

# Coventry's Biodiversity Duty Report

## 2025-26

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## Section 1: Introductory information

### Information about our authority

Coventry City Council comprises of 18 wards, each of which is represented by 3 Ward Councillors. Together, the 54 elected Councillors make the Full Council, and this group meets every six weeks. A representative from the party with the most elected Councillors is elected to become the Leader of the Council. The Cabinet consists of the Leader and nine other Councillors who have monthly public meetings and make recommendations to the Full Council. The nine other Councillors in Cabinet each have a 'portfolio' of Council services that they are responsible for. In terms of governance structures, the following decision-making structure is adhered to:

1. The Full Council decide on anything that:
  - significantly affects the whole City,
  - costs the Council more than £1.5 million or
  - the law requires the Council to decide on.
  
2. The Cabinet decide on anything that:
  - significantly affects more than two wards or
  - will cost the Council up to £1.5million.
  
3. Cabinet members decide on anything that:
  - affects up to two wards or
  - will cost the Council between £250,000 and £1 million.
  
4. Delegated decisions, those that Council officers can make.

The planning process is a key element of the Council's decision-making responsibility. This includes preparing Local Plans, determining planning applications and carrying out enforcement against unauthorised development. Through the Local Plan, the Council establishes its vision and framework for the City in relation to land use and development which includes housing, the local economy, community facilities and infrastructure. Local Plans contain policies which inform decision-making on planning applications and include a range of designations and policies relevant to the natural environment.

### Land and estates we manage

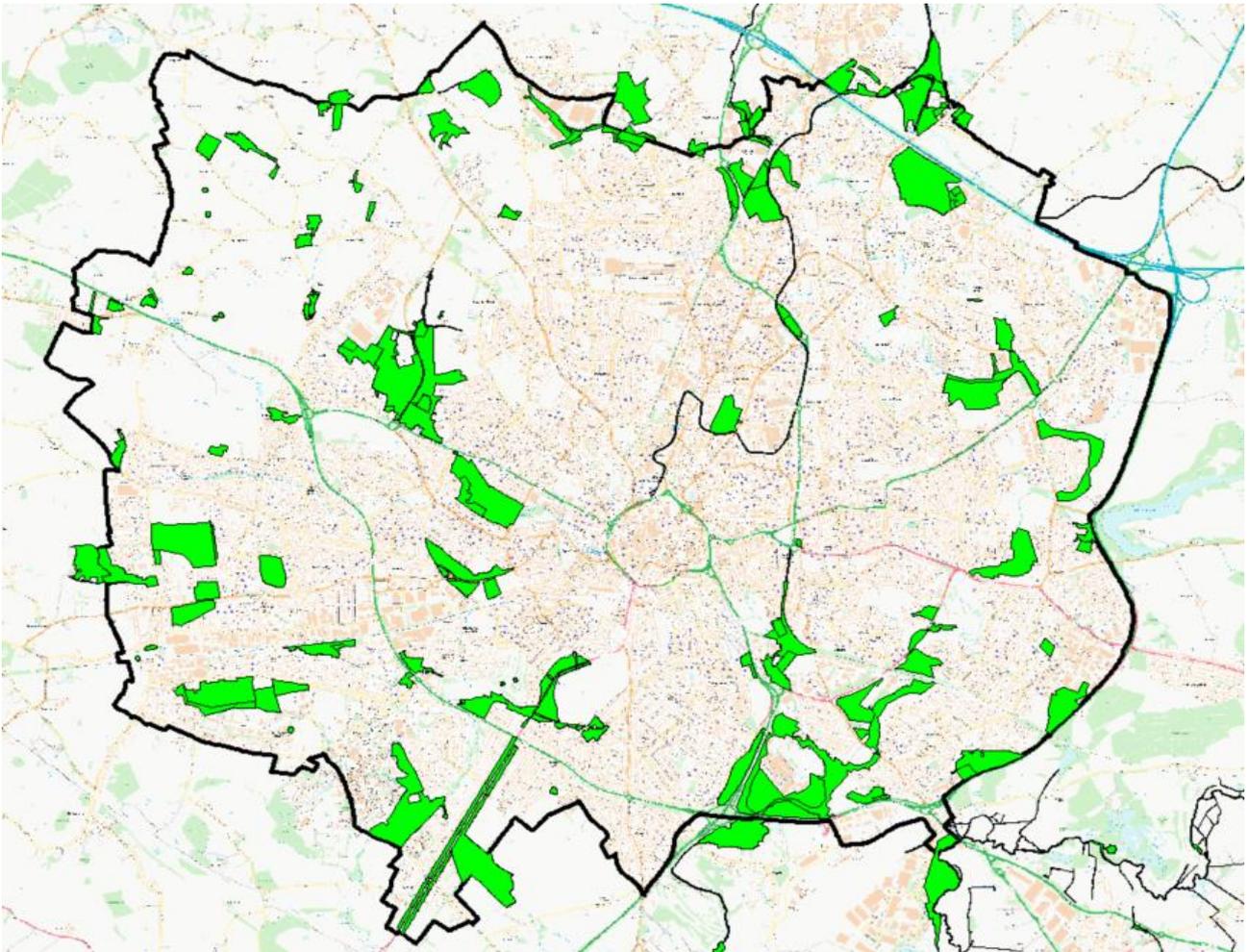
Coventry has a population of 345,325 people, making it the second-largest Local Authority in the West Midlands region. Coventry's Green Space Strategy 2019-2024 identifies 430 formal and informal green and blue spaces across the City, equating to 1325 Ha. This includes 6 Green Flag

