

East Lothian's Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Produced by:

**East Lothian
Biodiversity
Partnership**



East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership



TWIC
The Wildlife Information Centre

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1 Executive Summary

East Lothian's Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) sets out actions to tackle the Nature Emergency by protecting and enhancing nature in East Lothian. It has been produced by East Lothian Council on behalf of East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership through a process of collaborative partnership working.

The LBAP recognises that biodiversity is under threat both globally and nationally. It seeks to ensure that nationally and locally important species and habitats are conserved and enhanced through local action, to help East Lothian tackle the interlinked Climate and Nature Emergencies. The LBAP identifies actions and efforts that contribute towards mitigating further biodiversity loss, ensuring that our habitats are diverse and in healthy condition and that our ecosystems are healthy and resilient.

The plan focusses on local context, to ensure East Lothian delivers its part of national and international priorities to protect and enhance nature. It includes an Action Plan which supports the delivery of actions aligning with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy at a local level.

With expertise and knowledge from local specialists, groups and community members this plan identifies local priorities for protecting and enhancing ecosystems, habitats and species in East Lothian. As well as implementing actions to assist the response to the interlinked Climate and Nature Emergencies, the plan reflects the importance of engaging communities and citizens with delivery of actions.

This Biodiversity Action Plan embeds landscape scale ambition of restoration through the conservation, and protection for East Lothian's priority habitats. It also aims to raise awareness of the wildlife and

habitats of East Lothian at a national and local level as well as highlighting the contribution local biodiversity makes to the communities of East Lothian.

The Action Plan acknowledges the importance of people in the response to the Nature Emergency and that biodiversity not only benefits our natural environment, but the health and wellbeing of our communities. Community action has played an important role in delivering local biodiversity projects to date. This Action Plan aims to continue to support the delivery of local community projects and champion local people's voices and action for biodiversity.

Further, this action plan highlights the significant impacts and opportunities that development and planning have on biodiversity and nature. This includes the adverse impacts they can have but also the recognition that they play an important role in creating and delivering positive effects for biodiversity and nature.

East Lothian's Local Biodiversity Action Plan works towards a vision to 2035 to:

- **Restore and regenerate biodiversity across East Lothian's land, freshwater, coast and marine habitats.**
- **Ensure that our natural environment, habitats, ecosystems and species will be diverse, thriving, resilient and adaptable to climate change.**
- **Enable East Lothian's communities and people to play their part in the stewardship of the local and national natural environment, central to a nature positive future.**

The Delivery Plan sets out a partnership approach to delivering actions, working with key stakeholders in the East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership and other community organisations, neighbouring local authorities, and Government agencies such as NatureScot, to maximise delivery of actions for nature and identify further opportunities for nature restoration, nature-based solutions, and protection of biodiversity, both within the county and in connection to larger habitat networks.

Priority themes have been identified by East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership to respond to the Nature Emergency and protect and enhance East Lothian's biodiversity. These are:

- **Priority Theme 1: Landscape and habitat restoration and regeneration**
- **Priority Theme 2: Species recovery**
- **Priority Theme 3: People and nature**
- **Priority Theme 4: Biodiversity, planning, policy and development**

Each priority theme will deliver at least one of the following Outcomes aligning with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy:

- 1. East Lothian's landscape and priority habitats will be diverse, healthy and resilient helping ecosystems deliver a wide range of ecosystem services.**
- 2. Protected areas will be connected and in good condition.**
- 3. The abundance and distribution of priority species will increase in numbers and have healthy and resilient populations.**
- 4. Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) will be managed so that they no longer degrade priority habitats and native species or impede on their conservation and restoration.**

- 5. Nature based solutions will be fundamental to our efforts to deliver Net Zero and adapt to climate change.**
- 6. Natural Capital will be embedded and valued within policy and decision making.**
- 7. Biodiversity will be integrated, understood and valued across East Lothian and its communities.**

The Action Plan 2025–2035 includes the following East Lothian landscape and habitat types:

- Coastal and Marine Landscape Action Plan
- Freshwater Networks Action Plan
- Farmland and Heathland Landscape Action Plan
- Tree and Woodland Action Plan
- Urban Landscape and Golf Courses Action Plan
- Planning, Development and Biodiversity Action Plan
- People and Nature Action Plan

The Action Plan is intended to be a working document. A monitoring framework will be set up with key indicators to chart progress of actions. East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership will annually review the delivery plan and the progress of actions within it to ensure agreed targets are being met and that they are still suitable and achievable. Progress with delivering the LBAP will be reported annually, in addition to 3-yearly progress updates to the Scottish Government through East Lothian Council's Biodiversity Duty reporting.

2 Glossary

AECS: Agri-Environment Climate Scheme

Biodiversity: The variety of plants and animals, and the habitats in which they live.

Blue - green infrastructure: A combination of natural and manmade elements in urban areas. It integrates greenspaces like parks and gardens and blue elements such as rivers and ponds. This approach helps provide environmental, social and economic benefits to communities.

Climate adaptation: Adjustment or preparation of natural and/or human systems to the current and expected effects of climate change.

Climate change: The long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns (climate)

Climate mitigation: Actions and efforts that reduce or prevent the production of man-made greenhouse gas emissions to help limit the magnitude of climate change.

Ecosystem services: Services provided by the natural environment and healthy ecosystems that benefit humans.

Ecosystem: A biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment. Plants, animals, other organisms, weather and landscapes work together.

Geodiversity: The natural range of geological (rocks, minerals, fossils), geomorphological (landform processes) and soil features.

GWCT: Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust

Habitat mosaic: An area comprised of multiple habitat types.

Hibernacula: A shelter occupied during the winter by a dormant animal.

INNS: Invasive non-native species.

Landscape Scale restoration: Refers to large scale projects that incorporate landscape-level processes.

Nature network: 'A nature network connects nature rich sites and other environmental projects through a series of areas of suitable habitat, habitat corridors and 'steppingstones' for wildlife. These include rows, longer grass, meadows and trees, rain/bog gardens or wetland areas. Other benefits to nature networks include helping us to adapt to climate change in our urban areas.' – NatureScot, Nature Networks Explained.

NFU: National Farmers Union

NPF4: National Planning Framework 4

RAMSAR: Sites designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar convention.

Riparian woodland: Woodland and trees situated alongside and adjacent to rivers and streams.

RSPB: Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

SPA: Special Protection Area.

SSSI: Site Of Special Scientific Interest.

SWT: Scottish Wildlife Trust

Umbrella species: Species that whose conservation is expected to confer protection to many naturally co-occurring species

3 Welcome to East Lothian's Local Biodiversity Action Plan

3.1 What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the web of life: it is the variety of all living things and the ecosystems where they live in on land or in water. It is fundamental to human life, as biodiversity is essential to our health, wellbeing and economy.

3.2 What is the East Lothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan?

East Lothian's Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) sets out nature conservation priorities and projects for East Lothian's biodiversity and natural environment. It aims to improve the condition of habitats and protect species, while also contributing to restoring and enhancing landscapes. The LBAP will help further our understanding of nature and tackle some of the threats that biodiversity faces locally. The LBAP will enable local people to take part in conservation initiatives on their doorstep and help raise awareness about the value of the environment. In doing the above, the LBAP will not only improve and support biodiversity, but it will also benefit the health, wellbeing and quality of life for people in East Lothian.

3.3 Who is this document for?

Whether your interest in biodiversity is personal, professional or both, this plan identifies ways to protect and enhance nature and biodiversity across East Lothian. It will also guide you to identify how we all can make positive changes for biodiversity by:

Learning more about local, national, and global biodiversity.

Experiencing it yourself by either being out in the countryside or in your own local greenspace.

Taking positive action to conserve, protect and enhance biodiversity in our personal and/or our professional lives.



3.4 How to use this document

This action plan is in two parts:

Part 1 will introduce you to the national and local status of biodiversity and the policy context. It also celebrates what has already been delivered across the county for biodiversity. The landscape characteristics of East Lothian are illustrated to identify how actions can contribute to landscape scale biodiversity action. East Lothian's priority habitats have been identified alongside irreplaceable habitats and other equally important habitats that contribute to East Lothian's wider habitat mosaic which are vital to East Lothian's communities. East Lothian's priority species list combines species that are threatened, requiring conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, identified within the Scottish Biodiversity List and species rare or notable locally to East Lothian. These lists help advise site management decisions and development proposals to consider and avoid impacts on these species and habitats while prioritising where conservation efforts should be focussed. This provides the context to the Vision and Outcomes for East Lothian's LBAP.

Part 2 sets out the delivery plan to achieve the Vision and Outcomes through Priority Themes towards 2035. Priority Themes have been identified through East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership to respond to the Nature Emergency. Further, the reporting and monitoring of these actions is explained, including an annual review of actions through East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership, ensuring delivery mechanisms are still suitable and achieving the agreed targets.

3.5 How can you get involved?

East Lothian's Local Biodiversity Action Plan combines actions that will be delivered by a variety of stakeholders from East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership from NGOs to local community groups. It seeks to encourage others to act for biodiversity and suggests how you can get involved via members of East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership or by contacting East Lothian Council's Biodiversity team.

Contact email: landscapeandcountryside@eastlothian.gov.uk



(A.M, 2019)

Introduction to East Lothian's Local Biodiversity Action Plan

East Lothian's Local Biodiversity Action Plan sets out actions to tackle the Nature Emergency by protecting and enhancing nature in East Lothian. It has been produced through a process of collaborative working through the East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership, seeking to ensure nationally and locally important species and habitats are conserved and enhanced through local action, to help East Lothian tackle the Climate and Nature Emergencies. With expertise and knowledge from local specialists, groups and community members this plan will identify local priorities for protecting and enhancing ecosystems, habitats and species in East Lothian. This plan will also assist in implementing actions to respond to the interlinked Climate and Nature Emergencies and reflect the importance of engaging communities and citizens with delivery of actions.

The first East Lothian Biodiversity Action Plan was produced in 2003 with an aim of highlighting threats and issues relating to habitats and species at risk of extinction. The subsequent ELBAP (2008–2013) aimed to ensure that no locally native species or habitats becomes extinct, reverse the loss of priority species, reverse the decline in extent and quality of priority habitats and involve local communities in the biodiversity process.

This Action Plan aims to raise awareness of the wildlife and habitats of East Lothian at a national and local level as well as highlighting the contribution local biodiversity makes to the communities of East Lothian. It will identify actions and efforts that contribute towards mitigating further biodiversity loss, ensure that our habitats are diverse and in healthy condition and that our ecosystems are healthy and resilient. The plan focusses on local context, to ensure East Lothian delivers its part of national and international priorities to protect and enhance nature. It includes an Action Plan which supports delivery of actions aligning with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy at a local level.¹ The Delivery Plan sets out a partnership approach to delivering actions, working with key stakeholders in the East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership and other community organisations, neighbouring local authorities, and Government agencies such as NatureScot, to maximise delivery of actions for nature and identify further opportunities for nature restoration, nature-based solutions, and protection of biodiversity, both within the county and in connection to larger habitat networks.



¹ [Tackling the Nature Emergency - Scottish biodiversity strategy to 2045 - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-biodiversity-strategy-2024-2045/pages/introduction/)

5 Aims of East Lothian's Local Biodiversity Action Plan

East Lothian's Biodiversity Action Plan takes into consideration the Nature and Climate Emergencies, and the international, national, and local policy context including the revised draft Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.

This Biodiversity Action Plan embeds landscape scale ambition of restoration through the conservation, and protection for East Lothian's priority habitats. This will ensure that habitats are connected and in good condition to build and enhance East Lothian's Nature Network ensuring healthy and resilient ecosystem services. Priority species populations will be supported and conserved to help recovery and resilience to environmental changes. Further, awareness of local biodiversity will be raised across East Lothian.

This action plan acknowledges the importance of people in the response to the Nature Emergency and that biodiversity not only benefits our natural environment, but the health and wellbeing of our communities. Community action has played an important role in delivering local biodiversity projects to date. This action plan aims to continue to support the delivery of local community projects and champion local people's voices and action for biodiversity.

Further, this action plan highlights the significant impacts and opportunities that development and planning have on biodiversity and nature. This includes the adverse impacts they can have but also the recognition that they play an important role in creating and delivering positive effects for biodiversity and nature. Developers and planners

can use this document to identify how they can apply the policies of National Planning Framework 4 within the local East Lothian context, through identification of priority habitat and species lists and prescribed actions and projects.



6 East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership

East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership is comprised of individuals and organisations from a variety of sectors to co-ordinate and prioritise a programme for the delivery of biodiversity objectives. The Partnership develops the short-, medium- and long-term objectives for the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. The members hold a wealth of knowledge and experience on species and habitats, to contribute to nature conservation and enhancement.

The objectives of East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership are:

- To assist in the development and production of the East Lothian Biodiversity Action Plan (ELBAP).
- To co-ordinate and prioritise a programme for the delivery of the Biodiversity Action Plan objectives.
- To establish Action Plan Sub-Groups to develop plans for specific priorities, including advising on the content of action plans, setting of targets and implementation mechanisms.
- To ensure ELBAP targets and actions are disseminated and integrated into the plans, policies, and processes of all involved in the ELBAP initiative.
- To establish a wider informal Biodiversity Forum comprising representatives of a wide range of sectors, including community representatives, and interested individuals to contribute to the development of the ELBAP.

East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership

The following organisations are members of East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership and were principally involved in the production of this plan:

East Lothian Council – Countryside Service
East Lothian Council – Planning Service
East Lothian Council – Amenity Services
Scottish Seabird Centre
Woodland Trust
East Lothian Countryside Volunteers
NatureScot
Forth Rivers Trust
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
National Farmers' Union Scotland
Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust
East Lothian Climate Action Network
The Wildlife Information Centre
Buglife
Scottish Wildlife Trust
Scottish Water
SEPA

7 The importance of Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth, from the biggest mammal to the smallest microorganism, providing essential ecosystem services, including food production, clean air, clean water, carbon storage and other essential services that support all living things including ourselves.

Global, national and local biodiversity is under threat from many pressures including climate change, habitat loss and fragmentation, wildlife-human conflict and pollution. This loss of biodiversity has serious effects, impacting not only plants and animals, but the health and wellbeing of our communities. Healthy, resilient and diverse natural ecosystems ensure vital services for us as humans to survive. Human impacts have had large scale implications for global biodiversity loss.



After decades of habitat and biodiversity loss, it is now crucial to create a healthy and therefore resilient natural environment. This will support natural ecosystems to become healthy, functioning and connected ensuring we have efficient and resilient ecosystem services for:

- **Provisioning:** e.g. materials, energy, food and drink, medicine, water
- **Regulating:** e.g. clean water and air, carbon storage, flood management, pollination
- **Supporting:** e.g. healthy soils, nutrient cycling, photosynthesis
- **Cultural:** e.g. sense of place, tourism, physical and mental wellbeing

The solutions to some of these challenges are beyond the scope of this plan. However, acting for local biodiversity in East Lothian is a step towards connecting, protecting and improving biodiversity that contributes to wider efforts for national and global biodiversity action. This will enable East Lothian to meet its local, national and international obligations to protect and enhance biodiversity. Humans are part of biodiversity and are connected to the ecosystem. We have a crucial role in responding to the impacts and pressures faced by biodiversity and habitats, which will benefit not only our natural environment but our people and communities.

“When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it is attached to the rest of the world”- John Muir

8 The State of Nature

8.1 International and National Context

International Science-Policy Platform (IPBES) published the Global Assessment for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.² The report identified that the 5 direct drivers of global biodiversity loss are:

- Climate Change
- Land and sea-use change
- Pollution
- Natural resource use and exploitation
- Invasive non-native species (INNS)

In Scotland, nature and biodiversity have been under pressure and changing for centuries. There continues to be a decline and degradation of nature despite projects to restore ecosystems and conserve species. The abundance of Scotland's species has fallen on average since 1994. Out of 7,508 species assessed under IUCN Red list criteria, 11% have been classified as threatened.³ One of the many shocking statistics for Scotland's biodiversity is that there has been a 49% decline in the abundance of Scotland's seabird species, out with the outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza ('Avian Flu') in 2022.

Not all of Scotland's species have seen declines in population. Due to warming temperatures resulting from climate change, there have been increases in the distribution of some species. These changes could fluctuate depending on the species as climate change enables the expansion of invasive non-native species (INNS) or pushes species with

niche habitats such as montane and northern species to local extinctions when their habitats become too hot or dry.

Indirect drivers of biodiversity loss include:

- **Socio-cultural:** Scotland hosts diverse views about nature. Preserving nature for future generations is a strong driver for conservation that increases positive environment action. Despite this, conflicting values that may act against nature.
- **Demography:** There are multiple drivers through demography that impact biodiversity including Scotland's increasing population and demand for new housing and urbanisation. Local knowledge and experience are underutilised in environmental decision-making. There is a potential skills gaps in the nature-sector. Unequal access to, and therefore unequal engagement with, nature across society. Urbanisation and technology have decreased the connection between children and nature.
- **Economic:** Around 30% of threatened species have been linked to the impacts of global trade. For some domestic industries, the majority of product is exported with the biodiversity impact being felt in Scotland, for example an increasing global markets for Scottish produce. Additionally, the emergence of a carbon market will have environmental and social impacts.
- **Politics, institutions and governance:** Biodiversity loss has to be mainstreamed and integrated to make it a priority in all areas of policy. It is important to focus on equity, ensuring that societal and

² [Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services | IPBES secretariat](#)

³ [State of Nature 2023 - report on the UK's current biodiversity](#)

environmental changes are considered in a just transition. Improving democratic processes will help people discuss and solve complex environmental and societal issues allowing for more inclusive decision making and reducing influence of vested interest.

- **Technology:** Technological innovations have helped to start mitigating and adapting to climate change. However, mechanisms need to be strengthened to support the adoption of technologies that improve sustainability and reverse biodiversity loss.⁴

Despite the negative picture of Scotland's nature, we can draw on past conservation efforts that have worked, scaling them up and dedicating actions to reverse biodiversity loss. Action for biodiversity is not new to East Lothian. Efforts to protect, deliver projects and engage with the natural environment has been progressing over decades by local communities, Local Authority, NGO's and other organisations. Case studies of what action is being delivered to respond to the drivers of biodiversity loss are highlighted throughout this document.



