



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

Nature and Biodiversity Action Plan

Part One





Introduction

As a new unitary council, formed on the 1st April 2023, Westmorland and Furness Council has an ambition to lead on nature recovery and enhance biodiversity. Westmorland and Furness Council has highlighted the importance of the decline in nature by declaring a biodiversity crisis, stating that the Council must act to restore natural habitats, restrict invasive species and reduce pollution. We are in a unique position where we can have nature recovery as a key priority from the outset.

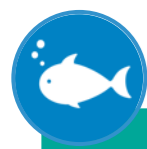
Westmorland and Furness Council will be at the forefront of supporting nature recovery and the challenges that may appear; we will provide leadership working to support local nature recovery, aligning with national policies and supporting the work of local initiatives to deliver meaningful projects. The Council Plan priority and vision to become a leader in the drive to address biodiversity loss and become carbon net zero will be supported by actions to encourage better land management, habitat creation, tree planting and biodiversity net gain in new developments. To support this priority, in our first year Cabinet approved £5 million of priority investment into our area in June 2023, where a 'green thread' throughout the investment shows the Council's commitment to biodiversity.

As a newly formed Council, we are preparing our natural environment programme. This Nature and Biodiversity Action Plan Part One will set the scene and begin conversations across the Council and throughout our communities about how we will work together to protect and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems. Following engagement, we will then compile a Nature and Biodiversity Action Plan Part Two, which will list our actions to achieve nature recovery and enhance biodiversity across Westmorland and Furness. The Nature and Biodiversity Action Plans will link closely to the Council's Climate Change Action Plans to support the wider co-benefits of nature recovery.

Westmorland and Furness Council recognises the need to act now to support nature recovery and tackle biodiversity loss. Whilst the United Kingdom may be known for its countryside and green spaces, an analysis from the Natural History Museum (2021)¹ states the UK has just half (53%) of its biodiversity remaining since the 1970s and is therefore one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. Moreover, the State of Nature Partnership (2023)² assessed over 10,000 UK species using Red List criteria, which has shown 151 species are now extinct and a further 16% (around 1,500 species) are now threatened with extinction.

¹ Natural History Museum (2021) Analysis warns global biodiversity is below 'safe limit' ahead of COP 15. Available at: <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/news/2021/october/analysis-warns-global-biodiversity-is-below-safe-limit.html>

² State of Nature Partnership (2023) State of Nature 2023. Available at: https://stateofnature.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/TP25999-State-of-Nature-main-report_2023_FULL-DOC-v12.pdf



The abundance of freshwater and terrestrial species has fallen by 19% since 1970, (based on 753 species).



The UK distributions of invertebrate species have decreased by an average of 13% since 1970.



Since 1970, 54% of flowering plant species have decreased in distribution.



The abundance of 13 species of seabird has fallen by an average of 24% since 1986.



Figure 1 shows how abundance of biodiversity has changed over time - Global Bio Stripes with birds - Data: Living Planet Index <http://stats.livingplanetindex.org/>

Whilst nature may be in decline nationally, and internationally as figure 1 shows, there are many opportunities in Westmorland and Furness to lead on nature recovery; Cumbria is well positioned to make an outsized contribution to national nature recovery and we have a moral obligation to do so. By geography, we are the third largest unitary authority in England with a total area of 3,754 km² and the most sparsely populated, home to 225,000 people. The Council also covers the Lake District National Park, part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, Arnside and Silverdale National Landscape, North Pennines National Landscape and multiple sites with special conservation status.



Westmorland and Furness is home to:

- 2 National Parks
- 2 National Landscapes
- 21 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
- 2 Special Protection Areas
- 3 Ramsar Sites (wetlands of international importance)
- 180 Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Westmorland and Furness is also home to a varied and rich range of natural habitats in a unique landscape; from the coastal and estuarine habitats in the south around Morecambe Bay, to the Lake District summit of Helvellyn at a height of 950 metres above sea level, Westmorland and Furness's natural environment includes everything from montane habitats and peat bogs to coastal plain and saltmarsh; ancient and broadleaved woodlands to grasslands; rivers, lakes and tarns to limestone pavement. The area also has many nationally recognised rare habitats all supporting priority species.



An environment with a rich biodiversity is essential for supporting human life. In recent years, multiple studies have demonstrated the co-benefits of nature recovery, which include:

Social

480,000 people in the North of England still do not have access to green space within ten minutes walk of their home³

- Clean air and water;
- Access to green open spaces;
- Health and wellbeing benefits;
- Green social prescribing and greens social care;
- Outdoor education opportunities for all ages; and
- Natural noise management.

Economic

Green Jobs: 25 temporary jobs and 6 job years created for every 100ha of woodland created⁴

- Nature tourism;
- Sustainable food production;
- Green jobs; and
- Investment in natural capital.

Environmental

20,000 properties were flooded and over £1.5billion of damage caused by floods in Cumbria and Yorkshire in 2015/2016⁵

- Reduction in flood risk;
- Improved water and air quality;
- Connected, species-rich habitats;
- Carbon sequestration; and
- Healthy pollinator populations.

^{3,4,5} <https://www.naturenorth.org.uk/business-case/>

The importance of landowners and land managers

Agriculture and land-based industries are a significant part of the local economy and define the local landscape, nature and biodiversity. Westmorland and Furness Council wish to support and guide our farming community to have a positive impact on the environment through funding and partnership working that not only benefits nature but supports the economic viability of Cumbrian farming.

