



Biodiversity: People & Nature

Workshop Report & Recommendations

Prepared for East Lammermuir Community Council
by East Lothian Climate Hub & Lil CIC



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East Lammermuir People & Nature workshop

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Executive summary

East Lammermuir is a distinctive hill-to-sea landscape of upland moor, mixed farmland, ancient woodland and a sensitive coastal strip that is now undergoing rapid change due to multiple large energy infrastructure projects and associated grid connections. Local residents identified biodiversity as one of four core community priorities and called for an ambitious biodiversity gain plan that uses developer support to deliver visible benefits for nature and people. This report summarises the findings of a December 2025 Biodiversity Workshop, sets them within the evolving national and local policy context, and proposes practical recommendations for East Lammermuir Community Council, landowners, developers and partners to work together on long-term restoration at landscape scale. Its primary purpose is to help the Community Council turn community aspirations into a coherent programme of action, and to guide energy developers in aligning biodiversity net gain and community benefit commitments with local priorities.

Policy and Development Context

Scotland's biodiversity policy framework is strengthening, with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045, the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill, the "30 by 30" commitment, and National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) all requiring substantial, measurable gains for nature. Locally, these duties are being translated through East Lothian Council's emerging Local Development Plan (LDP2), the updated Local Biodiversity Action Plan and a county-wide Nature Network, alongside the East Lammermuir Local Place Plan which advocates for protecting and enhancing semi-natural areas, regenerative soil management and climate resilience. At the same time, East Lammermuir is increasingly a focus for major energy infrastructure, including Eastern Green Link 1, the Crystal Rig wind farm complex, Berwick Bank's onshore works

and a pipeline of solar and battery proposals, each bringing both pressures (land-take, disturbance, loss of key features and habitats, cumulative landscape impacts) and opportunities (biodiversity net gain obligations, community benefit funds, in-kind resources). The report concludes that while the policy framework is strong on paper, it is not yet consistently delivering joined-up, place-based restoration in East Lothian, with gaps in mapping, coordination, enforcement and long-term funding.

Biodiversity Values, Assets and Pressures

Workshop participants grounded their discussions in a shared set of values - stewardship, respect for place, ecological responsibility, balance and interconnection - developed from two years of Local Place Plan engagement and tested during the December 2025 workshop.

The report summarises East Lothian's key habitats: coastal grasslands and maritime cliff systems; upland heath, moorland and limited peatland; ancient oak woodland at Woodhall Dean and other long-established woods; rivers, burns and small wetlands;



Workshop photo:
Sandy Young

hedgerows, field margins and species-rich grassland; and the mosaics of gardens, greens and paths within villages. Against this backdrop, participants identified major pressures including habitat fragmentation, agricultural intensification, energy and grid infrastructure, invasive species, pollution, climate change and under-resourced conservation, compounded by fragmented management across many landowners and projects. Despite these challenges, the area already hosts a growing portfolio of biodiversity initiatives, from Summit to Sea catchment work, Nature at Spott and Oldhamstocks for Nature, to long-term management at Woodhall Dean, hedgerow restoration pilots and industry-led work at Torness and Tarmac's sites, which together demonstrate practical routes to biodiversity recovery if better connected and supported.

Workshop Insights: What Is Missing

The Biodiversity Workshop brought together 29 participants from community groups, industrial landowners, energy developers, East Lothian Council and NatureScot to explore mapping, relationships, delivery and long-term strategy. Four cross-cutting insights emerged.

First, there is no single, living map that brings together habitats, species records, land ownership, existing projects, energy infrastructure and active-travel routes into a shared decision-making tool; available datasets remain scattered and under-used.

Second, relationships, especially with farmers and estate managers, are both vital and under-supported, with multiple actors approaching landowners separately and no dedicated role responsible for sustained engagement,



potentially leading to fatigue and missed opportunities.

Third, delivery capacity is thin: participants highlighted the importance of paid coordination and specialist roles (such as a hedgerow manager) to turn ideas into early, visible action, avoid duplication and support volunteers, noting that consultation fatigue and a sense of disempowerment are real risks if people do not see progress.

Finally, strategic planning and funding remain fragmented; there needs to be a single long-term biodiversity plan for East Lammermuir, greater clarity on the scale and timing of community benefit funds, and mechanism(s) to blend developer, public and charitable finance and volunteer contributions into a stable 10-30-year restoration programme.

Key Recommendations

The report recommends that East Lammermuir Community Council focuses

on a small number of enabling moves that create the “glue” missing from the current system. The first is to establish a small, funded Biodiversity Coordination Team, anchored in an appropriate host organisation but accountable to the Community Council, with a remit to build and sustain landowner relationships, coordinate requests from conservation groups and developers, support community engagement, and connect local projects to policy and funding opportunities.

The second is to scale up a handful of trusted, existing projects (such as Summit to Sea, hedgerow restoration and village-scale habitat initiatives) as early, visible wins that demonstrate what landscape-scale recovery looks like and build confidence in longer-term change, backed by robust monitoring. This habitat improvement could potentially be ‘banked’ to create a pot of Biodiversity Net Gain credits that developers could then buy to fulfil their obligations.

Third, the report calls for a portfolio of “shovel-ready” biodiversity projects, clearly specified and costed, that can absorb energy-sector biodiversity net gain and community benefit funding in ways aligned with the Nature Network, LBAP and Local Place Plan.

Finally, it proposes developing an ambitious, shared biodiversity strategy for East Lammermuir, clarifying governance roles (including the future of the Biodiversity Liaison Group), and designing a long-term financing mechanism, potentially including a local biodiversity endowment fund, so that restoration is coordinated, adequately resourced and resilient into the longer-term future.

Sarah Bronsdon

Chief Executive, Low Impact Living CIC

Bobby Pembleton

Manager, East Lothian Climate Hub



The East Lammermuir Biodiversity Workshop.
Photo: Sandy Young

Introduction

Purpose and Scope

East Lammermuir is experiencing significant change. A landscape of mixed farmland, upland heath, ancient woodland, and coastal habitats is now subject to multiple large-scale energy infrastructure projects, wind farms, substations, electricity grid connections, and battery storage facilities. In parallel, the community has articulated a vision for biodiversity enhancement, climate resilience, and greater nature connection, in their East Lammermuir Local Place Plan (2024–2034).

In 2025, as part of energy development planning, East Lammermuir residents voted for Biodiversity to be one of four core community priorities, asking for: “An ambitious biodiversity gain plan [to be] devised, agreed and implemented with maximum use of developer support for local volunteers and other relevant aspects of the plan.”

This report captures the output of a Biodiversity workshop held in December 2025, convened by the East Lothian Climate Action Network, on behalf of East Lammermuir Community Council to:

- **Understand current biodiversity status and priorities in East Lammermuir**
- **Better understand the current views of the community and other stakeholders.**
- **Explore existing projects, initiatives, and opportunities for habitat restoration**
- **Initiate discourse to plan the strategic, operational, and relational requirements to realise the community's biodiversity ambitions**
- **Thus also providing guidance to energy developers in aligning**

biodiversity net gain (BNG)
contributions with community
priorities

- Provide guidance for the use of community benefits to support delivery of this community ambition

This report is written firstly to support East Lammermuir Community Council and the communities they represent to move forward their ambitions for biodiversity in the area. Secondly it aims to support the Energy Development companies and others with an interest or responsibility in delivering their Biodiversity obligations and objectives in collaboration with the community.



*A landscape experiencing
significant change.*

Who Was Involved

The Biodiversity Gathering brought together over 29 participants representing:

- **Community and voluntary groups** (about a third of participants): East Lammermuir Community Council, Oldhamstocks in Nature, Sustaining Dunbar Rivers Project, Muir to Forth Restoration and community volunteers.
- **Industrial landowners and land managers:** Including EDF and Tarmac.
- **Energy developers and contractors:** Representing SPEN, EDF, Fred Olsen Renewables, Belltown Power, and Prysmian (grid connection contractor).
- **Statutory bodies:** East Lothian Council (Climate Forest Officer, Biodiversity Officer, Planning), and NatureScot
- **Project Teams:** Including project leads, biodiversity consultants and GIS specialists.

The workshop was developed and facilitated by ELCAN (East Lothian Climate Action Network), the East Lammermuir Community Council, and Lil CIC. It was funded by SP Energy Networks as part of capacity building work to prepare the way for spend of community benefits associated with their Eastern Green Link 1 project and to guide investment of community benefits associated with other transmission or renewable infrastructure in the area.



