



## LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY TOOLKIT

SEPTEMBER 2020

VERSION 3







## INTRODUCTION



Natural Cambridgeshire is the Local Nature Partnership for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. We are committed to protecting, preserving, and enhancing our region's natural environment and championing sustainable development. Natural Cambridgeshire aims to achieve the highest level of environmental outcomes to benefit people, wildlife, and the local landscapes.

Our ambition is to 'Double Nature' across the region. We want to offer the opportunity for everyone who lives, works, and visits Cambridgeshire to enjoy happier and healthier lifestyles, by establishing a significant long-term recovery of nature and a world-class environment.

As residents, businesses, parish councils, landowners, farmers and visitors we want the countryside around us to be an area where nature is at the heart of our lives. We want people to be able to walk or cycle out in safety and tranquillity across this thriving countryside, enjoying the sights and sounds and even the silence of the natural world, enjoying dark skies and cherishing the heritage – both natural and man-made around them.

Natural Cambridgeshire aims to deliver this vision, through the creation of an extensive and accessible nature recovery areas across Cambridgeshire, designed, led and supported by residents, landowners, farmers, businesses and parish councils. These nature recovery areas will be supported by Natural England and other statutory agencies and incorporated into local policy documents including Local Plans.

To support the 'doubling nature' ambition, we have produced this local nature recovery toolkit to help support communities to incorporate doubling nature in their neighbourhood plans and landscape assessment. Further information on nature recovery areas can be found in the [Doubling Nature – A landscape led approach document](#), which accompanies this toolkit.

### THROUGH THE NATURE RECOVERY TOOLKIT, WE AIM TO:

1. Deliver significant **increases in key wildlife habitats**, particularly those of limestone grassland, wetland and aspects of arable farmland, which are important to this geographical area
2. Raise levels of local pride, aspiration and community cohesion by helping communities to **understand, appreciate and enjoy their natural and built heritage**
3. Promote **public health and wellbeing**, providing opportunities for access to and understanding of nature-rich countryside
4. Create **new jobs and economic opportunities** allied to the delivery of these objectives, particularly in tourism, visitor attractions, farming and nature conservation
5. Through this work, create more **resilient countryside and communities**, where nature is at the heart of our approach to **tackling the climate emergency**.
6. Pilot and **champion best practice sustainable development** in all aspects of future development within the area including **sustainable techniques of land management** both on and off the existing nature reserves

Local residents play an important part in the delivery of this vision. Both as individuals in the way they manage their gardens and their own land-holdings (such as pony paddocks, orchards or meadows) and as local communities through the creation and delivery of nature recovery plans for the parishes and wards which make up the Natural Cambridgeshire area.

This document aims to be a starting point in taking local action; providing guidance, advice and support to help each area create their own nature recovery plans and also to identify the skills and resources needed to take forward their delivery and to manage both newly created and existing habitats.

It also acts as a signpost for further guidance and support from local expert partners.

The creation of nature recovery plans can only be taken forward on a voluntary basis with the enthusiastic support of local landowners. No plan should seek to suggest ideas for how private land should be managed without the specific consent of the landowners and only after careful discussion and engagement with their interests.

## WHAT IS A LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY PLAN?



A nature recovery plan should set out a medium-term plan for the creation of more nature rich habitats in our towns, villages, cities and the surrounding countryside. We suggest that each plan covers an initial ten-year period, although many of the projects that communities will want to start – such as planting oak trees for example - will take much longer to come to maturity.

We also suggest that each plan sets out clear outcomes, so that local people can take interest and pride in the progress they are making in creating and maintaining habitats. These might include targets such as planting 2km of hedgerow; creating a hectare of wild-flower meadow or developing 5 new ponds, as well as monitoring and recording key species, such as the number of bats and birds flying around, hedgehogs seen in gardens, or swifts and swallows nesting on buildings.

Community nature recovery plans should be developed by local people, to meet their local aspirations and reflect the nature that inspires them. Ideally, they will be agreed and formally endorsed by the parish or local council. The Natural Cambridgeshire partners can offer advice and guidance.

## WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?



How you organise and deliver local nature recovery is up to you and your group, however we would suggest that the programme is led by the parish or local council.

As part of the development of the local nature recovery plan, you will need to identify what you currently have and what could be possible. To help support your plans, it is recommended you work with someone who have good local knowledge and some horticulture and ecological understanding.

The success of the local nature plan will in part be down to the support of local residents and landowners, therefore the development of the plan and its delivery should be communicated to as wide an audience as possible, helping to encourage volunteers and supporters.



