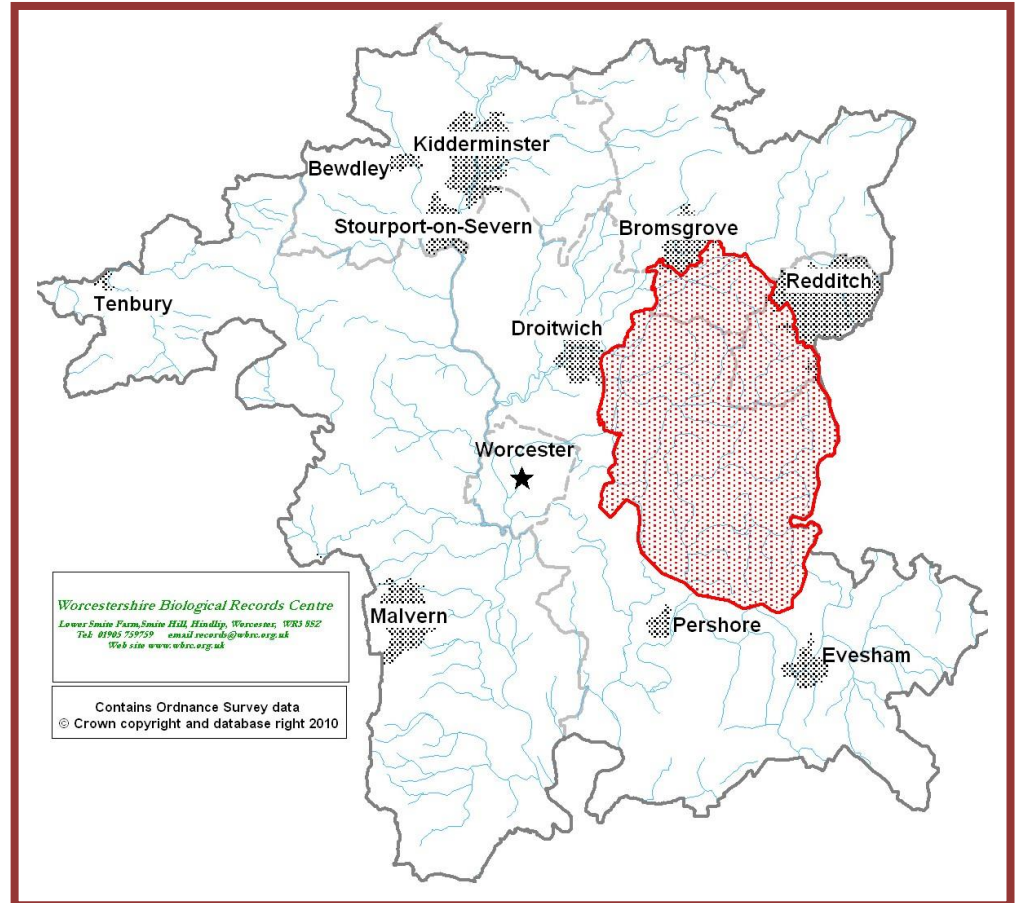


Forest of Feckenham

Updated October,
2106

The Biodiversity Delivery Areas were agreed by the Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership in 2009 revised and endorsed by the Local Nature Partnership in 2016 to indicate, spatially and strategically, where according to current knowledge and resource, priority areas for the delivery of the Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan.



Why is the Forest of Feckenham a biodiversity priority?

The Forest of Feckenham is a lowland pastoral landscape supporting a great proportion of the species-rich neutral meadow remaining in Worcestershire (and, indeed, in England) along with traditional orchard, parkland, veteran trees and scattered blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland. Contained within this landscape are remnants of formally extensive Royal Forests and Chases. The Forest of Feckenham supports the West Midlands' only known population of brown hairstreak butterfly and is a very important area for arable flora. There are significant logistical and economic challenges to be addressed, posed by fragmented landownership and small, isolated sites. The expertise to manage these habitats is declining and the capital investment needed for initial restoration can be prohibitive without external assistance.