The East Lammermuir Biodiversity Workshop was held in December 2025, in Westbarns.
Photo: Sandy Young

Background

Community

East Lammermuir is a dispersed rural community of small villages, farms and hamlets stretched between the Lammermuir hills and the North Sea coast, with residents relying on a mix of local employment and wider regional jobs in agriculture, land management, energy, services and tourism. The local economy is strongly shaped by working the land and sea (sheep and arable farming, estate and forestry work, quarrying and cement, Torness Power Station and a growing cluster of renewable energy and grid projects) which brings both income and disruption in the form of traffic, construction and landscape change.

People's relationship with nature is close and everyday: many residents live beside fields, burns, woods and coast. The Local Place Plan consultation showed that views, wildlife, dark skies and access to paths and open spaces are central to

their sense of place and wellbeing, leading the community to choose biodiversity as one of four core priorities and to call for an ambitious biodiversity gain plan using developer and transmission owner support. At the same time, workshop discussions reveal concern about hedgerow loss, changing views and habitat fragmentation, alongside a desire to act as good stewards of the landscape; this combination of attachment and anxiety underpins the community's wish to work with landowners, the council and energy developers to restore nature while sustaining a viable rural economy.

Energy Developments

East Lammermuir is now framed by a cluster of large energy projects whose design, consenting and community benefit arrangements will heavily influence future biodiversity in the area. At the core is **Eastern Green Link 1 (EGL1)**, a 2 GW high-voltage direct current



“electricity superhighway” connecting Torness in East Lothian to Hawthorn Pit in County Durham to export Scotland’s surplus renewables. The project includes offshore cables, landfall near Torness, onshore cabling and converter/substation infrastructure, and has been approved with commitments to deliver at least **10% biodiversity net gain** and to operate an £8 million Community Benefit Fund split between Scotland and England to support environmental, social and economic projects, including improved access to green space. Its footprint in East Lammermuir offers both risks (temporary construction disturbance and permanent land-take) and significant opportunities to finance nature network links, riparian restoration and community-led biodiversity schemes aligned with the Local Place Plan.

On the upland side, the **Crystal Rig** wind farm complex (developed by Fred. Olsen Renewables) dominates much of the Lammermuir ridge. Existing and

Groundworks for Eastern Green Link 1 in East Lammermuir

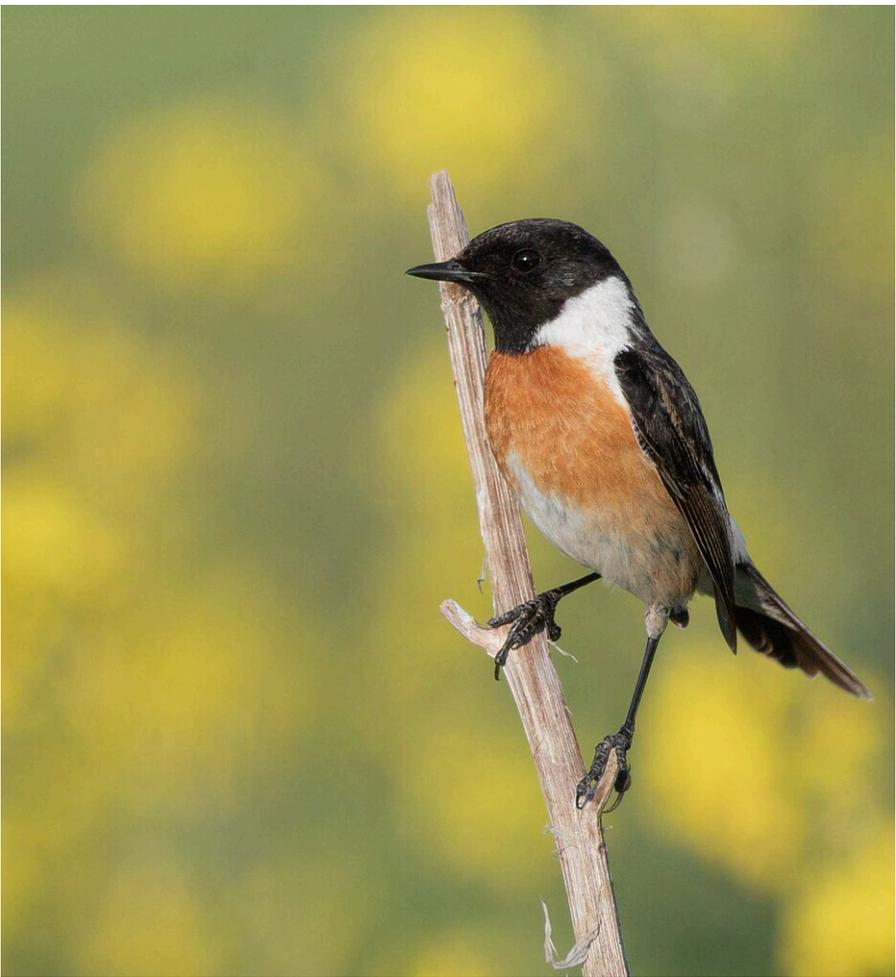
repowered phases, and associated substation extensions, are accompanied by habitat management measures around the Bothwell Water and hill ground, including proposals for bog restoration (ditch blocking), riparian planting, pond creation, grazing management for ground-nesting birds and broadleaved woodland planting. These measures, if well-targeted, can improve blanket bog condition, water quality and connectivity for species such as skylark and meadow pipit, but they sit alongside turbine access tracks, grid infrastructure and other pressures which must be managed cumulatively. Offshore, **Berwick Bank Wind Farm** (up to 4.1 GW) will connect



onshore at Branxton, near Innerwick, via substantial onshore cable and substation works. The project's documentation highlights "significant opportunity within the substation area" and at nearby sites such as Dry Burn and Braidwood for biodiversity enhancement, including invasive non-native species management, nature corridors and landscape planting for skylark, meadow pipit, brown hare and other species, with early engagement already taking place with the Biodiversity Liaison Group and Forth Rivers Trust.

Alongside these flagship schemes is a pipeline of **solar farm and battery storage proposals**, in planning or consented, in and around East Lammermuir. Recent planning reports show that these projects can pose substantial risks to habitats, hedgerows and ecological connectivity if poorly designed, with East Lothian Council's biodiversity officers raising concerns where biodiversity net gain is not robustly demonstrated or long-term management guarantees are weak. At the

same time, well-sited solar and storage developments can be compatible with enhanced grassland, pollinator strips, ponds and hedgerows if NPF4's biodiversity requirements and the emerging Nature Network are used as firm design constraints. Collectively, this energy cluster brings construction activity, jobs and community funding, but also cumulative pressures on land, seascapes and wildlife. For East Lammermuir, the key opportunity is to steer these investments into a coherent programme: using community benefit funds and statutory mitigation to restore burns and wetlands, strengthen hill-to-coast habitat corridors, manage invasive species and deliver visible, locally valued biodiversity gains around infrastructure footprints, rather than treating each scheme in isolation.



European stonechat (*Saxicola rubicola*). Photo:
El Golli Mohamed CC 4.0

Policy Context

This section provides a brief overview of the policies in development or in place that influence how local biodiversity outcomes might be planned and delivered, along with the status and relevant responsibilities for each policy.

International Framework

Scotland operates within the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which commit parties to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and to protect 30% of land and sea by 2030 (30 by 30). These targets are reflected in Scotland's domestic strategies and set the direction of travel for local action in East Lothian.

National Policy in Scotland

Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045 sets the national vision for a nature-positive Scotland by 2030 and widespread restoration by 2045. It is supported by a Delivery Plan (2024–2030) with actions on nature networks, protected areas, nature-friendly farming and forestry, peatland and woodland restoration, species recovery and tackling indirect drivers such as pollution and unsustainable land use.

The Scottish Government has formally adopted 30 by 30 as a national commitment and embedded it in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and its Delivery Plan, where it appears under the priority to “expand and connect protected areas and improve their condition”. In practice, 30 by 30 will be guided by a national 30 by 30 framework that sets principles for which sites count, how they are governed and how they link into Nature Networks.

For East Lammermuir, this means that existing designated sites, high-value habitats, river corridors and key restoration areas are increasingly being viewed not just as local assets, but as part of a national 30 by 30 network; decisions on land use, planning, energy infrastructure, and community projects are expected to contribute to that network's extent, condition and connectivity, rather than eroding it.

