

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change**Blue/Green Infrastructure Strategy****1. Purpose of Report**

To seek approval for the revised Blue/Green Infrastructure Strategy. This is in accordance with the Council's Corporate Priority of Environment – 'Protect the environment for the future'

2. Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to APPROVE the adoption of the Blue/Green Infrastructure Strategy 2025-2030.

3. Detail

Engagement has been central to the development of the revised Blue/Green Infrastructure Strategy. From the outset, the Council undertook a series of targeted workshops with internal and external stakeholders, followed by a formal public consultation and a comprehensive review by the Policy Overview and Working Group. This process has ensured that the revised Strategy has been shaped by a broad and representative range of views.

The Policy Overview and Working Group met on 2 October 2025 to undertake a detailed review of the draft Strategy. Their feedback has helped to refine areas in relation to biodiversity zoning, blue infrastructure, and the integration of climate resilience. Updates arising from this review are detailed in **Section 5** of the report.

Following Cabinet approval in June 2025, a public consultation was held for approximately six weeks, concluding at the end of August 2025. The consultation included online and paper surveys and a dedicated focus group session. While 21 responses were received via the online survey, this built upon earlier engagement and workshops, ensuring a robust and inclusive process. Key updates from the consultation are summarised as follows:

- Increased the list of 'emerging opportunities' and BGI projects in the A610 Urban Corridor GBI Zone.
- Added additional opportunities to improve existing open spaces or increase BGI provision within areas of greenspace deficiency – within both the north and south of Broxtowe Borough.
- Emphasised the need for enhanced opportunities to access blue corridors as these spaces are currently visited less regularly than other types of BGI.

- Increased reference to opportunities for play and socialising in green spaces.
- Highlighted opportunities for increased woodland provision (in accordance with the principles of the 'right tree in the right place').
- Identified additional opportunities to improve the condition of some green spaces, as poor maintenance was perceived as the most common factor preventing visits to BGI assets.
- Added additional opportunities for flood risk alleviation.
- Added reference to localised landscape management interventions such as increased control of Himalayan Balsam along the River Trent and the increased use of relaxed mowing regimes.

The revised strategy

The revised strategy is structured around the principles set out in Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework, with four key themes: Thriving and Prosperous, Nature Rich and Beautiful, Resilient and Climate Positive, and Active and Healthy. An integral element of the revised strategy is blue infrastructure, which has been incorporated as a cross-cutting theme rather than a stand-alone section. This helps to highlight its importance across all four theme areas and reflects the Council's commitment to integrate blue infrastructure within the Borough's broader Environmental agenda. A copy of the updated strategy can be found in **Appendix 1**.

Supporting Planning decisions

This revised strategy will play a key role in supporting planning decisions across the Borough. It aligns with the emerging Strategic Plan and provides a framework for embedding environmental and climate considerations into development proposals. To support this, a checklist has been included at the end of the strategy. This practical tool will assist planners, developers, and decision-makers in assessing proposals against the strategy's objectives.

Biodiversity

Reflecting the ecological diversity of Broxtowe, the Borough has now been zoned into six distinct biodiversity areas. This new approach allows for tailored interventions that respond to the unique environmental characteristics of each zone. It supports more effective habitat protection, enhancement, and climate resilience, and ensures that local biodiversity is preserved in line with the Climate Change and Green Futures Strategy.

Next Steps

Subject to Cabinet's agreement to adopt the strategy, the following steps will be undertaken to finalise and implement the document:

- The strategy will be professionally designed and formatted to ensure it is accessible and visually engaging.
- A one-page summary document will be produced to support wider communication and engagement.
- The action plan will be broken down into annual, costed, bite-sized actions to support delivery and maintain momentum across the five-year programme.
- Progress will be reported annually, aligned with the approach used for the Climate Change and Green Futures Carbon Management Plan, with updates provided to Members and agreement sought for the following year's actions.

4. Key Decision

This report is a key decision as defined under Regulation 8 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 201.

5. Updates from Scrutiny

The draft Blue-Green Infrastructure Strategy was reviewed by the Policy Overview and Working Group on 2 October 2025. The Group provided a range of constructive feedback, which has informed further revisions to the strategy. Key updates include:

Clearer Strategy and Definitions

- Cross-Boundary Working: The concept has been clarified and strengthened, with a distinct definition of blue infrastructure now included to support strategic understanding.
- Glossary Addition: A glossary has been added to aid interpretation of technical terminology throughout the document.

Making Spaces More Inclusive

- Accessibility Improvements: Chapter 2 has been revised to better reflect the importance of inclusive access to green and blue spaces.
- Engagement with Younger Audiences: The delivery framework has been updated to include actions and opportunities for schools and younger age groups, addressing a previously identified gap.

Realistic Views on Nature

- Nature-Rich and Beautiful Spaces: The strategy now acknowledges that ecological value is not always based upon visual appeal. It highlights the importance of natural processes such as death and decay, particularly in relation to veteran trees, which are an essential component of healthy ecosystems.

Improving Water and Local Areas

- Brook Naming and Water Quality Descriptors: Amendments have been made to improve the accuracy of Brook names and clarify definitions of water quality (e.g. “poor water quality”), alongside potential improvement measures.

Community Actions and Planning

- Nature Reserve Actions: The strategy now includes clearer direction on the Council’s ability to influence and support actions with Attenborough Nature Reserve.
- Small-Scale Community Actions: The Action Plan has been expanded to include small-scale interventions that residents can undertake, such as creating garden ponds, rewilding, and biodiversity-friendly practices on allotments and verges, emphasising that localised efforts can have a significant cumulative impact.

Making the Document Clearer

- Summary Document: A one-page summary has been requested by the Group to support public engagement, modelled on the format used for the Climate Change and Green Futures Strategy.
- Content Streamlining: Some repetition was identified between Chapters 3 and 5. Following discussions with the appointed consultant, it was agreed that the repetition serves a useful purpose in reinforcing key themes and will be retained, although a clearer explanation will be provided for each of the chapters.
- Minor Amendments: In addition to the scrutiny review, the Environment team also identified and addressed a number of minor grammatical and editorial amendments.

6. Financial Implications

The comments from the Interim Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer were as follows:

There are no additional financial implications to consider at this stage. Any significant budget implications in the future, over and above virement limits, would require approval by Cabinet.

7. Legal Implications

The comments from the Head of Legal Services were as follows:

Whilst there are no direct legal implications that arise from this report the Council has enabling powers to propose and advocate for Green Infrastructure Improvements and work across its own estate and on wider sites. It forms part of the Council's Local Plan evidence base and together with other evidence will help to ensure revised policies accord with the National Planning Policy Framework's tests of soundness.

8. Human Resources Implications

Not applicable.

9. Union Comments

Not applicable.

10. Climate Change Implications

Having an up-to-date and comprehensive Blue/Green Infrastructure Strategy is important as it serves as a key foundation in supporting the Council's Climate Change ambitions. The revised strategy not only recognises the critical role of nature and green spaces in mitigating climate change but also establishes a framework for integrating sustainable practices into all aspects of planning and development.

11. Data Protection Compliance Implications

This report does not contain any OFFICIAL(SENSITIVE) information and there are no Data Protection issues in relation to this report.

12. Equality Impact Assessment

An equality impact assessment has been completed and is found in **Appendix 2**.

13. Background Papers

Nil.