## CREATING A NATURE RECOVERY PLAN



We recommend the following steps to create your plan:

1. Make a **simple map of wildlife habitats** in your area, identifying where the most important places for nature are and why they matter
2. Based on this, decide the **objectives for your nature recovery plan**. What habitats do you want to improve or create and what species do you particularly want to see increase in your area?
3. Develop a **nature recovery map** that illustrates where you want to create new habitats and the existing habitats that can be improved.
4. Develop a **timeline for habitat creation or improvement**, recognising that the plan is best delivered in bite-size pieces over the ten-year period.
5. Develop a plan for **maintaining and monitoring these habitats** and the wildlife that lives there

All plans must respect the interests of landowners and must not suggest land management or land uses on specific areas of land that have not been previously discussed and agreed with the landowners. As an example, it would be acceptable to include a statement about a desire to work with landowners to create wildlife corridors in particular generic areas (for instance, between one area of existing wildlife rich habitat and another), but not to state that a particular field should be converted to a wildflower meadow or woodland, unless that is what the landowner wishes to do.



# MAKING A MAP OF WILDLIFE HABITATS



Any plan needs to start with an appreciation of the current state of nature locally. This will involve creating a map of the current nature-rich sites in each location and sites that can be improved to benefit nature.

Key wildlife sites might include:

- Gardens and allotments
- Mature Trees / Tree Preservation Orders
- Hedgerows
- Woodlands
- Grasslands / Road verges with wildflowers
- Churches and their grounds
- Animal boxes
- School grounds / wildlife area / amenity areas
- Farmland
- Nature reserves
- Waterways / rivers
- Waterbodies / ponds

Some areas may already have a lot of evidence about the wildlife and natural habitats in their area from previous surveys. Others may want to do some surveys as part of this work. Creating a database of photos at the start of the project will also be important, so visible progress can be recorded over time.

## HOW TO CREATE YOUR MAP?

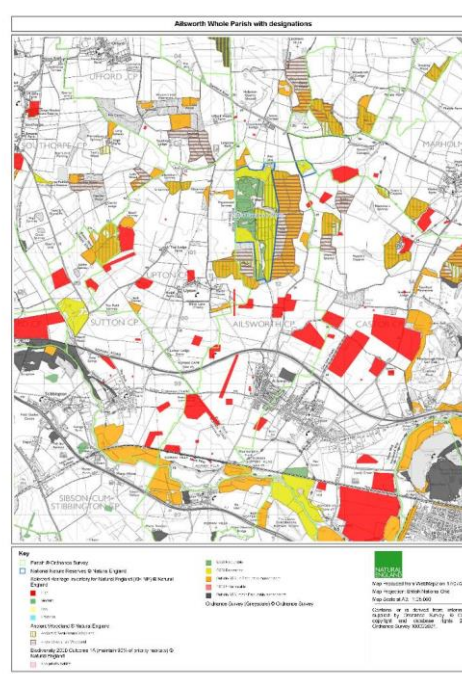
Use a blank map and the symbology and classification outlined in the sections below to create your map. To provide additional information about a site or feature, please use a numbered reference on the map and supply notes separately. This can then be incorporated into the final map. Existing designations and information about the natural environment can be found at <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>.

The local records centre for the area, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Centre (CPERC) is a source of local wildlife site, species and habitat information [www.cperc.org.uk](http://www.cperc.org.uk). CPERC may be able to offer a bespoke set of maps and information for your needs. Please contact CPERC for more details. Charges may apply

Maps can be produced in both hard copy or digital form, depending on the availability to each group.

All survey work should fully respect landownership and only be completed using public rights of way.

The following sections provide additional information about each of the key wildlife sites, along with questions to ask during the baseline survey, symbology for the mapping and links to other resources which might be useful when developing your plan.







## GARDENS AND ALLOTMENTS



### DESCRIPTION

Together, the UK's gardens are larger than all of our National Nature Reserves combined. They play a key role in connecting habitats, especially across urban areas, and provide safe refuges for wildlife in an ever-busy environment.

Gardens do not have to be large to benefit wildlife and less is more when it comes to management. It's not necessary for individual gardens to offer everything a species needs if nearby gardens contribute too, for example a blackbird will nest in one garden but forage and bathe in others. You may wish to map where all gardens are and consider them as one unit with many owners.

Allotments often have many of the same features as gardens but without the physical boundaries between plots so offer a large area for wildlife to utilise.

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

- Do garden boundaries restrict movement of wildlife e.g. hedgehogs?
- Are there any stone walls supporting important populations of solitary bees, or assemblages of ferns, mosses and lichens?
- Do people use water butts or compost heaps?
- Is the allotment site chemical-free?
- What species do people see in their gardens and what would they like to encourage?
- Also consider houses and whether they accommodate bats or swifts.

### SUGGESTED SYMBOL / LEGEND

Light green with \* for especially good gardens

### CLASSIFICATION

If there are any gardens that are particularly good for wildlife, it's useful to show where these are in order to make connections between them via other gardens.

