

Opportunities for recovering or enhancing nature: stakeholder input

Related documents:

- [Stakeholder Engagement Plan](#)

Requirement

The Environment Act requires Local Nature Recovery Strategies to include a description of the opportunities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity within the strategy area.

This description is contained within Part 2 of the Worcestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy under the following headings:

1. Nature recovery through mandatory **Biodiversity Net Gain**
2. Contribution to England's **National Environmental Objectives**
3. Delivery of **wider environmental benefits** associated with nature recovery
4. Worcestershire's **30 by 30 baseline**
5. **Habitats and species** for which Worcestershire is nationally important, there is urgency to conserve, or which we can make a significant national contribution to the recovery of
6. **Existing landscape-scale and cross-border projects and initiatives** underway within Worcestershire

Information gathering

Stakeholder engagement was undertaken as part of the information-gathering process for preparing the description of opportunities, in particular to prepare information under headings (3), (5) and (6). This document sets out the raw outputs from that stakeholder engagement, which took the form of:

- Meetings with key stakeholder organisations between January-December 2024
- Workshops with key stakeholder audiences between January-December 2024
- An Issues and Options Public Consultation in January-February 2024

For ease of reading, the outputs are presented under headings which correspond to the themes used by the Worcestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy to organise the Biodiversity Priorities and suggested Potential Measures. Note however that opportunities for species are not separated out within this document: the list of raw stakeholder engagement outputs covers habitats, species and environmental issues/nature-based solutions at this stage.

Water and Wetlands

- Catchment Data Explorer
- Environment Agency data
- Carrant Catchment farmer facilitation fund (FWAG South West)
- Bow Brook farmer facilitation fund (Worcestershire Wildlife Trust)
- Droitwich Canal habitat creation and enhancement projects (Canal & River Trust/Wychavon District Council)
- Salmon in the Stour project (Environment Agency)
- Legacy of the Unlocking the Severn project (Severn Rivers Trust/Canal & River Trust/Environment Agency)
- CABA partnerships (Middle Severn; Warwickshire Avon; Teme; Severn Vale)
- Severn Trent Water/Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Catchment Partnership project
- Bromsgrove Brooks (Environment Agency/North Worcestershire Water Management)
- Restoration of water levels on key groundwater-dependent sites (Environment Agency/Severn Trent Water)
- Worcestershire Working with Water project (NFM) (Worcestershire County Council)
- Creation of habitat through sustainable drainage schemes and on-site Biodiversity Net Gain
- District level licensing
- Agri-environment scheme payments
- Use of Natural Flood Management / pollution control regimes including those associated with development
- Extent, frequency and severity of flooding impacting communities and businesses, particularly along the Rivers Severn, Avon and Teme.
- Restoration of gravel pits because of restoration-led approach in local minerals policy
- Worcestershire has a nationally important inland resource of saline habitats. Relatively small, discreet and well mapped areas of saline habitats mean that targeted action ought to be possible. Much of the resource is in small patches but perhaps likely to be contiguous suitable soils for restoration, especially along Salwarpe Valley. Rare and locally important in a historic context so possibility of links to other agendas.

Trees, Scrub and Woodland

- Refreshed Worcestershire Ancient Woodland Inventory
- Recognition of importance of scrub as habitat in its own right
- Learning from Back from the Brink project (Buglife)
- Better understanding of link between hedgerow and hedgerow margin management
- Heart Of England Forest seeking to acquire land and plant woodland within east Worcestershire
- Severn Treescapes project - funding available to increase woodland connectivity within west Worcestershire (Worcestershire Wildlife Trust)
- Trees call to Action project (Heart Of England Forest)
- Midland Forest Network
- Enhanced management requirements for hedgerows
- Financial and political support for woodland creation and management under various schemes
- Delivery of carbon capture
- Use of TPO protections (orchards; broadening criteria to encompass mature and future veteran trees)
- Agri-environment funding; Support through agri-environment for trees in arable situations

- Agro-forestry
- Natural Networks (Worcestershire County Council/Worcestershire Wildlife Trust)
- Partnership working across borders (e.g Treescapes)
- Public awareness and engagement with tree planting
- Ability to make wide-scale improvement to hedgerow quality and quantity within Worcs due to the extent of the resource
- Abundance of standard trees within hedgerows (including veterans)
- Significance of hedgerows for landscape-scale connectivity in Worcs

Specific opportunities relating to traditional orchard:

- Worcs has significant traditional orchard resource in national context
- Well-documented, nationally significant numbers and distribution of flagship species such as noble chafer beetle and mistletoe
- Local festivals: Pershore plums, Bewdley cherries etc (raising public profile of orchards and fruit)
- Concept of local distinctiveness well-understood and celebrated in relation to orchards (public engagement)
- Potential for branding and badging of local produce
- Well-known local varieties and well-respected local growers capable of producing some of them

Specific opportunities relating to veteran and ancient trees and wood pasture and parkland:

- Good protection of anc/vet trees within planning system
- Worcs has significant ancient tree resource in national context
- Understanding of high value of ancient tree habitat
- Worcs high ranking nationally in saproxylic interest
- Worcs has a number of very high value sites that are well-known and often appropriately managed