- **Status:** Strategy and first Delivery Plan are in place and active.
- **Key responsibilities:**
 - o Scottish Government: strategy, targets, funding programmes.
 - o NatureScot: advice, implementation support, monitoring, administration of some funding.
 - o Local authorities: integrate into plans and projects.
 - o Businesses, landowners/managers, community groups: deliver on-the-ground measures.



*Volunteer-run East Lothian
Hedgerow Restoration pilot.*

Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill

The Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill was introduced in 2025 to put statutory nature restoration targets into law. It requires ministers to set legally binding targets for improved habitat condition and extent, species status and environmental quality, and updates the regulatory toolkit (including EIA and protected sites provisions).

- **Status:** Approved Feb 2026
- **Key responsibilities:**
 - o Scottish Ministers: set statutory biodiversity targets and report on progress.
 - o Environmental Standards Scotland: oversee compliance.
 - o NatureScot, local authorities, and public bodies: implement measures and report.

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

- Policy 3 Biodiversity

NPF4 is part of the statutory development plan and reshapes planning to require positive effects for biodiversity. Policy 3 requires:

- Major and EIA-development to leave biodiversity in a “demonstrably better state” than without the development.
- Local development to secure “positive effects for biodiversity”.
- Identification and protection of Nature Networks at local level.

NatureScot has issued guidance on “[developing with nature](#)” and is rolling out a biodiversity metric to support consistent assessment.



- **Status:** In force; supplementary guidance and the metric continue to be refined. NatureScot expect to consult on a draft metric tool and guidance in 2026.
- **Key responsibilities:**
 - o East Lothian Council (planning authority): apply Policy 3 in decisions and conditions.
 - o Developers (including energy developers): design projects to achieve net gain and contribute to nature networks.
 - o NatureScot: advice, use of the Scottish biodiversity metric.

NPF4 policy 14 encourages, promotes and facilitates well designed development by taking a design-led approach and applying the six qualities of successful places. These qualities are relevant to the approach to biodiversity in a landscape under development pressure, and particularly the quality of ‘sustainable’. The six qualities are:

- **Healthy:** supporting the prioritisation of women’s safety and improving physical and mental health.
- **Pleasant:** supporting attractive natural and built spaces.
- **Connected:** supporting well connected networks that make moving around easy and reduce car dependency
- **Distinctive:** supporting attention to detail of local architectural styles and natural landscapes to be interpreted, literally or creatively, into designs to reinforce identity.
- **Sustainable:** supporting the efficient use of resources that will allow people to live, play, work and stay in their area, ensuring climate resilience, and integrating nature positive, biodiversity solutions.
- **Adaptable:** supporting commitment to investing in the long-term value of buildings, streets and spaces by allowing for flexibility so that they can be changed quickly to accommodate different uses as well as maintained over time.

Biodiversity policy and **active travel/public access policy** in East Lothian are now tightly coupled through NPF4, the emerging East Lothian LDP2, the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and the East Lothian Local Place Plan. NPF4 requires nature networks to be planned and protected alongside paths and green infrastructure, meaning new routes and active travel projects should double as habitat corridors and nature-rich spaces rather than simple transport links. The draft East Lothian LBAP and council nature network work explicitly identify opportunities where core paths, river corridors and former drove roads can serve both people and wildlife, improving access while strengthening ecological connectivity. The East Lothian Local Place Plan similarly frames walking and cycling links as part of a wider landscape vision that protects semi-natural areas and enhances biodiversity, so that investment in routes, verges and open spaces delivers co-benefits for health, climate and nature rather than creating new fragmentation pressures.

Biodiversity Duty – Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004

All public bodies must further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their functions and must report on how they meet this duty every three years.

- **Status:** Long-standing legal duty; reporting cycles ongoing.
- **Key responsibilities:**
 - o East Lothian Council and other public bodies: integrate biodiversity into policies, projects, estate management and procurement, and publish regular duty reports.
 - o NatureScot: provides guidance on what meeting the duty looks like in practice.



Regional and Local Policy in East Lothian

East Lothian Local Development Plan (LDP) and LDP2

The current LDP (2018) sets out land allocations and policies but must now be interpreted in the light of NPF4. East Lothian Council is preparing a new Local Development Plan (LDP2) to fully align with NPF4's climate and biodiversity requirements.

- **Status:** Existing LDP in force; LDP2 in preparation with public engagement underway.
- **Key responsibilities:**
 - o East Lothian Council: ensure new LDP integrates nature networks, climate adaptation, and positive effects for biodiversity into all relevant policies.
 - o Developers: bring forward proposals consistent with LDP and NPF4.
 - o Communities (including East Lammermuir Community Council): influence content through consultation and Local Place Plans.

East Lothian Council is developing a county-wide **Nature Network**, using habitat data, species records and stakeholder input to identify priority corridors and stepping-stones for wildlife movement between key sites, including coast, river valleys and the Lammermuir hills. A draft network has been mapped and tested through a 2023 survey and is now being refined and embedded into the emerging Local Development Plan and the updated Local Biodiversity Action Plan, so that planning decisions and public investment can actively strengthen, rather than fragment, these corridors. For East Lammermuir, this means future biodiversity and access projects will

increasingly be assessed in terms of how they contribute to or impact on the mapped network, creating a clearer strategic context for local initiatives and for developers' biodiversity and mitigation commitments.

East Lothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)

The draft updated East Lothian LBAP sets local priorities for habitats and species, identifies actions for nature networks, and provides a delivery framework aligned with the national Strategy.

- **Status:** Draft consulted on in autumn 2025; final version expected to be adopted in 2026.
- **Key responsibilities:**
 - o East Lothian Council Biodiversity team: lead and coordinate implementation and monitoring.
 - o East Lothian Biodiversity Partnership (agencies, NGOs, community groups): deliver actions and advise on priorities.
 - o Land managers and communities (including in East Lammermuir): implement specific habitat, species and access projects.

East Lammermuir Local Place Plan (LPP)

The East Lammermuir LPP (2024–2034) expresses the community's spatial vision, including explicit aims to protect, retain and enhance semi-natural areas and open space, promote biodiversity and regenerative soil management, enhance river corridors to connect the hills to the coast and manage the impacts of major energy infrastructure.

- **Status:** Registered Local Place Plan, material consideration for planning.



- **Key responsibilities:**
 - o East Lammermuir Community Council: steward the vision, convene partners and track delivery.
 - o East Lothian Council: take the LPP into account in LDP2 and planning decisions.
 - o Developers and landowners: align proposals and mitigation / biodiversity measures with LPP priorities.

Energy Development and Community Benefit

Renewable Energy Development and NPF4

East Lammermuir is impacted by the construction of large wind farms and grid infrastructure (e.g. Eastern Green Link 1), all of which are assessed under NPF4 policies. A further 10 renewable or battery storage developments are also planned or in planning, either to be sited in East Lammermuir or with construction access through the area. Policy 11 (Energy) supports renewables in principle but subject to Policy 3 (Biodiversity) and nature network protection.

- **Status:** In force; applied case-by-case through planning and consenting.
- **Key responsibilities:**
 - o Developers: avoid sensitive habitats, design in biodiversity enhancements and contribute to wider restoration.
 - o East Lothian Council: secure and enforce conditions that deliver net benefits for biodiversity and align with the LBAP and LPP.
 - o NatureScot: statutory consultee on nature impacts and mitigation.

Community Benefit from Energy Projects

Scottish Government good practice principles for community benefits from onshore renewables encourage structured, long-term community benefit funds, with recent sector guidance emphasising reliability, predictability, and stronger community control. These funds are increasingly used to support biodiversity and climate projects.

- **Status:** Non-statutory but widely adopted as an expectation in negotiations.
- **Key responsibilities:**
 - o Developers: offer appropriate community benefit packages linked to installed capacity or revenue.
 - o Community organisations (including East Lammermuir Community Council): establish transparent governance to allocate funds, including to biodiversity priorities identified in the LPP and LBAP.
 - o East Lothian Council: may provide advice and coordination but typically does not control the funds.