parcs that are owned and managed by the City Council, the most recent accreditation being awarded to London Road Cemetery, which in one of the most green-deprived parts of the City.

Covering an area of 9865 hectares, most of Coventry lies in the Arden National Character Area. Coventry is a very urbanised region, as demonstrated by remote sensing imagery, which shows that 38% of the local authority region is covered by urban features such as roads and buildings; this compares to 9% of the Warwickshire sub-region. It is estimated that 21% of Coventry is categorised as Phase 1 'cultivated and disturbed' land, which includes habitats such as amenity grassland, arable land and introduced shrub.

In Coventry, the global target to manage '30% of land for nature by 2030' currently stands at approximately 11%. A key challenge for the future will be to identify where the extra 19% is going to be allocated, given Coventry's urban context and limitations on available land usage. This will require a shift in current land use planning priorities, with an increased focus on integrating nature into urban areas, alongside the creation of new habitats and improving the quality of existing ones.

Although Coventry's 11% baseline is low, the City does benefit from many biodiverse rich areas. The City numerous green spaces, woodlands, river and canal corridors, 45 allotments, street trees and private gardens, which all join to form a wider network of green and blue infrastructure. Coventry also contains 17 sites with statutory protection: 15 Local Nature Reserves and 2 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, totalling approximately 2% of Coventry's land area. These sites include Tile Hill Wood and Park Wood, two large areas of ancient woodland which have been designated as Local Wildlife Sites. Claybrooks Marsh is another critical site; it is a post-industrial site and has a mosaic of habitats and has consequently been designated as both a Local Wildlife Site and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Coventry also has 78 Local Wildlife Sites (including those with boundaries across multiple authorities), representing 7% of the total City area. These 78 LWS are shown in green on Figure 1 below.



*Figure 1 A map of Local Wildlife Sites in Coventry  
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## Section 2: Mainstreaming biodiversity

### Our policies and objectives

In Coventry, we have several layers of policy that mandate the need to protect and enhance our local environment. Our adopted Local Plan (2011-2031) requires developments to protect or enhance biodiversity assets and secure their long-term management and maintenance. This requirement is supported by our Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document, which was adopted in December 2022, and since this date Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain under the Environment Act 2021 has strengthened this process. At the time of publication, Coventry is undertaking a Local Plan review, presenting an opportunity to enhance green and blue space across the City in relation to future developments over the next 15 years. The emerging new Plan references a Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan, which will set out the principles in terms of how we plan for, create and manage our green and blue spaces that this project will deliver. The Local Plan was submitted for Examination in Public in September 2025.

Alongside the Local Plan, Coventry City Council has several departmental strategies that share the responsibility of biodiversity enhancement across the organisation.

