar of the Strategy, there are many potential interventions that could be adopted by MVDC in managing its land, Parks and Open Spaces. These are illustrated below and a brief explanation of each potential intervention is set out in the appendices to the Strategy.

The Strategy will be implemented through an initial Action Plan for the eighteen month period 2025/26 -2026/27 which will select the interventions to be adopted in that period from the various pillars with funding sources clearly identified.

In 2026/2027, it is anticipated that an Annual Report on the implementation and impact of the Strategy will be made to Cabinet with recommendations for continuing implementation for 2027/2028 being the first year of the unitary authority succeeding MVDC.

## Mole Valley Biodiversity Strategy



It is critical to embed monitoring practices alongside the Strategy and relevant Action Plan. The regular tracking of biodiversity health, including through regular surveys and evaluation of initiatives will inform and enable our Parks and Open Spaces management practices to better contribute towards the Biodiversity Objective.

## The role of MVDC Parks and Open Spaces

MVDC is responsible for 42 open spaces, 10 allotment sites and 305 hectares of open spaces, including 9 Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (**SNCIs**) and 3 Local Nature Reserves (**LNRs**). This provides a significant opportunity for MVDC to explore opportunities to both conserve and enhance biodiversity.

MVDC has an established record of managing its open spaces with nature in mind, with sensitive planting, no mow areas and engaging local volunteers to help manage areas for nature conservation.

This strategy sets out a range of different approaches for delivering biodiversity enhancements in the District, including some changes in the way in which MVDC manages its parks and open spaces. This approach will also assist in making MVDC's landholding more resilient to some of the impacts of climate change.

# Planting Schemes

MVDC manages over 25 open spaces throughout the district with formal bedding. These areas can all be enriched with wildlife friendly plants that not only make the sites look attractive but also provide a valuable source of nectar. There are also opportunities to introduce drought tolerant planting. On occasion drought-tolerant planting may require the use of non-native species.

## B Lines, Bee hives and bee friendly areas

The UK has around 270 species of bee. The most familiar is the bumblebee, but the 250 types of solitary bee are less well known, nesting alone in cavities or underground. Different varieties of bee also have different foraging preferences based on the flower scent, colour and shape. For instance, bees with long tongues, which can reach the nectar of deep flowers, fulfil a task that other bees cannot. Within the UK, 17 species have already become regionally extinct, with another 25 species at risk of extinction. Losing the variety of the country's wild bee species could leave many cultivated and wild plants without effective pollinators. By creating areas for bee hives and areas of ground where solitary bees can nest, we will be able to encourage an increase in bee populations.

B-lines are an insect pathway which are part of a national initiative that is championed by the conservation charity Buglife. These are long grass areas which create a network across sites benefitting bees, butterflies and other insects and invertebrates, as well as wildlife.

MVDC currently permits beekeeping at Ranmore Road Orchard, and at five of our allotment sites: Ranmore Road, Bentsbrook, North Holmwood, Coldharbour, Little Bookham and Barnett Wood Lane, Leatherhead. Any additional sites for beehives at our allotments would require consultation with key stakeholders, including the allotment holders and site agents, beekeeping organisations and take account of the risk of vandalism, public nuisance and the risk of disrupting the existing bee population through competing for forage or spreading disease.

## Habitat management and creation

The loss of biodiversity is gradual and not always obvious. We accept a shifted baseline of our expectations regarding the amount of nature we expect. This perception of what we are used to makes us forget what loss has occurred, and with it, what makes for a healthy ecosystem. An abundance of wildlife known to past generations is forgotten and the new accepted normal is what we expect.

Perhaps one of the most palpable ways this loss is felt is through the loss of birds and bird song, once so prevalent. Bird numbers have declined rapidly in the UK since the 1960s, with an estimated 40 million fewer birds. Whilst there are a number of reasons for this, loss of habitat is a factor, with old trees lost, hedgrows grubbed out and modern building methods taking away valuable nesting sites. The same losses are seen with a dramatic decline in the

number of insects, with a 60% decline in the last 20 years. Habitat creation such as this is vital to slow the loss of this life.