⁴ [NatureScot Research Report 1309 - Understanding the Indirect Drivers of Biodiversity Loss in Scotland | NatureScot](#)

8.2 East Lothian Context

The variety and quality of East Lothian's natural environment is one of the county's greatest assets, boasting extensive coastline, areas of rich woodland, grasslands, productive farmland, freshwater habitats, urban habitats, heathland, moorland and peatland. These habitats are all part of the wider ecological network important for both East Lothian's biodiversity and the people at the heart of its communities. East Lothian's natural environment hosts locally and nationally rare species and provides ecosystem services which benefit people and nature, whilst also helping to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

East Lothian's coastline on the Firth of Forth is of global and national importance for a variety of bird species. A significant percentage of East Lothian's land is agricultural, and the county boundary extends up into the heathland and upland of the Lammermuir Hills. There is over 270km of riparian networks including the River Tyne and the River Esk. 10.5% of East Lothian's land cover is woodland comprised of a mix of broadleaf woodland, conifer plantations, mixed woodland, hedgerows, and street trees.

With an increasing population and the associated increase in development across the county, urban habitats hold value in our response to the nature emergency. Access to nature is increasingly important within our communities and there is an opportunity to further enhance spaces within urban areas for biodiversity in our parks, greenspaces, across blue-green infrastructure and gardens.

The county also holds valuable habitats across our grasslands, estuarine and rocky landscapes.

8.3 Nature and Communities

In addition to their importance for supporting diverse and important wildlife and plant species, these landscapes and habitats provide the best defence against climate change when they are intact and healthy, sequestering carbon to their full capacity and increasing the resilience of species and the communities that rely on these ecosystems to adapt to impacts of climate change. Coastal habitats play a vital role in coastal defences to sea-level rise and erosion. Our freshwater networks can contribute to natural flood management, and our woodlands and grasslands help to sequester carbon, mitigating further emissions.

Nature plays a key role within our communities, enhancing our health, wellbeing and quality of life, including contributing to the local economy through tourism, recreation and culture. East Lothian, the birthplace of John Muir, founder of national parks, boasts landscapes and species that East Lothian's communities take pride in such as the world's largest colony of Northern gannets on the Bass Rock. It is in our interest and our duty to preserve, restore and reverse the loss of our natural environment for both biodiversity and the people of East Lothian.

The management of the natural environment continues to be central to East Lothian's Biodiversity Action Plan and meets East Lothian Council's statutory duty for all public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity.

8.4 Biodiversity as a Driver for Economic and Community Wellbeing

East Lothian's natural environment is a dynamic asset that not only sustains life but also drives local economic benefits.

Healthy ecosystems provide essential services, ranging from carbon sequestration and flood regulation to recreational and tourism opportunities, that directly contribute to the region's prosperity. By recognising and valuing these services through natural capital valuation methods, we can make a compelling case for investing in biodiversity.

Using tools such as market-based valuation, the avoided cost method, and contingent valuation, we can quantify the economic benefits of our natural assets. For example, wetlands that naturally filter water and reduce flood risks can save public funds otherwise spent on potentially more expensive infrastructure projects. Moreover, the presence of rich biodiversity enhances property values and attracts eco-tourism, further boosting local revenue. NatureScot is developing a tool to facilitate decision makers to take a natural capital approach for managing land, once this tool is launched it will be utilised within decision making, where appropriate.

Investments in biodiversity create opportunities for job creation and local enterprise. Initiatives such as large-scale tree planting, habitat restoration, and the development of urban green spaces not only improve environmental quality but also foster green job growth. Programs like the Grey Partridge Project demonstrate that partnership-led habitat enhancements can yield significant impact.

Central to this approach is community wealth building. By promoting models of local ownership, such as cooperatives or community investment funds, we ensure that the financial returns from biodiversity projects are reinvested into East Lothian's communities. Training programs can help workers transition to green jobs, supporting a just transition to a net zero economy while enhancing regional economic resilience.

To ensure these benefits are sustained, our approach will align with key policies, including the East Lothian Local Development Plan and the East Lothian Council's Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030. A robust monitoring framework will track economic indicators such as job creation, tourism revenue, and cost savings from ecosystem services, enabling us to adapt and optimise our strategies over time.

Protecting and enhancing biodiversity calls for integrated action, bringing together public authorities, private investors, local businesses, and community groups to build a vibrant, resilient economy that thrives on the natural wealth of East Lothian. By investing in biodiversity, we are not only protecting our environment but also laying the foundation for a prosperous and inclusive future.

9 East Lothian's Landscapes

9.1 Landscape Designations

East Lothian has 3 internationally designated sites: the Firth of Forth Special Protection Area (also a Ramsar site), Forth Islands and the Outer Firth of Forth and St Andrews Bay Complex SPAs. All of these sites were chosen for their importance for birds. There are 12 Sites of Special Scientific Interest designated for biological features, including woodlands, grasslands and wetlands. The Council has designated 57 Local Biodiversity Sites to protect locally important habitat and to provide ecological linkages with the SSSI sites, see Appendix 1.

Ancient woodland is protected under local planning policy within East Lothian Local Development Plan Policy NH8: Trees and Development.

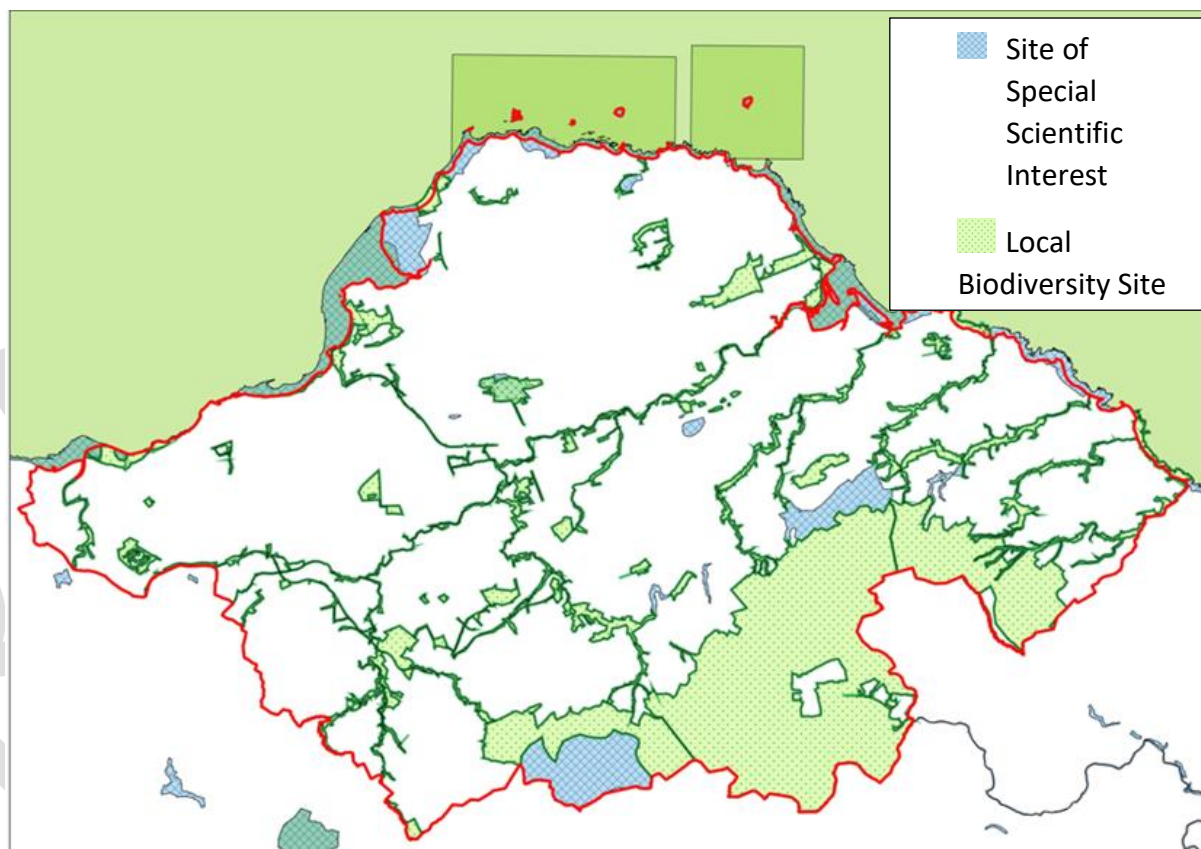


Figure 1: Map of East Lothian's Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and local biodiversity sites.

9.2 Landscape Types

East Lothian's biodiversity contributes to East Lothian's landscape character. There are seven landscape types in East Lothian characterised East Lothian's.^{5,6} This action plan will reinforce the character of East Lothian's landscape through habitat conservation, restoration and creation.

Coastal margin: This area is flat immediately inland of the coast, consisting of raised beach deposits. Crags and rocky outcrops form much of the northern coastal edge and enclose numerous sandy coves backed by dunes, and several rocky islands just offshore in the Firth are included in this Landscape Character Type. The estuaries of the Tyne and Peffer Burn are along this coastline.

Lowland plains: Characterised by the predominance of smoothly rolling arable farmland, undulating gently in a series of east and west aligned ridges, rising gradually southwards towards the fringes of the Lammermuir Hills.

Lowland hills and ridges: Common elements of topography, landform and land cover which differ significantly from the adjoining plains and valleys. Underlying factors to these differences include igneous rock type, less fertile soils, and wetter local climate. They form distinctive low hills, rising to elevations of 200 to 300 metres, with landform dictated by varied underlying geology.

Lowland river valleys: Distinguished primarily by their landform, and include the incised headwaters of the River Tyne system, and the gorge-like valleys of the North and South Esk. Their steep slopes carry a high proportion of broadleaf woodland cover.

Upland fringes: Fringe of transitional landscapes differentiated from the true uplands by a more productive range of land cover types including improved grassland together with arable land and coniferous woodland.

Upland: The Lammermuir plateau defines the southern boundary of East Lothian. The Lammermuirs are characterised chiefly by their altitude, ranging from 350m to 650m, and their subdued plateaux landscapes.



⁵ [Local Development Plan 2018 | East Lothian Council](#)

⁶ [Landscape Character Assessment | NatureScot](#)

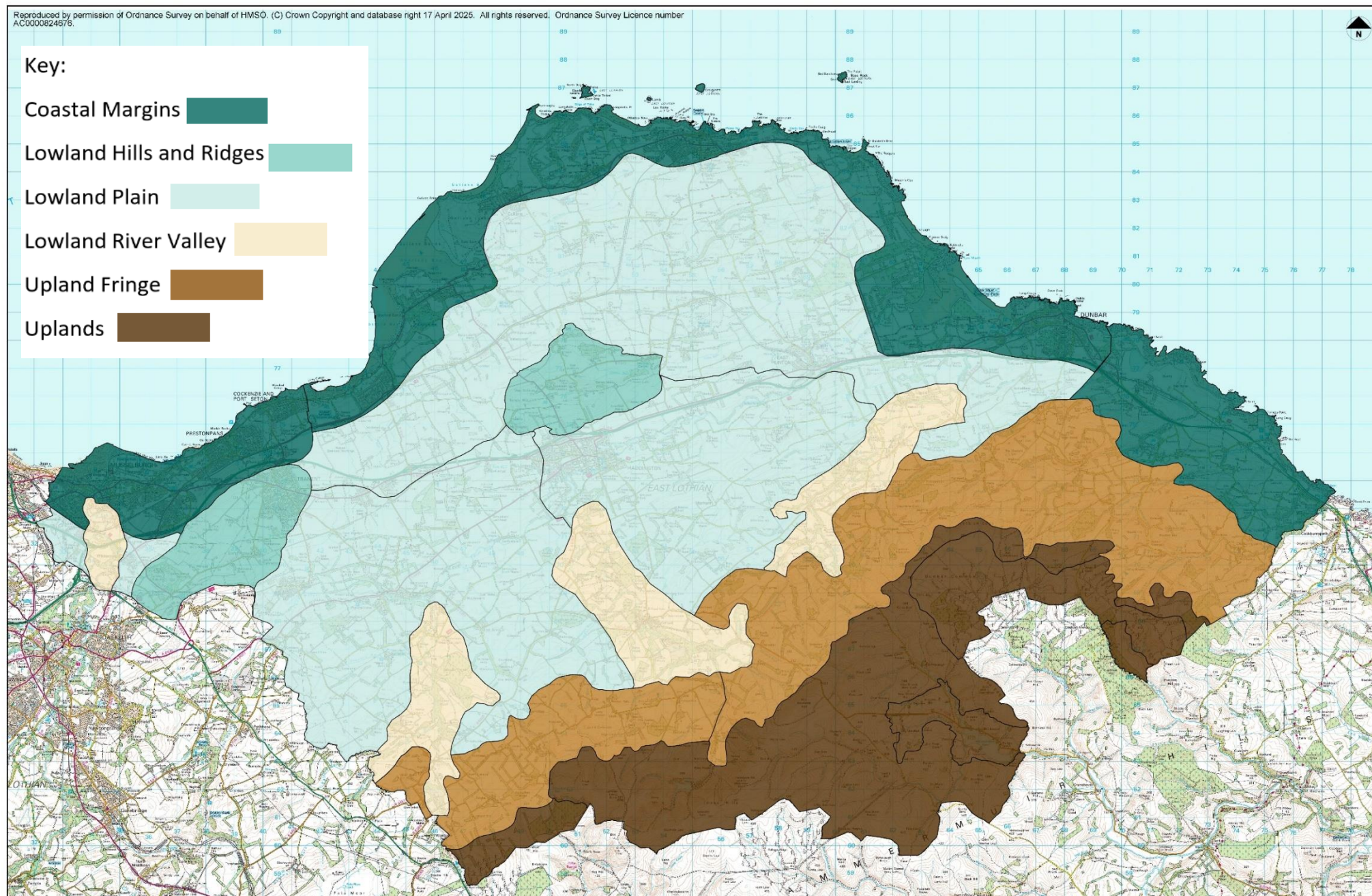


Figure 2, East Lothian's Landscape Character Types.

10 Species

There is an estimate of over 4,000 species of invertebrate, over 300 species of birds, 28 species of mammals and 3 species of reptile found in East Lothian. Some examples of East Lothian's variety in species can be found within our:

10.1 Butterflies

Since 2007, breeding butterfly species that dispersed south in the early 1700s have been increasingly recorded back in East Lothian. In 2009, speckled wood butterfly and in 2010 the wall brown butterfly returned, moving along the coast from Dunglass. Small skippers arrived in 2011 to Gullane/Aberlady area. Historically rarely recorded butterfly species within the region have increased, including holly blues which are becoming a regular sight across the county in our urban and rural habitats⁷. Grayling butterflies are also increasing following efforts to support and assist populations with habitat creation and translocations.

10.2 Birds

The Firth of Forth islands are home to seabird species including puffins, guillemots, and tern species. Notably, the Bass Rock hosts the world's largest colony of Northern gannets. Unfortunately, many seabird species were impacted by the outbreak of Avian Flu in 2021-2022.⁸⁹

Inland, farmland and heathland support key priority bird species such as grey partridge and birds of prey such as hen harriers. Our gardens can support smaller species such as bullfinch and tree sparrow.

10.3 Plants

Botanical diversity in East Lothian is vast, contributing to a mosaic of different landscapes. Notable coastal species in East Lothian include purple milk-vetch, *Zostera* species, sea pearlwort, common centaury, and bloody cranesbill. Woodlands across the county host ancient woodland flora, such as the native bluebell and primrose. Our grasslands support important wildflower and grass species for invertebrates including rockrose and maiden pinks. Bee Orchid records have increased, potentially due to warmer summers¹⁰ and changes in management practices.



⁷ [East Lothian Butterflies 2023](#)

⁸ [Report for 82 East Lothian – Marion Moir – Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland \(bsbi.org\)](#)

⁸ [Avian Influenza: a major threat to our struggling seabirds](#)

⁹ [Updated Outbreak Assessment #2 Winter 2021 HPAI in the UK and Europe](#)

11 Policy Context

11.1 International Policy:

- [United Nations Rio Summit and Convention on Biological Diversity 1993](#)
- [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#)
- [Edinburgh Process 2020](#)

11.2 UK Policy:

- [Biodiversity- The UK action plan 1994](#)
- [Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the goals of CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020](#)

11.3 Scottish Policy:

- [Scottish Biodiversity Strategy:](#)
Sets out ambition for Scotland to be Nature Positive by 2030, and to have restored and regenerated biodiversity across the country by 2045. This ELBAP has been updated to address and fulfil the requirements of this strategy.
- [Framework for 30 by 30 in Scotland:](#)
Framework that sets out how Scotland will aim to protect at least 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030.
- [Nature Networks framework for Scotland:](#)
Aims to progress the urgent and transformative action needed across Scotland to implement Nature Networks that help halt and reverse biodiversity loss.
- [The Environment Strategy for Scotland.](#)
- [Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Bill](#)
- [National Planning Framework 4 :](#)
Scotland's spatial strategy that guides development and infrastructure decisions in Scotland with biodiversity as one of its main themes. Policy 3 embeds protection of biodiversity, reversing biodiversity loss, delivery of positive effects from development and strengthening nature networks.
- [Scottish National Adaptation Plan 2024-2029](#)
- [Pollinator Strategy for Scotland:](#)
This Strategy sets out how Scotland can continue to be a place where pollinators thrive, with actions to achieve that objective.



12 Statutory context

As a public body, East Lothian Council has specific statutory nature conservation duties:

[The Conservation \(Natural Habitats, &c.\) Regulations 1994:](#)

General duty on Scottish Ministers, competent authorities and statutory advisors to exercise their functions so as to secure compliance with the requirements of the EU Habitats and Wild Birds Directives. As well as provisions relating to designation and management of protected areas.

[Nature Conservation \(Scotland\) Act 2004 Section 1:](#)

All public bodies in Scotland have a duty to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities, taking care of nature all around us, not just specified in designated and protected sites or for specific species. This is referred to as 'the Biodiversity Duty.'

[Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2011, part 5:](#)

As set out in the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011, every public body in Scotland is required to produce a publicly available report every three years on its compliance with the Biodiversity Duty.

East Lothian Council's most recent Biodiversity Duty Report 2021–2023, which was submitted to the Scottish Government in December 2023, is on the Council's website¹¹, and provides details of actions taken by the Council to conserve, protect and enhance nature and biodiversity. Since the last East Lothian Biodiversity Action Plan 2008-2013, there have been various projects and strategies implemented to enhance and restore East Lothian's habitats and species, including the importance of engaging communities and people in action for biodiversity. These are detailed in East Lothian Council's most recent Biodiversity Duty report to the Scottish Government.¹²



¹² [East Lothian Council Biodiversity Duty Report 2021 - 2023 | East Lothian Council](#)

13 East Lothian Council Policy

Context

13.1 East Lothian Council's Declarations of Climate and Nature Emergencies

In 2023, East Lothian Council declared a Nature Emergency, akin to the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency. The declaration notes the body of evidence which outlines the alarming extent of the global nature and biodiversity crises, and that nature is in decline and urgent action must be taken to reverse this. It recognises the inherent value of nature, as well as its crucial importance as an integral part of culture and society, and for our health, wellbeing, and economy; this being demonstrated through placemaking, tourism, food, energy, water and air quality regulation. Additionally, it recognises that the nature and climate emergencies are intrinsically linked, and that nature plays a key role in meeting climate targets, particularly for climate change adaptation and resilience.¹³ With this declaration, East Lothian Council welcomes the revised national Scottish Biodiversity Strategy¹⁴.