Forest of Feckenham: meeting the local criteria for a Biodiversity Delivery Area

<p>Delivering Local Biodiversity Action Plan targets .. ability to deliver significantly towards achieving the targets and actions for multiple BAP habitats and species</p>	<p>Priority LBAP habitats: lowland meadows; ancient semi-natural woodland; wood pasture, parkland and veteran trees; traditional orchard; ancient/species-rich hedgerows; ponds</p> <p>Priority LBAP species: brown hairstreak; noble chafer; arable plants; farmland birds; great crested newt</p>
<p>Addressing socio-economic factors .. links to delivery of health, tourism, economic, rural regeneration, flood alleviation or other sector agenda</p>	<p>Management of small sites economically unviable for individual owners; decline in management expertise; prohibitive cost of capital investment</p>
<p>Practical delivery opportunities .. landowner and community support, projects already in preparation or existence, delivery partnership identified</p>	<p>Fragmented ownership; small, isolated sites; improving connectivity between sites must be a focus of conservation activity</p>
<p>Availability of resources .. policy or legislative drivers, existing funding streams, commitment of time and resources from partners</p>	<p>English Woodland Grant Scheme focus on woodland creation; Higher Level Stewardship targeting for Grafton; the Forest of Feckenham is situated within the Wye, Severn and Avon Vales Integrated Biodiversity Delivery Area</p>

What needs to be achieved within this Biodiversity Delivery Area?

Meeting objectives for:

Access & recreation ✓
Economy ✓
Green infrastructure ✓
Health ✓

Biodiversity ✓

Biodiversity ✓
Climate change adaptation ✓

Biodiversity ✓
Community ✓
Economy ✓

Access & recreation ✓
Biodiversity ✓
Health ✓

Biodiversity ✓

- Innovation in the use of new or alternative funding sources through the delivery of multi-sector objectives. For example, improving public access from urban areas and villages to the surrounding countryside to link to the health and well being agenda and promotion of the economic opportunities of woodland planting where it can contribute to habitat connectivity.
- Integration of species conservation into delivery of habitat restoration and creation programmes, in particular demonstrating best practice habitat management for noble chafer, brown hairstreak and arable flora
- Incorporate adaptation for climate change into project planning, with a focus on buffering and improving connectivity between priority habitats.
- Demonstrate, encourage and enable economically viable management of small lowland meadow and traditional orchards sites by raising awareness, knowledge and management skills and expertise of owners through the provision of training and advice
- Manage and promote key nature reserves or appropriate Local Sites as 'flagships' to demonstrate best practice to other landowners and encourage recreation and volunteering
- Secure funding for the creation, restoration and management of lowland meadows, traditional orchards, native woodland, veteran trees and hedgerows, with small meadow and orchard sites ineligible for agri-environment schemes and listed Local Sites a priority

BAP Targets for key habitats within the Forest of Feckenham Biodiversity Delivery Area		Target Type	Worcestershire Habitat Targets 2017	West Mids Habitat Targets 2015	Proportion of West Mids target to be delivered in Worcs
Ancient/species-rich hedgerows	Hedgerow networks contribute to the wooded character, provide connectivity between woodland blocks and habitat for brown hairstreak and other fauna.	Maintain extent	1543km	No Net Loss	n/a
		Restore	20km	49km	29%
		Create	5km	99km	3%
Neutral grassland (lowland meadow)	Found throughout the area as small, scattered and isolated fragments. A number of sites are in conservation ownership. Resource includes the Eades Meadow and Foster's Green NNR.	Maintain extent	1225ha	2926ha	41%
		Restore	300ha	469ha	45%
		Create	66ha	202ha	23%
Traditional orchards	Found throughout the area with a concentration in the south around Evesham and the Lenches. Many sites are now small and fragmented. A number of Worcestershire orchards support noble chafer populations.	Maintain extent	2300ha	8224ha	27%
		Restore	87ha	157ha	39%
		Create	120ha	232ha	37%
Veteran trees with lowland wood pasture and parkland	The area contains a high number of hedgerow pollards and several significant wood pasture and parkland sites in conservation ownership, notably Hanbury Park and Pipershill.	Maintain extent	25 sites	Unknown	n/a
		Restore	4 sites	25 sites	15%
		Create	1 site	15 sites	6%
Woodland	Small to medium-sized ancient semi-natural woodlands are an important characteristic, particularly in the north of the area.	Maintain extent	4293ha	44186ha	9%
		Restore	1000ha	3679ha	19%
		Create	430ha	3653ha	8%
Ponds	Several important 'pondscapes' exist within the project area that support meta-populations of great crested newt.	Maintain extent	n/a	No Net Loss	n/a
		Restore	36 sites	177 sites	20%
		Create	18 sites	168 sites	10%

Contributing projects:

The Forest of Feckenham is a priority for Higher Level Stewardship.

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust focus on the Forest of Feckenham for the restoration of Local Wildlife Sites with lowland grassland interest, and restoration of grassland through the Restoring Worcestershire's Grassland project funded through SITA Trust.