Introducing bird boxes, and where appropriate, making use of trees felled as part of MVDC tree management activities will support the creation of beetle and bug hotels. Retaining deadwood and managing hedgerows play a role in supporting certain fungi. Other options include installing natural beehives, creating beebanks for ground nesting bees.

## Meadow areas

Meadows act as a hugely valuable food source and habitat. The UK is estimated to have lost 97% of its wildflower meadows since 1945, and it is important that MVDC acknowledges the need for similar habitat within the areas it manages. MVDC actively has and continues to seek areas which can be left as long grass areas to address this where possible. A national initiative by the conservation charity Buglife is encouraging *B-Lines* which are 'insect pathways', to link areas running through our countryside and towns, linking existing wildlife areas like a railway network. This aims to create a new habitat for bees, butterflies and a host of other wildlife, giving a lifeline to vital pollinators.

## Heathland areas

Heathland is very rare habitat type with only 2% of the county classified as heathland. Surrey has lost up to 85% of its heathland in the last 200 years. It is essential that MVDC preserves and enhances the small fragment it has in order to protect this important habitat type. Milton Heath and The Nower are the largest example of this habitat type.

## Woodland and Wood Pasture

Surrey is the most wooded county in England and this is reflected in MVDC's land holding. Many of MVDC's countryside sites are a combination of fragments of ancient woodland, more recent secondary woodland and historic wood pasture parkland. Much of the woodland we see today is a result of the decline of grazing after World War One. Whilst some of these sites are not as ecologically rich as ancient woodland, these wooded areas play a vital role in contributing to biodiversity as well as storing carbon.

The historic wood pasture and parkland sites are a Priority Habitat (UK BAP) in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. As such they are a very important habitat type supporting ancient and veteran trees, species rich grassland and associated specialist fungi, lichens and invertebrates. Notable examples of this habitat type are found at Ashted Park, Ashted Gap and Betchworth Park.

## Water bodies

One of the best ways of bringing wildlife into an area is through water. Whether found in a garden or part of an agricultural landscape, ponds are oases of wildlife. Even small ponds can support a wealth of species, and collectively ponds play a key role in supporting freshwater wildlife. Whether in semi-natural environments, gardens, farms or copses, wetlands are a biodiversity hotspot.



However this valuable habitat type is under threat, and it is estimated that around half a million ponds have been lost in the last century, with 1 in 5 remaining ponds thought to be in poor condition. Small ponds are vulnerable to silting up, and contamination from pollutant run-off such as road salts and other human activities. Ponds are also under threat from recreational activities such as dogs churning up sediment and shedding poisonous medicinal chemicals, and feeding waterfowl, which encourages high populations and in turn causes nutrient problems. These factors all contribute to degrade water bodies.

There are opportunities at certain of MVDC's parks and open spaces to introduce new ponds (Pixham Grazing Land), improve water quality (Meadowbank and the Pipp Brook), introducing of swales in areas which flood or extend existing wetland areas to provide additional containment (Leatherhead Riverside, Woodfield Ashtead) and restoration of existing ponds (Kennel Lane, Mansion House Gardens and Ashtead Park).

## Orchards

It is estimated that England and Wales have lost around 80% of their orchards since 1900. Traditional orchards are a very important ecological habitat, similar in structure and ecology to wood pasture and parkland, providing a vital habitat for specialised invertebrates and supporting a wealth of other species. The blossom of traditional orchards provides a valuable early source of nectar for insects in early spring when other sources are scarce. Planting long-lived, large rootstock, traditional local varieties of apple in our open spaces can help address this loss and provide a valuable food source for insects and mammals.

## Scrub land

Areas of scrub are often seen as neglected waste areas and 'scruffy'. However, these areas are often of immense wildlife benefit, providing nectar, fruit and shelter and breeding sites. A densely scrubby site such as Ranmore Road BMX site was recently found to have the very rare Red List species Nightingale bird, which are niche habitat specialists. Another example of the nearby Knepp Estate, near Horsham, shows that overgrown hedgerows and dense scrub can help form a vital habitat for very rare breeds such as the Nightjar, yellowhammer and lesser whitethroat as well as for increasingly rare mammals such as hedgehogs and dormice.

Whilst unmanaged scrub can develop into secondary woodland, and as such does need managing, this often takes the form of cyclical cutting allowing various stages of growth. MVDC will seek opportunities to preserve this important habitat type where appropriate.