Westmorland and Furness are one of these key landowners and can shape how best to manage our land for the benefit of nature. We are reviewing our current practices and looking

for opportunities to go further to enhance nature on our assets. We hope to act as an exemplar to show what is possible, when we manage our land in a more nature friendly way. For example, looking at opportunities to link in with Biodiversity Net Gain.

Effective connectivity of nature depends upon sustainable land management practices across the whole of Westmorland and Furness, and place-specific interventions that allow nature corridors to be established and maintained. It is therefore crucial we work alongside our farmers and land managers to allow biodiversity to flourish at a landscape scale.

Cumbria's three major land-based industries are:

| Farming | Conservation | Tourism |
|---|---|---|
| Farming, with forestry and other productive land management systems, contributes about £1.1 billion Cumbria 9% of the Gross Value Added (GVA). ⁶ | Conservation, countryside management, outdoor heritage and culture lie within the 'Protected Land Management' sphere; the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership has recently measured natural capital at a value exceeding £1.6 billion c.13% of the Gross Value Added (GVA). ⁶ | Tourism, which relies heavily on protected heritage and landscape, brings in 65 million visitor days, and £2.9 billion – about 25% of Gross Value Added (GVA). ⁶ |

In addition, a significant proportion of the catering and hospitality of the county is also linked to tourism and farming through extensive use of local produce, estimated as being around 25% of the total Cumbrian workforce.

⁶ Cumbria Strategy for Post 16 Land Based Education, Skills and Knowledge Transfer 2020

The State of Nature of Westmorland and Furness

Westmorland and Furness, like the rest of the UK, is experiencing a significant loss of biodiversity. Whilst it is home to a wide range of wildlife and often appears as a lush, green landscape, sadly biodiversity remains under threat from habitat loss, changing land-use, invasive species, pollution and climate change. Only 15% of Westmorland and Furness is currently managed uniquely for wildlife, and only 20% of this remains in good condition. The remaining 80% of land managed for wildlife has been degraded in some way by human activity.

Species

The most recent State of Nature report (2023) finds that nearly one in six of the more than ten thousand species assessed (16%) are at risk of being lost from Great Britain. This figure is even higher for groups such as birds (43%), and amphibians and reptiles (31%). Additionally, the UK distributions of nearly 5,000 invertebrate species have on average decreased by 13% since 1970.

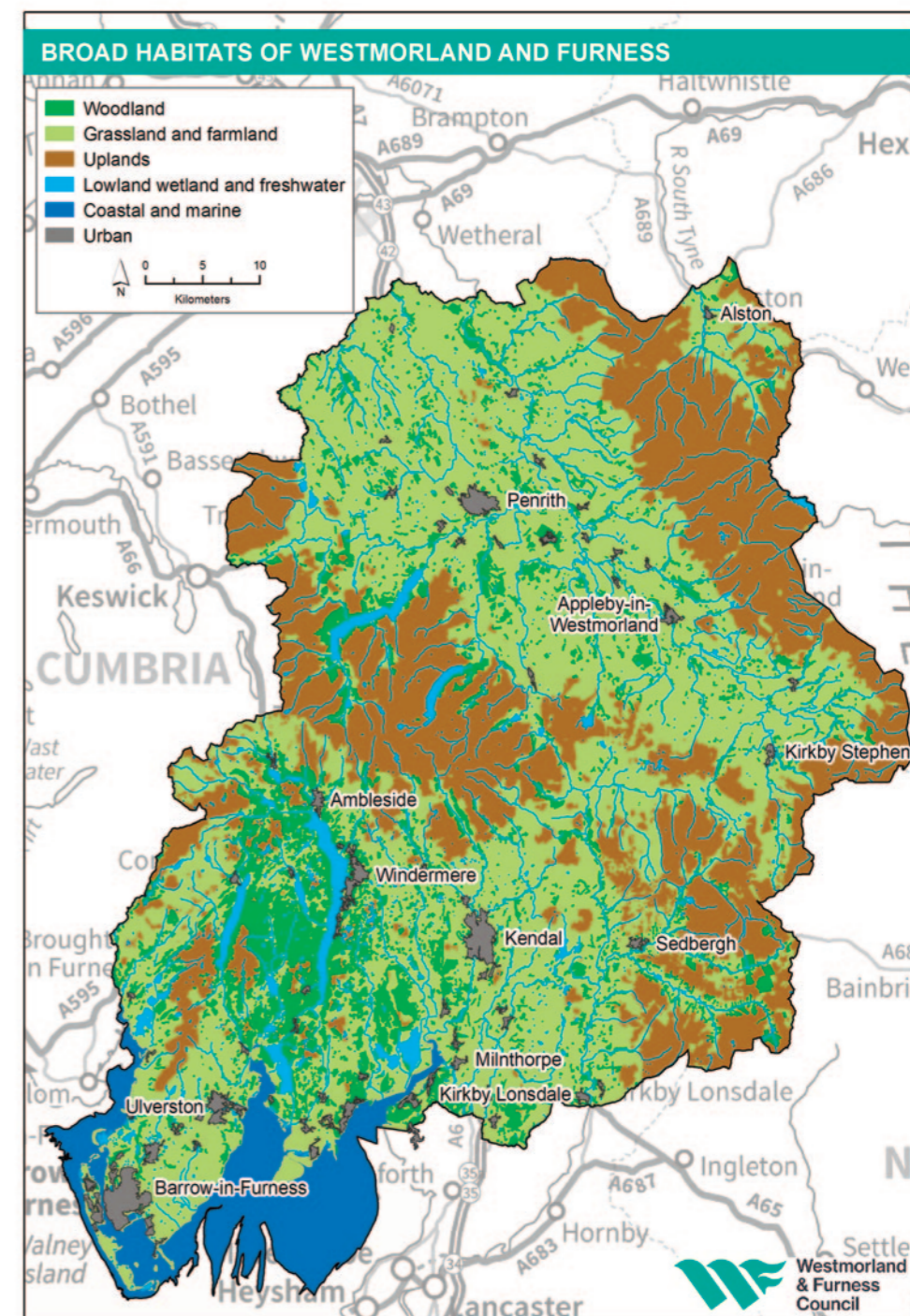
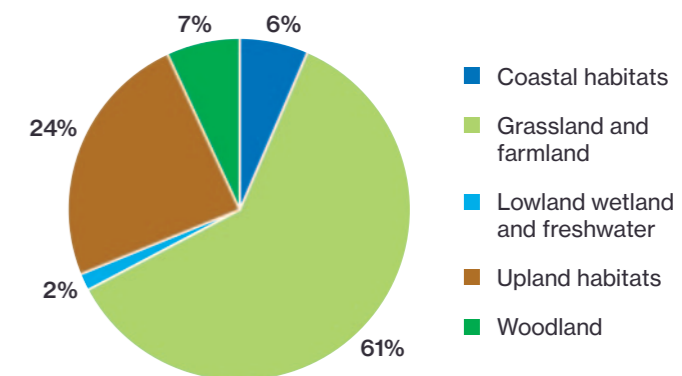


