

Key Decision Details

Decision Name	Habitat Banking
Date of Decision	10 February 2026
Decision maker	Cabinet
Describe the Decision taken	<p>The Cabinet has</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) noted the update on the Bio4All programme and the partnership work between the Council and CPCA for Phase 1, and how this can be taken forward in an approach for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG); (b) acknowledged the environmental, social and economic benefits of Habitat Banking across Huntingdonshire, alignment with existing policies/strategies, and the role of BNG and Habitat Banking in relation to development delivery within the District; (c) approved the principle of and approach outlined to phased establishment of Habitat Banks on suitable Council owned land to generate Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) units; (d) noted the inclusion of a £220,000 capital investment bid and associated income impact within the 2026-2027 MTFS to deliver Phase 1 & 2; (e) approved the approach, governance, process, and timeline for full implementation across the district by April 2026 and embedding BNG delivery

and management as part of business-as-usual activity; and

- (f) ensured appropriate delegations are in place to enable efficient and effective implementation, delivery of actions, and monitoring pertaining to BNG units as part of business as usual (BAU) and maximise the potential social, environmental and economic benefits of BNG on Council owned land.

What were the reasons for taking the Decision?

Habitat banking provides a financially sustainable and environmentally responsible approach to meeting statutory biodiversity requirements.

Cabinet approval will enable the Council to deliver habitat banking across appropriate Council sites, embed biosecurity and habitat management standards across its estate, and position the Council as a regional and national leader in nature-based innovation and sustainable land management.

The scheme based upon the business plan outlined within this report will allow the Council if it chooses to re-invest the surpluses delivered by the proposed schemes to help support the wider financial sustainability of the Council.

Launching this scheme will enable the Council to work with its strategic partners to upskill, train and launch new innovative programmes to help

What alternative options were considered and rejected?

support residents back into work, new apprenticeships or widen its reach across the volunteering sector.

The launch of this habitat banking programme will enable the Council to protect its local ecology environment and engage with local and national developers and with the retained income from the BNG sales it will allow the Council to improve and support wider services for local resident benefit.

Three delivery approaches were considered.

Option 1 — Do Nothing would forgo a significant financial and environmental opportunity, leaving the Council reliant on external providers to meet local Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) demand.

Option 2 — Partnership or Lease Model would reduce upfront delivery risk but would limit the Council's long-term financial return and control over habitat quality, with the majority of value captured by a private provider.

Option 3 — HDC-Led Habitat Banking, delivered on Council-owned land, offers the strongest alignment with strategic priorities, maximises revenue retention, and provides full oversight of environmental outcomes. This is the preferred option, as set out in detail in Appendix 2 & 3.

Option 3 is recommended because it maximises long-term financial return to the Council, ensures local delivery of high-quality habitats, and aligns most strongly with HDC's Corporate Plan, Climate Strategy and Huntingdonshire Futures priorities. While Option 2 reduces some upfront risk, it significantly limits the Council's financial return and long-term control. Option 1 offers no strategic or financial advantage and would result in a lost opportunity for improvement of Council-owned land.

Conflict of interest and dispensation

Is the decision a Key Decision? Yes

Was the decision included in the Forward Plan Yes

Was the decision subject to the urgency proceedings? No

List the background papers to any report considered by the Decision Taker

Person Making this report Nick Massey, Open Spaces Project Manager

Decision will be effective the day after call-in expires. Call-in expires on 18 February 2026

Accompanying Documents 7. Habitat Banking Programme
7. Habitat Banking O&S Comments