## Grazing land

Grazing, if done sensitively, can be a highly successful tool for ecological restoration. By reintroducing natural disturbance with animals, a site which is largely ecologically moribund can be reinvigorated by keystone species such as cattle, pigs and horses provided they are free from chemical treatment. The remarkable ecological recovery at the nearby Knepp Estate has been driven by very sensitive reintroductions of large herbivores in controlled numbers that have transformed the landscape in a very short space of time. The wider approach of rewilding runs on these lines. Herbivores can also help in the management of certain grasslands and heathland. Light sheep grazing at Pixham Lane for instance would improve the quality of the grassland sward without the need for mechanical intervention.

Sites MVDC is looking at for potential grazing opportunities are:

- Ashtead Park
- Pixham Lane Grazing
- Milton Heath and The Nower
- Milton Gore Coldharbour
- Chart Park
- Inholms Lane Claypit
- River Lane fields

## Funding

A number of the measures outlined above can be delivered at no additional cost, or within existing resources to MVDC.

These include:

- **Continuing the introduction of new meadow areas** can be achieved by altering the grass cutting schedule within our grounds maintenance contract, by moving from a regular grass cut to a meadow cut. These areas will grow from April onwards and be cut as a traditional meadow in August, after the majority of wildflowers have flowered and set seed. The new meadow areas will be monitored for the variety of grasses and wildflowers that appear. Support through plug planting and or sowing of suitable native grasses and flowers could be considered.
- **Introducing and extending B-lines** can also be achieved altering the grass cutting areas and schedule within our grounds maintenance contract.
- **Retention or expansion of Scrubland**
- **Orchard style planting** through the introduction of heritage variety orchard trees to complement existing old apple or fruit tree stock to provide a complementary habitat type.

In 2024/2025, the Climate Action team established a new website, [Sustainable Mole Valley](#), funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which provides a platform to support and promote opportunities for our residents to support and showcase biodiversity initiatives. This platform can be used by the MVDC Parks team and partner organisations to help deliver the **Community Engagement and Education** pillar. Examples of such initiatives include community gardens, including one at Goodwyns.

In May 2021, MVDC established the **Mole Valley Community Lottery**. As well as providing access to funding for a range of good causes, for every £1 ticket purchased, 10p is donated by the Lottery to a fund run by MVDC, the Environment Fund, which supports tree planting initiatives as well as other climate change initiatives.

Other interventions will have cost or resource implications and the availability of funding and resources will influence the scope and ambition of the annual Action Plan. Some potential avenues for securing additional investment (capital) or revenue funding as well as support in kind (volunteering hours) are outlined below.

**Contractor Social Value Commitment** MVDC adopted its sustainable procurement charter in 2022. With the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023, and the expectation that social value will form a key part of the evaluation (up to 10% weighting) when procuring and awarding of contracts, there is an opportunity to secure further support – in kind or financial – towards delivering some of the interventions outlined in this Strategy.

**Business Community** Many of our larger employers also have a statutory or a voluntary commitment to further Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) objectives and regularly seek opportunities to contribute to communities in which they have a significant footprint. This may be support in kind through volunteering hours, donations, or financial support or by adopting their own biodiversity objectives on their sites, business premises and business parks. Leveraging the Economic Development team's forums, such as the Business Leader Breakfasts, the Networking Lunches and the Mole Valley for Business channels can assist with connecting these businesses with potential opportunities to enhance biodiversity in the district.

**DEFRA** is a potential source of external financial support. This can take the form of local authority grant funding (section 31 grant), although this may cease as a result of the reform of local government funding, the Fairer Funding Review currently out to consultation. In addition, DEFRA operates a number of grant schemes for land managers and these will need to be explored as part of the first annual Action Plan to assess eligibility and strategic alignment.

**Statutory and non-statutory partners** may also be a source of support and funding, including Surrey Hills National Landscape, the Environment Agency and SES Water. There are opportunities to work with other landowners, business park managing agents, and businesses as well as resident associations, estate management companies and housing associations with stock in Mole Valley. We work with a number of third sector and volunteer led organisations and these provide both wellbeing benefits for their members and volunteers but also significant value in volunteer hours. These include the Friends of Deepdene (who provide support on sites beyond the Deepdene) and the Lower Mole Countryside Trust.