Community benefits for transmission infrastructure

Changing policy landscape

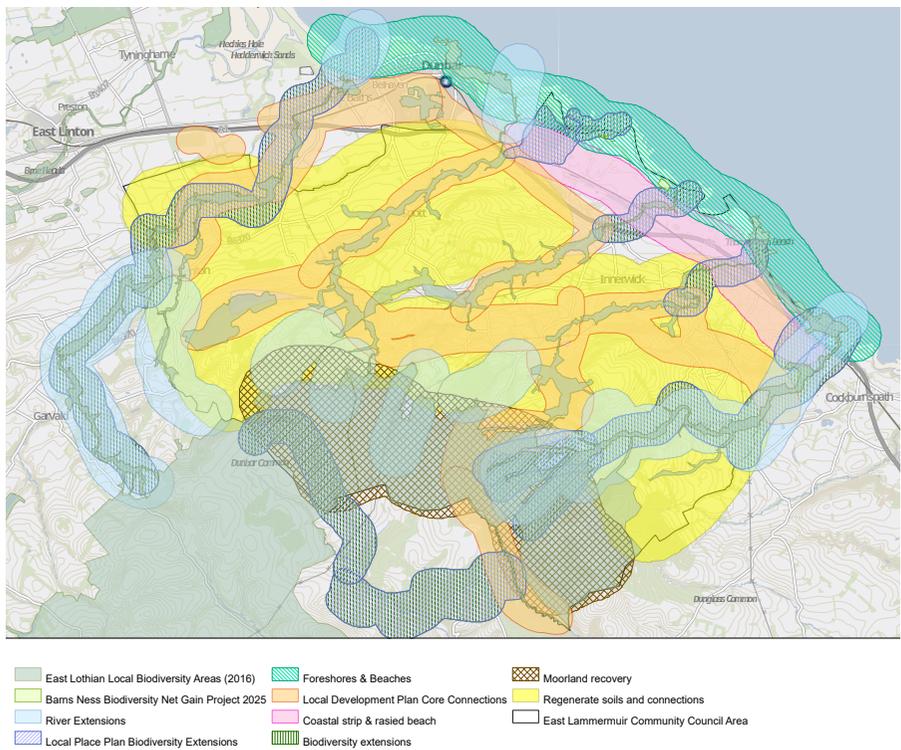
In 2025 UK Government consulted on mandatory community benefits and shared ownership for low-carbon energy infrastructure (including onshore/offshore wind, solar, storage and potentially nuclear), shifting community benefits from today's voluntary practice to a more standardised legal requirement; if implemented broadly, this would increase certainty over flows of funding into places like East Lammermuir, but may also come with more central rules on how funds are structured and accounted for.

'Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewables' remain voluntary but are under review, calling for more targeted guidance for emerging technologies and clearer routes to align benefits with local action plans such as LPPs

The result of the May 2026 Scottish Parliamentary election will set the pace and ambition. There is broad cross-party support for tackling biodiversity loss and for the new statutory targets, but differences over funding, regulation and community ownership models could influence how quickly targets are set, how strict future biodiversity-metric rules become, and how far community benefit and habitat-banking style mechanisms are encouraged or constrained. This policy landscape is in a very active stage of evolution at the time of this report's publication, with another [round of consultation on community benefits from Scottish Government](#), and the potentially transformative [£1b investment in community energy \(including shared ownership\) from GB Energy \(UK government\)](#).

East Lammermuir Biodiversity Status

Designated and aspirational biodiversity zones



Habitats and Species of Importance

East Lammermuir's landscape encompasses diverse habitats with distinct conservation value:

Coastal and Maritime Habitats

The Lammermuir coastline includes important geological and biological interest:

- **Coastal grasslands and heath:** Supporting rare plants, ground-nesting birds (curlews, stonechats), and wintering geese
- **Designated sites:** Includes SSSI designations for geological and biological interest (e.g. Chapel Point)
- **Marine habitats:** Coastal waters supporting seabirds, fish spawning, and marine invertebrates affected by grid connection infrastructure

Upland and Hill Habitats

- **Heathland and moorland:** Supporting mountain birds (eg hen harriers), invertebrates, and specialised plant communities; some areas degraded by past land use
- **Montane grassland:** With endemic and rare plant species
- **Peatland:** Of limited extent locally but significant for carbon storage and species habitat

Woodland and Tree Cover

- **Ancient woodlands:** Including Woodhall Dean and scattered patches, harbouring rare mosses, lichens, fungi, and specialist birds
- **Plantation forests:** Predominantly conifer; some restoration to native woodland underway
- **Hedgerows and field margins:** Supporting nesting birds, pollinators, small mammals, and connectivity between habitat patches

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-



Freshwater Habitats

- **Rivers and burns:** Including Oldhamstocks Burn, which support salmonid populations, aquatic invertebrates, and riparian habitat; currently threatened by pollution and habitat degradation
- **Wetlands:** Limited but important for amphibians, water voles, breeding waders, and invertebrates
- **Ponds:** Currently under-represented; being expanded via community projects

Farmland Habitats

- **Grassland and rough pasture:** Providing foraging habitat for birds and invertebrates; increasingly simplified
- **Crop fields:** Supporting ground-nesting birds and pollinators; pesticide impacts a concern
- **Hedgerows:** Declining in extent and condition; priorities for restoration identified

Urban and Semi-Urban Habitats

- **Village greens, parks, allotments:** Offering microclimates for pollinators, nesting birds, and community nature connection
- **Gardens and private land:** Collectively significant for biodiversity, particularly in species-rich planting and wildlife-friendly management

Threats and Pressures

Workshop participants and the Place Plan identify key biodiversity threats:

1. **Habitat fragmentation and loss:** Driven by development, agriculture intensification, and infrastructure expansion. Energy projects add to cumulative landscape change.
 2. **Pollution:** Agricultural run-off, atmospheric deposition, and potential impacts from development affect water quality and soil health.
 3. **Invasive species:** Particularly in wetlands and riparian habitats; management resources limited.
 4. **Climate change:** Shifting species ranges, altered phenology, increased extreme weather affecting nesting success and food availability.
 5. **Agricultural intensification:** Reduced field margins, pesticide use, simplified crop rotations limiting bird and pollinator habitat.
 6. **Fragmented management:** Multiple landowners and projects with limited coordination, preventing landscape-scale conservation effectiveness.
 7. **Underfunded conservation:** Reliance on volunteers and small grants; difficulty sustaining long-term restoration.
 8. **Reduced community engagement:** Particularly among younger people and those with limited outdoor access; nature connection declining.
-



Widened field margins are a benefit to biodiversity.

Photo: ScotGov Rural, CC

Existing and proposed Biodiversity Projects

Summit to Sea / River Catchment Restoration (Sustaining Dunbar & Forth Rivers Trust)

A pilot catchment-scale restoration project across five burns in East Lammermuir, mapping habitats, land ownership, pressures and opportunities, then developing action plans for practical measures such as wetland creation, leaky dams, riparian woodland and barrier removal, in partnership with landowners and community volunteers.

summit-to-sea.uk

Nature at Spott

A 180-hectare landowner-led project near Spott aiming to restore a diverse mosaic of meadows, woodland, ponds and wetlands, with plans for low-intensity grazing, nature-based education and community involvement as part of a wider Nature Recovery Network

Oldhamstocks for Nature

A community-driven initiative in and around Oldhamstocks exploring small-scale habitat improvements, path and verge management, and local engagement in biodiversity, acting as a model that participants suggested could be replicated in other villages.



Woodhall Dean Ancient Woodland Management (Scottish Wildlife Trust)

Long-term conservation management of Woodhall Dean's ancient oak woodland and associated species, with habitat work, invasive control, guided walks and volunteer involvement.

scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserve/woodhall-dean

Torness Power Station Biodiversity Management (EDF)

The Torness estate (c.144 ha) includes grassland, ponds and coastal habitats managed under a site biodiversity action plan, with actions such as enhanced grassland management, winter bird seed crops, hedge planting, woodland and pond improvements, and active control of invasive species like Himalayan balsam and rhododendron.

Muir to Forth Nature Corridors

A landscape-scale restoration initiative linking the Lammermuir hills to the Firth of Forth coast, led by Balanced Horizon in partnership with multiple landowners and conservation groups.

balancedhorizon.org/muir-to-forth

East Lothian Hedgerow Restoration project

This project is currently being piloted in other areas of East Lothian and with two landowners in East Lammermuirs to rejuvenate and restore hedgerow, working with interested landowners, community groups and volunteers. There has been significant interest shown in its potential to deliver early, visible benefits in East Lammermuir.

eastlothianclimatehub.org/hedges

East Lothian Biodiversity Collective

An initiative led by East Lothian Climate Hub, the East Lothian Biodiversity Collective aims to support biodiversity enhancement across East Lothian by connecting people, groups and projects together, building knowledge and supporting and uplifting local projects. The Biodiversity Collective meets regularly through on site visits, events and talks, enabling knowledge and skills exchange between projects.