Climate change is identified as a IPBES main driver of biodiversity loss. In 2019, East Lothian Council declared a Climate Emergency, requiring urgent action to make all Council Services net zero carbon as soon as reasonably practicable or in any case by 2045 and to lobby, support and work with all

relevant agencies, partners and communities to fulfil this commitment. East Lothian Council is committed to working with communities and partners towards making East Lothian a carbon neutral county as well as enabling the county to deliver its part of wider national and international commitments.¹⁵



¹³https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/news/article/14176/council_declares_nature_emergen
[cy](#)

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-biodiversity-strategy-2045/>

¹⁵ [Climate Emergency declared | East Lothian Council](#)

13.2 East Lothian Strategies, Policies and Projects

There are several local strategies, policies and projects already underway which are linked to the East Lothian Biodiversity Action Plan, as well as national targets and policies Strategy. Helping to address the main drivers of biodiversity loss.

Name	Overview	Description	ELBAP Partners involved
East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018	Local development plan for East Lothian, produced by East Lothian Council. Next local development plan (LDP2) is currently in preparation.	Land-use change including development is one of the IPBES drivers of biodiversity loss. East Lothian's LDP sets out spatial strategy, policies and proposals for future land use across East Lothian. It aims to protect 'check LDP'	ELC
East Lothian Tree and Woodland Strategy	Strategy produced by East Lothian Council required by Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. Fulfils the Council's duty to promote sustainable forest management as required by the forestry and the Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018.	Sets out long term vision and policies and proposals for trees and woodland to guide the development of East Lothian Climate Forest. The aim is: <i>"Expanded and sustainably managed networks of woodland and trees across East Lothian contribute to addressing climate change, and provide a healthy and resilient environment, nature recovery, a strong sustainable economy and enhanced quality of life for local communities."</i>	ELC
East Lothian Council's Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030	Overarching East Lothian Council strategy for tackling climate change mitigation and adaptation. Currently being delivered.	Sets out how East Lothian Council will respond to the climate emergency, adapt to climate change and continue reducing its emissions to work towards reaching Net Zero by 2045. The key theme of 'Place' sets out how through partnership working the Council will enhance nature and our built environment and includes the focus area 'Green and Blue Networks', recognising the importance of nature and biodiversity in our response to the climate emergency, and the importance of nature-based solutions and green infrastructure for climate resilience.	East Lothian Council (ELC) Countryside Amenity Community partners
East Lothian Council's Open Space Strategy	Strategy setting East Lothian open space standards and currently being delivered. Next Open Space Strategy is currently in development.	A strategy that identifies key policy areas to be addressed in relation to the provision and management of open space. The strategic objectives that align with the importance of biodiversity include healthier communities, green networks, natural heritage, and climate change. Habitats within settlements are valuable during times of increased urbanisation. Open spaces can play an important part in providing habitat for biodiversity, as well as benefits to local communities.	ELC

Name	Overview	Description	ELBAP Partners involved
East Lothian Council's Green Network Strategy Supplementary Planning Guidance	Supplementary Planning Guidance; part of Local Development Plan 2018.	Supplementary planning guidance that forms part of East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018. Focusing on connecting people to nature, landscape, geodiversity and each other; improving human habitat; and doing things on a human scale with a long-term aim of expanding existing green assets.	ELC
East Lothian Council's Climate Evolution Strategy	Strategy and action plan for a 'climate resilience zone' within western East Lothian.	Draft proposed supplementary planning guidance for Local Development Plan 2018. It is a place-based response to East Lothian's Climate Change Strategy with an aim to ensure that areas of development can become a national example of environmentally-friendly and inclusive development. It is not a fixed masterplan but clarifies opportunities.	SEPA Scottish Water ELC
East Lothian Council's East Lothian Nature Networks in parks and greenspaces	Report and action plan identifying opportunities for nature network creation and enhancement in parks and greenspaces. Currently being delivered.	Project developed by East Lothian Council to identify, explore, provide advice on and deliver nature network opportunities in parks and greenspaces supported by our communities. Through public consultation an action plan was developed to deliver meaningful biodiversity action in parks and greenspaces with habitat connectivity in mind.	ELC
East Lothian Council Countryside Management Plans	Management plans for East Lothian Council owned/managed countryside sites. Currently being delivered and frequently updated.	Prepared by East Lothian Council with input from Advisory Groups. Sets out site detail and scope of planned works agreed with advisory groups of EL owned/managed countryside sites. Includes biodiversity and greenspace theme with aim to seek opportunities of blue-green infrastructure, maximise tree planting and increase biodiversity.	ELC Countryside NatureScot
Forth Estuary Flood Risk Management Plan (2022-2028)	Plan to detail the actions to be delivered to mitigate flood risk within the Forth Estuary catchment, including East Lothian.	Sets of a plan of actions and objective to be delivered over a six-year period by all statutory partners, including East Lothian Council, within the Forth Estuary catchment, as part of the overall plan to management flood risk within the Forth Estuary Catchment.	SEPA, ELC

Vision and Outcomes of East Lothian's Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Vision towards 2035

East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership will work towards the following vision by 2035 to tackle the Nature Emergency:

Restore and regenerate biodiversity across East Lothian's land, freshwater, coast and marine habitats.

Our natural environment, habitat and ecosystems and species will be diverse, thriving, resilient and adaptable to climate change.

East Lothian's communities and people will play their part in the stewardship of the local and national natural environment, central to a nature positive future.



13.3 Priority themes

Priority Themes have been identified to respond to the Nature Emergency and identified priorities for East Lothian's biodiversity through East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership.

- Priority Theme 1: Landscape and habitat restoration and regeneration
- Priority Theme 2: Species recovery
- Priority Theme 3: People and nature
- Priority Theme 4: Biodiversity, planning, policy and development

Each Priority Theme will deliver at least one of the outcomes aligning with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy:

13.4 Outcomes

1. East Lothian's landscape and priority habitats will be diverse, healthy and resilient helping ecosystems deliver a wide range of ecosystem services.
2. Protected areas will be connected and in good condition.
3. The abundance and distribution of priority species will increase in numbers and have healthy and resilient populations.
4. Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) will be managed so that they no longer degrade priority habitats and native species or impede on their conservation and restoration.
5. Nature based solutions will be fundamental to our efforts to deliver NetZero and adapt to climate change.
6. Natural Capital will be embedded and valued within policy and decision making.
7. Biodiversity will be integrated, understood and valued across East Lothian and its communities.



14 East Lothian's priority habitats and species

14.1 Priority Habitats

Priority habitats include those found within East Lothian that are listed under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP)¹⁶ priority habitat list. This covers habitat identified as the most threatened and requiring conservation action under the UK BAP and those known to be significant to East Lothian. Priority Habitat lists can be found in Table 2.

14.2 Irreplaceable Habitats

Irreplaceable habitats are those identified that are very difficult or take significant amounts of time to restore, recreate or replace once destroyed.¹⁷ Currently, there is not a list of irreplaceable habitats for Scotland. England's Biodiversity Net Gain Metric identifies that ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, blanket bog, limestone pavements, coastal sand dunes, saltmarshes and lowland fens as irreplaceable habitat. This list will be applied in East Lothian and used to advise planning and development, ensuring that there is no degradation, loss or damage to East Lothian's irreplaceable habitat. This list will be reviewed once Scotland's Biodiversity Net Gain Metric is adopted, to ensure that habitats align with national policy. A list that applies to East Lothian can be found in Table 2.

14.3 Priority Species

Priority species are those found in East Lothian identified as:

- Being the most threatened and requiring conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Species identified within the Scottish Biodiversity list which are of principle importance for biodiversity conservation in Scotland.
- Species rare or notable locally to East Lothian.

Priority species will be protected through action delivered under the associated habitat statements. An ecosystem approach of conserving the whole environment and habitat instead of singular species projects that could impact non-target species will also be undertaken.

An Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) list has been established to indicate which invasive species will need action to manage the impact they have on habitats and species.

Both priority habitat and species lists advise site management decisions and development proposals to consider and avoid impacts on these species and habitats, as well as prioritise where conservation efforts should be focussed. This list can be found in appendix 1.

¹⁶ [UK BAP Priority Habitats | JNCC - Adviser to Government on Nature Conservation](#)

¹⁷ <https://www.nature.scot/doc/biodiversity-metric-scotlands-planning-system-key-issues-consultation#2.3+Irreplaceable+Habitats-01>

Broad Habitat Type	Irreplaceable Habitat	UKBAP Priority Habitat	Other Important Habitat to East Lothian	Landscape Character Type
Coastal & Marine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal sand dunes Saltmarsh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intertidal mudflats, seagrass beds, intertidal under-boulder communities, subtidal sands and gravels Coastal sand dunes, maritime cliff and slopes, estuarine, coastal saltmarsh, Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal heath 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal terrace Settled coastal farmland
Terrestrial Freshwater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lowland Fens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rivers Ponds Lowland Fens Bogs Reedbeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burns Lochs Springs Reservoirs Riparian zone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lowland river valleys Upland fringes
Woodland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ancient woodland Ancient and veteran trees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lowland mixed deciduous wood, upland oakwood, upland ash woods, upland birch woods, wet woodland Hedgerows Wood-pasture and Parkland Orchards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decaying wood/deadwood Scrub Veteran trees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upland fringes Lowland river valleys <p>Lowland farmed plains</p>
Farmland and Heathland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blanket bog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arable field margins Hedgerows Lowland Heathland Lowland acid, calcareous and neutral grassland. Lowland Meadows Peatland <p>Farm ponds and wetlands</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grazed land Agricultural fields 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plateau moorland Lowland farmed plains
Inland Rock		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inland rock outcrop and scree habitats Open mosaic habitats on previously developed land Lowland Meadows, lowland calcareous grassland, lowland dry acid grassland 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lowland hills and ridges

Broad Habitat Type	Irreplaceable Habitat	UKBAP Priority Habitat	Other Important Habitat to East Lothian	Landscape Character Type
Urban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ancient and veteran trees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orchards and Hedgerows Lowland calcareous grassland and lowland dry acid grassland, lowland meadows Ponds, rivers and burns Open mosaic habitats on previously developed land Wood-pasture and Parkland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Road and path verges Blue and green infrastructure (including green roofs, raingardens, SUDS) Street trees and veteran trees Gardens, parks, open space, cemeteries, greenspaces, allotments and community growing sites, natural play spaces, golf courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Settled coastal farmland Lowland farmed plains

15 Broad Habitat Statements

15.1 Coastal and Marine Landscape

The entire Firth of Forth coastline and Outer Firth of Forth and St Andrews Bay complex is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) due to its international importance for wading and other coastal birds, see appendix 1. The Bass Rock, Fidra, Craigleith and other islands form part of the Forth Islands SPA. This is designated for its international importance to breeding birds and much of the wider coast is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The landscape of the coast has varied habitats from sand dunes, maritime cliffs to saltmarsh and estuaries. With a variety of priority species from seabirds, wading birds, invertebrates, flora, lichens, and fungi in turn highlighting the importance of international wildlife legislation, coastal ecology, and visitor management.

Priority coastal and marine habitats:

Intertidal mudflats, seagrass beds, intertidal under-boulder communities, subtidal sands and gravels.

Coastal sand dunes, maritime cliff and slopes, estuarine, coastal saltmarsh, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh.

Associated species include grey seal, tern species, puffin, lapwing, eider, gannet, herring gull, purple milk-vetch.



Historic and known pressures:

- **Climate Change** – Increases in cases of more extreme weather events have impacted East Lothian's coastline through extreme storms, extreme swells, drying out of dunes increasing chances of wildfires, erosion, and flood risk. Distribution of species changes with climate change for example changes in availability of prey for seabird populations in the Firth of Forth.¹⁸
- **Pollution** – Plastic pollution in the forms of general waste, nurdles (plastic pellets) and fishing litter impact coastal and marine habitats despite Local Authority and community efforts and litter initiatives. East Lothian's coastline also has at risk of oil spillages as it sits along key shipping routes through to Firth of Forth ports as well as hosting a valuable fishing industry. Pollution can also have further impact during run off from inland development and agriculture. Light and noise pollution also impacts the marine environment.
- **Exploitation** – There have been documented instances of poaching that have impacts on local species populations.
- **Development** – Increased development along the coast to support a growing East Lothian increases pressure on coastal resources, habitat fragmentation and loss. As well an increase in population visiting the coastline increases impact and disturbance on habitats and Special Protection Area species.
- **Recreation** – East Lothian's coastline is a popular destination for visitors. This brings increased disturbance, erosion, and instances of damage through irresponsible behaviour such as camping, fires and litter.

¹⁸ [Marine Ecology Progress Series 583:227](#)

- **Invasive species** – Both native and non-native invasive species can colonise coastal habitats e.g. piri-piri bur affecting dune habitat, as well as sea buckthorn and tree mallow.

Case study: Eider Monitoring Scheme

Breeding eider (*Somateria mollissima*) is a feature of the SSSI between Longniddry and Dunbar. The Leithies are a group of three islands close to the settlement of North Berwick, identified as a successful mainland breeding site for the species. In response to this East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service set up the Eider monitoring project in 2007 and this has taken place annually between April and July each year. Data from this project evaluates breeding success. Since the project started, impacts on the breeding population have been identified. This includes predation, weather and human disturbance. Disturbance data has informed the input of signs from April to August advising the public not to enter the islands and disturb the nesting birds at the Leithies islands. Conservation Volunteers play a key role in complementing the work of the Countryside Ranger Service in data gathering.



Coastal and marine actions will work towards:

- Protection, enhancement and restoration of coastal and marine habitats.
- Ensuring coastal and marine habitats are in prime condition to sequester and store carbon, increasing resilience to climate change impacts.
- Mainstreaming of natural solutions in climate adaptation and resilience planning.
- Managing and reducing wildlife disturbance from recreation and development through management of sites, planning and development considerations and public engagement.
- Management of invasive species and the impact they have on habitats and species within coastal habitats, with balance to the wider ecosystem.
- Engaging litter initiatives with the public, business and industry. Reducing plastic pollution along our coastal and marine habitats.
- Continuing to monitor and respond to poaching incidents.
- Continue to respond and to pollution incidents and act to prevent pollution with multi-agency partners.

15.2 Trees and Woodland Habitat

The Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian notes that in 2024 East Lothian had a total woodland cover of 7,130 ha comprised of native woodland (1,423 ha). This was made up of upland oak wood, upland mixed ash wood, upland birch wood, scrub and undesignated native woodland, wet woodland and lowland mixed deciduous. Non-native woodland includes coniferous plantations.¹⁹ Other tree and woodland habitats that are valuable within East Lothian include hedgerows, wood-pasture and parkland, orchards, deadwood and veteran trees. Woodland cover in East Lothian is lower than the Scottish average and between 2011-2021 decreased by 330 ha. Within the lowlands, woodland is concentrated within the river valleys and shelterbelts and hedges within the agricultural landscape as well as some remaining orchards. Urban areas are also important for trees ranging from formal planting defining the urban structure to trees in parks, gardens and open spaces. Ancient and veteran trees are not uncommon throughout the lowlands. The Lammermuirs are dominated by heathland and moorland managed for grouse, with some areas of coniferous plantation. Native woodland cover is limited to within the cleughs and some juniper scrub in particular in the Lammer Law SSSI.

The Council is progressing efforts to enhance and increase tree and woodland cover across East Lothian including the delivery of the East Lothian Climate Forest, actions within East Lothian's Climate Change Strategy and the implementation of the Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian.

¹⁹https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210547/planning_and_building_standards/12249/trees_tpos_and_consentH_for_tree_works/

Priority woodland and tree habitats: Lowland mixed deciduous woodland, upland oakwood, upland ash wood, upland birch wood, wet woodland, hedgerows, wood-pasture and parkland, and orchards.

Associated species include wood warbler, spotted flycatcher, badger, bats and bluebell.

Historic and known impacts

- **Climate change:** Increases in extreme weather events such as Storm Arwen (2021) have caused significant damage and loss of trees across East Lothian. Periods of drought can impact growth and establishment, seedling recruitment, how well trees grow (productivity) and increase susceptibility to pest/diseases. Wildfire events may increase with changing climate and distribution of species may change.
- **Development and land-use change:** Historic land use change for settlement and agriculture has led to fragmentation of woodland in East Lothian. Renewable energy development is an additional more recent pressure.
- **INNS, pests and diseases:** Ash dieback disease is widespread in East Lothian and infected trees which pose a health and safety hazard are being removed. Other pests and diseases may establish because of climate change, shipping of trees, or spread via humans or animals. Increasing deer numbers prevents successful regeneration of woodland and establishment of trees.
- **Recreation:** Increased and unmanaged recreation within our woodlands can erode sensitive areas and fragment habitats.

Action for trees and woodland habitat will work towards:

- Delivery of targets and actions within the Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian.
- Expansion and restoration of riparian woodland across East Lothian's lowland river valley landscape.
- Ensuring the retention of decaying wood habitat.
- Identification of opportunities for woodland expansion without negative impact on other priority habitats.
- Manage woodlands to ensure support of associated priority woodland species.

Case Study: East Lothian's Climate Forest

In 2021, East Lothian Council approved a policy intent to plant 2 million trees across East Lothian over 10 years, to enable us to reach our target of a carbon neutral East Lothian and deliver biodiversity and green network benefits.

The aim of this is to sequester CO₂ and contribute to a transition to NetZero, as well as restore habitats and enhance tree and woodland networks. Ongoing tree planting across the county is being progressed by East Lothian Council, community groups, charities, landowners and developers in support of this. The Queen's Green Canopy also contributed to this target. The Tree and Woodland Strategy identifies appropriate tree planting locations and climate resilient species for the Climate Forest.



15.3 Freshwater Landscape

There is approximately 75km of flowing freshwater in East Lothian, made up of the River Tyne, Biel Water, Peffer Burns and the lower reaches of the River Esk. These rivers are important habitat networks within a developing landscape.