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and Butterfly Conservation working in partnership to manage Grafton and Trench Woods and the network of surrounding habitats edges for the brown hairstreak butterfly.

Promotion of traditional orchard management and restoration through a small grant project funded through Natural England and promoted by Worcestershire County Council.

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Flagship Reserves project where key sites will be used to develop, apply and demonstrate best practice conservation methods and promote community involvement and access. Includes Piper's Hill Common, Lower Smite Farm, Grafton Wood and Feckenham Wylde Moor.

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Living Landscapes project of which the Forest of Feckenham is a key focus.

Plantlife/Worcestershire Wildlife Trust arable flora partnership project at Naunton Court and Lower Smite Farm.

Restoration of the parkland and veteran trees at Hanbury Hall by National Trust.

Management of Hipton Hill Orchards and Ian's Wood by the Vale Landscape Heritage Trust.

Taking a multi-sector approach: linking biodiversity to other agendas

Access and recreation	This is a large landscape area with significant opportunities to promote access to the countryside for recreational purposes using the existing Rights of Way network and substantial number of nature reserves.
Biodiversity	Significant potential to deliver county Biodiversity Action Plan targets for lowland meadow, traditional orchard, veteran trees, hedgerows, farmland birds, brown hairstreak, noble chafer, arable flora and great crested newt.
Climate change adaptation	Habitat creation and restoration will increase habitat connectivity and buffering of key sites and facilitate species movements. Identifying and strengthening networks (corridors) of small sites, in particular lowland meadows, is key to achieving conservation objectives.

Community	Opportunities should be sought to increase community involvement in managing sites, contributing to species recording and taking part in organised events and volunteering activity. Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Worcestershire County Council and Wychavon District Council all offer a range of volunteering opportunities on their sites, including habitat management, walks and talks to raise awareness of the importance of this habitat.
Economy	The fragmented ownership of small, scattered sites presents a logistical and economic management challenge. The Local Sites system provides a vehicle for delivery and a dedicated funding stream must be identified for management and training. Success may involve trialling several different methods of engagement and delivery.
Green Infrastructure	A significant proportion of this BDA has been identified as being of Very High or High value within the emerging county GI strategy. There are objectives identified within the strategy to deliver habitat protection and enhancement that buffers existing sites and restores habitat connectivity.
Health	Activity to promote access to the countryside and volunteering can make a major contribution to the health and well being agenda.
Partnership working	Broad and inclusive engagement must be established and maintained to deliver the multi-sector priorities identified for this area. Building relationships with landowners, the organisations that represent them and those who provide goods and services to them is a high priority.

Integrating habitat and species needs

Key Worcestershire LBAP species whose needs must be integrated into habitat management and conservation within the Forest of Feckenham Biodiversity Delivery Area are:

- Arable flora: this part of Worcestershire is important for its arable flora communities. Habitat restoration and creation undertaken must consider the survival and expansion of important arable plant populations.
- Brown hairstreak: hedgerow and woodland management, restoration and creation within the area must have the conservation of brown hairstreak and expansion of its range as a core objective. Establishment and management of hedgerow trees, particularly ash, should also be carried out in such a way as to benefit the species.
- Great crested newt: this species depends on networks of ponds to support breeding meta-populations. The Forest of Feckenham contains several such 'pondscapes' and there are certainly opportunities for further pond restoration and creation in the project area.

Supporting information for the Forest of Feckenham Biodiversity Delivery Area.
Statement produced October, 2016 by the Worcestershire Local Nature Partnership.

- Farmland birds: the variety and type of habitats present with the area has the potential to benefit species using both arable field margins, hedgerows and cropped habitats and also species using wet grassland habitats.
- Noble chafer: decaying fruit trees provide larval habitat so this species is dependent on the survival and appropriate management of traditional orchards. Increasing levels of survey work over the last 2-3 years is resulting in the discovery of new populations across the county.

Further sources of information

Earth Heritage Trust www.earthheritagetrust.org

Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan www.worcestershire.gov.uk/biodiversity

Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment www.worcestershire.gov.uk/landscape

Worcestershire Biological Records Centre www.wbrc.org.uk

Worcestershire Habitat Inventory - see Worcestershire Biological Records Centre

Worcestershire Historic Environment Record www.worcestershire.gov.uk/archaeology

Severn and Avon Vales National Character Area objectives - www.naturalengland.org.uk

Arden National Character Area objectives - see Natural England