



NBIS Annual Report 2024/25



Introduction and NBIS objectives

The Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS) is a Local Environmental Records Centre (LERC) covering the county of Norfolk. NBIS is a member of the Association of Local Environmental Records Centres (ALERC) and operates within the framework of the National Biodiversity Network.

Thanks to its position and diverse range of habitats, over 17,500 different species have been recorded in Norfolk since 1600. The North Norfolk coast is a mecca for bird watchers, the Broads are a stronghold to the rare Norfolk Hawker dragonfly and Swallowtail butterfly, whilst the Brecks host several plant and invertebrate species unique to the area.

2908 of these species are classified as 'Species of Conservation Concern'. This means they are rare, threatened or protected by law. NBIS also holds 118638 records of 139 invasive non-native species.

Based at County Hall, Norwich the service sits within the Natural Norfolk Team of the Environment Service of Norfolk County Council, part of the Communities and Environmental Services Department.

NBIS aims to be a single, central point for obtaining high quality environmental information for Norfolk, providing quick and easy access to information on species, geodiversity, habitats and protected sites.

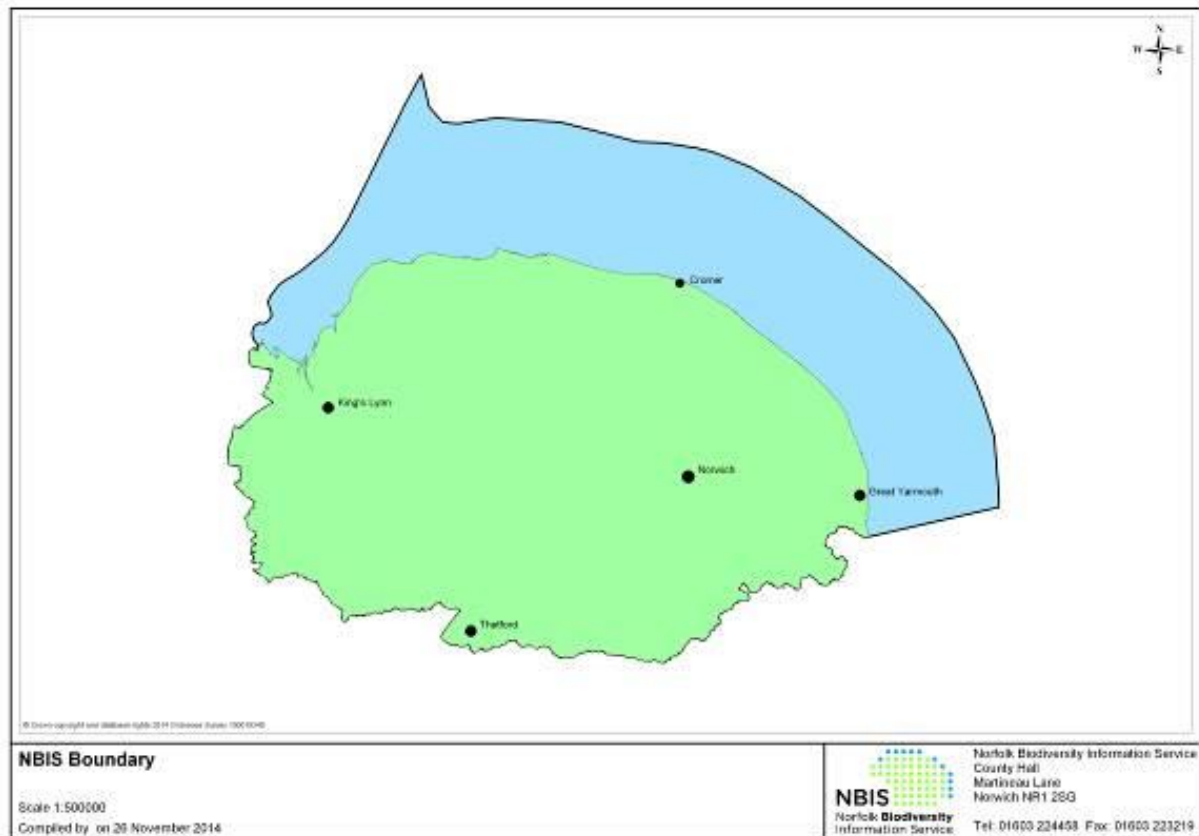
To fulfil this aim NBIS operates under the principles set out in its [Operational Framework](#).