**Community Infrastructure Levy** Neighbourhood CIL and potentially Strategic CIL may also be a source of funding support to enable some of the higher cost interventions to be achieved. The Parks and Open Spaces team will continue to explore and apply for these funding opportunities where applicable. Any applications will be subject to the usual governance arrangements for these funding programmes.

## Reviewing the Strategy and Monitoring Implementation

With the prospect of Local Government Reorganisation, the duration of this Strategy is time limited for a three year period with the final year being the first year of the new unitary so as to ensure that for the Mole Valley district, activity continues. It has been prepared in order to assist MVDC in discharging the General Biodiversity Objective but in a way which embeds flexibility to adapt to the changing landscape of local government.

It provides an opportunity to make progress through delivery of the Action Plans before MVDC ceases to exist and to embed good practices upon which further progress can be made by the successor East Surrey unitary.

A report for Cabinet in 2026/27 will be prepared in relation to the activities delivered during against the agreed Action Plan

# The Pillars

## Habitat Restoration and Protection

**Objective To restore degraded habitats and protect existing natural environments.**

Some of the potential interventions are described below.

- a. **Restoration of Degraded Green Spaces:** Revitalising urban parks, abandoned land, or degraded habitats (such as former industrial sites) by planting native species, creating wildflower meadows, or restoring natural landscapes to support local wildlife.
- b. **Rewilding Initiatives:** Reintroducing native species and allowing natural processes to shape the landscape, such as restoring woodlands or wetlands. This might involve planting trees, improving river corridors, or encouraging the return of species like beavers to manage water and habitat naturally.
- c. **Urban Biodiversity Corridors:** Establishing “green corridors” that connect parks, gardens, and nature reserves, allowing species to move and thrive across urban environments. This can include enhancing roadside verges, railway embankments, and riverside paths with wildlife-friendly planting.
- d. **Tree Planting and Woodland Management:** Increasing tree cover through tree-planting schemes, especially with native species, while also managing existing woodlands for biodiversity. Encouraging a mix of species, ages, and structures in woodlands supports a variety of wildlife.
- e. **Hedgerow Creation and Management:** Planting and maintaining hedgerows to act as habitats for birds, insects, and small mammals. Proper management, including traditional practices like coppicing and layering, enhances their biodiversity value.
- f. **Supporting Pollinators:** Creating pollinator-friendly environments through wildflower planting, maintaining flowering plants year-round, and reducing pesticide use to support bees, butterflies, and other insects critical to biodiversity. The use of the term pesticide includes insecticides.
- g. **Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs):** Establishing and maintaining LNRs and supporting the conservation of SSSIs can offer targeted protection for important habitats and species at a local level.
- h. **Wildlife-friendly park management:** Rather than intensive management (e.g., frequent mowing), parks and green spaces are managed to promote biodiversity. This can include leaving areas of long grass, planting wildflower meadows, and creating log piles and ponds for insects and amphibians.

- i. **Minimising chemical use:** Pesticides (which for the avoidance of doubt includes insecticides) and herbicides should only be used when it is judged, on balance, that there is no suitable effective alternative. If not possible to eliminate, then reduce the use of chemical herbicides and pesticides in public spaces, focusing on organic or mechanical means of controlling weeds and pests to protect pollinators and other wildlife.

## Species Conservation:

### Objective To protect endangered or threatened species

Some of the potential interventions are described below.

- a. **Identify and protect key species:** Local authorities should identify species of conservation concern, such as those listed under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP), and ensure their habitats are protected from development or degradation. This might include species like hedgehogs, bats, dormice, water voles, and specific bird species.
- b. **Ensure legal protection:** Ensure local planning decisions comply with UK wildlife laws, including protecting habitats of species listed in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, and the Environment Act 2021.
- c. **Create and enhance habitats:** Implement targeted habitat improvements for species in need, such as planting hedgerows for birds and small mammals, creating ponds for amphibians, or enhancing woodlands for bats and owls.
- d. **Management for specific species:** Adjust habitat management plans for specific species' needs. For example, grazing management in meadows can help ground-nesting birds. Reducing pesticide (which term for the avoidance of doubt includes insecticides) use benefits pollinators.
- e. **Enhance landscape connectivity:** Establish wildlife corridors, green infrastructure, and stepping-stone habitats between parks, woodlands, and other natural areas. This allows species like hedgehogs, badgers, and reptiles to move freely, maintaining genetic diversity.
- f. **Promote hedgerows and linear features:** Well-managed hedgerows, riparian strips along rivers, and connected woodlands act as highways for species, enabling migration and dispersal.