Figure 2: Map showing the main habitat types in Westmorland and Furness

Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database 2024

Habitats

For habitats (see Figure 2), only 7% of woodland and 25% of peatlands are assessed as being in good condition, particularly relevant to Cumbria due to our relatively large peatland resource of 31,000 hectares of blanket bog alone. These national trends are unfortunately reflected in Westmorland and Furness, with a notable example of the iconic red squirrel having reduced in its national range and prevalence by 37% since 1993.



Causes of Biodiversity Loss

National causes of biodiversity loss include:

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------------|--|-------------------|---------|
| Pollution | Invasive non-native species | Climate change | Poor land management | Habitat loss and fragmentation of habitats | Over exploitation | Disease |
|-----------|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------------|--|-------------------|---------|

They are closely linked to habitat loss, figure 3 shows the main causes and how they affect different populations.

Habitat loss is a major threat to biodiversity

The Living Planet Report assesses key drivers of species decline:

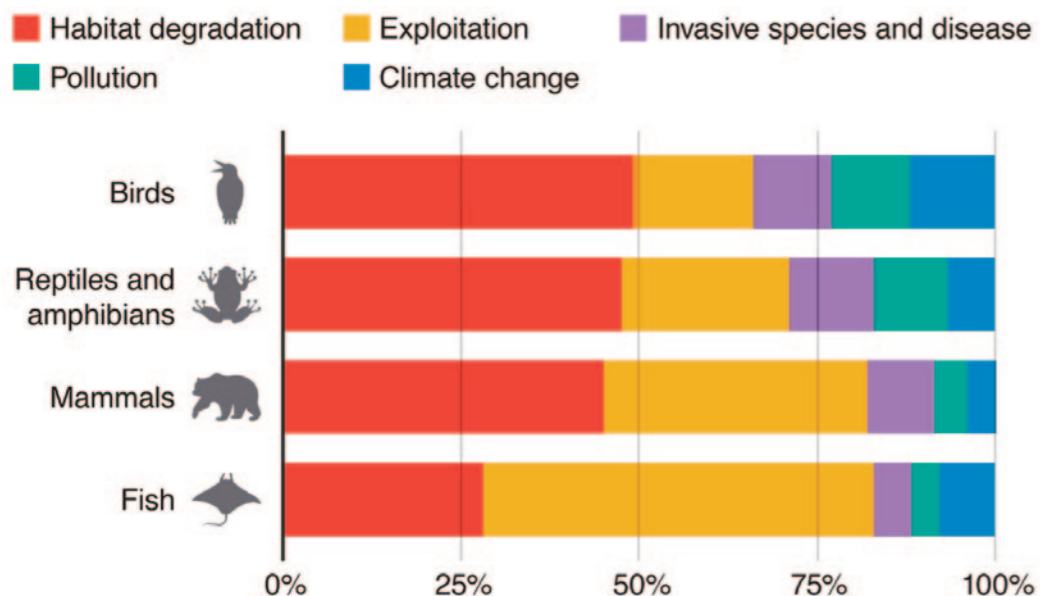
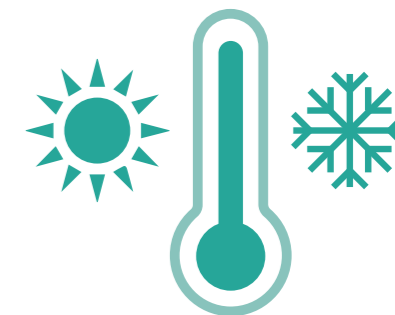


Figure 3: BBC 2019 Nature's Emergency - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-48104037>. A sample of 3,789 populations evaluated by the Living Planet Index. Source: WWF, Living Planet Report 2018

The Impacts of Climate Change on Nature



Climate change is the long-term shift in global temperatures and weather patterns. Climate change causes a wide range of negative impacts including increased heat, drought, intense storms, and rising sea levels; these impacts consequently harm wildlife and damage habitats.