NBIS is guided and supported by a Steering Group that usually meets twice each year and is made up of representatives of its users. These include staff from County and District Councils, IDBs, Ecological Consultants, Environment Agency, Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Anglian Water and Norfolk FWAG. We are very grateful for the time and commitment that our steering group members give in attending meetings and providing guidance. The steering group now works under a [Terms of Reference](#).

Much of the species data held by NBIS and made available for planning and conservation decision making is provided by the voluntary network of County Recorders. These people are members of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists Society and are experts in their taxonomic fields.

They provide or check all the records going on to the NBIS database to ensure the data is of high quality, spending hours of their own time verifying the records for us each year. We would like to express our thanks to these recorders and all the volunteers who record and gather species records over the year. Without the dedication and support of the recorders, County Recorders and volunteers we would struggle to be able to function as an effective Local Environmental Record Centre.

Map showing the boundary of the NBIS area, including the marine component:



Staff:

- Zeenat Noordally – Team Leader (Data & Digital Assets) (1fte) – Line manages NBIS staff.
- Sam Neal – Biodiversity Officer (Information) (1fte) – Manages the day-to-day running of NBIS, GIS and project work.
- Lizzy Oddy - Assistant Biodiversity Officer (Information) (0.61fte) - Data enquiries, data management and project work
- Nicola Dixon – Assistant Biodiversity Officer (Information) (1fte) – Data management and project work.

Funding and Data Partners

Organisation	Type of Agreement
Norfolk County Council	Hosting Agreement
GCN DLL Delivery Bodies (NCC, FWAG & NWT)	Service Level Agreement
Norfolk County Council Environment Specialist Advice Team	Service Level Agreement
Environment Agency	Service Level Agreement
Anglian Water	Service Level Agreement
Norfolk Internal Drainage Board	Service Level Agreement
Middle Level Commissioners	Service Level Agreement
British Trust for Ornithology	Data Agreement
Norfolk Wildlife Trust	Data Exchange Agreement
People's Trust for Endangered Species	Data Exchange Agreement

7 ecological consultancies had an Ecological Consultant SLA for data searches.

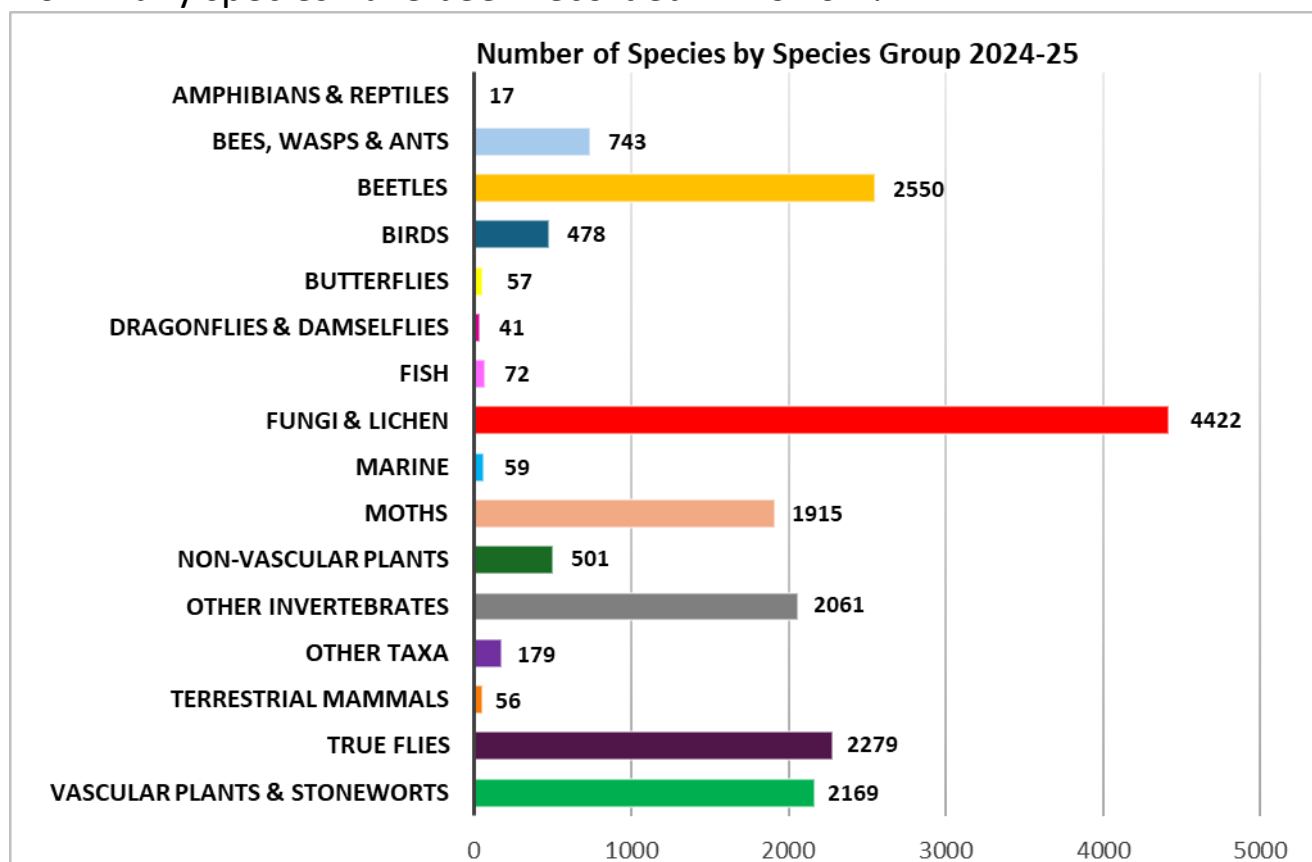
NBIS also has an important set of non-funding partners who provide essential support and encouragement. These include:

Association of Local Environmental Records Centres
East of England Regional Local Records Centre Forum
Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society.

Data Holdings

The NBIS database currently contains **11,320,955 species records** (as of 31st March 2025, including a number from our neighbouring counties of Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, collated as part of cross-county biodiversity audits).

How many species have been recorded in Norfolk?



Species diversity in Norfolk, by taxonomic group (based on data held by NBIS, March 2025)

Data Enquiries

Responding to data enquiries is a core function for NBIS and is a daily task. Requests come in from ecological consultants, conservation bodies, local authorities, students and interested members of the public wanting to know about protected species and sites in a particular area. NBIS aims to respond to all standard commercial and partner enquiries within 2 working days and all non-commercial enquiries within 10 working days. Timescales for more complex, non-standard enquiries are agreed with the requester.

NBIS continues to operate the East of England Regional Standard Enquiry Service. This service was developed with ecological consultants to ensure that anyone requesting a data search for planning purposes from the region's LERCs receives a minimum of a standard set of protected species and site data within 10 days.

Number of each enquiry type processed each year:

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Commercial Searches	595	617	612	737
Non-commercial Searches	50	63	51	57
Partner Searches (Including Districts)	3	16	21	18
TOTAL	648	696	684	812

NBIS Recorders Fund

NBIS operates a fund to support wildlife recording in Norfolk. This fund consists of the monies raised from commercial enquiries during the previous year and is designed to reinvest in our local recording network to provide the records we need to process these enquiries. The fund runs during the financial year with any remaining monies rolling over to the next.

In 2024-25 no significant projects were funded.

Regional and National Collaboration

NBIS works with other Local Environmental Record Centres within the East of England and staff attended two online regional Local Environmental Record Centre meetings during the year. The meetings facilitate discussion about sharing best practice, joint-working options and provide a regional overview.

Staff also attended the hybrid ALERC Conference in Birmingham in October 2024.

NBIS has continued to maintain a presence on the CWS steering group, Geodiversity Partnership group, Norfolk Ponds Project, Brecks Biodiversity Delivery Group and the Communities and Nature Working Group.

The Biodiversity Officer (Information) represented NBIS on the council of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society, and as a member of their Research Committee. They also continued to represent ALERC on the Wildlife and Countryside Link Nature Policy and Land Use Groups. A conversation has started here to try and get Local Environmental Records Centres on a statutory footing.

NBIS has continued membership of the Association of Local Environmental Records Centres (ALERC) and following the launch of the accreditation process in July 2012 NBIS began work to meet the necessary criteria in preparation for applying for accreditation in 2015. NBIS was assessed in August 2015 and following a successful result officially became an accredited LERC. This means that NBIS demonstrated that we were meeting or exceeding a set of criteria draw up by ALERC to ensure LERC's are providing a good service to their users and providers. NBIS was reaccredited in 2020 for a further five years, and work has now started to submit for a second reaccreditation in August 2025.