# Invasive Species Control

**Objective: Managing or eradicating non-native species that threaten local ecosystems and biodiversity.**

Some of the potential interventions are described below.

- a. **Surveying and mapping:** Conduct regular surveys to identify and map the presence of invasive species in public spaces, parks, and waterways. This can be done in partnership with ecological consultants or local wildlife groups.
- b. **Use of technology:** Utilise GIS mapping tools to track the spread of invasive species and prioritise areas for intervention. Data from community science apps like iRecord and iNaturalist (both free to use) can help gather and share information on species distribution.
- c. **Early detection:** Implement an early warning system for new invasive species. Early intervention is often the most cost-effective way to prevent their establishment.
- d. **Focus on vulnerable habitats:** Prioritise control efforts in areas where invasive species pose the greatest threat to biodiversity, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), nature reserves, and important wildlife corridors.
- e. **Target critical pathways:** Focus on pathways where invasive species are likely to spread, such as rivers and transport routes. For example, removing invasive plants from riverbanks can prevent their seeds from being carried downstream.
- f. **Manual removal:** Organise manual removal programs for invasive plants like Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam, or Giant Hogweed. For some species, hand-pulling or digging is effective, while for others, a more coordinated approach is needed. Volunteers and local community groups can be involved in these efforts.
- g. **Mechanical removal:** For larger infestations, mechanical equipment like mowers or excavators may be required to control invasive species. However, care must be taken to prevent further spread through soil or plant fragments.
- h. **Grazing and biocontrol:** Use controlled grazing or biological control agents to manage some invasive species. For example, introducing grazing animals like goats or sheep to areas infested with certain invasive plants can help control their spread.
- i. **Selective herbicide use:** Where manual or mechanical control is not sufficient, use targeted herbicides to control invasive plant species, minimising the concentration levels and ensuring application methods are suitable and targeted.
- j. **Training for staff:** Ensure our staff and contractors are trained in the safe and effective application of herbicides, particularly near sensitive habitats such as watercourses.



- k. **Ongoing control efforts:** Invasive species control is often a long-term commitment. Implement regular monitoring and follow-up removal efforts to ensure invasive species do not re-establish after initial eradication efforts.
- l. **Adaptive management:** Adjust control strategies based on the effectiveness of interventions and changes in the spread or behaviour of invasive species. Use lessons learned to improve future management plans.

## Sustainable Land Use

**Objective: Promoting land management practices that are sustainable and biodiversity-friendly.**

- a. **Creation of green corridors:** Sustainable land use integrates green corridors—networks of green spaces such as parks, woodlands, hedgerows, and waterways that connect fragmented habitats. These corridors allow wildlife to move between areas, maintaining biodiversity and reducing habitat isolation.
- b. **Wildlife-friendly urban planning:** New developments incorporate green roofs, living walls, and urban gardens to support pollinators, birds, and small mammals. Retaining mature trees and integrating wildlife corridors into urban spaces is a key aspect.
- c. **Protecting existing natural habitats:** Ensure that areas of ecological value, such as woodlands, meadows, and wetlands, are preserved and enhanced in the face of new development. These areas act as crucial refuges for wildlife.
- d. **Implementing BNG in planning:** Under the Environment Act 2021, developments are required to deliver a biodiversity net gain, meaning that projects must leave the environment in a better state than before. This could involve creating new habitats, restoring degraded land, or enhancing existing green spaces. This is addressed through the MVDC Local Plan 2020-2039
- e. **Offsetting biodiversity loss:** Whilst on-site is the preference, where biodiversity cannot be maintained on-site, developers may be required to provide off-site compensation through habitat creation or restoration projects, ensuring there is a net positive impact on biodiversity across the Mole Valley area. This is addressed through the MVDC Local Plan 2020-2039.
- f. **Restoring soil health:** Promoting practices that enhance soil biodiversity, such as reducing chemical inputs, preventing soil erosion, and adding organic matter and organisms such as worms, is crucial for maintaining healthy ecosystems and supporting a range of species.
- g. **Low-impact grazing:** Sustainable grazing practices (e.g. using native livestock breeds for conservation grazing) can maintain species-rich grasslands and prevent scrub encroachment, promoting diverse plant and insect communities.
- h. **Rewilding projects:** Setting aside certain areas for rewilding, where natural processes are allowed to take over with minimal human intervention. This could involve reintroducing native species like beavers or restoring natural floodplains and wetlands, which improve biodiversity while providing ecosystem services such as flood protection.
- i. **Restoring degraded land:** Sustainable land use includes reclaiming and restoring brownfield sites or degraded landscapes (e.g., former industrial or mining sites) by planting native species and creating habitats that support local wildlife.