Wetlands cover 600ha in East Lothian which is made up of reservoirs, ponds, lochs and springs, marsh and bogs. The largest bodies of water are found at Whiteadder Reservoir and Hopes Reservoir in the Lammermuirs. The Hopes Reservoir and catchment sit within a SSSI. Other notable sites include Levenhall Links with valuable habitat for wading birds and North Berwick Law marsh combining marsh, grassland and wet woodland which are valuable habitat for amphibians, wetland birds and invertebrates as well as botanical interest. Both the River Esk and Tyne catchment are both important lowland river landscapes combined not only providing habitat but acting as a vital system for freshwater services and climate mitigation and adaptation services.

Priority freshwater habitats:

Rivers, ponds, lowland fens, bogs, reedbeds.

Associated species include

otter, water vole, great crested newt.



Historic and known impacts

- **Pollution and nutrient enrichment:** Freshwater habitats can be exposed to pollution altering nutrient content affecting the health of the habitat and the species within it. Water quality can be affected by contaminated run off and sewage.
- **Development and infrastructure:** The River Esk and the River Tyne were historically modified with weirs and dams for industrial use. These have impact on the fish species using these rivers to breed upstream like salmon and trout. Passes through these obstructions will help these populations travelling through habitat networks and reach breeding sites. Culverting of watercourses has also fragmented this habitat.
- **Climate change:** Our rivers and wetlands are impacted by increased cases of extreme weather events, changes to temperature and rainfall levels leading which regularly lead to increases in run off and pollution, drying out events of wetlands, algal bloom events and impact to habitat condition. Loss of riparian shade from trees and woodland contribute to increases in river temperatures which have an indirect and direct ecological impact on freshwater species.²⁰
-
- **Invasive Species:** Invasive species in freshwater habitats pose a dual impact by altering the ecosystem and degrading their ability to withstand wider other impacts. Negatively affecting both biodiversity and recreational activities. For example, giant hogweed, Himalayan balsam and American mink.

²⁰ [Rising water temperature in rivers: Ecological impacts and future resilience - Johnson - 2024 - WIREs Water - Wiley Online Library](#)

- **Recreation:** Both managed and unmanaged recreation can affect wildlife and habitat such as fishing and feeding wildfowl.

Case Study: Giant Hogweed eradication programme.

East Lothian Countryside Volunteers have collaborated with landowners along the River Tyne to map and treat giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*). The management of the giant hogweed involves spraying plants in Spring and Summer and deadheading/digging up small plants before they set seed. Treated sites are then inspected to confirm absence of the plant. In 2023, the project introduced a GIS mapping tool to support surveying areas known to have had giant hogweed present. This project has been successful and has been expanded to map and treat giant hogweed along the River Esk, working across Mid- and East Lothian.



Across our freshwater networks actions will work towards:

- River catchment level action to create healthy ecologically diverse freshwater systems.
- Protection and conservation of populations of priority and vulnerable freshwater species.
- Exploration of opportunities for the removal of barriers to migration of freshwater species.
- Increasing awareness about our freshwater networks, and the species within them.
- Promotion of education and awareness of land-management practices that impact our freshwater networks.
- Understanding, mitigation and adaption of impacts from climate change and maximising nature-based solutions within adaptation plans and projects that protect freshwater networks.
- Expanding and connecting wetland habitat networks where appropriate, in combination with enhancing existing habitats.

15.4 Urban Landscape

East Lothian is a semi-rural local authority with a population of around 113,740 in 2023²¹. Towns and villages have expanded with increased development to support a growing population. Parks, public and private open spaces and greenspaces, green networks including active travel routes, school grounds, sports and recreation spaces, allotments and gardens provide habitat within our towns and villages. Urban habitats include woodland, trees, grasslands, hedgerows, freshwater networks and brownfield/derelict sites. These can play a critical role in linking fragmented natural habitats therefore enabling the movement, resilience and genetic exchange of species.

Well-planned urban development that considers habitat connectivity contributes to the overall ecological health of East Lothian, supporting biodiversity and enhancing the resilience of ecosystems in the face of urbanisation. Urban areas are important for human habitation and nature positive design within our urban spaces will benefit human health and wellbeing providing spaces for recreation, social interaction, mental well-being and connection to nature fostering care for the natural environment which is a key step in responding to the nature emergency. Biodiversity also improves environmental conditions through enhancing urban liveability by mitigating and adapting to climate change and reducing air pollution

Priority urban habitats: Parks, Cemeteries, greenspaces, urban green networks, golf courses and allotments. Orchards, hedgerows and woodland areas. Road and path verges. Open mosaic previously developed land.

Associated species include bats, hedgehog, badgers, foxes, lichens, , otter, house martin, garden birds, common toad, pollinators.



²¹ [East Lothian Council Profile](#)

Historic and known impacts

- **Climate change:** Climate change impacts the habitats and wildlife within them as well as humans in urban environments. Change in precipitation levels and temperatures due to climate change can impact plant species in urban habitats.^{22 23}
- **Pollution:** With land use change there is potential for increased risk of polluted run-off, soil contamination and noise and light pollution, especially as East Lothian is undergoing increased development. Air pollution has a negative impact to our plants, fungi and lichens.²⁴
- **Urbanisation:** Increased development and urbanisation can result in habitat loss or fragmentation by infrastructure projects. Increases in urbanisation can increase need for resources which can put pressures on ecosystem services. In the face of urbanisation, domestic gardens can provide habitats and refuge for wildlife. However, conversion of vegetated gardens to hardstanding and a reduction of plants in gardens is a loss of greenspace and habitat. For example, in the UK more than 4.5 million front gardens have no plants and a quarter are completely paved over.²⁵ Additionally, there is an increase in homeowners choosing artificial grass.²⁶ However, there are opportunities within urbanisation to design with nature, supporting and creating important habitat networks to benefit both nature and people.
- **Management:** Traditional landscaping design of urban greenspaces can mean there is more intensive management for areas to look neat and tidy which can be unsympathetic to biodiversity. Planting of species that may have more aesthetic value than biodiversity

value can reduce food, shelter and breeding resources for wildlife. Alternatively, lack of management can lead to low biodiversity value habitats such as rank grassland and spread of invasive species.

- **Invasive species:** INNS and garden plants can spread from gardens into other habitats within the urban environment. Poor or absence of biosecurity can spread INNS, pests and pathogens. Himalayan balsam have been impacts East Lothians rivers and Japanese knotweed is a problem plant not just to biodiversity but to infrastructure. Domestic pets can impact local biodiversity. For example, cats predate local wildlife and dogs can cause disturbance within habitats as well as altering plant composition through nutrient input and spread of pest and disease from dog fouling.^{27 28}



²² [journal.pone.0275044.pdf](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0275044.pdf)

²³ [Urban environment, drought events and climate change strongly affect the growth of common urban tree species in a temperate city - ScienceDirect](#)

²⁴ [Clean Air for Wild Plants and Fungi - Plantlife](#)

²⁵ [RHS front garden research: Greening Grey Britain / RHS](#)

²⁶ [Number of UK homes with artificial lawns expected to grow - Aviva plc](#)

²⁷ <https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1365-2656.13745>

²⁸ [Dogs and nature | The Wildlife Trusts](#)

Case Study: Buglife B-Line John Muir Pollinator Way and East Lothian's Nature Networks

The John Muir Pollinator Way was Scotland's first B-line that stretches 134 miles running from birthplace of John Muir in Dunbar to Helensburgh in the west. The project created a 'B-lines' opportunity map that follows the route of the John Muir Way and 3km either side of the route. The map identified wildflower forage and nesting habitats for pollinators and other wildlife that can be created, enhanced and managed including on school grounds, parks and greenspaces. As part of the project, pollinator habitat was improved at Prestongrange Museum, Morrison's Haven and Prestonpans. East Lothian's Nature Networks in Parks and Greenspaces project, identifies, explores and provides advice on opportunities in parks and greenspaces in our towns and villages, supported by our communities.



Within urban habitats actions will work towards:

- Employing best practice of sympathetic management of priority urban habitats to improve the health of East Lothian's urban ecosystems.
- Ensuring balance between providing for biodiversity and people within our urban habitats.
- Promoting nature-based solutions that support biodiversity to mitigate and adapt our towns and villages to climate change.
- Protecting, restoring, and enhancing our urban habitats and species.
- Engaging urban biodiversity initiatives with East Lothian's communities, promoting wider action for urban habitats and species that benefit people and nature.

15.5 Farmland and Heathland Landscape

East Lothian has a rich farming heritage and a majority of the county is identified as prime quality agricultural land, hosting flat land with fertile soils with moderate rainfall and warmer temperatures.²⁹ Arable and pasture farmland covers approximately 30,000 ha and 9,000 ha, respectively. There is extensive heathland across the Lammermuir Hills, covering around 7,000 ha providing habitat for mountain hare, grey partridge, adder and birds of prey.

One of the main drivers of biodiversity loss is land-use change and historical land management practices for a variety of purposes such as food production and hunting has altered the amount, variety and condition of habitats, impacting our biodiversity. Scotland retains some of the largest and most intact blanket bog globally, but losses to drainage, land use change, commercial peat extraction and damage through burning has led to extensive degradation with an estimate that currently 75% of Scottish peatlands are damaged.³⁰ Intensive agriculture such as tillage, drainage, pesticide and fertiliser use have impacts on wild species.

Despite historical land management and the negative impacts to biodiversity and habitats, there has been a shift in more sustainable practices and technologies with incentives from national schemes. Some examples of scheme supporting landowners and farmers include the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS) which promotes land management practices which protect and enhance Scotland's natural heritage, improve water quality, manage flood risk, preserve historic sites and mitigate and adapt to climate change. From 2025, The Basic Payment Scheme requires applicants to provide a Whole Farm Plan incorporating a biodiversity audit

of their land to help farmers and crofters become more productive and profitable while helping climate and nature targets.³¹

Farmland and heathland are important habitats to East Lothian culturally, economically and for heritage. Management of these landscapes for biodiversity can benefit nature while also mitigating and adapting to impacts of climate change, while also providing sustainable food production. Therefore, it is important that farmers and landowners voices their voices are at the table when action planning for biodiversity and that representatives are included in East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership. The National Farmers Union and The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust have helped shape this action plan and will help us deliver what is needed for our biodiversity across our farmland and heathlands.



Priority Farmland and Heathland habitats: Arable field margins, hedgerows, lowland heathland, lowland acid, calcareous and neutral grassland, lowland meadows and peatland, farm ponds and wetlands.

Associated species include grey partridge, mountain hare, Northern brown argus, adder, waxcap, specialist grassland fungi, barn owl beetles, pinked-footed geese, curlew, yellowhammer.

²⁹[East Lothian by numbers | Statistics, facts and figures | East Lothian Council](#)

³⁰[State of Nature Scotland Report | NatureScot](#)

³¹[Farm Biodiversity Project | NatureScot](#)

Historic and known impacts

- **Climate Change**

Soil health is incredibly important for both agriculture and biodiversity. Increased drought and heavy rainfalls can cause erosion and deplete soil nutrients. Wildfires pose risks during periods of drought. Extreme weather events and season changes can impact flowering times impacting pollination rate and types of crops available to grow and food security.

- **Land-use change**

Demand for productivity influences how land is used which can result in fragmented or lost habitat. Forestry planting on unimproved grasslands contributes to loss of these priority habitats as well as peatlands/bog habitat. Under- and overgrazing impact the health and diversity of botanically rich grassland habitats. The Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian does not support tree planting and woodland expansion on other priority habitats.

- **Fertilisers and pesticides**

Broad spectrum pesticides and herbicides have long-term effects on non-target invertebrates, many of which function as important biological pest control and pollinators.³² Inorganic fertilisers can reduce botanical diversity.³³

- **Management**

Intensive management influences habitat health and availability. Changes in harvest seasons can impact breeding habitat of birds and small mammals. Tillage can impact soil habitats where species of invertebrates including pollinators overwinter. Intensification of

grasslands can be detrimental to butterfly populations. Grazing can be a beneficial tool in conservation, however if unmanaged can impact plant species composition. If poorly managed and undertaken without due consideration of consequences, Muirburn and burning on deep peat, as well as the use of peat in horticulture, are threatening heathland/bog habitats.^{34,35}



³² [Invertebrate biodiversity continues to decline in cropland | Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences](#)

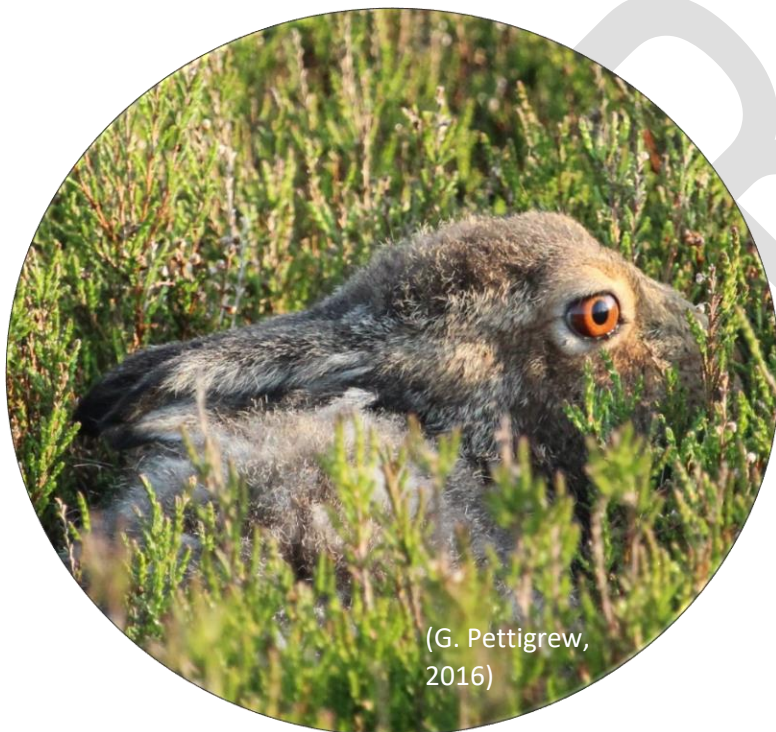
³³ [Why does fertilization reduce plant species diversity? Testing three competition-based hypotheses](#)

³⁴ [The Wildlife Management and Muirburn Bill – The dawn of a new era of upland management in Scotland? | Scottish Wildlife Trust](#)

³⁵ [3. Muirburn - Wildlife management: consultation analysis - gov.scot](#)

Across our farmlands and heathland actions will work towards:

- Protection, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats and species within the farming and heathland landscape.
- Exploring and building opportunities for partnership-based farmland and heathland landscape work.
- Championing and supporting landowners through their actions and projects for biodiversity.
- Continuing to create and enhance native hedgerows across the farming landscape.



(G. Pettigrew, 2016)

Case Study: Healthy Hedgerows Project

East Lothian is a rural county with a rich farming history and hedgerows play an important habitat within these landscapes providing not only biodiversity benefits, but ecosystem services. Unfortunately, hedgerows have had a history of cultural change, land use change and policy change that has impacted the condition of our hedgerows. East Lothian Climate Action Network's East Lothian Climate Hub and the community organisations within the network, including Climate Action East Linton's Twa Burn Woods project; are undertaking a pilot project of mapping and assessing the condition of hedgerows around East Linton in partnership with local farmers and landowners, using the Adams Hedgerow Management Scale. This included workshops held by People's Trust for Endangered Species with training for volunteers to assess hedgerows around East Linton and the wider area which aims to help advise management and enhancement of hedgerow networks around East Lothian. The project is an exemplar of partnership working with landowners and farmers to help extend and enhance habitat connectivity across the farming landscape.



15.6 Grasslands

A priority habitat found across a wide range of East Lothian's broad habitat and landscape are grasslands, consisting of:

- lowland meadows
- lowland calcareous grassland
- lowland dry acid grassland
- coastal dunes
- amenity grassland
- naturalised grassland
- field margins
- grazed grasslands

The UK's grasslands are declining with over 97% of species-rich grassland lost in less than a century and only covering 1% of land³⁶. There are many reasons for this including land-use change and conversion into crops with intensive management, tree planting or being lost or fragmented to development.

The loss of these valuable and important habitats is alarming as grasslands provide critical food, shelter and breeding habitat for birds, invertebrates and mammals. Grasslands also keep soils healthy with diverse plants, fungi and microorganisms, supporting the ecosystem and reducing soil erosion.

Grasslands play a significant role in our response to the climate emergency. Like trees, healthy and diverse grasslands can sequester significant amounts of carbon. Grasslands can hold the highest terrestrial carbon stock of any UK broad habitat due to their large area coverage

(including improved grasslands).³⁷ Tree planting and woodland regeneration play an important role in our conservation and climate emergency response. However, it is important that afforestation efforts are conducted by planting the right trees in the right place, to ensure no detriment to other important habitats including grassland.³⁸

Actions for grasslands will be embedded across the different habitat action plans and will include restoration, enhancement and conservation of existing grassland ensuring they are healthy and diverse. Creation of new grassland habitat will increase connectivity across East Lothian and ensure that grasslands have a significant place and continue to be valued within East Lothian's wider habitat mosaic.



³⁶ [Grassland - Plantlife](#)

³⁷ [Carbon Storage and Sequestration by Habitat 2021 - NERR094](#)

³⁸ [Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian | Trees, TPOs and Consent for Tree Works | East Lothian Council](#)

16 Geodiversity

Geodiversity is the natural range of geological (rocks, minerals, and fossils), geomorphological (landforms, physical processes, and topography), soil and hydrological features. As the building blocks for our diverse habitats and our landscapes, it is equally important to value and conserve geodiversity.

450 million years ago (mya), Scotland was south of the Equator, where sediments were deposited in deep waters. The collision of the Scottish landmass with England pressed and folded the sediments into hard rocks called greywackes. These form the upland mass of the Lammermuirs. Erosion of the greywacke led to the formation of other rocks: conglomerate around Oldhamstocks and Innerwick and sandstone around Gifford, Garvald and Dunbar.

About 350 mya the changing climates facilitated further deposition of sediments. Different sedimentary rocks formed in different landscapes: for example, forests produced coal; shallow seas produced limestone. These rocks have become important resources in the coalfields around Tranent and the quarries near Dunbar. There was much volcanic activity at this time, particularly between North Berwick and Whittingehame. Lava and magma cooled to form large expanses of hard rock. These are seen today in the basalt outcrops of the Garleton Hills, Traprain Law, North Berwick Law, the offshore islands, and other smaller rocky outcrops. The geology of these sites helps to produce interesting and scarce vegetation. Volcanic activity at this time, created large expanses of hard rock between North Berwick and Whittingehame, such as Traprain and North Berwick Law.