Climate change is happening, and the range of impacts associated with wetter winters and warmer, drier summers are evident, such as Storm Desmond in 2015 and 2023 being the UK's hottest year on record with areas of Westmorland and Furness observing temperatures exceeding 30°C. As the frequency of extreme weather events increases, the risk of coastal and fluvial flooding remains a concern as Westmorland and Furness is already one of the wettest regions in England. Summer rain may also become heavier in many places and increase the likelihood of surface water flooding, although total summer rainfall is expected to decline overall. These events are not only dangerous for Westmorland and Furness' residents but cause widespread damage to our environment such as tree loss, landslides, erosion, and the drying out of salt marshes and peat bogs.

Climate change is and will continue to impact upon our natural environment and landscape. The United Kingdom Climate Projections (UKCP) from 2019 predict the following changes relevant to Westmorland and Furness that have the potential to damage habitats, put species at risk or exacerbate the distribution and number of invasive non-native species:

- Greater temperature extremes.
- Hotter, drier summers increasing risk of wildfires.
- Wetter, warmer winters.
- More intense and frequent rainstorm events.
- Sea level rise causing coastal landscape change and flooding events.
- Summer soil and peat moisture content decreases.

Strategies, Policies and Drivers

To protect and enhance Westmorland and Furness' biodiversity, this Part One Action Plan has taken into consideration the different national, regional and local policies to ensure the interrelation of this document with wider strategic initiatives.



National Legislation

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
- The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000;
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (as amended);
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended); and
- Environment Act 2021.
- Biodiversity Duty;
- Local Nature Recovery Strategies (Cumbria's LNRS is currently under development);
- Biodiversity Net Gain.

National, Regional and Local Policy Documents

- UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework;
- Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services;
- England Peat Action Plan 2021;
- England Trees Action Plan 2021 to 2024;
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
- Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs); and
- Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy Pilot 2021.

Plans and Policy Drivers:

- Natural England Nature Networks;
- 25 Year Environment Plan;
- Dasgupta Review 2021; and
- Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network (2010).
- Lake District UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 (EIP23);

Figure 4 shows how DEFRA have identified Thriving Plants and Wildlife as their apex goal that all their other goals will help to achieve.

Connections between our environmental goals

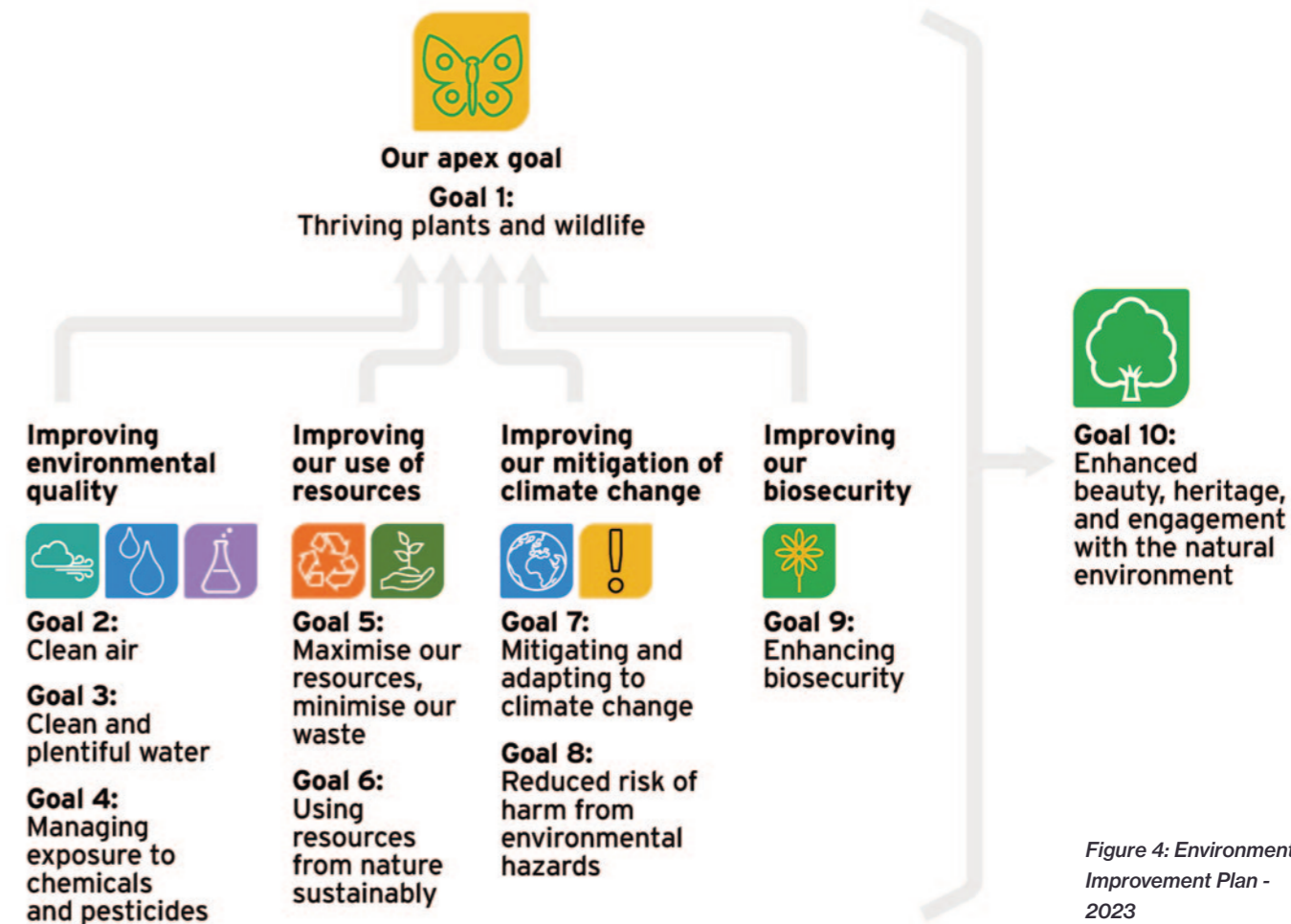


Figure 4: Environmental Improvement Plan - 2023



Vision and Ambition

Our Council Plan

One of the council's seven values is to be 'Ecologically aware'. In implementing this value we will take a responsible approach to protecting and enhancing our natural environment across all our council functions, embedding nature recovery into Council culture

We are committed to collaborating with partners and key stakeholders, embracing opportunities to achieve nature recovery at a

landscape scale in Westmorland and Furness. Working together to realise this goal is the only way to improve the extent, condition and connectivity of priority habitats and the species they support.