### USEFUL LINKS AND INFORMATION

- Wild About Gardens – [Encouraging wildlife to your garden with RHS and the Wildlife Trusts](#)
- RSPB – [Gardening for Wildlife](#)
- National Trust – [Nine ways to build a wildlife friendly garden](#)
- The National Allotment Society – [How to plan an allotment](#)
- Allotment & Gardens – [Grow your own](#)
- Anglian Water – [Water conservation for home and garden](#)
- Buglife – [Invertebrate identification and advice](#)



# CHURCHES AND THEIR GROUNDS



## DESCRIPTION

Churches have been a focus for communities for thousands of years and, alongside their primary purpose, are refuges for many species. Bats are well known for inhabiting churches due to their open structure and relative quiet.

The ancient stonework can be rich with lichens and mosses while the ledges and roofs can be ideal places for nesting birds. The church grounds have often escaped the damaging effects of fertilisers and ploughs so contain remnants of ancient grassland where fungi thrive and wildflowers flourish.

## SURVEY QUESTIONS

- Do you know of any animals using the church building? E.g. bats or birds
- Do the church grounds support wildflowers in the grass? Is it closely mown?
- Are there mature trees in the grounds?
- Are there gravestones with lichens or mosses on them?
- Is it an active burial site?

## SUGGESTED SYMBOL / LEGEND

See section on Trees for other useful codes.

- CH – for religious building
- CHB – Bat roost in the building or tree in the grounds
- CHM – for closely managed church grounds
- CHW – for less managed church grounds where areas of grass are left long

## USEFUL LINKS AND INFORMATION

- Caring for gods acre - [guide to documenting the biodiversity of your churchyard](#)
- Bats in churches - [A partnership project to support communities living with bats](#)
- Bat Conservation Trust – [Information](#)



## SCHOOL GROUNDS AND AMENITY AREAS



### DESCRIPTION

The grounds of a school are much the same as a garden and can encompass many of the same features – flowering plants, trees, ponds, vegetable patches, log-piles. In this situation though, consideration must be taken as to how the area can be used as an educational resource as the students are our ecologists of the future. A balance needs to be found between providing for the local wildlife and attracting those species that are happy with a bit of disturbance.

Amenity areas such as playing fields, playgrounds and sports courts will inevitably need to be closely managed to maintain their primary purpose. However, there is bound to be an area suitable for some wildflowers, a thick hedge could be planted around the boundary or some trees planted to provide shade.

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

- Does the school have a designated wildlife area?
- Is it used by students?
- Are there opportunities around amenity areas to have longer grass or plant trees?

### SUGGESTED SYMBOL / LEGEND

Coloured yellow with:

- SCHF – School field
- SCHW – School wildlife area
- RG – Recreation ground/sports court/playground

### USEFUL LINKS AND INFORMATION

- Learning through landscapes - [Outdoor lesson ideas](#)
- Council for Learning Outside the Classroom - [Take your teaching beyond the classroom](#)
- Fields in Trust - [knowledge-base](#)
- RHS - [gardening ideas, crafts, wildlife and habitats info](#)
- Young Peoples' Trust for the Environment - [teaching resources](#)



# WOODLANDS



## DESCRIPTION

Most woodlands in England are 2ha and over (93.2%). There are striking variations of woodland cover across England and the UK. The terms woodland and forest are often used interchangeably and can comprise of near monocultures of broadleaf and conifer or include a diverse range of tree species.

Some woodlands are ancient and have had tree cover for many hundreds of years; others have developed more recently through colonization of previously open land; and some are recently created plantations or shelterbelts. They may be isolated from other woodlands by roads and arable farmland. Woodlands are a major habitat type, can be havens for wildlife, and can be used as a tool in addressing climate challenges.

## SURVEY QUESTIONS

- What tree species are present and are there any known protected or rare flora or fauna?
- Is there a pond within or near this woodland? If so, please map following the pond guidance below.
- Approximately how old is the woodland?
- Is the woodland managed? Trees felled for timber, coppiced, rides mown etc.
- Does the woodland contain veteran trees?
- Does the woodland contain rides, glades or other areas of open space?

## SUGGESTED SYMBOL / LEGEND

Coloured brown with WD plus other relevant letters:

- WD-B Broadleaf
- WD-C Conifer
- WD-M Mixed
- WD-PS Protected species
- WD-R Rare flora or fauna
- WD-F Has an associated feature: pond, bank etc

## CLASSIFICATION

| Woodland Size |                  |
|---------------|------------------|
| Very Small    | ≤0.25ha          |
| Small         | >0.25ha - 5.00ha |
| Medium        | >5.00 – 10.00ha  |
| Large         | >10ha            |

| Woodland Age |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| New          | ≤ 5 years       |
| Young        | > 6 – 50 years  |
| Mature       | > 51– 100 years |
| Ancient      | >101 years      |