Barns Ness BNG offsite measures relating to Branxton Substation

For the Branxton substation associated with the Berwick Bank onshore works, a significant share of the biodiversity net gain package is proposed off-site at Barns Ness, on the coast east of Dunbar. Here, the developer has identified opportunities within and around the Barns Ness Coast SSSI and adjacent land to deliver habitat enhancement that cannot be accommodated within the constrained substation footprint, including invasive non-native species control, creation and management of species-rich grassland and scrub, and improvements to habitat structure for key species such as skylark, meadow pipit and brown hare. These measures are intended to connect with wider coastal and raised-beach restoration ambitions in East Lothian's Nature Network and LBAP, so that off-site BNG investment at Barns Ness contributes both to compensating Branxton's impacts and to strengthening a strategic hill-to-coast biodiversity corridor for the East Lammermuir area.

Biodiversity restoration and BNG plans for energy and transmission infrastructure

Several other projects in and around East Lothian already have, or are likely to have, explicit biodiversity-net-gain outcomes. For Eastern Green Link 1 (EGL1), SPEN has committed to delivering measurable biodiversity enhancement along the onshore cable corridor and at associated infrastructure, with proposals including hedgerow restoration, grassland improvement and targeted habitat works around Torness. The Crystal Rig wind farm complex and related substation extensions incorporate habitat management plans covering bog restoration, riparian planting, ponds and woodland creation.

Emerging solar and battery storage proposals in East Lothian are being assessed under NPF4 Policy 3, with Council Biodiversity Officers pressing for clear on- and off-site measures such as species-rich grassland under panels, new hedgerows and wetland features where baseline surveys show losses, meaning many future consents in and near East Lothian are likely to carry explicit positive-for-biodiversity or net-gain style conditions.



The 180ha Nature at Spott project is part of a wider Nature Recovery Network

Workshop summary

9 December 2025, Westbarns Village Hall

The East Lammermuir Biodiversity Workshop was designed as a practical, conversational step towards a shared plan for nature in a landscape facing significant change. Held at West Barns Village Hall on 9 December (6 - 9pm), it brought together community representatives, project leads, and statutory and specialist partners to explore what biodiversity means locally, what people value, and how to turn those values into coordinated action. The overarching aim, drawn from the Local Place Plan, was to protect, retain and enhance a network of semi-natural areas and open space, and to promote biodiversity, regenerative soil management and the land, climate, flora and fauna of East Lammermuir.

The workshop had five main objectives:

1. to create space for open discourse on what “biodiversity” means in East Lammermuir, acknowledging that understandings differ and that it is acceptable not to agree fully at this stage.
2. to surface and test a shared set of values - stewardship, respect for place, ecological responsibility, balance and interconnection - that can guide future decisions and investment.
3. to begin to define how stakeholders might work together in practice, by exploring roles, relationships, and practical mechanisms for collaboration.
4. identify early actions and responsibilities that could translate discussion into visible, local projects.
5. Shape the development of recommendations to guide spend of community benefits



and other investment opportunities towards delivery of the community ambition for “An ambitious biodiversity gain plan [to be] devised, agreed and implemented with maximum use of developer support for local volunteers and other relevant aspects of the plan.”

The evening was structured in three sessions.

After registration and informal conversation over tea and biscuits, the first session set the scene. Community Council chair Chris Bruce and energy projects partnership manager Beth Landon, briefly explained “how we got here”, providing context for the workshop within a series of four events initiated by East Lammermuir Community Council and shaped with the Biodiversity Liaison Group. East Lothian Climate Hub Manager Bobby Pembleton introduced the Hub team and the Biodiversity

Collective, outlined housekeeping, and invited participants to annotate the large maps provided throughout the evening. Ground rules emphasised active listening, the “rule of two feet” (people could move where they felt they could contribute best), and a focus on opportunity rather than exercising objections to energy developments. Participants were reminded that substantial change will unfold over the next 25 years and that the workshop was part of building capacity to respond constructively.

Session two focused on shared learning. Participants first discussed in pairs what biodiversity meant to them, before being reminded of the Local Place Plan’s overarching aim and the intention to start co-creating a plan for next steps and responsibilities. Biodiversity meant many different things to attendees: landscape, culture, nature, wildness, a threat (eg invasive species). It was apparent that the communities’ goals for this landscape were not necessarily focussed just on

nature conservation. The loss of hedgerows is a good example of a cultural element of the landscape they felt was being lost – not for its intrinsic biodiversity value, but because it had always been there. This highlights the need for clearly communicating decision making and involving the community going forwards.

Two short presentations then offered different perspectives: Philip Revell, Sustaining Dunbar presented their progress with the [Summit to Sea](#) river catchment work; and Jo Gibb shared the Climate Hub’s work with the [Biodiversity Collective](#) and [Hedgerow Connections](#)³ project.

Presenters were asked to relate their work to the spatial plan, highlighting what they had learned, what they might do next, and what others should consider to realise shared aspirations.

- **Summit to Sea** is a landscape-scale river catchment regeneration initiative in the East Lothian that works from the uplands (“summit”) down through rivers and farmland to the coast (“sea”). It brings together communities, landowners, and partners across places like Biel, Spott, Thornton, and Oldhamstocks to restore biodiversity, improve river health, reduce flooding risk and strengthen climate resilience. The project focuses on coordinated, long-term nature recovery that delivers environmental, social, and community benefits across the whole catchment rather than isolated sites.
- **East Lothian Biodiversity Collective** is an open, collaborative network that connects people, groups and projects to support and upscale



biodiversity enhancement across East Lothian. It provides a shared space for site visits, knowledge exchange, mutual support and more ambitious joint action, recognising strong links between biodiversity, food growing and community-led climate action.

- **East Lothian Hedgerow Restoration Pilot** is a practical, place-based programme led by the East Lothian Climate Hub to restore, expand and better manage hedgerows as vital wildlife corridors across farmland and public land. It combines surveying, 10-year hedgerow management plans and hands-on actions such as planting, gapping-up, coppicing and hedge laying, working closely with farmers, landowners and communities. The pilot demonstrates how healthy hedgerows can deliver

multiple benefits at once: biodiversity recovery, carbon sequestration, climate adaptation, agricultural resilience, wellbeing and strengthened local relationships, with a view to scaling up across East Lothian.

Between presentations and action planning, the workshop explicitly revisited community values, emphasising that the work to date puts this community in an advanced position, and the earlier consultation topics should not need to be revisited. Drawing on two years of consultation for the Local Place Plan, the facilitator presented a distilled set of values and invited participants to reflect on them “over cake”. **Stewardship** (caring for land and nature for future generations), **respect for place** (honouring landscape, heritage and local identity), **ecological responsibility** (acting to protect and enhance habitats and species), **balance** (managing change

without sacrificing natural or cultural assets), and **interconnection** (recognising people, land and ecology as mutually dependent) were tested as a shared foundation. Participants discussed what these values mean in practical terms for decisions on land use, funding and project design.

Session three turned towards planning. Facilitators introduced four core components considered necessary to realise the area's biodiversity ambitions:

- **a fully developed map** (covering biodiversity status, land ownership, existing opportunities, and other relevant projects such as active travel networks),
- **strengthened relationships between landowners, community, and developers** (including knowledge of stakeholders and existing relationships, agreements to work together, and expertise in managing competing priorities),

- **delivery and practical project implementation** (mechanisms, organisational forms, job descriptions and competent staff) and
- **strategic development and long-term planning** (clarity on funding flows and limitations, effective governance, risk management, and continuous monitoring and evaluation).

Participants self-selected into table groups aligned to these themes and, using a common set of questions, explored what must happen, how it might happen, what capacity is needed, what is already in place, who might lead, and what the blockers are. The evening concluded with short report-backs from each table and an invitation to continue putting forward proposals and “big ideas”. By the end of the session, participants had deepened their networks, begun to converge around a set of shared values, and identified the building blocks for a more joined-up approach to enhancing biodiversity in East Lammermuir.