Our Council Plan Delivery Framework, Figure 2, shows how the missions are grounded in the three sustainability pillars of equity, economy and environment.

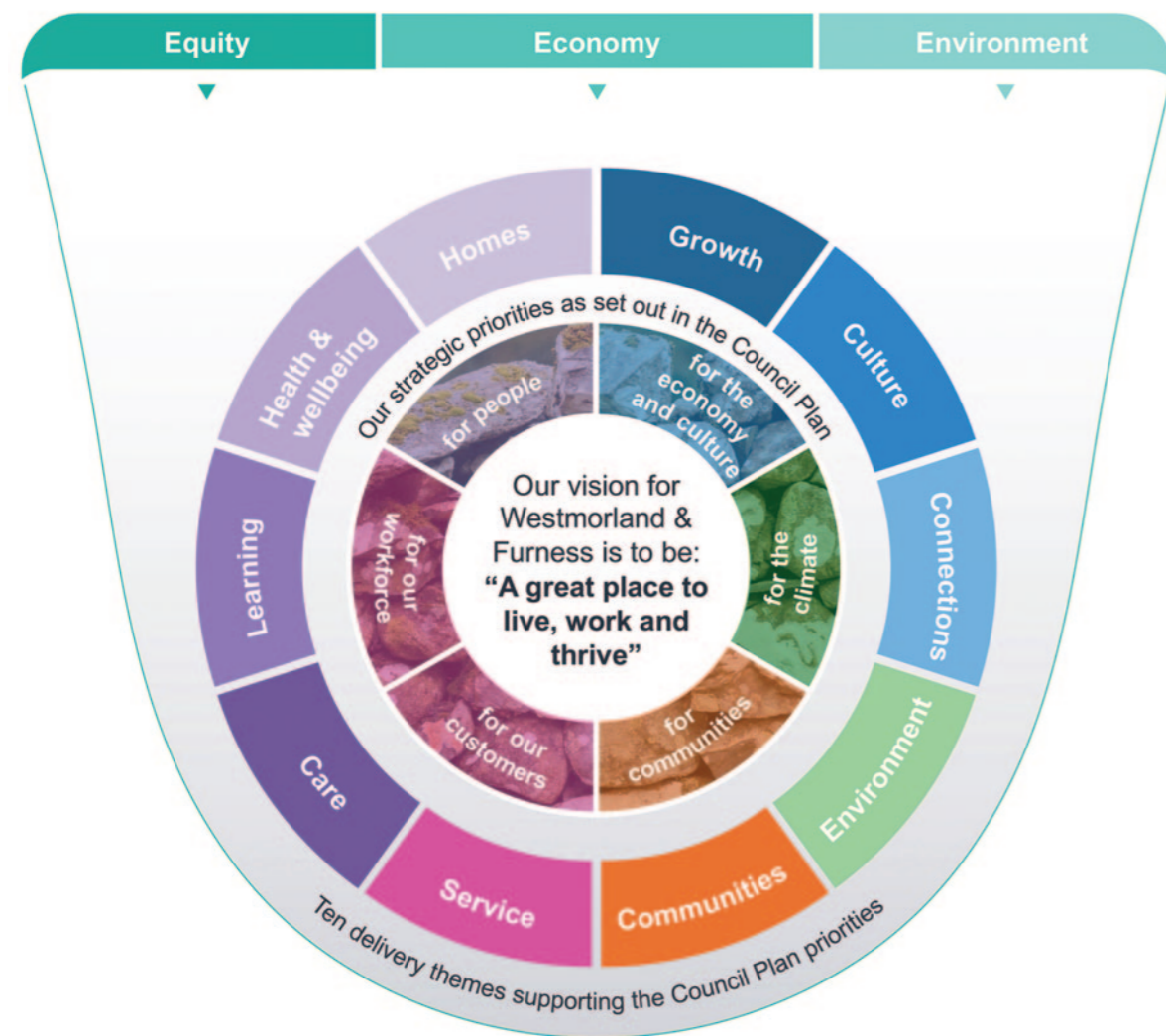


Figure 5 - Westmorland and Furness Council's strategic priorities and delivery themes as set out in the Council Plan.

- **Equity** - We know that there is a need to address any inequalities, especially those resulting from poverty and rural sparsity. We will focus on the wider determinants that drive those inequalities in a way that is fair and equitable.

- **Economy** - We know that we need to increase our productivity and improve educational outcomes, broaden and increase our skills base. We will support sustainable and inclusive growth which benefits our diverse population whilst protecting the environment.

- **Environment** - As a new Council we recognise our environmental responsibilities, including taking action on climate change and biodiversity loss. We will seek to redress damage and protect our environment for the long term.

Our mission for the environment ensures our environment positively impacts on health, well-being and economy and together we build our resilience to climate change and take action to reverse biodiversity loss and to achieve carbon net zero.