1. We have a mandate for change through the City's new Climate Change Strategy, which sets out an ambitious vision to address the fundamental challenges and opportunities in how we tackle the climate and natural emergencies. This Strategy involved developing a citywide Climate Change Board, with key organisations creating five focused pathway groups in a voluntary capacity, including a Nature-Based pathway group. We undertook extensive community engagement as part of this strategy and developed new data sources such as the City's Route to Net Zero route-map so that our citywide Strategy was evidence-based and reflects the views and ambitions of the communities, businesses and key organisations across the City.
2. Coventry's Green Space Strategy 2019-2024 recognises and promotes the multi-functional nature of urban green spaces and aims to ensure that they are ecologically friendly, well managed and publicly accessible. The revised Green Space Strategy 2025-2030 will give increased priority to enhancing and creating biodiversity in our open spaces and consider opportunities to improve biodiversity alongside roads and cycle lanes, verges and on streets.
3. Coventry's Urban Forestry Strategy 2022–2032 recognises the importance of urban trees and forests in serving an ecosystem services function and proposes to plant a tree for every citizen, amounting to 360,000 trees by 2032. This tree planting campaign combines the rejuvenation and expansion of our existing woodlands to sequester carbon and create wild spaces for people and nature, with new tree planting in green spaces and along streets to improve air quality, create shade and mitigate urban heat island effects.
4. At the time of publication, Local Nature Recovery Strategies are being adopted regionally, prioritising interventions to improve the protection and enhancement of strategic nature corridors and both habitats and species of significance. Coventry hopes to benefit from LNRS's being published both in the West Midlands and in Warwickshire, regions of which Coventry socially, economically and ecologically overlaps. Details of the WMCA LNRS can be found online at: <https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/environment-energy/west-midlands-local-nature-recovery-strategy/> and the respective Warwickshire strategy can be found online at: <https://www.wcslnp.co.uk/lhrs>.

## Our actions and top achievements

In addition to devising policy and strategy, Coventry has been engaged in the West Midlands Combined Authority's Local Investment in Natural Capital Programme, which is a DEFRA-funded

pilot to develop opportunities to leverage more investment into nature. This has provided the Council with support from a consortium of green finance experts, including Finance Earth and Accelar. The pilot has enabled us to develop an initial natural capital pipeline for the City. We have received invaluable advice from experts around innovative ways to seek to attract and blend finance for nature projects, building biodiversity net gain and carbon credits alongside more emerging markets, as well as consider how we can market projects to the private sector to leverage investment linked to ESG and attract philanthropic donations. This provides a strong foundation for us to build a more detailed natural capital pipeline for the City, which we will develop in response to our Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan, setting out clear interventions and funding options which will help to make our plans a reality and ensure we prioritise investment in those areas that need it most. This will help inform strategic investment in green and blue infrastructure across the City for years to come.

Coventry has also fostered an innovative partnership involving the John Muir Trust, National Trust, Council and Historic Coventry Trust to launch a new Heritage Park at Charterhouse, a C14th Monastery and one of the most important heritage assets in Coventry. The Charterhouse building is part of a much larger open space along the River Sherbourne, where there is a vision to establish an urban natural greenspace rich in history, but prioritising community engagement and wildlife.

Alongside our existing tree planting campaign, Coventry City Council was also awarded £294,915 from the Forestry Commission's Local Authority Treescapes Fund to plant 142 semi-mature trees and 7068 whips across 10 Wards in Coventry in partnership with Earthwatch and Citizen Housing. This included six Tiny Forests, small forests that aim to bring dense, nature rich habitats to urban communities. This project served as a pilot to explore the social and environmental benefits of this innovative green space management intervention. These trees have been planted in some of the most deprived wards and three wards in Coventry with the lowest tree canopy cover in Coventry: Radford, Upper Stoke and Holbrooks. This partnership provided an excellent opportunity to continue and expand our engagement work within these communities.

In collaboration with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, the Canal and Rivers Trust, and the University of Warwick, Coventry City Council also delivered a £485,000 project to enhance habitats designed to support Bittern, Water Vole, Willow Tit and White-Clawed Crayfish and help their local populations flourish. Coventry City Council was primarily involved with the Water Vole and White Clawed Crayfish projects. The project concluded with a successful translocation of 30 White Clawed Crayfish from Leicestershire to the University of Warwick campus, thus reintroducing the endangered, White Clawed Crayfish species to Coventry.