## REFERENCES

- SWOG - [Small Woodland Owners Group](#)
- Woodland Trust – [What we do](#)
- Forestry England - [Growing the nation's forests](#)
- Woodland Trust - [Advice on tree planting and a summary of woodland types](#)
- Conservation handbooks - [The Conservation Volunteers' handbooks](#)
- Forest Research - [Providing evidence through forestry and tree related research](#)
- Tree Council - [Advice and grants for tree planting](#)





## MATURE TREES / TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS



### DESCRIPTION

Trees have many benefits for insects, small mammals and birds with many tree species having specific intra-relationships with often, hundreds of insect species. Even as mature trees decline, they still offer complex and comprehensive habitat value to a wide range of species. Some trees deserve statutory protection because of their size, their age, their contribution to an area's character or the wildlife they support.

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are a mechanism for protecting trees and these are made under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012\*. A TPO is a discretionary order made by the local planning authority usually as part of a local council. The order is implemented to protect specific trees or a particular woodland from deliberate damage and destruction.

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

- Where is this tree: private garden, private land, waterway, road, railways etc
- Is the tree in a conservation area or has a TPO issued?
- Is the tree locally or nationally scarce?
- Is the tree a willow pollard?
- Any notable features; a known bat roost; important populations of dead-wood invertebrates, fungi etc

### SUGGESTED SYMBOL / LEGEND

TR – Tree with the classification next to it i.e TR N

### CLASSIFICATION

| Letter | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| N      | Newly planted trees & saplings                                                                                                                                                            |
| Y      | Young trees: Establishing with visible good vigour                                                                                                                                        |
| M      | Mature: Fully established trees around the middle half of their expected life-span; generally retaining good vigour and achieved full height but with potentially still spreading crowns. |
| V      | Veteran and very old trees; low vigour; highly liable to visual decline. Potential for reduced structural integrity.                                                                      |
| TPO    | Tree Preservation Order                                                                                                                                                                   |
| D      | Dead tree                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| W      | Willow pollard: Inc veteran tree in need of pollarding                                                                                                                                    |

### REFERENCES

- GOV.UK - [Tree Preservation Orders and trees in conservation areas](#)
- Natural England - [Veteran Trees: A guide to good management](#)
- GOV.UK - [Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: protecting them from development](#)
- Woodland Trust – [Veteran Trees](#)
- Woodland Trust - [Street Trees Project](#)





## ORCHARDS



### DESCRIPTION

Orchards can be hotspots for biodiversity in the countryside, supporting a wide range of wildlife and containing UK priority habitats and species. Alongside woodlands, they can have an array of Nationally Rare and Nationally Scarce species. The wildlife of orchard sites depends on the mosaic of habitats they encompass, including fruit trees, scrub, hedgerows, hedgerow trees, non-fruit trees within the orchard, the orchard floor habitats, fallen dead wood and associated features such as ponds and streams.

Orchards used to be extensive in the East of England but shifts in agriculture and pressure for land meant that many were removed. Remaining old orchards can also be a repository for varieties of fruit trees developed locally that are now rare. In recent years many new orchards have been planted by community groups and these will be wonderful habitats in the future with local varieties of fruit, veteran trees and complimentary habitats.

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

- What fruit trees are present? Apple, pear, gage, plum, cherry, nut, medlar, quince?
- Is the orchard older than 20 years?
- Does the grassland surrounding the trees contain wildflowers?
- Is the orchard managed i.e. trees pruned, grassland cut?

### SUGGESTED SYMBOL / LEGEND

Coloured Red with Letter N- New or O – Old (*Use a number reference to provide additional information*)

### CLASSIFICATION

New or old – If planted less than 20 years ago, it is new.

### REFERENCES

- People's Trust for Endangered Species – [Protecting Orchards](#)
- JNCC - [BAP Priority Habitats](#)
- Stamford Community Orchard Group – [About SCOG](#)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Orchard Group – [Survey Reports](#)
- East of England Apples and Orchards Project – [About](#)



## HEDGEROWS



### DESCRIPTION

Hedgerows are easily recognised features of the countryside and urban settings. They have historic connections as boundaries, that were generally used in the control of livestock movement, or to delineate legal or political areas and fields. The sensitive management of hedgerows can create diverse areas with high natural value.

The greater the number of plant and tree species present, the greater their value. Hedgerows can vary in size from a single row planting to wide multiple rowed features and green lanes. They are habitats to a wide range of bird, mammal, and insect species, providing roosts, nesting sites and food. Having trees (standards) within a hedgerow can greatly increase its value for wildlife, especially for birds as they can use it as a song perch.

The management of hedgerows can actively increase diversity when it is undertaken correctly and at the appropriate time of year (in the winter). This is after most hedgerow berries have been eaten and before the fresh spring growth and the onset of the bird nesting season. While it is possible for a nature recovery plan to identify the potential to restore hedgerows, this must be done with the consent of the landowner.