- m. **Natural flood management:** Sustainable land use focuses on restoring natural hydrological processes to reduce flood risk and enhance biodiversity. This could involve creating or restoring wetlands, re-meandering rivers, and maintaining vegetated buffer strips along watercourses to improve water quality and provide habitat for aquatic species.
- n. **Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS):** SuDS are integrated into urban planning to manage stormwater in a way that supports biodiversity. These systems, including ponds, swales, and rain gardens, can provide habitats for birds, amphibians, and insects while reducing surface water flooding.
- o. **Local biodiversity action plans:** Aligning land use policies with the goals of biodiversity action plans (BAPs) and local nature recovery strategies, ensuring that land use supports national and regional biodiversity goals.
- p. **Sustainable development frameworks:** Framing land use planning within sustainable development principles, ensuring that economic, environmental, and social factors are considered equally when making decisions that impact biodiversity.
- q. **Reversibility:** ensure reversibility if temporary/limited-life-span land use is proposed, for example solar farms on agricultural land. For example, the use of low impact mounting systems reduces soil impact and allows for easier restoration.

## Water Resource Management:

**Objective:** prioritise the enhancement of biodiversity by improving habitats for aquatic species and ensuring that water bodies support a wide range of plants and animals.

- a. **Restoring natural floodplains:** Support the restoration of natural floodplains, allowing rivers to overflow safely into designated areas during periods of high water. This reduces the risk of flooding in urban areas while enhancing wetland habitats for wildlife.
- b. **Reducing pollution from runoff:** Manage pollution risks by promoting good agricultural practices (e.g., reducing the use of fertilizer and pesticide (which term for the avoidance of doubt includes insecticides) and minimising urban runoff that carries pollutants into rivers and lakes. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) can help filter and treat polluted water before it reaches watercourses.
- c. **Restoring and creating wetlands:** Restore degraded wetlands and create new ones to enhance water storage, improve biodiversity, and act as natural filters for water quality. Wetlands can also sequester carbon and mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- d. **Protecting aquatic habitats:** Managing rivers, ponds, and lakes to support diverse aquatic species is crucial for maintaining ecological balance. Efforts could include reintroducing native species, removing barriers to fish migration, and maintaining riparian buffers to reduce erosion and protect waterways from pollution.
- e. **Valuing ecosystem services:** Recognise and incorporate the value of ecosystem services provided by healthy water bodies and wetlands, such as water filtration, flood protection, carbon storage, and recreation. Managing water resources to enhance these services ensures the long-term sustainability of both natural environments and human use.

## Community Engagement and Education

**Objective:** Involving local communities and educating the public about the importance of biodiversity conservation fosters support and active participation.