On a much larger scale, the Council has also been a key partner in the Sherbourne Valley Project, a £3.5million project with the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Severn Trent Water and the Environment

Agency. This project aimed to connect both nature and communities by looking at Nature-Based Solutions across the City, along our River Sherborne corridor. One of the main areas that this project focused on was looking at reducing the risk of flooding, and this project helped to engage the community with how they can help contribute to reducing the risk of flooding and strengthen community groups in helping to look after their green spaces in a more sustainable way. This project involved close interdisciplinary working both internal at the Council and externally with regional and national partners.

Generally, across Coventry, Council-owned land is managed by our Streetpride team, who are responsible for the day-to-day management of parks, open spaces as well as roads and pavements. They are working closely with our Parks and Open Spaces team, and Ecology and Biodiversity team to ensure our green spaces are managed with people and nature in mind, with mechanisms like wildflower verges and reduced frequency mowing being explored across the City.

The waterways and drainage systems in Coventry are managed by our Flooding and Drainage Team. The team fulfils our statutory role as a Lead Local Flood Authority, which following the Flood and Water Management Act, 2010, recommends that local authorities should lead on the management of local flood risk, with the support of the relevant organisations. This team is working between the City Council and other relevant organisations and local communities to manage flood risk, fund future flood schemes and help communities to become more resilient to flooding. They are working with teams in Highways, Traffic and Transportation, Parks and Open Spaces, to identify impermeable areas of highway that are being assessed for potential rain gardens and where we can create and install green spaces in highway, to improve water management. They are also working closely with our Ecology and Biodiversity team to ensure that any works to our Blue infrastructure enhance biodiversity and improve the surrounding environment for ecology and local communities.

In our Transport department, our Active Travel team are continuously expanding the City's Active Travel Network in line with our Transport Strategy and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. In Coventry we only have 12km of high-quality cycle routes compared to a strategic network of over 260km. There is therefore a significant need to build more attractive active travel routes to unlock the unmet demand for cycling and other forms of micromobility, which in turn will reduce emissions from driving and improve air quality. To ensure this network continues to expand, the use of highway-adjacent greenspace will need to be considered, and therefore the Council's Active Travel team and our Parks and Open Spaces and Ecology and Biodiversity team will need to collaborate to facilitate development while ensuring biodiversity net gain across all schemes.

This array of policies, strategies and actions evidences the clear and comprehensive prioritisation of ecology and biodiversity across a wide array of Coventry City Council departments, and external, regional partners.

## Section 3: Implementing Biodiversity Net Gain

### Biodiversity Net Gain in Planning

In regard to development in Coventry, biodiversity is considered through planning consultations, and the provision of pre-application advice and published guidance to support developers in mitigating impacts and delivering biodiversity gains. There are additional procedures to manage regulatory services, including tree preservation and hedgerow removal.

Since the adoption of Coventry's Local Plan 2011-2031, developments in Coventry have been required to:

1. Lead to a net gain of biodiversity, where appropriate, through an approved ecological assessment of existing site features and development impacts;
2. Protect or enhance biodiversity assets and secure their long-term management and maintenance;
3. Avoid negative impacts on existing biodiversity;
4. Preserve species that are legally protected, in decline, are rare within Coventry or which are covered by national, regional or local Biodiversity Action Plans.

The Local Plan states that where this is not possible, adequate mitigation measures must be identified. If mitigation measures are not possible on site, then compensatory measures involving biodiversity offsetting will be considered.

This requirement was updated in the Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that was adopted in December 2022. This SPD articulates the need for developments to demonstrate how they meet Local Plan requirements by:

1. Undertaking an ecological assessment of the habitat and key biodiversity features of the site;
2. Using a recognised metric to assess the biodiversity value of the site and the impact of the proposed development, and
3. Agreeing on appropriate mitigation for any impact of the development by ensuring that overall, the number of biodiversity units is increased.

The Warwickshire Biodiversity Impact Calculator has been in established use in Coventry for several years, and the metric has been successfully used for biodiversity mitigation projects for many developments. However, following the development of the statutory DEFRA BNG metric, all new developments were required to abide by the statutory mechanism, with off-site BNG being secured through S106 agreement, or BNG unit sale through the statutory register market as this emerges.