Break-out tables and map work at the Biodiversity Workshop. Photo: Sandy Young

Workshop insights:

Ambitions for East Lammermuir's Biodiversity

Overview

Participants at the Biodiversity Workshop explored four linked questions: how to map nature, build relationships, deliver projects, and plan strategically for the long term. Views of biodiversity were grounded in lived experience - hedgerow loss, familiar views changing, treasured local places - and were only beginning to stretch toward a larger, future-focused vision.

Summary of Each Table Output

Table 1 – Mapping the Landscape

The mapping group focused on what would be needed to create a **living, shared picture of nature in East Lammermuir** that can guide decisions over the long term. A “**fully developed map**” was defined not just as a technical GIS product, but as a practical tool that **brings together ecological knowledge, land management realities and community priorities in one place**.

Participants agreed that such a map should at minimum show:

- Biodiversity status: key habitats, species records and areas under pressure, so that priorities are evidence-based.
- Land ownership and management: who owns or manages different parcels and, where possible, how the land is used, to make communication and permissions easier.
- Existing known opportunities: sites already identified for restoration, enhancement or access improvements, including early-win locations.



- Other projects and infrastructure: especially the active travel network and other community projects, so that biodiversity work and people-movement routes can reinforce each other.

Participants highlighted the need to pull together existing datasets from the council, developers and community projects, then “ground-truth” them with local knowledge. They stressed the importance of agreeing on a common purpose for the map (decision-making, communication, funding bids) to keep it focused and useful.

The group envisaged a phased approach: first collating what already exists, then filling gaps through targeted surveys and conversations with land managers and community groups. They noted that the mapping process itself could be participatory, with local people adding observations and priorities over time.

What capacity is needed to do it? Alongside technical GIS and data-management skills, the group saw a need for facilitation and translation: people who can interpret maps for non-specialists and ensure findings feed back into local plans and projects.

Participants recognised that there are already many plans and maps in existence (e.g. Place Plan maps, council nature network work, developer surveys) and that the task is to connect and update these, not start from scratch.

Who might do it? Ideas included a small partnership of council officers, community representatives, and project leads (such as river and hedgerow initiatives), supported by technical specialists where needed.

Likely constraints identified were access to proprietary datasets, licensing costs for some tools, uneven data coverage, and the time needed to maintain the map, so it stays current rather than becoming a one-off product.

Overall, the mapping table framed the map as a shared decision-making tool and story-platform for the landscape, rather than a static output. Such a tool, if done well, could help align projects, clarify opportunities, and make biodiversity priorities visible and understandable to everyone.

Table 2 - Relationships Between Landowners, Community, and Developers

This group focused on relationships as the backbone of any landscape - scale change. Key points:

- Need clear knowledge of key stakeholders, their interests (e. g. grouse shoots), and sub-groups such as Scottish Wildlife Trust and WoodlandTrust.
- Recognition of the Council's role as "**guardians of a place**".
- Call for a **vision and "clear ask"** that is *story-led and value-led* to secure buy-in across groups.
- Desire for a trusted network: "building a network of stakeholders with trust and transparency" and a coordinated home for shared knowledge.

They distinguished between:

- **Urgent action** - a clear ask, visible early wins, responding to the climate and nature crisis.
- **Slow, long-term work** - nurturing relationships over decades, aligning with long energy project timescales.

Capacity needs included:

- **Ambition** and a compelling, succinct ask.
 - A coordinating body or role to **link multiple grassroots actions to regional and national priorities.**
-



- **Neutral, trusted relationship-builders and partnership role.** Table expressed an ideal role like the existing Foundation Scotland hosted Energy Projects Partnership Manager role but for Biodiversity and landowners.

Blockers included:

- Non-uniform landowner interests, funding timelines that discourage long-term thinking, transactional relationships, and consultation processes that do not always reflect community values.

Table 3 - Delivery and Practical Project Implementation

This group explored how to turn ideas into visible action on the ground. They emphasised:

- Mechanisms for delivery: an organisation (existing or new), clear roles, and staff with the right skills.
- Building capacity:
 - o Strong appetite to **replicate successful village models** (e. g. Oldhamstocks, river projects) across the area, acknowledging that places like Innerwick face particular capacity challenges.“

• ***We wouldn't be sat here if not for Beth in a paid role.***

Funding and support:

- Interest in the **40-year community benefit funding** but uncertainty about terms, decision-making, and in-kind support from developers (e. g. staff volunteering).

What must happen:

• ***“Take the small wins to develop from there - people love to see positivity.”***

- Stop unnecessary destruction and influence how sites are restored.
- Identify local priorities and create a **list of projects** that developers can support.
- Connect paths and nature so people can get out into the landscape.
- Focus on **practical, visible work** - especially hedgerow protection and restoration.

Capacity needs:

- Paid staff to work with communities, a **hedgerow manager**, and roles that support early, visible projects (rivers, hedgerows).
- Better use of “industrial volunteers” from neighbouring employers (e.g. EDF).

Blockers and deeper reflections:

- Long - term funding and landowner engagement.
- People feeling “battered... demoralised and disempowered” and consultation fatigue.
- A “**false baseline**” - people are trying to protect what they know, not what is ecologically possible:

• **“We lack an ambitious vision - cuckoos, beavers, otters, MORE!”**

Table 4 - Strategy and Long - Term Planning

This group looked at the **long view** - how to steer a complex, long-term biodiversity programme. Key themes:

- Need to **know the money**: how much is coming, when, what limitations apply, and how to blend funding streams.
- Strong governance by “passionate experts”, managing risk in a changing world, and **continuous monitoring and evaluation**.
- A clear, shared vision to plan against - “do we have a clear vision



which planning can be based on?”

- Influencing BNG and replanting through planning conditions and understanding potential projects emerging from a shared strategy.

They asked:

- “What must happen?” - clearer understanding of funds and aims; transparent company influence (if any) over community funds; clear potential project pipeline.
- “How does it happen?” - mixing local capacity with specialist subcontracting; using corporate sustainability reporting drivers; setting targets; ensuring enough resources so projects do not stall.
- “What capacity is needed?” - strategic thinkers/futurists, clarity on existing resources, and realistic assessment of funding.

Existing assets and blockers:

- Many plans and maps already exist (LPP, BCLG, local groups) and active volunteering.
- Questions about whether these tools are sufficient and how to avoid “siloed thinking”.
- Blockers include complexity of funding arriving; due diligence and planning enforcement gaps; limited use of local experience; and uncertainty about accessing developer funds.

Cross - Cutting Themes and Correlations

A Strong Base, Ready to Grow

Across all tables there is a quiet confidence that East Lammermuir is **starting from a strong position**:

- **“Starting point is far developed ahead of many other parts of Scotland.”**

- **“Already have some fantastic places - resources, SSSIs, geology... A lot going on already - a lot of good plans.”**

This strength sits alongside a recognition that these efforts are fragmented and need stitching together.

Relationships, Trust and Coordination

Every group highlighted **relationships and coordination** as central:

- Need for a body or role that can **“coordinate the multiple grassroots action”** and link local efforts to wider priorities.
- Desire for “a group of stakeholders who can manage relationships and knowledge with transparency”.
- Recognition that building trust with landowners and communities **takes time** and cannot be rushed, even when the climate and nature crises feel urgent.

There is clear support for neutral “bridge” roles - both at project level and strategically.

Capacity, Paid Roles and Respect for Existing Effort

Capacity was a recurring theme:

- **“We wouldn’t be sat here if not for Beth in a paid role.”**



- Calls for dedicated posts such as a **hedgerow manager**, plus staff who can work systematically with communities over time.
- A desire to **respect previous effort** and re-engage those who “drift away” when their time does not seem to make a difference.

Participants consistently framed paid roles as enablers of community action, not replacements for it.

Vision, Baselines and Ambition

Participants named a tension between the **familiar landscape** and what might be possible:

- **“Living memory is short and does not encompass what is lost.”**
- **“We are trying to protect what we know, rather than what could be possible... We lack an ambitious vision - cuckoos, beavers, otters, MORE!”**

At the same time, they stressed the need for a clear, shared vision and a “compelling, succinct ask” to bring partners together.

Funding, Timescales and Continuity

Funding appears as both opportunity and constraint:

- Community benefit funding is long-term on paper, but timelines and procurement rules can make it feel fragmented.
- **“Biodiversity is something that needs ongoing persistence... cannot be paused, stop-started.”**
- Participants want clarity on “how much and when?”, and how to match funds to a long-term, landscape-scale plan.