- a. **Community science initiatives:** Engage local residents, schools, and wildlife groups in species surveys (e.g., hedgehog tracking, butterfly counts), improving both data collection and community awareness.
- b. **Community engagement:** Raise public awareness about the impacts of invasive species and how residents can help prevent their spread. For example, provide guidance on how to dispose of garden waste properly or clean boots and equipment when moving between natural areas to prevent the spread of seeds
- c. **Signage and information:** Place informative signs in public parks, nature reserves, and waterways explaining the threats posed by invasive species and how the public can report sightings.
- d. **Allotments and community gardens:** Providing spaces for allotments and community gardens promotes sustainable land use while supporting urban biodiversity. These areas can be designed with wildlife in mind, using organic gardening practices and native plant species.
- e. **Biodiversity awareness programs:** Run regular campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity and how local ecosystems contribute to human well-being (e.g., clean air, water, and recreation). These campaigns can include media outreach, leaflets, social media, and public talks.
- f. **Highlighting local biodiversity:** Focusing on local species, habitats, and conservation projects helps residents understand the unique biodiversity of their area and the specific threats it faces. Information on local wildlife, green spaces, and the importance of habitat conservation can be distributed via newsletters, websites, or community events.
- g. **Volunteering opportunities:** Provide regular opportunities for community members to get involved in hands-on conservation work. This can include habitat restoration, tree planting, invasive species removal, and litter clean-ups. Volunteering not only supports biodiversity efforts but also gives participants a sense of ownership and pride in their local environment.
- h. **Biodiversity education in schools:** Work with schools to integrate biodiversity and environmental education into the curriculum. This can be done through supporting school garden projects, nature clubs, and outdoor learning activities such as wildlife walks and pond dipping.
- i. **Eco-schools programs:** Supporting eco-schools initiatives, where students lead environmental projects, helps foster an early appreciation of biodiversity. Students might

work on projects to create pollinator gardens, build bird boxes, or raise awareness of plastic waste and its impacts on wildlife.

- j. **Youth environmental groups:** Establish or support youth groups that focus on biodiversity, such as junior rangers or wildlife clubs. These groups can learn about local species, participate in conservation activities, and develop leadership skills related to environmental stewardship.
- k. **Biodiversity-themed workshops:** Host workshops and talks on biodiversity topics such as planting for pollinators, creating wildlife-friendly gardens, and managing invasive species. These events can be run in local community centres, libraries, or parks.
- l. **Green fairs and biodiversity festivals:** Participating at community events such as biodiversity festivals or green fairs can draw attention to local nature and engage a wide audience. These events could include guided nature walks, demonstrations, wildlife exhibits, and interactive learning stations for children.
- m. **Involving the community in project planning:** When developing biodiversity enhancement projects (e.g., nature reserves, new parks, habitat restoration), involve local communities in the design and decision-making process. Public consultations, surveys, and workshops ensure that residents feel ownership over projects and are more likely to support and care for them in the long term.
- n. **Collaborative habitat management:** Encourage local people to participate in the management of local green spaces, such as community woodlands or local nature reserves. This fosters a sense of shared responsibility for biodiversity conservation.
- o. **Adopt-a-space programs:** Launch “adopt-a-space” schemes where community groups or individuals can take responsibility for managing local green spaces, such as small parks, roadside verges, or planters, with the aim of enhancing biodiversity.
- p. **Parks as biodiversity hubs:** Run programs that encourage the use of urban parks as biodiversity hubs, with educational signs, wildflower areas, and spaces dedicated to supporting native species.
- q. **Biodiversity awards and recognition:** Recognising and celebrating the efforts of individuals, schools, businesses, and community groups that contribute to biodiversity enhancement is a great way to encourage participation. Biodiversity awards or accreditation schemes can highlight good practice.
- r. **Sharing success stories:** Regularly share success stories about biodiversity projects through local media, websites, and newsletters. Highlighting positive outcomes, such as increased wildlife sightings or restored habitats, helps maintain public interest and encourages more people to get involved.
- s. **Biodiversity apps and platforms:** Encourage the use of apps and platforms that allow residents to report wildlife sightings, invasive species, or pollution issues. Apps like

iRecord or iNaturalist can help local authorities gather data on biodiversity and engage residents in community science efforts.

# Alternative formats

If you would like this document in another format or language, please contact Customer Services on 01306 885001 or email [info@molevalley.gov.uk](mailto:info@molevalley.gov.uk)

## Document history

| Version date | Key changes made | Consultees                              | Approved by                |
|--------------|------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1            | N/A              | Scrutiny<br>Committee 7<br>October 2025 | Cabinet 21<br>October 2025 |

Responsible Officer: Executive Head of Service with responsibility for Parks & Open Spaces

Last updated: 21 October 2025

Approval of changes: Cabinet

Next date due: 2027