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

- Does this hedgerow require restoration, gaps to be re-planted or further tree planting?
- Is this hedgerow within 15m of another hedgerow or woodland that it could link up to?
- Is this hedgerow associated with any protected or rare species?
- Hedgerow is wider than 4m and/or taller than 5m then it is considered a line of trees or band of scrub.
- Does the hedgerow form part of a green lane, with associated grassland?
- Does it include a wall, ditch or earth bank within part of the length?

### SUGGESTED SYMBOL / LEGEND

Coloured line showing quality of the hedgerow (green, yellow, red). A dotted green line to show Green lanes

### CLASSIFICATION

| Classification | Good                                                                                  | Average                                                            | Poor                                              |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Tree in hedge  | Every 10 -20m                                                                         | Occasional                                                         | Absent                                            |
| Species        | 5 or more tree species with similar frequency                                         | Mixed but with 1 or 2 dominant species                             | 1 or 2 species                                    |
| Width          | 2-4m wide                                                                             | 1m – 2m wide                                                       | < 1m wide                                         |
| Height         | 3-5m tall                                                                             | 1-3m tall, leggy                                                   | Up to 1m tall                                     |
| Integrity      | No gaps                                                                               | Some gaps                                                          | Many gaps                                         |
| Management     | Sides cut on rotation, trees allowed to flower and fruit, layered every 10 – 15 years | Trimmed every couple of years, some trees able to flower and fruit | Severely cut annually, uniform shape along length |

### REFERENCE

- Hedgelink – [Importance of Hedgerows](#)
- The Tree Council - [Why hedge trees and hedgerows matter](#)
- DEFRA - [Hedgerow Survey Handbook](#)





## GRASSLANDS / ROAD VERGES WITH WILDFLOWERS



### DESCRIPTION

It is estimated that 90% of grasslands were lost in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century due to being cleared for agriculture or development or changes in management. Use of artificial fertilisers in the 1950's resulted in higher yields from grasslands, but the nutrient-rich conditions were not suitable for many wildflowers. Species-rich grassland is still being lost.

This legacy can still be seen where vigorous grasses and plants dominate over slower-growing more delicate species. Such species now exist in small pockets of unimproved grassland and action is required to join these areas up and expand their populations.

Grassland habitats are not limited to meadows – many road verges are rich with wildflowers and are excellent corridors between larger sites. Margins to arable fields can also support a diverse range of plant species and be targeted to benefit specific species such as pollinators or birds. Within a village centre, verges and greens can incorporate small areas of flowering plants to improve the aesthetic appeal and to benefit wildlife.

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

- Does it have a mix of wildflowers and grasses?
- Was the grassland sown with wildflower seeds in recent years?
- Does the area have a lot of weeds such as thistle, nettle and bindweed?
- Is it grazed by livestock? Is it cut for hay?

### SUGGESTED SYMBOL / LEGEND

Coloured Orange plus G (Good), A (Average) or P (Poor) rating

### CLASSIFICATION

- Good – A grassland with many wildflowers and grasses providing food and refuge for insects
- Average – A grassland with some wildflowers but a limited number of species and with some weed species
- Poor – A grassland with mostly weeds such as thistle, nettle, cleavers, bindweed and vigorous grasses (cock's-foot, wall barley, false oat-grass)

### REFERENCE

- Plantlife - [Grassland. Road Verge Campaign](#),
- Magnificent Meadows - [Guidance on creation, restoration and management of meadows](#)
- Natural England – [How to create a wildflower meadow](#)
- Plantlife – [Urban Road Verges](#)
- Butterfly Trust – [Road Verge Symposium](#)
- Emorsgate Seeds - [sowing and aftercare methods](#)
- National Trust - [Conservation grazing](#)
- Wildlife Trust – [Grazing](#)
- Rare Breed Survival Trust - [Conservation Grazing](#)



## ANIMAL BOXES



### DESCRIPTION

You can help increase bird, small mammal and insect populations by providing plenty of places to nest. A nestbox is an excellent substitute for a missing habitat, like a tree hole; however, the priority should always be to try to provide a natural habitat.

The species you attract will depend on the location, the type of box, and the size of the entrance hole, so target species will need to be considered first. With bird boxes it is best to face them between north and east. This will reduce exposure to strong sunlight from the south and to prevailing winds and rain from the south-west. Have a strategy for cleaning the box, during the dormant times. If making a box, avoid using heavily treated woods or applying wood treatments as the residual chemicals used are highly toxic.

Bat boxes are also available and can be attached to trees or buildings. It can take a few years for bats to start using a box. A single roosting bat only requires a very small crack to roost in and is likely to find this already in older buildings or trees.

Hedgehogs are particularly vulnerable during their winter hibernation and disturbance during this time can be detrimental to their health. To enable peaceful hibernation, hedgehog homes can be provided in well-connected gardens.

