

Appendix II – Section of Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan

Ecology and Biodiversity

Biodiversity net gain is now a requirement within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). New developments will need to demonstrate how this has been achieved.

Existing policies on landscape and biodiversity in the Local Plan are robust, nevertheless these will be reviewed in light of updated policy, guidance and best practice. A recent review of AONBs suggests they are well situated to be the focus for nature recovery and climate change mitigation and form the backbone of the Nature Recovery Networks. With part of the North Downs AONB within Swale, we are well placed to advance this agenda with the AONB.

The development of the Kent Nature Partnership (KNP) Biodiversity Strategy 2019-2044 is nearing completion. The aim of the strategy is to deliver the restoration and creation of habitats that are thriving ensuring Kent's terrestrial, freshwater, intertidal and marine environments regain and retain good health. Key themes are terrestrial habitats; marine habitats; freshwater and intertidal ecosystems and connecting people with the natural environment

According to the Government's National Forest Inventory (NFI) 8% of the Swale area is woodland. Trees play an important role in removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storing it as carbon. They also provide a home for nature, mitigate air pollution and reduce flood risk.

Current activities, actions and programmes

There are many existing networks working on the ecological and biodiversity projects within Swale. These groups, such as the Green Grid Network are highly active and engaged in Kent-wide initiatives.

Objectives

To improve development outcomes which support and improve people and places, access and recreation, connectivity and green spaces and the natural and built environment. Some reports recommend Swale should more than double our tree cover by 2030.¹

¹ <https://takeclimateaction.uk/climate-action/methodology-local-authority-data-project>

Opportunities and benefits

Ecology, biodiversity and green space are vital to both mitigating climate change and to helping us to adapt to the inevitable climate change due to historic carbon emissions. We rely on these assets for our quality of life, and provision of food and water. Protecting and enhancing these assets is vital. Green spaces and planting in urban areas promote good physical and mental health.

Ecology and biodiversity action plan. (High Priority key actions in bold.)

Dept.	Action	Timescale	Annual Carbon Reduction (tCO ₂ e)	Progress	
Actions Swale Borough Council can take:					
1	CEL	Tree planting on council land (target; 148,100 trees or 60 acres of woodland) to offset 20% of council emissions.	2025	1,481t offset (25t to date)	2,500 trees planted in country parks 2019/20
2	Planning	To use planning policy (local plan and a supplementary planning document) to improve development outcomes which support access and recreation, green spaces, biodiversity and climate change adaptation and mitigation.	Short	Medium	Ongoing
3	CEL	Establish a baseline of trees and woodland on council land and develop a funded action plan to increase tree cover in Swale and promote the benefits of sequestration.	Short	Medium	
4	Planning	Ensure the installation and maintenance of landscaping in new developments to contribute to biodiversity net gain via suitable conditions or Section 106 agreements.	Short	Medium	Ongoing
5	CEL	Minimise use of fertilizers, pesticides and weed killers.	Short	Small	

6	CEL	Promote use of locally produced compost derived from garden and food waste collections	Short	Small	
Actions we can take in partnership with others					
7	CEL	Encourage coppicing of council woodland to promote biodiversity and use of local woodland products in Swale's country parks.	Short	Small	
8	CEL/ECS/EH	Engage business and community groups to support tree planting and conservation work in Swale's efforts to achieve action 1	Short	Large	Ongoing
9	CEL	Promote forest and beach schools	Short	Small	
10	CEL	Support Swale in Bloom working with schools, community groups, voluntary groups and Town and Parish Councils to enhance local habitats and wildlife corridors improving biodiversity conditions across Swale	Short	Small	Ongoing