Open Habitats

- Report on opportunities for restoration and management of floodplains to deliver carbon storage (Floodplain Meadows Partnership)
- Study of nesting curlews (and other waders) in Severn and Avon valleys by Wildfowl and Wetland Trust (and others)
- Drive to reduce soil erosion, watercourse siltation and improve water quality (driver for arable reversion of previously floodplain meadow habitat)
- Interest in regenerative grassland management
- Acid grasslands on Malvern Hills managed as commons have a particularly rich flora
- Agri-environment (SFI) options
- Existence of a policy framework to provide protection (EIA regs, site notification etc) for grasslands

Specific opportunities relating to acid grassland and lowland heathland in north Worcestershire:

- Well known and protected resource, with most sites designated or in secure conservation-minded ownership
- Resource well connected and buffered by other acid habitats
- Restoration projects underway
- Sandscapes project (National Trust)

- Hosts many priority species that could bring grant funding potential and public enthusiasm
- Cross-border links at a landscape scale to north
- Heathland on sandy soils on Sherwood sandstone has the potential for extension into non-productive/low quality farmland
- Relatively large potential habitat in discreet areas of the county
- Value well understood by practitioners (but less so by others)
- Hosts some charismatic species that may attract grant funding and public support

Specific opportunities relating to lowland meadow:

- Large extent of restorable resource in Worcs
- Higher impact in Worcs of creating stepping stones/connections between lowland meadow sites, compared to other counties
- Worcestershire has a significant part of the national lowland meadow resource
- High opportunity for recovery of lower quality lowland meadow sites

Specific opportunities relating to farmland birds and arable wildflowers:

- Learning from flagship sites experimenting with arable wildflower conservation (e.g. Kemerton estate)
- Some flagship species capable of generating public enthusiasm (yellowhammer, corn bunting, arable weeds)
- One LWS for arable margin habitat (based on Cotswold Pennycress colony)
- Identification of sites with a rich seed bank of scarce arable wildflowers through Plantlife's Important Arable Plant Areas
- Measures to reintroduce lost plant species to arable land e.g. re-introduction of Red Hemp-Nettle to Bredon Hill
- Management of identified sites with agri-environment schemes to increase diversity and number of scarce arable wildflowers, with consequential increase in pollen resource
- Extend area under schemes to provide nesting habitat and food supplies for farmland birds

Specific opportunities relating to calcareous grassland:

- Relatively small, discreet and well mapped areas mean that targeted action ought to be possible
- Much of the resource is in small patches but perhaps likely to be contiguous suitable soils for restoration
- Wide range of calcareous soils in county e.g Carboniferous, Silurian, Rhaetic, Jurassic, gives opportunity for restoration of grassland under agri-environment schemes
- Location of limestone geology in Worcs to the north west of Cotswold oolite provides room for species movement in face of climate change
- Protected areas in county provide seed source

Landscape-scale and Linear Habitat Connectivity

- Costed Local Site System delivery/action plan
- More, Bigger, Better, Joined principle of Lawton Report now widely established
- State of Worcestershire's Grasslands report (Worcestershire County Council/Worcestershire Wildlife Trust/Natural England)
- Established Roadside Verge Nature Reserve scheme (Worcestershire County Council)
- Learning from pilot schemes carried out by Malvern Hills National Landscape and others
- Practical techniques for delivery well known and understood
- Extant case studies

- Good understanding of requirements locally
- National lighting guidance and Bat Conservation Trust work
- Strong understanding of bat needs locally – meaning other species can also benefit
- Pro-active Local Sites Partnership(s) with track record of effort
- B-Lines providing cross-border linking opportunities (Buglife)
- Severn Treescapes project (Worcestershire Wildlife Trust)
- Agri-environment funding
- 2026 renegotiation of county highways verge management contract
- Importance of Local Sites network recognised in local plan policy
- RVNRs key component of Worcs Nature Recovery Network
- Pipeline of potential RVNR sites continues to grow
- Publication of Worcestershire's Nature Recovery Network, which identifies strategic corridors
- Inclusion of LWS and LGS within LNRS as other areas of particular importance to biodiversity
- Inclusion of Roadside Verge Nature Reserves within LNRS as other areas of particular importance to biodiversity
- Good relationships with Highways officers and decision-makers

Earth Heritage

- Active farmer facilitation groups supported by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Malvern Hills National Landscape and FWAG
- Interest in low-till or zero-till agriculture and regenerative grassland management
- Availability of tools, apps and training for farmers to monitor and improve the health of their soils
- Exposure through quarrying

Green Infrastructure

- Worcestershire Green Infrastructure Strategy
- National Green Infrastructure Framework/Standards
- Nature Recovery Network mapping as part of LNRS demonstrates priority areas and areas of particular sensitivity
- Designated sites and landscape areas (Living Landscapes, Biodiversity Delivery Areas etc) offer evidence-based locations for consideration
- Management of green spaces in the urban environment
- Building with Nature standards
- Supportive Local Plan policies
- Natural Networks funding (Worcestershire County Council/Worcestershire Wildlife Trust)
- Neighbourhoods Nurturing Nature project (Worcestershire Wildlife Trust)
- On-site BNG
- Green bridge and de-culverting with Highways England/National Rail funding
- Sustainable drainage requirements
- Planning tools