Why Act?

Looking after nature not only benefits biodiversity but also brings a wide range of other benefits to our residents. We have aligned these opportunities with our council plan priorities:

- Supporting active, healthy, happy lives for young and old.
- Supporting people in need and reducing inequalities.
- Sustainable and inclusive economic growth.
- Customers at the heart of everything we do.

Environmental Inequalities

Through our commitments to health and wellbeing, it is crucial we do what we can to address any environmental inequalities facing our most disadvantaged residents across the whole of Westmorland and Furness. From access to green open spaces, to reducing exposure to pollution and climate impacts, we must ensure that our nature solutions and environmental improvements benefit everyone in all areas and that they can be accessed by all. This can also bring social and economic improvements as investing in cleaning our environment and improving our resilience will create jobs and encourage growth.



Our Vision for Westmorland and Furness

A holistic approach is needed to tackle biodiversity loss and achieve nature recovery, working across boundaries and in collaboration with everyone who lives, works and enjoys our beautiful area.



We will focus Council action in the six categories shown in the diagram below:

Enhancing and protecting biodiversity in Westmorland and Furness

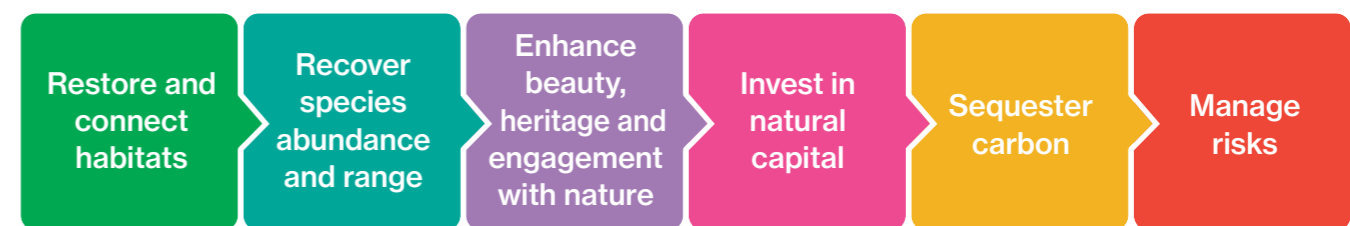


Figure 6: Council action for enhancing and protecting biodiversity in Westmorland and Furness



Restore and Connect Habitats

Sustainable and healthy habitats are vital to all organisms including animals, birds and plants as they depend on these habitats for their air, food, water and shelter. The Council aims to manage all their land in an appropriate way for biodiversity so that the habitats we have, from grassland to coastal habitats to upland habitats, are thriving and supporting a wide range of species. Sustainable management of our land also includes reducing the impact of air and water pollution where appropriate and raising awareness of the issues pollution brings to our local wildlife. Enhancing habitats for biodiversity also brings wider benefits to our residents and visitors as it maintains a sustainable landscape and access to green space.

Recover species abundance and range

Species are all living organisms from the smallest pollinator and plants to iconic species such as the red squirrel and water vole. The Council aims to support partners to protect native species in Westmorland and Furness and appropriately manage invasive non-native species in order to help maintain a rich biodiversity for generations to come and to support our wildlife.

Sequester Carbon

Climate change is and will continue to impact upon our natural environment and landscape. One of the ways we can begin to reverse the effects of climate change is through a method known as carbon sequestration. By, for example, planting trees and hedgerows, and restoring peatland and grassland, carbon can be removed from the atmosphere and stored in our natural assets. Equally supporting businesses and the wider economy to decarbonise and to adopt more sustainable practices can protect and enhance local nature and biodiversity through reducing and mitigating against the impacts of climate change and environmental pollution. This is also supported through the Council's ongoing work through the Climate Change Action Plans.

Enhance Beauty, Heritage and Engagement within Nature

One of the Council plan priorities is to ensure customers are at the heart of everything we do. There are clear benefits to nature by restoring habitats and protecting species, but there are also wider co-benefits to our residents and visitors from these actions. For example, nature recovery brings health and wellbeing benefits, outdoor learning opportunities, greater access to green open spaces, cleaner air and water, and it supports a green economy. Tourism is a major sector in the local economy and has a significant impact on nature and biodiversity. Local nature is itself an attraction for tourists but there is a balance to be made between promoting this and protecting and restoring the natural environment.

Manage Risks

Unfortunately, there are several risks to healthy biodiversity, which include invasive non-native species, disturbance from recreation, poor management of land and climate change. Westmorland and Furness Council is working to improve the overall flood and climate resilience of small, rural communities that have suffered repeated flooding. By adopting natural management techniques, the Council is showing leadership in sustainably managing risks to enhance biodiversity and benefit the livelihoods of local people. Additionally work to improve nature and biodiversity can also help with adaptation to changes in climate, for example more trees and hedgerows provide shelter and shading for wildlife during periods of hot weather with similar benefits to humans with greener urban areas during heatwaves.

Invest in Natural Capital

Natural Capital comprises the ecosystem services that our natural assets provide, including clean freshwater, clean air, soils and biodiversity. Investing in these services brings wider positive effects such as carbon sequestration and flood management, indirectly creating green jobs and supporting sustainable tourism. By protecting our natural assets and supporting green skills, such as greener farming practices, Westmorland and Furness Council will support these ecosystem services that help support our economy and society.