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

- What species are already using man-made boxes in the area?
- Are all available boxes being used? Is there a surplus or are more needed?
- What species would you like to encourage through providing more boxes?

### SUGGESTED SYMBOL / LEGEND

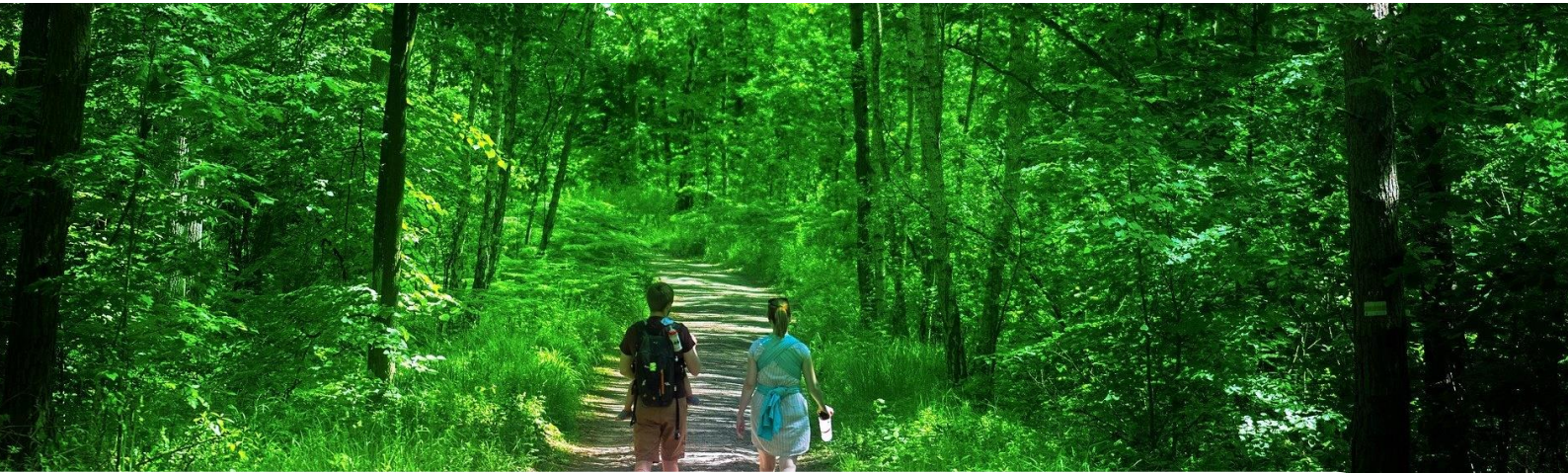
Each shape and letter to be written in green if used or red if unused or not sure

- Circle for generic small bird box
- Circle and SW for swift box
- Circle and HS for House Sparrow box
- Triangle for owl box
- Square and H for hedgehog box
- Square and B for bat box

### REFERENCES

- RSPB - [Build a bird box](#)
- Wildlife Trust - [How to build a bat box](#)
- Bat Conservation Trust - [Bat Boxes](#)
- Gardeners' World - [How to make a hedgehog house](#)
- British Hedgehogs – [Hedgehog Homes](#)
- Buglife - [Wildlife Gardening - Building for Bees](#)
- Action for Swifts – [Activities and ideas for swifts](#)





## NATURE RESERVES



### DESCRIPTION

There are a range of nature reserves identified in the Cambridgeshire countryside. These include National Nature Reserves (NNRs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and other sites managed for nature such as Forestry England land, and Langdyke Trust, Wildlife Trust and Nene Park Trust sites.

They offer a range of opportunity for both the rare and special wildlife of this area, but also some of the best places for people to interact and engage with nature.

Whilst the management of these sites may not be directly in your control, there may be activities on land that you manage adjacent to the reserve which can help support conservation and/or public engagement aims of the site managers (and conversely, actions that should be avoided).

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

- What sites are managed for nature in your area?
- Do you have any statutory protected areas such as SSSI or Ancient Woodland?
- If these aren't under your control, are there measures you could discuss with landowners of adjacent land that will support the wildlife or act to buffer those sites from harm?
- What are the key species that the site is managed for? Are there ways you can encourage creation of supporting habitat nearby for them?

### CLASSIFICATION

- SSSI – Site of Special Scientific Interest
- CWS – County Wildlife Site
- NNR – National Nature Reserve
- LGS – Local Geological Site
- LNR - Local Nature Reserves

### SUGGESTED SYMBOL / LEGEND

Coloured according to the main habitat type and labelled NR

### REFERENCES

- Langdyke Countryside Trust - [About](#)
- Nene Park Trust – [About](#)
- Wildlife Trust – [Nature Reserves](#)
- The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire – [Nature Reserves](#), [County Wildlife Sites](#)
- Natural England - [Sites of Special Scientific Interest](#)
- Forestry England - [Visit](#)
- GOV.UK - [National Nature Reserves in England](#)



# FARMLAND



## DESCRIPTION

Working with farmers and landowners to look at how to make farming a sustainable, environmentally sound and viable business is vital for both our wildlife and our rural communities.

