



ILMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL
Biodiversity Statement
Approved 15 September 2026
To be Reviewed: September 2030

Biodiversity Statement

Iminster Town Council (ITC) has had a biodiversity statement for some years now. When the statement was reviewed in February 2026, it was decided to update it in view of changing legislation and developments within the ITC.

The need for action has been highlighted by a succession of reports, both regional and national that have consistently highlighted over time that most ecosystems remain threatened, and biodiversity decline persists. Examples of most recent reports are the UK Government 7th National Report on biodiversity targets and regionally, the West of England State of Nature Report 2026, prepared by the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority which reported a 15% decline in all species across the region.

A redacted version of a national security assessment called Global Biodiversity Loss, Ecosystem Collapse and National Security, released late last year following a freedom of information request, highlighted the threat to national security of continuing ecosystem degradation and collapse. Food production, climate and water were identified as the most critical for UK national security.

More locally the Somerset State of Nature 2023 report highlights the challenges we face in our county. This was formative in the preparation of the Somerset Local Nature Recovery Strategy, [Somerset Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#), prepared by Somerset Council, in collaboration with the Somerset Local Nature Partnership as required by the Environment Act 2021. This was published in May 2026. The strategy is comprehensive, evidence based and highlights examples of good practice across a range of fields from land use, wildlife groups, business and many others. Crucially, for ITC, the report suggests that the strategy can be used to support local development, protect biodiversity and enhance green spaces for the benefit of residents.

ITC, along with all parish and town councils now have an enhanced duty – under The Environment Act 2021- to maintain and enhance biodiversity, rather than just conserve biodiversity, which was how the requirement was expressed in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 which was the legislative framework underpinning ITC's biodiversity statement.

Local Developments

In January 2020, ITC declared its recognition of a climate and ecological emergency and committed to work with others to develop collaboration and joint approaches and to share resources in tackling climate change and protecting the environment. ITC also agreed to recognise the ten One Planet Principles, which together cut across a range of policy areas including Land and Nature, Food, Transport, Health and Sustainable Water – to name just 5.

As frameworks, both initiatives are useful and would be enhanced by regular monitoring by ITC.

Responses

A comprehensive 5-year plan was developed by ITC outlining how the Herne Hill Local Nature Reserve will be managed over the 5 years between 2023 and 2028. As an 8.25-hectare Local Nature Reserve, this is perhaps ITC's most significant asset.

The plan highlights the need for sound environmental management with a focus on sustainability, climate resilience habitat management and ecological enhancement. A detailed action plan provides a costed, multi-year schedule covering path improvements, accessibility enhancements, climate resilience planning and habitat management.

The Canal Management Plan 2023 (the canal is an asset of Ilminster Education Foundation but managed by ITC under a lease) highlights the need for vegetation management including hedge laying to enhance the area both for leisure and recreation and for improving biodiversity.

The Ilminster Neighbourhood Plan (INP) was voted and made in August 2025 and provides a comprehensive vision for the development of the town. In its vision and aims, the plan highlights the need to encourage biodiversity and water conservation and also to safeguard the rural environment for food production and recreational amenity. Also highlighted is the need to create a continuous network of green habitats, waterways and nature trails. In a bid to enhance biodiversity, new developments will provide for 10% net gains and any application include options for delivering biodiversity net gain.

Ilminster Design Principle 8 goes into some detail as to how biodiversity will be protected and enhanced, although it remains aspirational rather than providing specific targets.

ITC Commitment

The aims outlined in the original statement remain and many have been included in the INP, the Canal Management Plan and the Herne Hill Nature Reserve Plan.

ITC will integrate biodiversity considerations into its policies, plans and projects.

ITC will manage the land it owns or maintains in ways that support and enhance biodiversity, through planting schemes, mowing regimes and habitat enhancement.

Support community led initiatives including tree planting, identifying areas for wildflower areas and work in partnership with others to improve biodiversity outcomes.

ITC will continue to monitor and review its outcomes to support biodiversity and adapt to best practice.

Implementation

The statement will be considered when new strategies are discussed whether in maintaining open spaces, designing new projects and engaging with the community. ITC will take biodiversity into account in both operational and strategic decision making.

To remain at the heart of council strategy and practice, it would be useful to set goals and targets so that momentum can be maintained. This needs to be developed if the existing policies / statements are going to be more than aspirational.

Regular reporting against identified targets in the existing plans would ensure that biodiversity enhancement remains a priority of the council.

One vehicle to ensure continued progress is to adopt the suggestion of the Somerset Nature Recovery report to create in partnership with other local groups a Local Nature Action Plan, which could bring together much of the good work being done and to provide a forum to imagine and implement new ways that biodiversity can be enhanced.

Summary

Iminster Town Council has updated its Biodiversity Statement for 2026 in response to new legal duties under the Environment Act 2021 and continuing biodiversity decline highlighted in national and regional reports.

The statement sets out ITC's commitment to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, supported by existing local plans including the Herne Hill Local Nature Reserve Plan, the Canal Management Plan and the Iminster Neighbourhood Plan, which requires 10% biodiversity net gain in new developments.

ITC will embed biodiversity considerations across all policies and projects, manage council land to support habitats, and work with community groups, while recognising the need for clear targets, regular reporting and potential development of a Local Nature Action Plan to coordinate future progress.