There is a shared wish to move from reactive, project-by-project thinking to planned, multi-decade investment.

Desire for Visible Early Wins

Across tables there was a strong call for tangible, visible early action:

- ***“People love to see positivity, and it helps them see how they can get involved.”***

- ***“We need something visible, something positive and something early to show what we have done. e.g. hedgerow restoration.”***

Hedgerows, paths and small-scale, locally visible changes emerged as especially powerful for building confidence and connection.

Key Goals to Pursue (As Identified by Participants)

Drawn from all four tables, the workshop points towards a set of shared, grounded goals for East Lammermuir’s biodiversity work:

Create a Shared, Ambitious Vision for the Landscape

- Articulate a long-term ambition that goes beyond current baselines, including the possibility of returning lost species and restoring richer habitats.
- Express this vision as a clear, values-led story that different groups can sign up to.

Build a Coordinated “Bridge” Capacity

- Establish one or more neutral coordinating roles or bodies to:
 - o Hold relationships with landowners, community groups, developers and council.
 - o Connect grassroots projects to strategic funding and policy



opportunities.

- o Look after shared knowledge, mapping and monitoring.

Develop a Living Biodiversity Map for East Lammermuir

- Combine existing data (council, developers, projects) with local knowledge into a layered, updatable map of:
 - o Habitats, species and drivers of loss.
 - o Land ownership and management.
 - o Existing projects and “low-hanging fruit” opportunities.

Invest in Early, Visible Habitat Projects

- Prioritise a small number of high-visibility, community-linked projects - particularly hedgerow restoration, river and burn work, and nature-rich path networks.
- Use these as proof points that action is possible, funding is working, and the landscape is beginning to change.

Shape Long - Term, Joined - Up Funding

- Align community benefit funds, council duties and external grants behind a single long-term biodiversity plan, rather than one-off projects.
- Provide clarity on timelines, decision-making, and the role of companies and community bodies.

Nurture Relationships and Trust Over Time

- Treat relationship-building - especially with landowners - as core work, not a side task.
- Use a mix of urgent action and patient conversation to maintain momentum while respecting the pace at which trust grows.

How is Policy working in the East Lammermuir Landscape?

The layered policy framework is strong on paper, but workshop discussions, Local Place Plan evidence and stakeholder feedback suggest several ways it is currently failing to deliver for East Lammermuir:

Limited Translation from Policy to Place

- National duties (biodiversity duty, NPF4 Policy 3, Scottish Biodiversity Strategy) are not yet visibly translating into coherent, landscape-scale restoration in East Lammermuir. Projects remain fragmented, short-term and often opportunistic rather than clearly driven by a shared spatial plan.
- Despite multiple plans (LBAP draft, LPP, developer surveys), there is no single, up-to-date map that integrates habitats, species, land ownership, existing projects and pressures to guide decisions on where action and investment should go first.

Weak Coordination and Governance Across Tiers

- Participants describe “siloe thinking” and a lack of coordination between council policy, nature network work, community-led projects, and developer obligations.
- The Biodiversity Community Liaison Group has a remit to push developers to deliver positive outcomes but not that broader role for landscape scale biodiversity enhancement.
- Landowners are approached separately by multiple actors (developers, NGOs, projects, council) with uncoordinated asks, creating fatigue and slowing the uptake of measures that national policy assumes will happen at scale.



Planning Policy Not Consistently Delivering “Better for Biodiversity”

- NPF4 requires positive effects for biodiversity, but local stakeholders report “due diligence on planning applications has not been in place” and that East Lothian Council has been “unwilling to tap into local experience” in some cases.
- Community members perceive gaps between the ambition of NPF4 / LBAP and actual planning outcomes on the ground (e.g. hedgerow loss, restoration conditions not clearly delivering net gain, invasive species not being tackled).
- There is concern that enforcement of biodiversity-related conditions is inconsistent, meaning the regulatory layer does not reliably translate into ecological outcomes.

Funding: Long-Term Needs, Short-Term Mechanisms

- Community benefit funds and project grants are typically time-limited and linked to individual developments, whereas peatland, woodland, and river restoration require 10-40 years of consistent management and monitoring.
- Participants express uncertainty about how much money is coming, when, and with what constraints, making it difficult to plan a coherent programme rather than a patchwork of bids.
- Procurement rules and funding caps (e.g. SPEN thresholds) make flexible, iterative community-led work harder, even though national policy expects adaptive, collaborative approaches.

Over-Consultation, Under-Empowerment

- The policy framework depends on “empowered communities” and

Local Place Plans, but residents report consultation fatigue and a sense of being “pummelled” by overlapping processes (LPP, planning, energy projects) without seeing commensurate action.

- Turnout at the biodiversity workshop from the wider community was low, despite strong representation from experts and organisations, suggesting that formal participation structures are not yet creating a sense of ownership or impact.
- Some contributors feel demoralised and disempowered, indicating that policy-driven engagement has not been matched by visible delivery and feedback loops.

Landowner Role Under-Supported

- National and local policies assume landowners will implement a large share of habitat creation, restoration and nature-friendly farming, but there is no single, funded role locally whose job is to build and maintain these relationships over time.
- This workshop, and the “active travel” workshop, each identified landowner engagement as the “critical bottleneck”, with policy expectations outpacing the support available to help farmers integrate biodiversity into viable business models.
- Financial drivers (commodity prices, tenancy structures) often pull against biodiversity aspirations, yet policy and funding instruments are not yet aligned enough to resolve these tensions at farm scale.

Vision and Baseline Misalignment

- Policy frameworks talk in terms of nature-positive futures and historic baselines, but many local conversations and decisions remain anchored in living memory, protecting what is left, rather than imagining what could be restored.
 - Participants explicitly highlighted a “false baseline” and a lack of
-



ambitious shared vision (e.g. for the return of species such as cuckoos, beavers, otters), which national strategies assume will underpin transformative action.

Data and Tools Not Yet Joined Up

- The area is data-rich (developer EIAs, council nature network mapping, NGO surveys), but these datasets are scattered across organisations, with no resourced process to integrate, interpret and share them as a common asset.
- Costs and licensing of some tools, and uncertainty over data ownership and access, are practical barriers to building the kind of shared biodiversity map that both NPF4 and the LBAP implicitly rely on.

Reccomendations

Next steps for People & Nature

East Lammermuir Community Council is well-placed to turn the community's wishes into a coherent programme if it focuses on a small set of enabling moves rather than trying to do everything at once. Key to this is addressing a structural gap: East Lammermuir has committed, knowledgeable people and projects, but lacks the “glue” to join them up, align them with policy and absorb energy-sector funding effectively.





Recommendation 1: Establish a small Coordination Team with the skills, authority and time to hold relationships, navigate regulatory and corporate processes, and “glue together” currently disparate data, projects, funds and responsibilities into a coherent programme of work.

Workshop findings consistently identified landowner engagement and project coordination as the critical bottleneck limiting progress. Aside from two industrial landowners, there were no Estate or Farm Managers present at the workshop. One to One consultation is needed to build relationships. Community attendance was also lower than anticipated, with identified barriers including consultation fatigue, limited transport options, and competing priorities. This reflects a broader challenge in engaging residents in technical planning processes.

Multiple actors are approaching landowners independently, potentially creating fatigue. Meanwhile, conservation projects are operating in isolation, limiting landscape-scale impact and risking conflict. Added to this, there are other priorities, such as active travel routes, that are related and require coordination. The Coordination team could be mandated to act as neutral brokers between funders and projects, maintaining a portfolio of shovel ready projects and building a habitat bank for BNG credits.

Suggested actions:

- Secure funding for a full-time Biodiversity Coordinator role (or roles), accountable to East Lammermuir Community Council.
- Confirm a partnership with an appropriate host for the post(s), led

by the Biodiversity Coordination Team, building on or working closely with the existing Biodiversity Community Liaison Group

- The coordinator's remit could include:
 - Further building and maintaining relationships with key landowners and land managers
 - Understanding on-farm conservation opportunities and constraints
 - Coordinating requests from conservation groups and developers, presenting unified, non-burdensome engagement and equitable opportunities.
 - Support community engagement in ways that respect consultation fatigue and low capacity to enable engagement in design and planning processes.
 - Supporting landowners in accessing funding and technical advice
 - Coordinating across projects to identify landscape-scale opportunities and prevent duplication or conflict.
 - Facilitating knowledge exchange and peer learning among landowners and communities in liaison with other stakeholders with an interest in this area.