Geological processes continue today. Rivers and burns are constantly eroding their landscape, carrying and depositing boulders and sediment. Their channels fluctuate naturally, resulting in valleys, flood plains and meanders. Wind and wave power constantly erode and deposit sediment, particularly along the coast. Sand dunes are naturally mobile landforms.

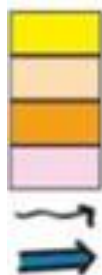
SSSI's in East Lothian that are designated for their geological features include Rammer Cleugh, Garleton Hills, Keith Water and Bangley Quarry. Mixed SSSI sites that are designated for their biological and geological features include Firth of Forth, Barns Ness Coast, Lammermuir Deans and Traprain Law. Other notable sites have been designated as Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) and Local Geodiversity Sites. These designations aim to protect the landforms and rock features that explain our landscape history.



Map Key

Superficial deposits

River/loch alluvial flat
Blown sand
Raised beach
Sand and gravel
Glacial channels
Ice-flow direction



Sedimentary rocks

Coalfield
Limestone field
Sandstone, mainly
Conglomerate
Greywacke



Igneous rocks

Trachyte lava
Basalt lava
Intrusion



Carboniferous sedimentary rocks generally covered by superficial deposits. Extensive sand and gravel along foothills and Dunbar- Cockburnspath plain

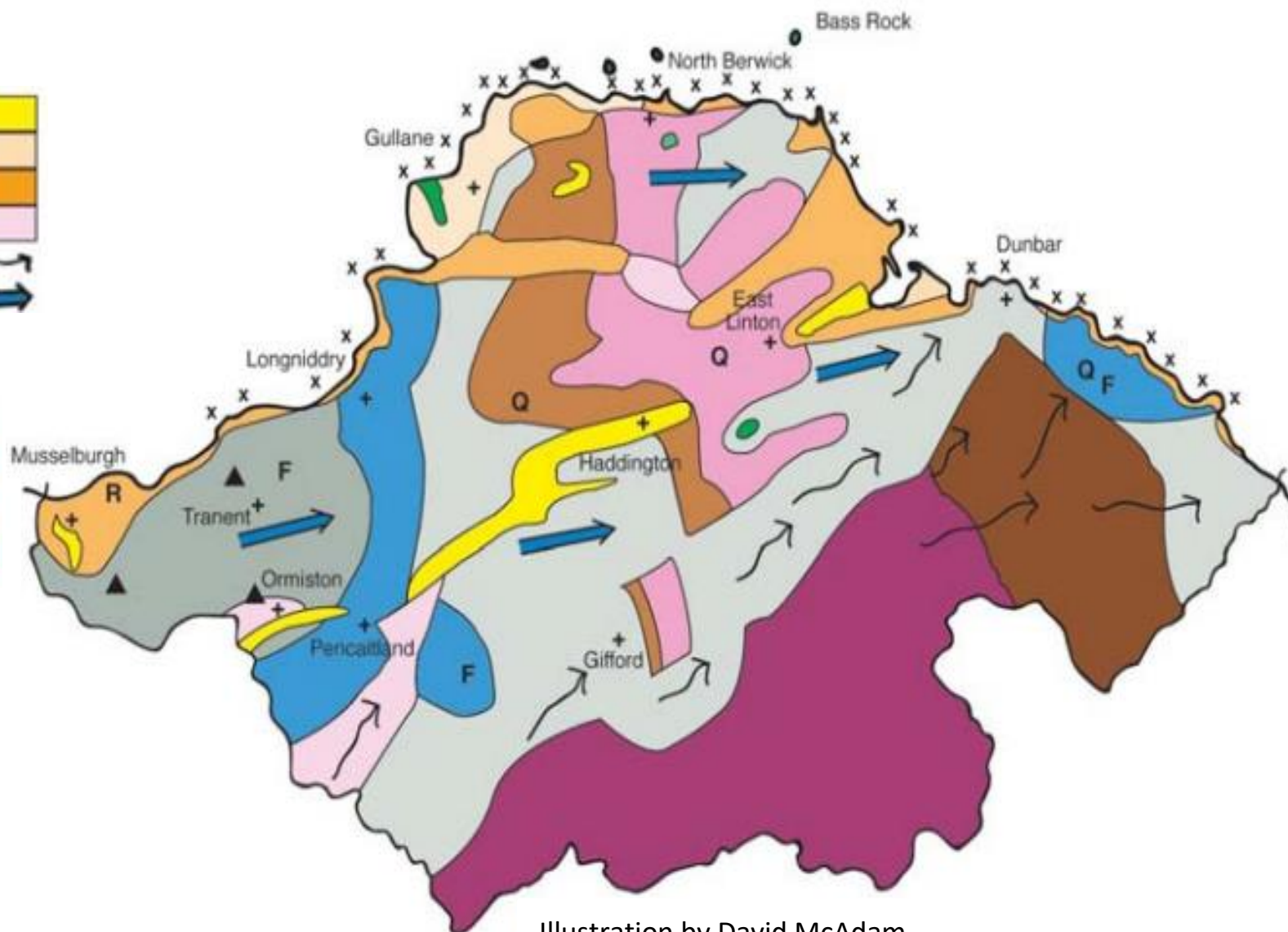


Illustration by David McAdam,
Lothian & Borders RIGS Group

Figure 3, map of the geodiversity of East Lothian.

East Lothian's Local Biodiversity Action Plan: Delivery Plan 2025-35

East Lothian
Biodiversity
Partnership



17 A Delivery Plan for East Lothian's Biodiversity

This is Part 2 of East Lothian's Local Biodiversity Action Plan; it outlines the delivery plan and actions that East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership and other key stakeholders will deliver to respond to the Nature Emergency and the priorities identified within Part 1. East Lothian's Local Biodiversity Action Plan (ELBAP) has no end date. However, its focus is on the next 10 years in line with this delivery plan and its vision to 2035.

Actions in the previous East Lothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2009-2013) were achieved and since then there have been various strategies, projects and actions, delivered by East Lothian Council, local communities, farmers and landowners and other organisations, to protect and enhance biodiversity. These actions have been reported through 3 yearly Biodiversity Duty reporting to Scottish Government.

This delivery plan captures the changes in national and local policy with the new Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and East Lothian Council's Nature and Climate Emergency Declarations. East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership has identified priority Themes to respond to the impacts facing East Lothian's biodiversity and natural environment.



18 Priority Themes

This delivery plan for East Lothian's Local Biodiversity Action Plan sets out how the four priority Themes identified through East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership will achieve the Vision and deliver the prescribed Outcomes for East Lothian's biodiversity.

- **Priority Theme 1: Landscape and habitat restoration and regeneration**

Actions will work towards landscape and habitat restoration and regeneration, ensuring diversity, health and resilience of habitats. Ecosystems will be healthy, resilient and deliver a wide range of ecosystem services. Habitats will be connected to support resilience and health of species across East Lothian. This will be done by connectivity and quality of green and blue networks, designated sites, nature networks and local biodiversity sites.

- **Priority Theme 2: Species recovery**

Actions will work towards effective species recovery and protection measures to restore species and support adaptation and resilience to threats. Priority species will increase in numbers and have healthy resilient populations within East Lothian's landscapes and habitats.

- **Priority Theme 3: People and nature**

Actions will work towards delivering biodiversity outcomes through partnership and joint working. There is strength in collaboration in biodiversity action, bringing a unified strategy and enabling more to be delivered. This includes the Biodiversity Partnership as well as the local community, members of the public and other stakeholders cultivating shared responsibility and leveraging local knowledge. As well as responding to indirect threats to biodiversity, it will ensure more effective and sustainable outcomes while benefitting the people in our communities.

- **Priority Theme 4: Biodiversity, planning, policy and development**

Actions will work towards the integration and delivery of biodiversity action within land use, planning and development, to help reverse biodiversity loss and enhance nature through protection, enhancement and habitat creation, including through nature-based solutions, as an integral part of development to support East Lothian's growth.

18.1 Priority Theme 1: Landscape and habitat restoration and regeneration

East Lothian hosts diverse landscapes. The habitats within these landscapes face pressures impacting the natural processes within them by accelerating the degradation, fragmentation and loss.

This Priority Theme focusses on delivering for:

- Outcome 1: East Lothian's landscape and priority habitats will be diverse, healthy and resilient helping ecosystems delivery a wide range of ecosystem services.
- Outcome 2: Protected areas will be connected and in good condition.
- Outcome 5: Nature based solutions will be fundamental to our efforts to deliver NetZero and adapt to climate change.
- Outcome 7: Biodiversity will be integrated, understood and valued across East Lothian and its communities.

Landscape restoration and regeneration is the improvement of habitats and land on a large scale. It considers natural processes, circular and regenerative processes and is an essential part of rebuilding the ecological integrity and enhancing people's lives alongside biodiversity.

East Lothian has many designated areas for nature conservation and geological interest and biodiversity interest. These include SPA's SSSI and Local Biodiversity site over all they cover 33.7% of East Lothian's land. East Lothians nationally and internationally designated sites cover 12.6% of East Lothian's land and contributes to the national target within the Scottish

Biodiversity Strategy '30 X 30 target' on a local level which is protecting over 30% of East Lothian's land by 2030³⁹.

It is crucial that these areas are continually protected and restored creating large areas of healthy habitat within the landscape while also working with natural processes, benefitting multiple species and ensuring resilient ecosystem services. Central to this approach is partnership and connecting people with nature and helping to provide context where human activities can be undertaken in balance and harmony with the natural environment. A resilient and diverse landscape ensures functioning ecosystems and the services they provide.⁴⁰

This plan has identified landscape characteristics of East Lothian using NatureScot's Scottish Landscape Character Types Assessment. Priority habitats have been categorised within these so that readers and users of this document can pinpoint which actions could target which landscapes and habitats.



³⁹ [30 by 30 explained | NatureScot](#)

⁴⁰ [Nature Restoration at the Landscape Scale | NatureScot](#)

18.2 Nature Networks

Priority Theme 1 incorporates the importance of habitat connectivity across East Lothian's landscapes, which is essential when one of the key drivers for biodiversity loss is habitat loss and fragmentation. Connectivity ensures movement of species and genetic exchange as well as resilience to environmental pressures and impacts.

*'Nature Networks connect together nature-rich sites, including restoration areas, and other environmental projects through a series of areas of suitable habitat, habitat corridors and stepping-stones. As well as support regional and national approaches to protect and restore nature, they provide local benefits to wildlife and people'*⁴¹

In line with the Scottish Government's 5-year delivery plan, Nature Network framework⁴² and National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)⁴³, East Lothian Council has begun implementing nature network plans and projects to establish habitat connectivity. NPF4 outlines that development proposals will contribute to build and strengthen nature networks and the connections between them. Further, development proposals for national or major development, or for development that requires an Environmental Impact Assessment, will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, including nature networks so they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention.

Projects that have started to piece together East Lothian's nature network include:

Nature Networks East Lothian - a project developed by East Lothian Council to identify, explore, provide advice on and deliver nature network opportunities supported by our communities, in suitable areas of Council owned and managed parks and greenspaces across East Lothian's towns and villages. The objective was to identify areas which have the potential for development of enhanced and connected nature networks and biodiversity enhancements with community support to produce an Action Plan which East Lothian Council aim to deliver over the coming years, bringing a wide range of benefits to nature and people.⁴⁴



⁴¹ [Nature Networks Explained - Nature Networks](#)

⁴² [Nature Networks Framework | NatureScot](#)

⁴³ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/>

⁴⁴ [Nature Networks in our parks and greenspaces | Nature Networks | East Lothian Council](#)

Within the national landscape, protected areas such as Local Nature Conservation Sites, Local Nature Reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Special Protection Areas continue to form vital areas of protection for a variety of species and some form important habitat networks, such as Firth of Forth SSSI. These are managed areas and conserve some of the best examples of our priority habitats and our specialist species. In 2008, The East Lothian Local Plan recognised a series of local wildlife sites, identified by the Scottish Wildlife Trust. It gave these sites a measure of protection, though not as great as that afforded to SSSIs and internationally designated sites.

Within the 2018 Local Development Plan, a new approach to local conservation sites was implemented recognising the importance of ecological networks in delivering a more effective service than conservation of individual and isolated sites. A main objective of Local Biodiversity Sites was to link up the nationally designated sites establishing a habitat network.⁴⁵

Additionally, East Lothian's Green Network Strategy (published as supplementary planning guidance) was created in support of new green network policies of East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018 with Central Scotland Green Network project. This investigated and addressed gaps within existing grassland, woodland and wetland habitat networks.

Actions will work towards spatially defining Nature Networks and identifying opportunities for habitat connectivity, ensuring that East Lothian's nature network will be healthy and resilient through connecting habitats to protected sites, locally designated sites, and other important habitats and through our towns and villages to benefit both biodiversity and our local community. Mapping habitat connectivity will help guide

what projects and actions can be applied to build and strengthen nature networks, for developers, planning, landowners and managers and community groups.

This priority theme will work towards:

- Establishing partnerships to consider new opportunities for landscape and habitat projects.
- Increasing the quality and area of natural and semi natural habitats.
- Protecting, restoring and enhancing designated habitat within the landscape.
- Identification and implementation of landscape restoration and conservation.
- Ensuring habitats are in healthiest condition to increase resilience and adaptation to impacts.
- Enhancing, connecting and restoring habitats to create resilient and healthy habitat networks across East Lothian.
- Creating partnerships and collaboration to guide what enhancements, restoration and networks are suitable across areas of East Lothian.
- Ensuring cross boundary and meaningful connectivity between designated and priority habitats.
- Spatially defining East Lothian's nature network, identifying existing connectivity and opportunities for enhancement, creation and restoration.

⁴⁵ [Technical Note 10: Planning for Biodiversity | East Lothian Council](#)

18.3 Priority Theme 2: Species Recovery

East Lothian is home to over 4,000 species. Many are at risk, including from climate change impacts, habitat loss and degradation, pollution, pests and disease, disturbance and competition from Invasive Non-Native Species. It is vital that these species are conserved and supported to adapt to these pressures and thrive within the ecosystem.

This Priority Theme centres on action to protect, conserve and support the recovery of species, including nationally and locally important notable and priority species within East Lothian. It delivers for:

- **Outcome 3:** The abundance and distribution of priority species will increase in numbers and have healthy and resilient populations.
- **Outcome 4:** Harmful Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) will be managed so that they no longer degrade priority habitats and native species or impede on their restoration.
- **Outcome 7:** Biodiversity will be integrated, understood and valued across East Lothian and its communities.

Historically, there are many iconic priority species that have been recorded in East Lothian. However, they have been lost or are incredibly rare across the county. For example, red squirrels (*Scuirus vulgaris*) were native across the UK, but with pressures from invasive non-native grey squirrel and loss of habitat, populations have declined. They have historically been recorded in East Lothian, with few sightings in present day. There are existing populations within the Scottish Borders, but there is minimal supportive habitat in East Lothian for movement into the county and there is not

currently a concentrated project managing grey squirrel populations within the county.

Another example is the Atlantic salmon (*Salmon salar*) in our rivers, an iconic species to Scotland and important to river ecosystems and the rural economy. There has been a decline in population of salmon throughout most of their native range. Reasons for decline include climate change, poor water quality, barriers to movement, exploitation and invasive non-native species.

Priority species action can drive larger scale habitat restoration and conservation benefitting multiple non-target species through flagship or umbrella species projects, investment, research and public understanding.⁴⁶ Managing habitat for these priority species such as great crested newt, are often conferred with protection of a number of species.

East Lothian's Local Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species List can be found in appendix 1. This list has been created by East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership and local taxonomic experts. It has advised actions and projects for species recovery. Action to protect species will continue through habitat conservation, species translocations and public engagement.



(A. Marland)



(A. Marland)

⁴⁶ [Single species conservation as an umbrella for management of landscape threats | PLOS ONE](#)

Examples of pressures on priority species in East Lothian.

Priority Species	Pressure
Great crested newt	Loss, availability and fragmentation of habitat. Climate change.
Salmon and trout	Climate change and barriers to movement upstream. Climate change, river water quality and reduce area of riparian woodland cover.
Northern brown argus	Loss and availability of habitat. Climate change.
Water vole	Habitat loss and fragmentation. Pollution and predation.
Grey partridge	Habitat loss and availability.
Juniper	Overgrazing and fragmentation.
Lichens	Climate change, pollution habitat loss.



This priority theme will work towards:

- Identifying priority species within East Lothian.
- Raising awareness of East Lothian's priority and notable species.
- Ensuring that there are suitable healthy habitats to support priority species.
- Identification and development of projects that protect, support and conserve East Lothian's priority and notable species.



18.4 Priority Theme 3: People and nature

Partnerships play a crucial role in the successful implementation of biodiversity action plans. Collaboration between local authorities, environmental organisations, stakeholders and community members can ensure projects are well-rounded, address ecological concerns while also benefitting the community and stakeholders. This collaborative approach promotes sustainable development and fosters a sense of shared responsibility for biodiversity action across East Lothian.

Priority Theme 3 centres actions that incorporate community and public engagement with extra emphasis on:

- **Outcome 6:** Natural Capital will be embedded and valued within policy and decision making.
- **Outcome 7:** Biodiversity will be integrated, understood and valued across East Lothian and its communities.

There is already strong partnership working underway to deliver for biodiversity and East Lothian's communities and cross boundary partners.

East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership consists of over 20 stakeholders and consultees comprising of government bodies, local government services, charitable organisations, research organisations, community groups, landowners, businesses and local taxonomic experts. This partnership brings together stakeholders and the expertise to co-design and deliver actions.

Volunteers and community groups play an important role in delivering biodiversity actions, including habitat restoration, data collection and fostering public engagement across East Lothian's countryside sites, gardens, parks and greenspaces. Their involvement enhances the scope and effectiveness of conservation efforts, making it collaborative and inclusive. They have made many positive changes for wildlife and the local community for many years in East Lothian. The East Lothian Countryside Volunteers (ELCV) have supported Countryside Ranger staff to manage countryside sites and complete data collection whilst other groups focus on urban habitats such as 'InBloom' groups helping to boost nature and wildlife in our towns and villages. East Lothian Climate Action Network has grown into a vast network of local organisations community groups delivering local climate and biodiversity projects and activism.



There are many organisations delivering projects in East Lothian including the Scottish Seabird Centre that works to provide interpretation, engagement and conservation for the coastal and marine environment, engaging 1000's of visitors and local communities with the marine environment. East Lothian Council and Scottish Wildlife Trust work in partnership to monitor Local Biodiversity Sites.