Joined up Working

To achieve our vision of nature recovery and tackling biodiversity loss across Westmorland and Furness, we recognise the need to work in collaboration with partners. The decline in nature across the UK and Westmorland and Furness, as well as the potential to restore our varied and rich biodiversity, emphasises the importance of nature recovery and joined up working. We believe that by working together and pooling our resources, we can achieve even greater results.

Ambitious work is already taking place by our partners, local communities, parish councils, locality boards and the legacy authorities of Cumbria County Council, Barrow Borough Council, Eden District Council and South Lakeland District Council. Westmorland and Furness wish to celebrate the work already taking place and build on these successes by working with others to achieve effective nature recovery at a landscape scale.

Land Management Practices

As a major landowner in Westmorland and Furness, we are open to exploring alternative and innovative options to land management practices, both on our own land and with partners, that benefit our residents, visitors and nature. The Council will always look towards approaches that are evidence-led and compliment the ongoing work of our partners. We are currently exploring alternative options to the use and management of certain weedkiller, roadside verge maintenance, invasive non-native species (INNS) management, and tree planting.

We are adopting a flexible and holistic approach to find the best way of sustainably managing our land that continues to provide services to our residents, but also benefits the environment. By continually assessing the sustainability of our land management practices, the Council will adapt our practices to make sure the needs of our residents and visitors are met in the most nature-friendly way.

Actions already underway

Nature Recovery

Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Westmorland and Furness Council were formally appointed the responsible authority for the Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) in July 2023, and will work closely with key partners such as Cumberland Council, Natural England, the Lake District National Park and Yorkshire Dales National Park to develop the strategy. We hope to build on the success of the Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy Pilot to agree a set of priorities and measures for habitat management and creation, and the identification of the most suitable locations for each of these priorities. The LNRS will be designed to align with existing guidance and policies, and to inform future implementation and delivery plans for our own council and for key stakeholders across the county.

23/24 Funding - Biodiversity Boost

Cabinet approved £510,000 from the Priority Investment Fund to be invested in initiatives that will support biodiversity and nature enhancement in Westmorland and Furness. This investment has also supported the implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain that became mandatory in February 2024, and through our planning regulations we can ensure that any developments or projects gaining permission will help to leave the environment in a better state than it was found.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is an approach to development, land and marine management that leaves biodiversity in a measurably better state than before the development took place; BNG became mandatory on 12th February 2024. Westmorland and Furness Council's approach is to deliver 10% net gain in line with mandatory requirement, and work is currently underway to develop the internal systems to support BNG, as well as gathering the evidence base that could support the aspiration for 20% net gain.

23/24 - Climate and Environment Partnership Grants

Westmorland and Furness Council launched the Climate and Environment Partnership Fund of £900,000 in August 2023. This fund is supporting local partnerships to assist nature recovery, manage the risks of climate change and bring wider benefits to our communities, contributing to our aspiration for Westmorland and Furness to be a leader on biodiversity and carbon net zero. The Fund is supporting partnerships across Westmorland and Furness to restore peatland, improve water quality, hinder invasive species propagation, and plant trees and community gardens.

Caring for W&F's Roadside Verges

The sides of Westmorland and Furness' roads are home to hundreds of species of wild plants and animals.

Recognised as a valuable resource for biodiversity, roadside verges can also bring great pleasure and delight, helping us connect with nature on our journeys wherever we go and acting as important corridors to connect one habitat to another for species.



Within Westmorland and Furness there are nearly 383 miles (approximately 600km) of special roadside verges. These range in altitude up to over 600m (2,000ft). This represents an incredible resource for our wildlife. These linear verge networks also help connect habitats and green spaces, enabling species to move freely across our landscape.

Every verge managed by W&F has its own cutting programme. Roadside verges must be managed for safety and their management is timed to help protect the wildlife, some cutting is early in the year and some in July-October, this allows the plants to flower.

A Dark Sky Friendly Authority

As custodians of the night sky and the excellent environment here in Westmorland and Furness, we currently maintain over 21,000 electrical units. It is important that, as a Council, we are mindful of the impact of our work. To reduce light pollution and help protect our nocturnal environment, we work in collaboration with suppliers to gain a better understanding of evolving technologies such as impacts on colour temperatures during the design process. We also work with partner organisations including the Friends of the Lake District who we support for events like “The Big Switch Off” across Cumbria.

We continue to use innovative technologies and solutions to reduce light pollution and are committed to changing specification, design techniques and introducing upward light calculations to help protect the nocturnal environment, all while maintaining the safety of our communities.

Planting

Planting for Pollinators

Planting for Pollinators is a project developed by Cumbria Local Nature Partnership and delivered by Cumbria Wildlife Trust and Westmorland and Furness Council.

The aim of the scheme is to reverse pollinator decline by creating a mosaic of pollinator-friendly habitats, in turn providing food, shelter and nesting places for the likes of bees, butterflies, wasps and other insects. Pollinator-friendly habitats include hedges, species rich grassland, scrub, deadwood, banks, glades and flower rich gardens.

Cumbria Community Forest

Westmorland and Furness Council are working closely with RAISE Cumbria to identify sites for Community Forests in Cumbria. The Community Forests are focused on areas around the urban centres of the county focusing nearer to the coast and runs from Carlisle to Barrow.

By planting trees and bringing woodlands back into use for both people and wildlife we continue to provide new opportunities for leisure, recreation, and cultural activities, enhancing biodiversity, helping us become more resilient to climate change and improving education and healthy lives

Coronation Living Heritage Fund

This scheme supports local tree planting projects across England, aiming to create a lasting reminder of the Coronation while contributing to the government's environmental goals. In October 2023, Westmorland and Furness Council successfully applied for and were awarded £100,000 from Defra for community orchards and micro-woodlands. This investment will ensure that the Council

can actively work with community groups and small organisations to plant trees to increase tree cover and bring wider benefits to local people such as access to green spaces and education opportunities on nature.