Local Sites Monitoring

NBIS has historically provided Norfolk data to Defra for SDL-160 on behalf of the Local Authority. SDL-160 is a national indicator for Local Sites in Positive Conservation Management. However it is no longer statutory. This lack of statutory status means it is of lower priority, but NBIS still plan to provide this indicator when resources allow, and this will then be made available to District Councils.

County Wildlife Sites (CWS)

NBIS works with staff at Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) and through the Local Sites Partnership to coordinate, create and provide to users the CWS annual update. Data and information for the most recent update from July 2024 is available and downloadable to partners.

Event Attendance

Due to staff capacity, NBIS are currently not attending wildlife events to promote its work. Promotional material is made available to colleagues in the Natural Norfolk and Environment Service Teams when they attend appropriate events. It is hoped that event attendance will restart when capacity allows.

Annual Recorders Event

The Annual Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society Recorders' Event was held at the John Innes Centre on the 15th March 2025, and was supported by NBIS.

The theme of the event was 'Citizen Science' and a wide variety of topics were explored by the speakers. Highlights included a talk on citizen science by Ellie Leach from BTO, an informative update on the Norfolk Bat Survey by Stuart Newson, and a fascinating presentation on DNA barcoding work by the Norfolk Fungus Group. Networking with colleagues was encouraged over lunch, and the day concluded with exhibits and posters from Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society members.

Projects

Ancient Woodland Inventory

Work continues on the England -wide Ancient Woodland Inventory Project. The old Ancient Woodland Inventory was created in the 1980s and 90s. It didn't include woodlands under 2ha in area, or wood pasture and parkland. Both of these will be included in the new inventory which is being created from scratch. The project involves several stages. NBIS staff are currently working on Stage 1 which involves identifying areas of Long Established Woodland in Norfolk (areas that were wooded on the first edition OS map (late 1800s/early 1900s) and are still wooded today). This will then be compared to the existing inventory in Stage 2. Stage 3 is being worked on by Norfolk Wildlife Trust (field surveys) and the University of East Anglia (UEA) have done lots of work on the historic landscape aspect. All of the information will be collated together to produce a new inventory of Ancient Woodland. Long Established Woodland could potentially become classed as an Irreplaceable Habitat in the future (to be consulted on).

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

NBIS were involved in contributing to the production of the species long lists and short lists for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). NBIS provided species records data for all eligible species, provided advice and consulted its wildlife experts (County Recorders) for expert local interpretation of the draft lists.

Wendling Beck Habitat Suitability Monitoring Project

NBIS inputted species and habitat information into the Wendling Beck Habitat Suitability Monitoring project which was looking at if habitats could be used to predict species distributions and could therefore be used as a predictive model to identify areas of habitat suitable for species restoration and reintroduction.

Finance

The table below shows the budget for 2024-25 and the previous two years. It is essential that NBIS continues to secure external project funding to ensure the centre can continue to run as effectively when income is shorter. The below table does not include the contributing costs of Norfolk County Council to the hosting of NBIS.

Expenditure (in £)	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Staff salaries/training/travel/subsistence/conferences	-102716.40	-105370.00	-109754.77
IT hardware/software & general equipment purchase	-4095.88	-4083.88	-4083.88
Subscriptions (e.g. ALERC)	-500.00	-570.00	
Contractor costs	-3,511.57	-5446.63	-14909.59
Venue hire/food costs etc		-377.15	-223.00
Printing/marketing/design			
other/misc			-739.00
Publications/NBIS recorders fund/recorder support	-1606.22	-1000.00	
Budget adjustments/financials	-2101.00	2101.00	
Match Funding/project contributions/P&C contributions			-10000.00
Total expenditure	-114531.07	-114746.66	-139710.24

Income (in £)	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Data Searches	68167.31	75494.80	98511.12
Project work/contracted works/other charges	23263.99	32978.68	12562.69
Service Level Agreements with Local Authorities/IDBs	3750.00		7377.00
Service Level Agreements with utilities	4554.12	5505.07	5681.23
Service Level Agreements with Defra bodies	12062.00	12665.10	13197.03
Recharge (other departments)/refunds			
Match Funding			
Total income	111797.42	126643.65	137329.07

Balance (in £)	-2733.65	11896.99	-2381.17
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The balance figures for each year do not represent profit – the figures of surplus are already assigned to projects or staff costs and the opposite figures mainly show debit due to project or staff cost spend or matching assigned, from monies received in previous financial years. Some SLA monies have been received in different financial years to which they should have been received.