Local community groups have been delivering projects within their local towns and villages for biodiversity, climate change and people. East Lothian Climate Action Network (ELCAN) is a collaborative community of community groups, community-based organisations and non-profits aiming to advocate for a sustainable and inclusive environment and to amplify their collective voice and work. These stakeholders are vital to the successful delivery of local biodiversity and climate action.

On the River Esk, the Citizen Esk project was set up by Forth Rivers Trust. It provides a voice for the communities within the Esk catchment to highlight the impacts community members see affecting their local river. ELCV have been mapping INNS along the River Tyne and River Esk for their Giant Hogweed Eradication Programme.

Landowners and farmers play an important role in biodiversity action. They have a wealth of experience about the land they manage and despite often being held responsible for biodiversity loss, farmers have already been delivering for nature through government schemes and out of their own interest for the natural environment. Biodiversity loss impacts farming and so wildlife friendly farming not only benefits our natural environment, but it also helps strengthen food security and supports farming business.⁴⁷

All these efforts not only benefit biodiversity but also the health and wellbeing of people in our communities.

Young people are incredibly important stakeholders for the future of our planet. Involving young people in acting for biodiversity and supporting their voices for the natural environment is essential to creating awareness for biodiversity. On the front line of shaping young people's understanding of biodiversity and the nature emergency are teachers and environmental educators. With the correct knowledge, tools and support they can make a huge impact on how children and young people shape biodiversity action. East Lothian has 41 registered Eco Schools, East Lothian Council Countryside Rangers lead Junior ranger sessions and group events for different ages including John Muir Awards for young people. There is support from East Lothian Council for young people's development, health and wellbeing through nature play and equity in access to nature. These initiatives shape youth understanding and resilience toward biodiversity conservation and preservation and the benefits it provides for their health and wellbeing.

These case studies are not the only projects being delivered and partnerships are crucial in the delivery of action for biodiversity. Collaborative working will continue to ensure a unified approach and address challenges to sustain long-term positive outcomes.

People delivering for nature can further address how some indirect drivers to biodiversity loss can be tackled. While most indirect drivers of biodiversity loss need to be addressed at national and global levels, there are also local actions that can effectively tackle these issues locally.

⁴⁷ [The case for increased investment in Nature for UK Food Security.pdf](#)

This priority theme will work towards:

- Support and collaboration with community groups, championing local projects that benefit both biodiversity and the health and wellbeing of the local community. Further, supporting projects to align with wider biodiversity aspirations for East Lothian and on a national level.
- Embedding biodiversity in governance and decision making.
- Informal learning and skills sharing for all ages and championing their contribution to act for East Lothian's Biodiversity.
- Embed nature and environmental learning at all levels of education.
- Involve people in decision-making and demonstrating best practice through East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership.
- Raise awareness of biological recording, with signposting and engagement materials.
- Identify and respond to indirect drivers to biodiversity loss in East Lothian.



18.5 Priority Theme 4: Biodiversity, Planning, Policy and Development

East Lothian has one of the fastest population growth rates of all 32 local authorities in Scotland, with forecast growth of 23.3% from 2012 up until 2037⁴⁸ compared with 8.8% nationally over the same sample period.

Increased development and infrastructure puts pressure on biodiversity.⁴⁹ Integrating biodiversity considerations into development planning is essential for sustainable growth, helping mitigate the impact of urbanisation on habitats and supporting both ecosystems and climate resilience in East Lothian.

Priority Theme 4 will address how planning, policy and development can contribute to delivering for biodiversity and all the outcomes prescribed alongside the ELBAP vision.

Strategies, policies, and principles in place that aid biodiversity enhancement in planning include:

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) which emphasises the role planning has in reversing biodiversity loss and delivering positive effects for biodiversity. Policy 3 of NPF4 states that all development will contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity including, where relevant, restoring degraded habitats and building and strengthening nature networks and the connections between them. Proposals should also integrate nature-based solutions. The Policy requires that proposals for local development should only be supported if the application includes ‘appropriate measures’ to enhance biodiversity, in proportion to the

nature and scale of development.⁵⁰ This plan aims to capture the requirements of Policy 3 within the framework and support the delivery of requirements for both planners and developers. NatureScot has produced guidance to support developers implementing this policy.⁵¹

East Lothian’s Local Development Plan (LDP)

NPF4 requires Local Development Plans to protect, conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity in line with the mitigation hierarchy. They should also promote nature recovery and nature restoration. They should facilitate the creation of nature networks and strengthen connections between them, restoring degraded habitats or creating new habitats; and incorporating measures to increase biodiversity including priority species.

East Lothian’s next Local Development Plan is currently in development. The next LDP will identify and protect Local Nature Conservation Sites, including Local Biodiversity Sites and Local Geodiversity. The Spatial Strategy of the LDP will establish and grow Nature Networks to help protect and restore the biodiversity, ecosystems and natural processes in East Lothian.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity net gain is an initiative that requires new developments to result in measurable increase in biodiversity and leave it in a measurably better state than it was before. Scotland does not currently have its own biodiversity net gain metric and there is work progressing in the development of a Scottish metric. Currently, NatureScot provides guidance on how the Scottish planning system can integrate the existing metrics

⁴⁸ [East Lothian by numbers | Statistics, facts and figures | East Lothian Council](#)

⁴⁹ [NatureScot Research Report 1309 - Understanding the Indirect Drivers of Biodiversity Loss in Scotland | NatureScot](#)

⁵⁰ [Part 2 – National Planning Policy - National Planning Framework 4 - gov.scot](#)

⁵¹ [Developing with Nature guidance | NatureScot](#)

found in England. Irreplaceable habitats, priority habitats and species which require conservation at a local level should be used to advise plans and developments.⁵² This is to ensure projects are conducted with no/minimal negative impact on irreplaceable, priority habitats and species, and to enhance biodiversity. Habitats and species can be found in appendix 1.

This ELBAP will prioritise integrating biodiversity within policy, strategies and planning to help deliver meaningful biodiversity actions in future developments and projects. It will work towards a better understanding of biodiversity and its role within the planning process. This includes supporting and guiding those involved with these processes with new legislation such as NPF4, ensuring understanding of requirements and how they can be efficiently applied.



This priority theme will work towards:

- Planning and development policies will protect and enhance biodiversity as a priority, as per NPF4.
- Developing local guidance for biodiversity requirements with aims to guide planning and development to deliver positive outcomes for nature at a local level.
- New developments will ensure creation and retention of habitat, while also supporting species. Proportionate to the nature scale of development.
- Promotion and enhancement of green and blue infrastructure within new developments.
- Ecosystem Services will be considered within development proposals and planning decisions
- Ensuring that a base level of local and national biodiversity knowledge is integrated within training and guidance for planners, developers and ELC staff, supporting the delivery of requirements for biodiversity enhancement, protection and habitat creation.

⁵² [A Biodiversity Metric for Scotland's Planning System | NatureScot](#)

19 Data, Monitoring and Recording

East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership will convene annually to disseminate the delivery of actions and monitor progress of targets and actions within this plan.

As a requirement of East Lothian Council's declaration of a Nature Emergency, an annual report is required which provides an update on the development of the East Lothian Biodiversity Action Plan and East Lothian Council's duty to deliver for biodiversity. Additionally, these annual reports will also create efficient evidencing for statutory biodiversity duty reporting to Scottish Government which is submitted every 3 years. The last duty report was submitted in 2023.

Actions within the duty report listed combine ongoing projects and work, and include new actions developed through the Biodiversity Partnership. Monitoring is important to determine progress and success of outputs. However, this can be challenging due to capacity, time and resources. East Lothian's Local Biodiversity Partnership will review progress of the action plan annually to advise further delivery of the plan.

Data gathering and sharing is crucial in building a foundation for informed decision making and fostering a collective approach to biodiversity conservation. It facilitates assessment of species populations, richness and abundance enabling targeted conservation efforts. It helps recognise threats and impacts allowing for effective mitigation strategies, while also

detecting changes and helping to prioritise conservation areas. This information provides scientific evidence for policy development, influencing how biodiversity is streamlined into strategies, policies and planning. Establishing a baseline for all of East Lothian's habitats and species will help monitor the progress of actions set out within this delivery plan.

East Lothian Council Countryside Ranger Service and volunteers undertake biological surveys through projects, ad hoc and within their everyday responsibilities. These records are shared with The Wildlife Information Centre (TWIC). TWIC supply data to East Lothian Council for planning applications, consultations and preparing ecological reports. Additionally, this data is supplied for recorders, public, research and general interest. Recorded data is also shared to other organisations such as Butterfly Conservation, the British Trust for Ornithology and Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland.

Citizen Science plays a vital role in collecting valuable data for biodiversity monitoring. Involving the public enhances data coverage, providing a more comprehensive understanding of ecosystems and enabling informed conservation actions.

Challenges facing this priority include:

- **Data flows:** There is challenge in ensuring data is submitted to the most-appropriate submission route and in a timely manner. Minimising delays in data submission and ensuring the appropriate sharing of data ensures that decision makers and data users can access the most up-to-date information.
- **Taxonomic expertise:** The availability and capacity of expert verifiers for some taxonomic groups can be limited. Some groups only have national experts. Building verifier capacity and ensuring succession planning for existing verifiers is necessary to ensure a robust network of verifiers into the future.
- **Capacity:** The positive increase in different monitoring schemes, projects and entry methods. There is an increase in volume of data now available meaning that capacity of processing data is a challenge, especially with limited resources.

The data recorded across East Lothian habitats and species will help monitor the progress and advise action.



20 East Lothian's Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2025-2035

The following action plan is intended to be a working document with annual review of progress by East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership.

Action Plan glossary

BASC: British Association for Shooting and Conservation

BEAR Scotland: Road maintenance and management firm in Scotland.

ELC: East Lothian Council

ELCAN: East Lothian Climate Action Network

ELCCRS: East Lothian Council Countryside Ranger Service

ELCV: East Lothian Countryside Volunteers

GWCT: Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust

NFU: National Farmers Union

RSPB: Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

SEPA: Scotland' Environment Protection Agency

SWT: Scottish Wildlife Trust

TWIC: The Wildlife Information Centre



20.1 Coastal and Marine Landscape Action Plan

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
C.1	1	Continue partnership projects with Restoration Forth to help deliver marine restoration across East Lothian		ELC Restoration Forth Scottish Seabird Centre NatureScot	Tynninghame seagrass meadow planting and Musselburgh oyster seeding	Partnership strengthened and delivery of Restoration Forth projects along East Lothian's marine and coastal landscape	Continue the partnership to deliver objectives for coastal and marine restoration in the Firth of Forth	For duration of Restoration Forth project
C.2	1	Manage and monitor East Lothian's saltmarshes to conserve and to mitigate erosion and adaptation to sea level rise	New Coastal Adaptation Plan Countryside Site Management Plans	ELCCRS NatureScot		Management projects delivered. Engagement with members of public delivered. Monitoring delivered and provided within annual reporting to East Lothian Council	Intervention taken with ongoing monitoring	Annually
C.3	1	Protect, maintain and enhance the structure and function of dune and coastal grasslands across East Lothian's SSSI coastal sites through continued monitoring, management and condition surveys	New Coastal Adaptation Plan	ELCCRS NatureScot	Ongoing monitoring of dune habitat on Countryside Sites	Management and monitoring via Coastal Adaptation Plan and Countryside Management Plans.	Annual reporting on status	Annually

Ref.	Priority theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
C.4	1	Identify priority areas across coastal habitats across that require conservation, enhancement or restoration		East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership ELC NatureScot	Phase 1/National Vegetation Surveys for Local Biodiversity Sites	Sites identified	Creation of list of sites for restoration or enhancement projects ready to be put forward for funding opportunities	2027
C.5	1	Enhance, restore and expand East Lothian Council's coastal meadows and grassland estate where appropriate within the habitat mosaic, creating resilient and healthy habitats for species and to increase carbon sequestration of habitats	Nature Networks Countryside Site Management Plans	ELCCRS NatureScot	Estimate of 837 hectares of existing coastal grassland across East Lothian's coast.	Area (m ²) of coastal meadows created, restored or enhanced, where appropriate.	800,000 m ² of Council managed coastal grassland enhanced, created and restored.	2034
C.6	1	Develop and co-ordinate a monitoring and mapping plan to tackle invasive species across East Lothian's Coast. Monitor progress in efforts to promote best practice in management of invasive species		Local Biodiversity Partnership ELC TWIC ELCV Landowners	INNS projects delivered by ELCCRS, ELCV and partners	Delivery of invasive species mapping and management projects across coastal habitats	INNS eradicated and monitored along East Lothian coastal sites	2026 discussions with partnership members. Plan produced 2027

Ref.	Priority theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
C.7	1	Monitor and control cord grass <i>Spartina angelica</i> at Belhaven Bay		ELC Countryside Ranger Service NatureScot	1st Year trial of management with correspondence with other case studies across Scotland	Management and monitoring delivered annually	Cord grass eliminated and/or managed accordingly at Belhaven Bay	Annually up to 2030 Review in 2030
C.8	2	Monitor wildfowling at John Muir Country Park and Aberlady LNR sites during active season		ELCCRS BASC		Monitored annually during the season and continued correspondence with relevant advisory bodies	Responsible and safe wildfowling attained at Belhaven Bay and Aberlady Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	Annually
C.9	2	Monitor grey seal populations on Craigleith		Scottish Seabird Centre Fife Seal Group		Annual counts delivered reporting to East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership	Annual monitoring of grey seal populations within the Firth of Forth	Annually
C.10	2	Implementation of marine strandings plans for cetaceans		Multi-agency partners	Marine Strandings plans developed and delivered by ELC 2024	Review on annual basis and following any significant event	Marine strandings plan implemented during stranding events	Annually

Ref.	Priority theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/ Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
C.11	2	Continue to deliver SOS Puffin project across Fidra, Craigleith and the Lamb. Delivering vegetation management to support nesting puffins and other breeding seabirds		Scottish Seabird Centre RSPB	Historical tree mallow % removed	% of tree mallow removed. Puffin nest counts	Eradication and monitoring of tree mallow on Fidra, Craigleith and the Lamb.	Ongoing during the duration of SOS Puffin Project
C.12	2	Continue to monitor and manage invasive predators across The Firth of Forth Islands of Bass, Fidra, Craigleith and the Lamb		Scottish Seabird Centre RSPB		Number of invasive predators managed across Forth Islands	Eradication and continued monitoring of invasive predators across the Forth islands.	Ongoing
C.13	2	Explore research opportunities on seabird productivity on the Firth of Forth Islands		Scottish Seabird Centre Forth Seabird Group		Nest productivity research explored and delivered	Nest productivity monitored.	2030
C.14	2	Set up and deliver a shorebird disturbance project, researching and mitigating recreational disturbance along East Lothian's coastline and explore opportunities to partner with other Firth of Forth Local Authorities		RSPB ELC Local Authority partners ELCCRS NatureScot ELC Planning and Policy	Space for Shorebird project, Northumberland ELC Eider monitoring project	Project created and being delivered	Delivery of project over ELBAP 10-year delivery plan, annually reviewing progress of management practices. Share findings and best practice management with partners, targeting Firth of Forth shorebird populations and coastal habitat disturbance	Start 2026 Delivery ongoing

Ref.	Priority theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/ Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
C.15	3	Continue to monitor impacts of recreational pressures on East Lothian's coast, including recreational disturbance to habitats and wildlife, and the cumulative impacts		ELCCRS East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership	ELCCRS monitor and report recreational pressures on countryside coastal sites during peak visitor season through Red Amber Green reports for visitor impact	Recreational pressures identified and managed with best practice	Annual reporting on status	Annually
C.16	3	Raise awareness and encourage enjoyment and responsible use of the coastal and marine environment through on the ground interaction with Countryside Rangers, engagement with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, social media and events		ELC Countryside Ranger Service ELC Outdoor Learning	East Lothian Countryside Ranger responsibilities and seasonal Ranger Red, Amber, green reporting	No. of social media posts, on the ground interactions, events and stakeholder engagement sessions		Annually
C.17	3	Embed biodiversity outcomes within the Coastal Change Adaptation Plan for East Lothian to explore long-term solutions to mitigate and adapt East Lothian's coastline to future climate change and coastal erosion	Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030	ELC Roads	SEPA Flood Hazard Mapping Dynamic Coast's Coastal Erosion Data	Coastal Change Adaptation Plan for East Lothian created and delivered	Scope and award- early 2025	2026

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
C.18	3	Develop a coastal landscape partnership with key stakeholders to deliver strategic environmental action within the coastal and marine landscape		ELC NatureScot RPSB SEPA Scottish Seabird Centre		Partnership created and active	Projects delivered through this partnership	2026
C.19	3	Raise awareness and encourage enjoyment and responsible use of the coastal and marine environment through on the ground interaction with Countryside Rangers, engagement with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, social media and events		ELCCRS ELC Outdoor Learning East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership	East Lothian Countryside Ranger responsibilities and seasonal Ranger Red, Amber, green reporting	No. of social media posts, on the ground interactions, events and stakeholder engagement sessions		Annually
C.20	3	Develop a coastal storm response project to clean and reduce litter along East Lothian's coast, raising awareness of litter in the natural environment		ELCCRS Scottish Seabird Centre Scottish Coastal Clean Up Community volunteer groups		Storm response project developed and delivered Amount of litter collected (number of bags collected)		2026/2027 Delivery ongoing

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
C.21	3	Develop partnership projects with local fishermen and harbours to engage in best practice to reduce fishing litter		ELC Countryside Ranger Service Fishermen Community Organisations		Partnerships built and engagement and projects delivered	Reduction in fishing litter along East Lothian coastline	2030
C.22	3	Mitigate and reduce contaminating and polluting wastewater outflow into coastal and marine environments, to the greatest degree possible.		Scottish Water ELC		Wastewater infrastructure monitored and pollution events mitigated and responded to accordingly	Reduction in pollution events	Annually
C.23	3	In partnership, work to deliver engagement material to promote responsible domestic waste management for our water systems.		Scottish Water ELC	Nature Calls Campaign	No. of campaign posts promoted across suitable platforms.	Increase in engagement with Nature Calls Campaign.	Annually