Recommendation 2: Scale Up Existing, Trusted Community Projects for Quick Visible Wins

There are active projects in the area, (e.g. Summit to Sea River Catchment Restoration, Hedgerow Restoration Project, Oldhamstocks for Nature) that have demonstrated early delivery capacity and community credibility. Scaling or replicating these projects will demonstrate visible biodiversity action to the Community and build momentum for longer-term landscape restoration.



Suggested actions:

- Identify 2 or 3 existing projects with proven leadership, community support, and clear expansion or replication potential.
- Provide support from the Biodiversity Coordination Team to accelerate activity and ensure collaboration between projects.
- Secure additional funding to scale activity (expand area treated, increase volunteer engagement, extend monitoring).
- Use scaled-up projects as flagship demonstrations of what landscape-scale biodiversity action looks like, building the understanding of what a healthy landscape could look like and confidence in longer-term programs.
- Ensure projects are monitored to track biodiversity outcomes, providing evidence of effectiveness which can be shared widely.

Recommendation 3: Create a Portfolio of "Shovel-Ready" Biodiversity Projects that would benefit from Energy Developer cash or in-kind support.

Energy developers need pre-identified, shovel-ready projects that align with BNG requirements and community priorities to deliver their commitments where these cannot be achieved within site boundaries. Community conservation groups lack funding and capacity to develop detailed proposals, particularly to meet the need for the application of a biodiversity metric by which BNG impact can be demonstrated. Creating a portfolio bridging this gap will accelerate delivery and ensure quality.

Developers should be encouraged to contribute in-kind support (ecologists, GIS capacity, data, volunteers) alongside money, to strengthen local capacity and the shared biodiversity map and monitoring system.

Monitoring results should be shared publicly and feed back into the living map, so residents can see where their landscape is improving and how any credits or BNG commitments are being delivered over time.

Suggested actions:

- Commission support for the development of a detailed biodiversity project portfolio for East Lammermuir. Discuss with the energy developers the scale of the projects needed. These may include site specific work as part of the early projects identified in Recommendation 2 or they may be separate.
- For each project, prepare:
 - Clear description of biodiversity objectives, target species/habitats, and landscape context
 - Implementation plan with timeline and resource requirements
 - Budget and potential funding sources
 - Community and stakeholder support documentation
 - Monitoring and evaluation framework
 - Estimated biodiversity metric (BNG units or species/habitat outcomes)
 - Use a standardised template and assessment criteria to ensure projects are fundable, deliverable, and credible. Ideally this would tie in with the strategy (see below) if the timing of its development is compatible.
- Ensure community groups and landowners are involved in developing the portfolio, building ownership and refining projects iteratively.
- Commissioned work should be undertaken in close collaboration with the Biodiversity Coordination Team

Recommendation 4: Develop and resource an ambitious, long-term biodiversity plan for East Lammermuir and use it as the investment framework

Coordinating and aligning nature-based projects around shared goals would enable greater collaboration between actors and more targeted use of funds. All funders, especially energy developers, should be asked to align contributions with this single, agreed biodiversity plan and project portfolio, rather than responding to ad-hoc bids. The plan should set a small number of landscape outcomes (for example, functioning hill-to-sea catchments, a connected hedgerow and woodland network, and a restored coastal strip), define priority zones and project types using the Nature Network, Local Place Plan maps and aspirational biodiversity zones as the spatial structure, and include simple spend rules (for example, a minimum proportion of all community-benefit and off-site BNG funds directed to strategic projects in these mapped corridors, with the remainder supporting village-scale initiatives and capacity).

Suggested actions:

- Work collaboratively to:
 - Develop a vision, beyond maintaining the landscape of living memory, that incorporates the communities' ambitions and the requirements of national and local biodiversity policy delivery.
 - Set out shared outcomes, priorities, spatial focus areas and no-go areas, aligned with the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and nature network mapping, so that community groups, landowners, developers and public bodies are working to a

common agenda - a strategy.

- Combine the strands of existing projects and early impact with complementary initiatives on farmland, active travel routes, Council grounds management.
- Include the development of a comprehensive combined map to inform decision making regarding priorities and focus areas. Create an accessible version to enable everyone, and particularly landowners and managers to understand how they might contribute.
- Provide a methodology for new proposals, developer contributions and community ideas to be assessed, sequenced and supported, ensuring that opportunities are not lost and that actions cumulatively deliver measurable biodiversity gain over the long term.
- Clearly communicate the vision and need for coordinated action.

Recommendation 5: **Clarify and Strengthen Governance**

The Biodiversity Liaison Group is an important partnership forum with a clear mandate but does not see itself creating a governance structure that would enable it to manage this work.

Suggested actions:

Undertake a governance review across the Community Council and associated groups, clarifying who could take on:

- Strategic role: Coordination, monitoring, and alignment of biodiversity action; identification of landscape priorities; representation of community interests
- Operational role: What the Group does, support and oversight of the



Biodiversity Coordination Team

- Membership and representation: How decisions are made, who holds power, what transparency mechanisms exist
- Sustainability: How will the Group operate long-term, beyond current funding cycles?

Create mechanisms for community input into Group decisions (e.g., annual general meeting, online surveys, community representatives rotating onto steering committee).

Recommendation 6: Develop a Financing Mechanism for Multi-Year, Landscape-Scale Biodiversity Action

Current funding is potentially short-term, fragmented, and tied to specific infrastructure projects. Biodiversity restoration requires 10+ years of consistent, coordinated and planned support and is undermined by isolated projects, funding gaps and project end dates.

Suggested actions:

Commission a financing study to model sustainable funding for East Lammermuir's biodiversity action over 10-30 years.

This could explore mechanisms including:

- Biodiversity trust fund: Invest a proportion of the Community Benefit funds received to create a longer-term income stream to support future work.
- Agri-environment innovation: Explore the potential to partner with Scottish Government on successor to SRDP to pilot enhanced on-farm biodiversity support.

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- **Habitat Banking:** Habitat banking in East Lammermuir would mean creating high-quality, long-term habitat projects that generate quantified “biodiversity units” which energy developers can buy to help meet their biodiversity net gain and policy obligations, where on-site measures are not enough. In practice, the Community Council (or a partner organisation) could secure landowner agreements and upfront finance to restore or create priority habitats in agreed zones (e.g. burns, wetlands, hedgerows, moorland fringe), have the uplift measured using the forthcoming Scottish biodiversity metric, and register these gains as a local habitat bank. Developers such as EGL1, Crystal Rig or Berwick Bank would then purchase credits from this bank under legal agreements, with proceeds used to cover long-term management and reinvest in further projects, all overseen by a clear governance structure and monitoring regime.



The workshop brought together community representatives, project leads, and statutory and specialist partners to explore what biodiversity means locally. Photo: Sandy Young

Conclusions

East Lammerrmuir has a strong foundation of projects, knowledge and community commitment; the task now is to join these pieces into a coherent, long-term programme that visibly improves the landscape for nature and people.

The recommendations in this report set out how to do that: establishing a small coordination team, agreeing a shared map and plan, aligning developer and community-benefit funding, and clarifying governance so that national duties and local ambitions pull in the same direction.

A critical next step is to deliver early, visible action in the places people know best, so residents can see that years of consultation are turning into real change on the ground. There are existing projects that can be expedited to achieve early wins with landowners and community e.g. hedgerow restoration and others that are already directly contributing to the recommendations in this report that with some additional capacity can deliver

within the context of a shared Biodiversity strategy. These early wins should sit within the wider strategic corridors identified in the Nature Network and aspirational biodiversity zones, demonstrating to landowners, community, strategic partners, energy developers and funders how local efforts contribute to a bigger hill-to-sea recovery story. Communicating that story will be critical.

East Lammerrmuir can become a leading example of community-led biodiversity restoration in a changing energy landscape.



Landscape, nature and people: The village of Innerwick, East Lothian.

East Lammermuir Biodiversity: People & Nature

This report was funded by Scottish Power Energy Networks and prepared on behalf of East Lammermuir Community Council by:

Lil CIC

email: hello@dolilthings.org

Website: dolilthings.org

East Lothian Climate Hub

email: hello@eastlothianclimatehub.org

website: eastlothianclimatehub.org