## Delivering Biodiversity Net Gain

Following the full implementation of the statutory BNG approach in February 2024, Coventry City Council has sufficient biodiversity offset sites to meet the expected demand in the coming years. Sites have been identified in all parts of the City and provide for the long-term creation and management of a range of different habitats; these sites are in the process of being added to the biodiversity net gain site register. The two currently proposed BNG register sites are shown in red on Figure 2 below:

1. Elms Field Farm - 42.84 habitat units, predominantly grassland, scrub and woodland
2. Coundon Wedge - 98.78 habitat units, predominantly grassland, 10.78 hedgerow units, and 7.69 watercourse units

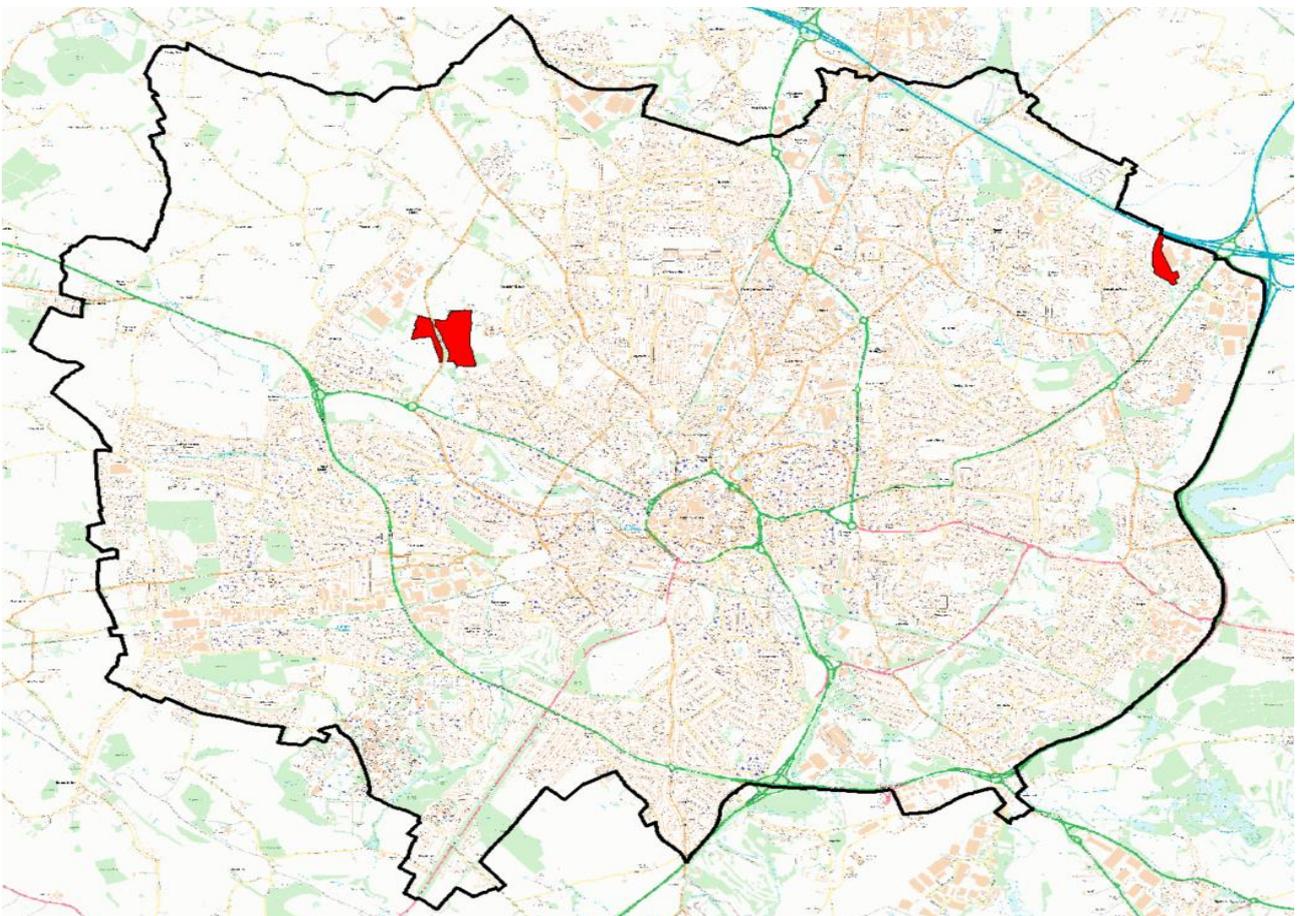


Figure 2 Coventry's proposed BNG register sites  
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Developments are expected to contribute to any off-site mitigation required within this scheme by way of a Section 106 contribution. Since the establishment of the Statutory BNG system, there have been approximately 4 applications that required offsite biodiversity offsetting, as the majority of applications have met the 10% requirement on site, and HMMPs and biodiversity gain plans have been conditioned to secure this compensation. Alternative methods of providing adequate offset through third-party schemes or the purchase of external Biodiversity Credits will be considered and acceptable in principle, with emphasis being on the retention of biodiversity provision in Coventry. However, each case will be looked at and assessed on its individual merits as to the level of offsetting which will be required and accepted by the Council to ensure the retention and expansion of biodiversity within Coventry. Currently the Council has no external software to support the monitoring of BNG, and it the management of BNG delivery and monitoring is delivered in house by the Ecology and Biodiversity team, with support of external partners such as Warwickshire Wildlife Trust's Natural Capital Assessment Partnership (formerly the Habitat Biodiversity Audit).

## Section 4: Public engagement and workforce development

### Raising awareness and educating the community

Coventry City Council have been developing several opportunities for local communities to get involved in nature. Our Urban Ranger Team consistently run tree and bulb planting, river clearance and bat walk events with the local communities, and alongside the Parks and Open Spaces Team and Urban Forestry Team, facilitate the support and expansion of 'Friends of' local parks groups, who care for many green spaces across the City. One key 'Friends of' group, at Lake View Park, have been working with the team and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust to deliver a range of woodland and scrub activities throughout the year and is working towards the creation and delivery of a management plan for the site. The group have gone on to receive registered Charity status to cement their long-term ambitions for the location and their ability to attract funding to invest in the site.