20.2 Freshwater Networks Action Plan

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
F.1	1	Explore opportunities to assess river condition for biodiversity across the River Tyne and River Esk, to advise best management to improve condition		ELC Roads Service SEPA Forth Rivers Trust River catchment groups	Forth Rivers Trust has recognised that straight sections of rivers do not provide suitable habitat for breeding priority species like salmon and trout	River condition surveys delivered		2031
F.2	1	Explore opportunities to enhance freshwater networks where appropriate, involving landowners and East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership using East Lothian's Nature Network mapping	Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian	ELC SEPA Forth Rivers Trust River catchment groups	Nature Network mapping to be delivered under LBAP	Freshwater network opportunities mapped and delivered. Habitat condition monitored when projects are delivered		2029
F.3	1	Enhance and manage freshwater and wetland habitats within ELC countryside sites with best practice. Key sites include North Berwick Law Marsh, Marl Loch, Seafeld Pond, Levenhall Links	East Lothian Countryside Management Plans	ELCCRS	Wetland management plans	Aims and objectives prescribed within site management plans are delivered and monitored	Delivering habitat conservation and enhancement of wetland sites	Delivered within timeframes of Countryside Site Management Plans

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
F.4	1	Continue to monitor and manage invasive species along East Lothian's rivers, including development of a surveying a framework and liaising with landowners		East Lothian Countryside Volunteers ELC Cross-border partners	ELCV Giant hogweed project	Eradication of invasive non-native species along the River Tyne and the River Esk catchments	Explore management of other invasive species along the River Esk and Tyne (Himalayan Balsam, Giant Knotweed and Japanese Knotweed)	Annually
F.5	2	Deliver great crested newt surveys on existing freshwater sites across East Lothian Council estate including North Berwick Law, Marl Loch Aberlady LNR and Traprain Law. Identify condition of wetland habitat for this priority species		ELC Countryside Ranger Service	North Berwick Marsh and pond survey completed 2024	Habitat Suitability Index assessments delivered. eDNA surveys delivered at appropriate sites	Surveys to inform management of sites	2029
F.6	2	Explore and identify new great crested newt habitat in partnership with landowners to expand and enhance great crested newt habitat network		ELC Countryside Ranger Service Landowners	Historical great crested newt potential habitat mapped	New sites identified. Projects planned for delivery of great crested newt habitat enhancement	Minimum of 4 sites identified	2029

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
F.7	2	Continue to deliver and expand Bug life's 'Guardians of Our Rivers' citizen science project across East Lothian's river networks. With focus on the River Tyne		Buglife Volunteers	Number of volunteers trained in East Lothian at present 40 groups monitoring across Scotland	Number of additional volunteers trained and active delivering Guardians of the River project	Recruitment, support and training of local people who would like to get involved in monitoring the health of their local river	Ongoing for duration of 'Guardians of Our Rivers' citizen science project
F.8	2	Continue to deliver Riverfly on the Esk citizen science project, monitoring freshwater invertebrates as indicators of river health		Buglife FreshWater Watch Volunteers	Riverfly on the Esk project delivered across two East Lothian sites	Number of volunteers trained and delivering monitoring across East Lothian rivers	Recruitment, support and training of local people who would like to get involved in monitoring the health of their local river	Ongoing for duration of Riverfly on the Esk project
F.9	2	Explore opportunities to restore and enhance habitat to encourage recolonisation of water voles to sites with historic records.		East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership	Historic water vole records through TWIC database	Opportunities explored and restoration projects delivered.		2030

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
F.10	3	Explore and develop river catchment groups to identify and deliver freshwater landscape projects and actions for biodiversity and climate adaptation	ELC Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030 ELC Green Networks Strategy	ELC Forth Rivers Trust SEPA Other key stakeholders		Catchment groups convened and regularly meet to deliver aims and objectives.		2028 - ongoing engagement with groups.
F.11	3	Investigate and engage with stakeholders to determine options to tackle impassable fish barriers within the River Esk and the River Tyne catchments noting cultural heritage		SEPA ELC Roads Service Forth Rivers Trust	SEPA projects	Investigation undertaken	Opportunities identified for areas to remove impassable fish barriers	2030
F.12	3	Support national agencies in delivery of their water management policy, helping to respond to climate change and drying out of habitats and depletion of water sources	ELC Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030	ELC Roads service SEPA Landowners		Partnership and support continued to deliver management		Annually
F.13	3	Explore opportunities for school and education workshops to raise awareness and engagement of river health and biodiversity through Riverfly on the Esk project		Buglife Schools and education hubs	Riverfly on the Esk project delivered across two East Lothian sites	Number of workshops delivered across schools and education hubs	Raising awareness of river health and freshwater biodiversity	Ongoing for duration of Riverfly on the Esk project

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
F.14	3	Develop engagement and awareness campaigns and materials for freshwater networks and the priority species within them		Forth Rivers Trust ELC Countryside Ranger Service East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership	Priority species include salmon, trout, European eels	Materials developed to be delivered through an awareness raising campaign delivered by East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership	Delivered through social media, through schools, event programmes	2027
F.15	3	ELC to work with stakeholders and relevant law enforcement to mitigate and respond to incidents of wildlife poaching		ELC Countryside Ranger Service Law Enforcement	Partnership patrols of countryside sites during high season	Partnerships developed and action taken on cases	Reduction in poaching incidents	Annually
F.16	4	Update and implement the guidance for developers to raise awareness of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) biodiversity enhancement and best practice in management which affects watercourses		ELC Planning ELC Roads Scottish Water	Advice on biodiversity enhancement provided during planning process	Guidance provided and awareness	Knowledge and awareness of how to enhance SuDS for biodiversity	2027

20.3 Farmland and Heathland Landscape Action Plan

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
FH.1	1	Seek opportunities for peatland restoration across the Lammermuirs. If opportunities arise within research, deliver peatland restoration objectives in partnership with stakeholders		East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership NatureScot ELC Landowners	NatureScot's Carbon and Peatland map. PEATLAND ACTION	Identification of peatland restoration opportunities. No. of peatland restoration projects delivered		2035
FH.2	1	Monitor muirburn practices within the Lammermuir Hills and promote and support landowners that follow the Muirburn Code		NatureScot GTW RSPB	Guidance - The Muirburn Code NatureScot	Monitoring continued and updated within appropriate reporting bodies.		Ongoing
FH.3	1	Promote and support restoration, enhancement and development of and hedgerow networks across farmland landscape	Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian.	East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership East Lothian Climate Hub ELC NFU	AECS Funding opportunities. East Lothian Climate Hub Hedgerow working group Healthy Hedgerow Pilot Project 2024.	Total length of hedgerow condition enhanced and created.	Length of hedgerows increased and connected and in healthy condition. Refer to TWSEL hedgerow targets	Ongoing through to 2035

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
FH.4	2	Improve network of common rock rose for Northern brown argus butterfly		East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership ELCCRS ELC Biodiversity Officer Landowners	Current patches at Barns Ness, Dunbar Golf Club and near Traprain Law. Rockrose mapped but may need a review.	Area (m ²) of common rock rose enhanced and expanded	Increase in area of rockrose sites (m ²)	2035
FH.5	2	Establish an annual Northern brown argus butterfly monitoring project across identified common rock rose sites		ELCCRS ELC Biodiversity Officer Landowners Volunteers Butterfly Conservation	Ad hoc egg and adult surveying conducted.	Scheme set up and delivered	Monitoring delivered annually with reporting	Establishment 2026 Delivered annually
FH.6	2	Explore opportunities to reinstate an East Lothian grey partridge project, implementing learnings from previous project		GWCT ELCCRS East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership Landowners Farmers	Grey Partridge Project TWIC data	Grey Partridge Project reinstated. Numbers of grey partridge in East Lothian	Increase in grey partridge population and habitat created and maintained	2029
FH.7	2	Create and install artificial nesting sites for barn owls in locations identified through The Barn Owl Trust's Barn Owl survey in partnership with landowners and farmers and the local community		East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership ELCCRS Landowners Community Groups	Barn Owl Trust Southern Scotland Suitable Land for barn owls mapped.	Number of barn owl next boxes installed		2030

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
FH.8	2	Set up a yellowhammer monitoring survey with support from volunteers, landowners and farmers		East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership GWCT ELCV ELCCRS Landowners Farmers	TWIC data for East Lothian.	Monitoring project set up	Involving farmers and landowners to survey their land and provide advice on how to enhance habitat for yellowhammers and other farmland birds	2029
FH.9	2	Through appropriate management, maintain safe nesting habitats and year-round feeding opportunities for yellowhammers in partnership with farmers and landowners		Farmers with support from East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership Landowners NFU GWCT	Enhanced margin habitat planted under Agri-environment schemes, which is valuable for Yellowhammers.	Number of yellowhammer nesting and feeding sites created and managed on farmland	Provide advice on how to enhance habitat for yellowhammers and other farmland birds	2034
FH.10	3	Explore and develop a farming and heathland partnership sub-group to identify and deliver aims of strategic environmental action within the farming landscape	ELC Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030	East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership NFU Landowners and farmers Cross border stakeholders NatureScot	Similar to the Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership.	Partnership created and active.		2026

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
FH.11	3	Explore opportunities to support and promote agro-forestry for East Lothian's farmers and landowners	Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian.	East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership ELC NFU Farmers and Landowners	Scottish Forestry Grant (FGS) Scheme to boost agroforestry in Scotland.	Number of agroforestry projects delivered across East Lothian's farms	Expansion and adoption of agroforestry across East Lothian	2030
FH.12	3	Promote and support landowners and farmers to join the Nature Friendly Farming Network, creating a network of landowners and farmers acting for nature		East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership ELC NFU East Lothian Climate Hub		Number of farms in East Lothian signed up to Nature Friendly Farming Network		2031
FH.13	3	Map farming and agricultural biodiversity projects across East Lothian to monitor and champion efforts of landowners and managers that are delivering for biodiversity		East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership NFU NatureScot		Farming projects mapped and promoted		2031

20.4 Tree and Woodland Action Plan

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
T.1	1	Implement the Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian	TWSEL	ELC East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership		Targets and actions prescribed within TWSEL achieved		2034
T.2	1	Promote and increase riparian planting alongside East Lothian's river valley network	As per the Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian	ELC Landowners Farmers SEPA		% of riparian planting delivered	Increasing native riparian woodland by 18%; from 42% of the riparian zone to 60% (with 9% implemented year 5)	2034
T.3	1	Produce a Tree Management Strategy for ELC tree and woodland estate, with best practice management for biodiversity	As per the Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian	ELC Forestry ELCCRS	Actioned within Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian	Management Strategy produced		2030
T.4	1	Deliver the East Lothian Climate Forest	Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian	ELC together with partners such as Edinburgh & Lothian's Greenspace Trust, NatureScot, Scottish Forestry, Woodland Trust and local businesses and landowners	Opportunities identified within Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian.	Creation of the East Lothian Climate Forest of at least 80-125 ha of new woodland annually. Data collected on tree survival rate and development.	East Lothian to provide the 2 million trees in 10 years to achieve increased woodland coverage of 13.45% by 2031	Long term

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
T.5	1	Complete the Ancient Woodland Survey for East Lothian including the mapping of wood pasture, parkland and orchards	As per the Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian	ELC Planning Service	Actioned within Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian	Mapping carried out by Planning Service as resources allow		Ongoing
T.6	1	Promote the restoration to native woodland of Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites	As per the Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian	Scottish Forestry NatureScot ELC		Area (ha) of restored native woodland		2030/ongoing
T.7	1	Map locations, species and condition of all hedgerows and hedgerow trees in East Lothian	As per the Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian	East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership ELC Landowners Farmers	Actioned within Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian	Recording of hedgerow condition alongside ongoing plant recording		Ongoing during the duration of ELBAP
T.8	1	Develop a hedgerow plan for retention, replacement, increase and management of hedgerows and hedgerow trees	As per the Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian	ELC Planning Service	Actioned within Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian	A project to be developed as resources / officer time allows		2031
T.9	1	Support research opportunities for planting schemes and constraints with woodland screening service in Partnership with TWIC	As per the Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian	ELC Planning Service	Actioned within Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian	Research undertaken and opportunities identified		2028

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
T.10	2	Identify and map existence of suitable habitat for red squirrel within East Lothian		ELC SWT East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership	TWIC data	Mapping carried out	Network identified with opportunities for enhancement and creation of red squirrel habitat	2030
T.11	2	Explore opportunities to expand and deliver 'Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels' project within East Lothian		ELC Landowners NatureScot SWT	'Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels' project	Project delivered in East Lothian		2031
T.12	2	Identify opportunities to restore, enhance and create red squirrel habitat across East Lothian. Develop connectivity where populations are recovering, enabling movement into areas where red squirrels were historically recorded		East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership SWT ELCCRS Landowners		Area of habitat created, restored or enhanced	Habitat connectivity to support movement of red squirrels in East Lothian	2032
T.13	2	Map aspen populations across East Lothian to identify opportunities to enhance species population within the county		ELC TWIC	Historical data obtained through TWIC.	Aspen mapped and opportunities for planting identified	Planting of male and female Aspen with optimal methodology for successful future self-seeding identified	2030

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
T.14	3	Work with communities to develop and manage community orchards and fruit growing, including promotion of heritage varieties	As per the Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian	ELC Amenity Services ELC Countryside Ranger Service East Lothian Climate Hub East Lothian Food Growers Collective	Identifying existing community orchards across East Lothian	Number of community orchards created		2033
T.15	3	Involve communities in tree planting and maintenance of new trees, including setting up a Tree Warden Scheme	Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian	ELC Amenity Services ELCAN Community Groups. Volunteers	Tree Warden Scheme based on model of ELCV Path Warden Scheme. As resources allow	Tree Warden Scheme set up		2029
T.16	3	Continue to deliver the 'TreeTime East Lothian' project, to plant new trees in East Lothian, including park trees, street trees and woodland planting		ELC Amenity Services Community Groups	No. of trees already planted including through Queen's Green Canopy initiative and TreeTime East Lothian	Opportunities explored and if identified projects and actions are set up and delivered.		Ongoing

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
T.17	3	Work in partnership with cross boundary stakeholders to identify and create cross boundary connectivity of woodland habitat networks		ELC East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership Cross boundary partners Landowners		Number of cross boundary partnership projects planned and delivered.		2035

20.5 Urban Landscape and Golf Courses Action Plan

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
U.1	1	Nature Networks will be implemented in towns and villages, ensuring habitat connectivity from urban environments to the wider countryside	ELC Improving Nature Networks for East Lothian's Communities Local Development Plan Scottish Biodiversity Strategy	ELC Landowners ELCAN Local Communities	ELC Improving Nature Networks for East Lothian's Communities report	Area(ha) of Nature Network projects implemented within East Lothians towns and villages		Ongoing
U.2	1	Enhance, restore and expand East Lothian Council's urban meadows and grassland estate where appropriate within the habitat mosaic, creating resilient and healthy habitats for species that also contributes to sequestration of carbon emissions	ELC Improving Nature Networks for East Lothian's Communities ELC Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030	ELC Amenity Services East Lothian Council Countryside Service		Area of enhanced, restored and created urban meadows and grassland		2034

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
U.3	1	Explore further opportunities for urban grassland restoration and enhancement across East Lothian Council Estate	Nature Networks in Parks and Greenspaces (ELC)	ELC East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership	ELC Improving Nature Networks for East Lothian's Communities report	Opportunities identified		2030
U.4	1	Develop opportunities for 'grey' hard-standing areas to become community greenspaces in housing areas	ELC Improving Nature Networks for East Lothian's Communities Green Network Strategy	ELC Amenity Services ELC Housing ELC Roads Services	ELC 'Greening the Grey' Amenities, Housing & Roads Services project			2034
U.5	1	Explore opportunities for 'Wee Forest' development within/close to communities, engaging and involving local communities with implementation	ELC Improving Nature Networks for East Lothian's Communities	ELC East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership ELC Planning Local Community groups Landowners/managers		Area (ha) of 'Wee Forest' created		2030/ongoing

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
U.6	1	Map and identify opportunities for urban habitat creation and restoration in the heart of local communities. Work with landowners & local businesses with community input and support, creating green spaces that benefit people and biodiversity		ELC East Lothian Climate Hub East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership	Low Impact Living (Haddington) researching platform for communities to map opportunity in their local areas	List created of potential areas		2030/ ongoing
U.7	1	Undertake and support management of East Lothian Council owned/managed and partnership golf courses to enhance biodiversity.		ELC Stakeholders		Area of Golf course enhanced for biodiversity.		2027/ ongoing
U.8	1	Explore opportunities for implementation of green roof habitats retrofitted within current infrastructure/developments or new buildings/infrastructure on council estate, supporting pollinators and climate adaptation	ELC Improving Nature Networks for East Lothian's Communities	ELC Infrastructure ELC Planning	ClearChannel green roof bus shelters in Musselburgh	Number of green roof projects explored, delivered and maintained		2030/ ongoing

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
U.9	1	Work in partnership with road managers to identify and produce a management vision outlining areas to manage road verges that promote biodiversity		ELC Roads services BEAR Scotland ELC Amenity Services Landowners	BEAR Scotland management of small sections of A1 for orchids. Map of suitable areas on A-roads and B-roads. Bug Life B-lines mapped	Creation of East Lothian wide operational map indicating areas to manage road verges that promotes biodiversity and habitat corridors	Creating habitat corridors alongside roadside verges.	2026
U.10	1	Revise East Lothian's road verge management regime in order to better manage this habitat for biodiversity where suitable		ELC Roads Services ELC Amenity Services ELC Biodiversity Officer	ELC Nature Network Projects in Parks and Greenspaces implementing alternative management regimes	Management regime revised and biodiversity enhancement included		2027
U.11	1	Increase urban tree canopy cover where appropriate to create habitat and adapt to climate change impacts	Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian	ELC		Increase in Area (ha) of urban canopy cover where suitable	See TWSEL target of 30% in settlements and the areas in the most deprived 30% of SIMD areas	Ongoing

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
U.12	2	Explore and deliver grayling butterfly recovery projects across suitable sites		ELCCRS	Grayling butterfly transplant project delivered at Levenhall Links	Projects delivered and monitored		2030
U.13	2	Promote and support community hedgehog projects with aspiration of expansion across East Lothian, alongside hedgehog public survey monitoring		East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership East Lothian Climate Hub Community Groups	Pledgehog Dunbar	Number of hedgehog projects in East Lothian. Promotion of hedgehog public survey		Ongoing
U.14	3	Promote a biodiversity monitoring scheme for urban habitats in parks and greenspaces, ensuring legacy of Nature Networks East Lothian Projects involving local community, schools and volunteers to foster connection and enhancing environmental stewardship	ELC Improving Nature Networks for East Lothian's Communities	ELC Biodiversity Partnership East Lothian Climate Hub ELCAN Members	Bioblitz events and adhoc recording within IRecord app.	Number of people and volunteers signed up to IRecord urban wildlife monitoring scheme.	Data collected to advise urban biodiversity projects	2026 promoted annually