Our farmland provides habitat that already offers corridors for wildlife to traverse the local landscape. The hedges, ditches and flower-rich margins on the edge of an arable field will offer food and shelter for birds and invertebrates; the crop itself will host skylark and brown hare; and the soil is a precious resource that needs nurturing and protecting for future generations.

Public footpaths offering access across farmed land is a key way that local communities can interact with and understand the benefits that nature-rich farmland brings.

Contributing to a local nature recovery plan will help the farming community deliver the emerging principles of the Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme. It will demonstrate how improvements to the environment can be made on each holding; how this helps deliver environmental aims alongside their neighbouring land managers; and how this effort fits into a collaborative landscape-scale approach to restore nature

## SURVEY QUESTIONS

- What habitat features are present in the farm landscape?
- Are there existing hedges, ditches, trees, ponds, flower-rich margins or uncultivated headlands that could– working with the landowners - be retained and/or restored?
- Are there opportunities to work with landowners to consider widening these habitat corridors or further opportunities where unproductive land could be taken out of cultivation and managed for wildlife or resource protection, if the owners desire?

## CLASSIFICATION

Record the main features of the farmland, alongside any key species seen whilst undertaking the survey.

## SUGGESTED SYMBOL / LEGEND

Coloured pink

## REFERENCES

- Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group – [About](#)
- Farm Wildlife – [Local Advice](#)
- RSPB – [Farming Advice](#)
- Operation Turtle Dove – [Actions to help Turtle Doves](#)
- RSPB – [Farmland Birds](#)





## WATER BODIES / PONDS



### DESCRIPTION

Whether large or small, in the countryside or in a garden, ponds and other water bodies can be of great benefit to nature. The most diverse wildlife is often found in waterbodies which are unshaded and have a range of depths, including sinuous shallow margins and deeper central areas that will remain wet even during times of drought. However, it is important that a wide variety of waterbodies are maintained. Seasonal ponds, that dry completely in the summer and may hold only shallow water for a few months of the year, are an important habitat which has suffered dramatic decline through drainage or conversion to “real” ponds, for example.

A range of fringe vegetation and both floating and submerged aquatic plants will provide additional diversity. However, many species need bare mud and some like weed-free water. Water quality is a critical factor in ponds of all types, and some of the best ponds are spring-fed. Water bodies, especially small ones, can be rapidly damaged by nutrient or silt inputs, and introduced species from gardens.

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

- Does the waterbody support any protected species e.g. great crested newt or water vole?
- Are there non-native invasive species e.g. New Zealand pygmy-weed?
- What is the water clarity like? Is the water body regularly used by large numbers of ducks/geese? Is it regularly disturbed by dogs swimming in it?
- Where does the pond get its water from? Spring-fed, rain, drain, etc.
- How wide and deep is it when full?
- How many kinds of aquatic and marginal plants does it have?
- Does it dry out, and if so, how often and for how long?
- What proportion of the pond is shaded? On what aspect are the trees located (N, E, S, W)?

### CLASSIFICATION

Ponds are so varied that it is difficult to define features that make a “good” pond. Water quality is important, and most of the best ponds are largely unshaded. Proximity to other water bodies is always helpful, and the presence of invasive alien species never is. Varied vegetation is good if the pond is permanent. The best way to decide the quality of a pond is to survey it to see exactly what is there.

### SUGGESTED SYMBOL / LEGEND

Coloured blue

### REFERENCES

- Freshwater Habitat Trust - [Advice](#)
- JNCC - [UK Biodiversity Action Plans Priority Habitats](#)
- Froglife – [Information and Advice](#)
- Amphibian and Reptile - <https://www.arc-trust.org/>
- ARG UK – [ARG resources](#)
- RSPB Nature After Minerals - [restoring extraction sites for wildlife](#)



## WATERWAYS / RIVERS



### DESCRIPTION

The Cambridgeshire countryside has some iconic Rivers including the Cam, Nene and Welland, and a host of other key waterways are found in the area.

Backchannels and ditches provide important refuges and habitat corridors for wildlife and are often important historic and cultural features in their own right.

Key aims for our waterways and rivers are to help them to avoid impacts of nutrient run-off, pollution and invasive non-native species; to protect and manage riverbank vegetation and trees so that they support a range of species; and to ensure any maintenance work is carried out in a way that benefits species such as water voles, otters, kingfishers, and encourages a diverse array of fish and aquatic invertebrates.