We have also developed a citywide Community Growing project to create community growing sites on derelict plots of land and facilitate a local food growing network. This has included community organisations that work with volunteers from across the City and has provided valuable insight, particularly with regards to how we can effectively engage with communities to build on existing networks and identify training and skills development opportunities to empower communities.

Our Outdoor Education team work hand in hand with many schools across the City, both in the provision of outdoor learning opportunities such as residential trips to Plas Dol-Y-Moch, physical improvements in school campus's through linking to local and national tree planting schemes, training schemes such as apprenticeships and forest school leader training, and the development of a green curriculum to enhance the provision of nature-focused education across the City.

Our recent Local Authority Treescapes Fund award with Earthwatch Europe and Citizen Housing also involved the delivery of eleven community engagement days. Five of these events involved co-creating the planting designs of the proposed Tiny Forests, and the remaining six provided post-planting training in citizen science techniques to monitor tree growth and understand the impacts the trees are having on our local environment, such as through pollinator counts and water sequestration experiments.

In Coventry we also participate in the annual, global City Nature Challenge, which provides an opportunity for residents and local community groups to record nature in Coventry on the iNaturalist app. Coventry has participated in City Nature Challenge since 2021, with growing successes year on year, with over 6143 records being submitted in Coventry and Warwickshire by 169 people in 2025, compared to 357 observations being submitted by 20 people in Coventry in 2021.

All of this work is showcased through consistent communication with Coventry's residents through various social media platforms and the Council website. We have individual Communications and Engagement teams at the Council who manage the flow of information between the Council and our residents and also run key engagement activities such as our householder survey. Key information regarding the protection and enhancement of biodiversity can be found on the dedicated website: <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/heritage-ecology-trees/ecology>, and all nature-based activities are advertised on the Council's events page: <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/events>.

## Section 5: Research and monitoring

### Monitoring and evaluating our actions

Coventry City Council is actively exploring a variety of monitoring opportunities to track how biodiversity and nature are improving in the City. This includes various citizen science initiatives, such as City Nature Challenge, Riverfly surveying with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, and woodland monitoring events with Earthwatch Europe, as well as academic research with our local universities, supported by our Health Determinants Research Collaborative, who were established to build partnerships with academics, particularly on health issues.