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
U.15	3	Provide support for planting of native plant species within urban greenspaces where appropriate, working with landowners/managers, community groups and businesses	ELC Improving Nature Networks for East Lothian's Communities	ELC Biodiversity Officer ELC Amenity Services ELC Landscape	East Lothian seed zone native tree species list. Creation of recommended native flowering plant list for East Lothian and referenced during planting enquiries	Native plant species are promoted in ELC operational works and promoted during planting enquiries		Ongoing
U.16	3	Work with InBloom groups to promote actions for pollinator species and biodiversity friendly practices		ELC Amenity Services East Lothian Climate Action Hub	Britain InBloom judging guidelines include guidance on pollinator friendly planting	Partnerships developed and biodiversity friendly practices delivered		Ongoing
U.17	3	Enhance biodiversity & habitat value of allotment sites and local community food growing sites, including green network enhancements, and increase number of local food growing sites where possible	ELC Allotments & Local Food Growing Strategy (in preparation) East Lothian Friendly Food Charter	ELC Amenity Services East Lothian Climate Hub East Lothian Friendly Food Network		Number of allotment sites and community food growing projects with biodiversity enhancements		2033/ongoing

Ref.		Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
U.18	3	Support and involve communities where suitable in enhancement and management of their local urban habitats on Council estate	ELC Improving Nature Networks for East Lothian's Communities ELC Open Space Strategy	ELC Amenity Services ELC Biodiversity Officer	Tranent Wombles Forest Garden, Foresters Park, Tranent. Community members managing small sections of local greenspaces for biodiversity in partnership with ELC	Number of community projects delivered on Council owned/managed land in partnership with ELC		Annually
U.19	3	Promote and encourage golf courses to become certified through sustainable certification schemes such as Sustainable Golf's 'Golf Environment Organisation (GEO) certification'		East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership ELC Golf Courses	5 Golf course across East Lothian GEO certified	Number of additional golf courses accredited through GEO's certification		2033
U.20	3	Set up a biodiversity monitoring programme in partnership with golf courses, identifying opportunities for biodiversity enhancement of golf courses		Scottish Seabird Centre East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership Golf Courses	Plant monitoring, Bee surveys and Butterfly transects, tree planting, grassland and meadow creation	Monitoring programme set up in partnership with golf courses and volunteers to deliver biodiversity monitoring		2028/ ongoing

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
U.21	3	Promote information on gardening for wildlife and make it available in schools, garden centres and community hubs across East Lothian. Encourage garden centres to have dedicated wildlife-friendly sections	ELC Improving Nature Networks for East Lothian's Communities	East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service Climate Hub ELC Amenity Services Local Businesses Community members.		Guidance created and promoted		2026
U.22	4	Promote the implementation of 'swift bricks' within the built environment		ELC Planning Service ELC Biodiversity Officer		Number of developments implementing swift bricks within design proposals		Ongoing

20.6 Planning, Development and Biodiversity Action Plan

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
D.1	1	Spatially define East Lothian's Nature Network	Scottish Biodiversity Strategy	ELC NatureScot Landowners East Lothian Climate Hub Community groups East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership		Map created and promoted	Opportunities for habitat network creation identified and listed	2026
D.2	1	All development must adhere to National Planning Framework 4 and Scottish Biodiversity Net Gain metric. Including ensuring that the delivery and implementation of biodiversity enhancements proportionate to development proposals in line with NPF4, Policy 3.	MPF4, Policy 3 NatureScot Developing with Nature guidance	ELC Planning Service ELC Biodiversity Officer		Biodiversity enhancements and Scottish Biodiversity Net gain metric implemented and designed within development proposals.		Annually
D.3	1	Review condition of existing Local Biodiversity Sites	Local Development Plan 2	ELC Planning ELC Biodiversity Officer SWT ELCV	2024 volunteer Phase 1 habitat surveys.	57 Local Biodiversity Sites Phase 1 surveys completed		2025

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
D.4	1	Explore opportunities to nominate new local biodiversity sites for consideration	Local Development Plan 2	ELC Planning ELC Biodiversity Officer Landowners		New sites identified		2025
D.5	1	Promote the protection and the enhancement of blue and green infrastructure and blue and green networks	National Planning Framework 4 (Policy 20) Green Networks Strategy Open Space Strategy	ELC	As per Green Networks Strategy etc	Development proposals incorporating new or enhanced blue and/or green infrastructure will be supported Number of blue/green infrastructure projects supported and delivered		2034/Annually
D.6	1	Continue to embed habitat network restoration, and promotion of species diversity in response to climate adaptation into wider land use planning decisions	Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. NPF4	ELC	East Lothian Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030	Included and implemented		Annually

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
D.7	1	Investigate the existing carbon sequestration levels of habitats across East Lothian's Council estate with the aim to identify areas for habitat condition improvement for climate mitigation and adaptation		ELC Biodiversity Officer ELC Sustainability and Climate Change Officer	Natural England Carbon Storage and Sequestration by Habitat 2021.	Sequestration levels of existing habitats identified.		2033
D.8	1	Continue to maintain protection of SSSI, GCR and Local Geodiversity Sites, including reviewing condition of existing sites	Local Development Plan 2	ELC Planning East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service NatureScot	Designated Geodiversity Sites.	Geodiversity sites profile is increased and protection is continued	Fixed point photography of geodiversity site condition	Annually
D.9	2	Promote clear messaging about wildlife seasons (e.g. breeding seasons and migration) through guidance, setting out when projects, developments or actions should take place so as not to cause detriment to wildlife during sensitive periods		ELC Biodiversity Officer. ELC Planning Service East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service	Through Biodiversity Literacy, legislation, social media and planning services	Promoted and ensured that actions are implemented		Annually

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
D.10	2	Explore more opportunities for protection for safe passage across roads e.g. wildlife underpasses/highways for safe passage of wildlife where there may be barriers for movement	Nature Networks	ELC Roads Services ELC Planning Service ELC Biodiversity Officer Transport Scotland	Existing examples as baseline.	Number of projects delivered to ensure safe passage of wildlife across barriers such as roads		2029
D.11	3	East Lothian Council will work with neighbouring local authorities to identify and create cross boundary partnerships and connectivity	ELC Green Networks Strategy	ELC Neighbouring local Authorities		Partnerships developed and maintained		Annually
D.12	3	Develop site statements for East Lothian's Local Biodiversity Sites	Local Development Plan 2 supplementary guidance	ELC Planning Service ELC Biodiversity Officer	Local Biodiversity Sites identified.	Site statements created with advice for enhancement and management for further biodiversity conservation.		2026
D.13	3	Work with developers, landowners and community groups etc. to ensure the implementation of actions that deliver habitat connectivity identified as part of East Lothian's Nature Network	Scottish Biodiversity Strategy	ELC Planning Service ELC Biodiversity Officer Landowners Developers Community Groups	Nature Network Mapping	Area (m ²) of habitat created from identified nature network opportunity mapping	Connectivity of habitat created within East Lothian Nature Network map	Annually

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
D.14	3	Promote positive biodiversity management, projects or management plans for the Local Biodiversity Sites that may benefit from enhancements in partnership with landowners	Local Development Plan 2, Countryside Site management plans.	ELC Planning Service ELC Biodiversity Officer	Local Biodiversity Sites identified.	Number of Local Biodiversity sites commented on for enhancement		Annually
D.15	3	Create and Promote guidance for developers and landowners to implement biodiversity enhancement	National Planning Framework 4	ELC Planning Service ELC Biodiversity Officer	NatureScot 'Developing with Nature' Guidance	Promote existing guidance and create local Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance	Guidance promoted that advises biodiversity enhancement where appropriate to local context	2026/Annually
D.16	3	Explore opportunities for a Section 75 developer contributions framework for implementing biodiversity enhancement and ongoing management		ELC Planning Service ELC Biodiversity Officer	NatureScot 'Developing with Nature' Guidance. Nature Network mapping.	Framework explored, created and promoted		2025

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
D.17	3	Natural Capital: Explore the potential for economic and community wealth derived from natural capital in East Lothian (e.g. energy generation/carbon sequestration/ other ecosystem services)	East Lothian Local Economy Strategy	ELC Economic Development SC&L		Natural Capital opportunities explored and reported to East Lothian's Climate and Nature Emergency Working Group		2026/Annually
D.18	4	Continue to identify and protect designated sites and priority habitat through planning policy and in planning decisions		ELC Planning Service NatureScot		Sites protected		Annually
D.19	4	Ecosystem services will be considered within development proposals and planning decisions. For example, air pollution control, carbon sequestration, urban heat island effect, and soil health)	Scottish National Adaptation Plan NPF4	ELC Planning Service		Development proposals considering and incorporating ecosystem services within their design will be supported.		2034/Annually

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners Involved	Baseline	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
D.20	4	Review local design standard guidance for biodiversity enhancement within developments in line with NatureScot's national guidance for NPF4, to promote biodiversity enhancement for national and local context	NPF4 NatureScot 'Developing with Nature' Guidance	ELC Biodiversity Officer ELC Planning Service		Review completed and further promotion of biodiversity enhancement within building standards for local and national context		2027
D.21	4	Continue to use best available species data to inform planning decisions		ELC TWIC				Annually

20.7 People and Nature Action Plan

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline (where applicable)	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
P.1	1	Habitats across East Lothian Council estate managed to support biodiversity to help to mitigate and adapt to climate emergency and nature emergency.	Countryside Site Management Plans ELC Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030	East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service ELC Amenity Services	Carbon Storage and Sequestration by Habitat 2021. Countryside Site management plan prescriptions.	Habitats are healthy, connected and diverse		Annually
P.2	1	Deliver best practice biosecurity in procurement and implementation of projects.	Plant Biosecurity strategy for Great Britain (2023 to 2028)	ELC	East Lothian Invasive Species list.	Guidance followed to prevent diseases, pests and invasive species.		2029
P.3	1	Liaise with local industry experts and professionals on native seed collection for habitat enhancement, restoration and conservation projects, to localise action.		ELC in partnership with local tree nurseries and other partners with botanical expertise.	Ongoing project with local tree nurseries to be further developed through the Climate Forest as resources allow.	Opportunities for local seed collection and creation of East Lothian local meadow mix to use across the county.	Including trees, meadow and grassland. Exploration of other partnerships.	Annually

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline (where applicable)	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
P.4	2	Continue to deliver constant effort bird ringing sites to monitor bird populations and apply data to advise management of sites	Countryside Site Management Plans	BTO East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service	Constant effort bird ringing group trialled at Levenhall Links	Ringling groups continued and potential new group set up		Annually
P.5	2	Promote and support the increase in hibernation sites for reptile and amphibian species across East Lothian on ELC countryside sites and also raise awareness and encourage other landowners/managers to implement them across their sites		East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service ELC Biodiversity Officer Landowners	Promoted within ELCCRS management of appropriate sites	Number of hibernaculum (hibernation sites) projects delivered		Annually
P.6	2	Set up new Bumble Bee survey transects across East Lothian Countryside sites with a focus on sites that come under Bug Life's B-line John Muir Pollinator Way network. Also explore and promote other pollinator monitoring schemes		East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service ELCV Bumblebee Conservation Trust	Bee walks set up at North Berwick Law, Aberlady Bay, Traprain Law and Barns Ness	Number of bee surveys set up and annually surveyed. Other pollinator monitoring schemes explored		2028/ Annually

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline (where applicable)	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
P.7	2	Include mycological interests (fungi) into countryside site management plans	Countryside Site Management Plans	East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service Site Advisory Groups Local mycologists	Countryside Site management plans with biodiversity and habitat information	Mycological interests included in site management plans		When management plans are reviewed and renewed.
P.8	3	Support community groups and volunteers to engage in activities which increase biodiversity through habitat improvements or creation, and awareness raising activities in parks and other greenspaces	ELC Open Space Strategy ELC Countryside Site Management Plans	ELC East Lothian Climate Hub East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership	Pledgehog, Dunbar Tranent Wombles InBloom groups	Number of community projects delivered in partnership with stakeholders		Annually
P.9	3	Create guidance for communities and landowners for local biodiversity projects, enabling them to undertake best practice management for East Lothian's habitats and the wider nature network	Nature Networks	ELC Biodiversity Officer East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service East Lothian Climate Hub	Tree and Woodland Strategy for East Lothian and Nature Network map to identify opportunities for projects	Guidance created and promoted		Annually

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline (where applicable)	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
P.10	3	Produce an information sheet of mycologically (fungi) important habitats for officers		ELC Biodiversity Officer Local mycologists	List of East Lothian Priority species and habitat list	Information sheet created and mycologically important habitats mapped within the guidance		2026
P.11	3	Explore opportunities for the inclusion of mycological (fungi) data on the citations of relevant SSSIs and other wildlife sites, and where appropriate include fungal assemblage as notified features		ELC NatureScot	Aberlady Bay and Yellowcraig woods noted for best sites for fungi in the UK. 2018 Guidance on selection of Biological SSSI's for habitats and species groups including fungi	Mycological data included on SSSI citations		2031
P.12	3	Ensure ELBAP actions and targets are disseminated and integrated within plans and policies of members of East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership.		East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership		ELBAP targets and actions are represented and acknowledged within plans and policies of members of East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership		Annually

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline (where applicable)	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
P.13	3	Annually review East Lothian's Biodiversity Action Plan's delivery and progress through East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership		Local Biodiversity Partnership	Through Local Biodiversity Partnership meetings	Annual meeting of East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership and review and monitoring of East Lothian Biodiversity Action Plan		Annually
P.14	3	Monitor and track progress of actions delivered on behalf of the Council's declaration of Nature Emergency, including reporting to Council and monitoring and discussion on an ongoing basis by the cross-party Climate and Nature Emergency Group.	ELC Nature Emergency Declaration 2023. Corporate Risk Register 2024-2025	ELC		Annual report provided		Annually
P.15	3	All East Lothian Council strategies, plans and policy will consider contribution to Nature Emergency and Biodiversity		ELC		Nature Emergency and biodiversity considered across strategies, plans and policy		Annually

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline (where applicable)	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
P.16	3	Contribute, where appropriate, to the delivery and integration of national strategies and policies within workstreams, including Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill and Scotland's National Adaptation Plan	Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill and Scotland's National Adaptation Plan	ELC NatureScot		Annual and 3 yearly reporting through Biodiversity Duty report and Climate emergency reporting, where appropriate. Updates and guidance provided within the Local Biodiversity Partnership.		Annually
P.17	3	Identify funding streams and partners to continue delivering projects to conserve and enhance biodiversity through a platform to notify opportunities for the delivery of biodiversity and climate projects	Corporate Risk Register 2024-2025	East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership East Lothian Climate Hub ELC		Funding opportunities identified and promoted	Identifying a list of funding opportunities and promoting them through the biodiversity partnership, local community groups and ELC to enable delivery of biodiversity projects.	Annually

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline (where applicable)	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
P.18	3	Deliver a wide range of events, talks and workshops for people of different ages and backgrounds to learn the skills to observe, identify and record natural history including delivery of 'bioblitz' events (biodiversity citizen science events).	Countryside Site Management Plans	East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service Schools ELCAN	John Muir Awards Ranger led events, school events etc.	Number of events delivered annually. 1 Bioblitz events delivered per year		Ongoing and when capacity allows
P.19	3	Raise awareness and encourage enjoyment and responsible use of the countryside and urban habitats through on the ground interaction with Countryside Rangers, engagement with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, social media and events	The Scottish Outdoor Access Code. ELC Countryside Site Management Plans.	East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service East Lothian Outdoor Education	Red, Amber, Green reports. Annual ELCCRS reporting with updates about access to the countryside	Number of social media posts and interactions Number of events held On the ground interactions delivered as part of everyday responsibilities of Countryside Rangers and Outdoor Learning Staff.		Annually

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline (where applicable)	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
P.20	3	Undertake at least one joint campaign per year with East Lothian's Biodiversity Partnership to raise awareness and increase engagement with biodiversity conservation across East Lothian, using social media, events, projects and other means. With focus particularly on private gardens, parks and greenspaces and other priority areas of East Lothian	Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030	Local Biodiversity Partnership	'Green Futures Festival' Climate Hub festival delivered by East Lothian Climate Hub. East Lothian Walking Festival	Campaign/festival delivered annually	Shared campaign.	Annually
P.21	3	Raise awareness of wildlife disturbance and responsible dog walking using engagement materials, social media posts and in-person positive engagement. Including partnership with dog trainers and businesses		ELC Dog Warden East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service		Materials created and promoted		2025 / Annually
P.22	3	Review East Lothian Council approved commercial dog walking list and create a code of conduct that includes responsible access of the countryside and awareness of wildlife disturbance with accreditation		ELC Dog Warden East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service	List already set up	List reviewed and code of conduct created		2026

Ref.	Priority Theme	Action	Relevant Strategy/Plan	Partners involved	Baseline (where applicable)	Indicator	Target (where applicable)	Target date
P.23	3	Encourage commercial dog walking companies within East Lothian to sign up to East Lothian Council approved commercial dog walking list and to raise awareness of wildlife disturbance and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code		ELC Dog Warden East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service		Increase in commercial dog walkers joining East Lothian approved commercial dog walking list		Annually
P.24	3	Raise awareness of the importance of biological recording and wildlife conservation through attendance at public events, including citizen science events, social media and through running events and training workshops		East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership TWIC East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service ELCV		No. of events delivered. No. of social media posts		Annually
P.25	3	Deliver mandatory biodiversity literacy training for all staff across East Lothian Council		ELC Biodiversity Officer ELC	ELC mandatory climate literacy training provided online	Number of staff undergone biodiversity literacy training	All staff will be biodiversity literate.	2028

21 Appendix

21.1 Appendix 1

East Lothian's Priority Species List: [East Lothian's Priority Species 2025-2035](#)

Priority Habitat List: [East Lothian's Priority Habitat ELBAP 2025-2035.pdf](#)

21.2 Appendix 2

East Lothian's Sites of Scientific Interest designated for biological interest:

1. [Barns Ness Coast](#)
2. [Bass Rock](#)
3. [Danskin Loch](#)
4. [Forth Islands](#)
5. [Firth of Forth](#)
6. [Lammer Law](#)
7. [Lammermuir Deans](#)
8. [North Berwick Law](#)
9. [Papana Water](#)
10. [Rammer Cleugh](#)
11. [Traprain Law](#)
12. [Woodhall Dean](#)

East Lothian SPA and RAMSAR sites:

1. [Firth of Forth RAMSAR](#)
2. [Firth of Forth SPA](#)
3. [Outer Forth and St. Andrews Bay Complex SPA](#)
4. [Forth Islands SPA](#)

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