Westmorland and Furness Council will deliver the following two schemes:

- **Coronation Micro Woods:** Provides grants to local authorities for planting miniature areas of woodland in urban areas.
- **Coronation Community Orchards:** Offers grants to local communities and groups for establishing community orchards.

Flood Management

Cumbria's Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme

Westmorland and Furness Council work closely with partners to mitigate the risks caused by climate change, for example by using natural flood management (nature-based solutions) techniques. Cumbria's Innovative Flood Resilience Project (CIFR) has seen over £6 million of government investment into Cumbria to aim to improve the overall flood and climate resilience of small, rural communities that have suffered repeated flooding.

The natural flood management techniques often have considerable benefits for nature. For example, planting areas of hedgerow and woodland, using a range of native species, improves local biodiversity and provides habitat for birds and small mammals. Other natural flood management measures prevent erosion and improve water quality, helping to improve the biodiversity of our beckes, rivers and lakes. Some of these other benefits may provide opportunities for others to invest in natural flood management, these and the newly announced changes brought about by the

Environmental Land Management (ELM) and Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) schemes create chances for CiFR to spread the impact further and provide long term and sustainable change.

We have a number of sites situated in Westmorland and Furness and hope the learning from these can be extended further across our area and beyond.

Partnership Working

Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership

Westmorland and Furness Council are working directly with the Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership (ZCCP) by actively engaging with all groups, in particular the Farming and Other Land Use sector group to achieve net-zero emissions by 2037. The Farming and Other Land Use sector group seeks to respond to sector-based emissions by increasing the natural sequestration potential of land managed for agriculture, as well as wider opportunities to reduce emissions and sequester carbon. The use of green land for business and pleasure is widespread and steeped with tradition, diversity and challenges, and management of that land is crucial to its future. Success in 2037 requires a unified effort across a wide range of stakeholders, including the Council, to achieve a sustainable future for Cumbria with food production at the core of land management delivered through a carefully balanced land use approach, which nurtures carbon storing, biodiversity and regenerating land.

Health and Care Partnerships

The Climate and Natural Environment team are working closely with the Integrated Care Partnerships to collaborate on co-benefits and understand how work to address Health and Wellbeing and Nature Recovery efforts can compliment each other. Linking together with our Public Health colleagues and partners in Natural England and the National Health Service (NHS) to maximise the wider benefits to health and wellbeing from nature. The team are supporting various events and providing information for colleagues working in healthcare to inspire actions that both improve nature and health, for instance nature-friendly management of NHS estates.

Lake District National Park Partnership

Westmorland and Furness Council are one of 22 partners involved in the Lake District National Park Partnership. The partnership's aim is to work towards the vision of the park in the best interests of its environment, communities, economy and visitors, and to have the chance to share best practice. By coming together, the partners can ensure the National Park remains a place where its prosperous economy, world class visitor experiences and vibrant communities come together to sustain the spectacular landscape, its wildlife and cultural heritage.

Cumbria Local Nature Partnership

The Cumbria Local Nature Partnership (CLNP) was officially recognised and confirmed by Government in 2012 with the purpose of acting as the “prominent and unified voice for the natural environment in Cumbria” and “to foster the development of a strategic natural environment framework for the county”. The CLNP acts as a hub for nature and focuses conversations with partners on planning and action for nature recovery. As a local authority, Westmorland and Furness Council support the

work of the CLNP to ensure any action has a consideration for the environment and maximises wider benefits.

Cumbria's People and Nature Network

Westmorland and Furness Council support the People and Nature Network, both as a council and as the responsible authority for Cumbria's Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The network aims to connect partners to explore the wider links between nature recovery and people, or the social benefits that arise. The network are currently supporting the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to prioritise our actions for nature recovery that bring wider benefits to residents and visitors.

Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership (CLEP)

The Climate and Natural Environment team support the CLEP's Rural Sector, aiming to continue to develop a sustainable, productive rural sector, and lead as a UK exemplar for the management of our natural capital. Our rural community supports a variety of land management practices, including farming, forestry and food production that help shape the environment and landscape that we love and enjoy and by working with partners, we can help realise the potential of land and business whilst supporting ecosystem services.

Land and Nature Skills Service

As we continue to grow and expand this 'green industry', we understand that there will be a skills and resources gap; it is essential to work with partners to address this gap through re-skilling, up-skilling and training our new and existing workforce to be able to adapt to a nature-friendly approach. Therefore, this perceived gap has the potential to bring a wide range of opportunities to our workforce and support the local economy.





Next steps

This is just a snapshot of the journey the Council is on to enhance nature and address biodiversity loss in Westmorland and Furness. We will follow this plan with a Part Two, which will outline in more detail how we will work collaboratively with colleagues, partners and key stakeholders in our area to address the biodiversity crisis and encourage joined-up thinking. The Part Two also has the opportunity to link to Cumbria's Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and so will be developed once the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is published.

Join us on this journey

At Westmorland and Furness Council, one of our core values is being collaborative, and in tackling such a complex and global issue, engaging with our community and residents is paramount to any potential success.

The actions being developed in this plan will also contribute towards the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, helping to inform the activities already taking place and identify any areas where gaps in nature recovery can be addressed.

We want to encourage discussions on nature and biodiversity, and will be reaching out to environment action groups, businesses, charities and community groups to support the planning of our natural environment programme.

If you would like to contact us, email climate@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