The Council directly supports research and studentships in innovative areas such as eDNA and biodiversity. In collaboration with the University of Warwick's School of Life Sciences, we have been awarded funding from the University's Biosciences Impact Fund to experiment with innovative eDNA techniques to monitor biodiversity in Foleshill, Binley and Willenhall. This involves collecting water and soil samples with volunteers, which colleagues at the University of Warwick then use to identify species in the area. This work has been expanded as part of the Species Recovery Programme

delivery, with partners at the University of Warwick using eDNA samples from across key watercourses in Coventry to determine the presence and distribution of White Clawed Crayfish, invasive American Signal Crayfish, crayfish plague, Water Vole and American Mink, which were supported by field studies by both volunteers and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust staff. This research involved temporal sampling across the four different seasons to contribute to the broader literature on best practice for eDNA sampling.

The Council also continues to have a Service Level Agreement with the Natural Capital Assessment Partnership and Warwickshire Biological Records Centre to maintain a biological records database for the region, provide information to support Planning and site and operational management, support the Local Biodiversity Action Partnership, and support biological recording in the area.

## Section 6: Biodiversity challenges and next steps

Coventry is one of the most greenspace and nature-deprived cities in England; radical change is needed. We were the first Marmot City; we are driven by addressing inequalities and deprivation. Our vision is to transform our green spaces across the City and work towards 30% of the City's area supporting nature conservation by 2030. The scope to make more use of our valuable green and blue networks across the City presents a massive opportunity for boosting biodiversity, climate resilience and food security, as well as an essential resource to communities to support wellbeing. There is a significant challenge for us to better understand the habitats and biodiversity that exist across the City to protect and enhance them, as well as identify opportunities for creating more joined-up green and blue corridors.

Due to intense land pressures, historically there have been losses of green spaces and wildlife habitats for development. Coventry's Local Plan (2011-2031) and increasing pressures from Biodiversity Net Gain and regional Local Nature Recovery Strategies, means that land in Coventry is being increasingly safeguarded for nature, and it is crucial that this continues to be prioritised. However, there are concerns that existing green spaces in Coventry are declining in their quality of habitats and value for species due to a significant encroachment of invasive non-native species such as Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and American Signal Crayfish. We are continually monitoring and managing these species, through volunteer management 'Balsam Bashing' sessions and using innovative eDNA techniques with the University of Warwick to track the spread of these species. However, we need to work regionally to ensure that the removal or containment of these species is done on a coordinated, catchment wide basis.

## Our future actions

Through its review, Coventry's Local Plan (2011-2031) and its nature conservation policies will reflect the strengthened national legislation and the ever-increasing need to reverse biodiversity loss. We will pursue ambitious approaches to ecological enhancement, including mandating species-specific enhancements such as bird and bat boxes on all developments to encourage biodiversity, as well as features designed to mitigate issues like flooding, pollution, and the urban heat island effect.

In July 2025, Coventry was awarded £990k in funding from the National Heritage Lottery Fund's Nature Towns and Cities programme, to deliver 'Green for All'. Through this three-year project, we will bring together a diverse range of experts and communities to build skills, capacity and networks through training and empowering positive action for nature. The legacy will be a co-designed, equitable, place-based Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan for the City, supported by a sustainable funding model, a skilled workforce and volunteers, and new systems to create better connected green spaces for local people and nature. This Plan will include:

1. A map of areas of green and blue spaces across the City, auditing data we have and identifying gaps we need to address, looking at barriers and enablers to access, how sites are currently utilised, local areas of heritage importance, identifying key habitat corridors, identifying biodiversity changes and opportunities for enhancement.
2. An assessment of our existing policies and strategies and a new Green Infrastructure strategy that ensures nature is at the heart of local placemaking, reflecting the views of what communities want from their green spaces.
3. A project pipeline and investment strategy, building on our experience gained from Defra's Local Investment in Natural Capital programme, producing an innovative blended funding model to unlock investment opportunities for improving biodiversity and nature.

To consolidate these efforts and reinforce the commitment to improving nature provision in Coventry, during the three-year project we will apply for Nature in Towns and Cities accreditation. Green for All, combined with the continued delivery of other Council priorities and the delivery of biodiversity net gain will build the foundation for biodiversity protection and enhancement in Coventry over the next five years.