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

- Does the water flow swiftly or slowly?
- How much vegetation covers the channel?
- Are there nearby trees (note especially any willow pollards, and whether they are still managed)?
- Is there woody debris in the water to provide additional habitat?
- Does the waterway support any protected species e.g. otter or water vole?
- Are there any non-native invasive species present e.g. Himalayan balsam?
- Are there opportunities to improve management of the banks, or create/restore adjacent pools or backchannels?

### CLASSIFICATION

Describe key features along the river, such as vegetation cover in the channel; presence of substantial bankside trees; pools, riffles and gravel areas; or woody debris/broken branches in the channel.

### SUGGESTED SYMBOL / LEGEND

Coloured blue

### REFERENCES

- Buglife - [Crayfish Hub](#)
- UK Rivers Network - [local community river groups](#)
- The Rivers Trust - [Projects](#)
- Non-native Species Secretariat - [species identification and advice](#)
- Welland Rivers Trust – [About](#)





LEGEND

|                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Gardens and Allotments               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                       |
| Trees                                | TR                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | N – New, Y – Young, M – Mature, V – Veteran, TPO –Tree Preservation Order, D – Dead, W – Willow Pollard               |
| Hedgerows                            |  Good<br> Average<br> Poor  Green lanes                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                       |
| Woodlands*<br>*Indicate size and age | WD                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | B – Broadleaf, C – Conifer, M – Mixed, PS - Protected species<br>R - Rare flora or fauna, F - feature: pond, bank etc |
| Orchards                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | N – New<br>O - Old                                                                                                    |
| Grasslands/Wild Meadows              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | G – Good, A – Average, P - Poor                                                                                       |
| Churches and Grounds                 | CH                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | B – Bat roost in the building /grounds<br>M –managed church grounds, W –less managed church grounds                   |
| Animal boxes                         |  Bird  Swift Box  House Sparrow<br> Owl box  Hedgehog Box  Bat Box |                                                                                                                       |
| School Grounds                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | SCHF – School Field, SCHW – School with Willdlife Area, RG – Recreation Ground                                        |
| Farmland                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                       |
| Waterways / Rivers / Ponds           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                       |

## DECIDE YOUR OBJECTIVES



The next step is to agree what habitats the you want to create or improve.

Examples might include:

- Plant 100 individual trees across the area
- Restore 3 and create 5 new ponds
- Create two small wildflower rich areas of grassland
- Increase the number of swifts that can be seen flying over the village by putting up 20 swift nest boxes
- Increase the number of hedgehogs that are reported in village gardens by encouraging more nature friendly gardening and the creation of hedgehog routes through gardens
- Reduce the amount of roadkill by provision of green lanes
- Increase the quality and signage of footpaths/cycleways

Your local partners can assist with this decision making by advising on particular habitats that might be encouraged in each area based on the existing habitats and what could be most realistically created or improved. Any planting of trees and wildflowers must be native and preferably of local provenance.

## DEVELOP A NATURE RECOVERY MAP



Your nature recovery map should show where you want to create or improve habitats and how they link up with what is already in place. Each nature recovery plan will be different, reflecting the geography and geology of each location and the different objectives identified.

Examples of what you might put on a map include:

1. Hedgerows that could be restored (gapped up) or opportunities to plant new hedges
2. Road-side verges that could become wild-flower rich
3. The locations of old ponds that could be restored or new ones created
4. Areas that could be sown as wild-flower rich grassland
5. Places for tree planting – either groups of trees or individual, 'standard' trees that could make landscape features
6. Land in public ownership or that landowners have volunteered that might be used to create community orchards
7. Locations for nest box schemes
8. Community gardens/allotments to promote first-hand active engagement of the community with nature (*as they say "Gardens and gardening are our doorway to the natural environment"*)

Nature recovery plans should respect the interests of private landowners and not suggest new land-uses or habitat management or creation on private property unless the landowner has already been consulted and approves these plans.



## DEVELOP AN ANNUAL TIMELINE



A nature recovery plan shouldn't be a long document. It should include the objectives of the plan, a map of current wildlife interest, the nature recovery map and an annual timeline which sets out what the aims are to achieve each year.

This should also include an indicative budget and any training requirements, so that the community understands the resources, skills and knowledge it will need to deliver the plan.

Speak to your local organisations who might be able to help with:

- Co-ordinating grant and funding applications
- Helping source equipment
- Providing training
- Providing professional advice and examples of best practice
- Establishing links to other organisations that may be willing to support your projects

## DEVELOP A PLAN FOR MAINTENANCE



It's going to be just as important to think about how you manage the new habitats for the long-term. Your plan needs to think about what work will be required to keep the habitats in good condition and what that will mean in terms of resources – both human and financial.

In addition to engaging with the local community in the creation or initial improvement of habitats the plan should develop ideas for how the habitats within the area will be maintained. This might include links to external organisations or groups who will benefit from the opportunities of working and visiting the area.

## WHAT'S NEXT?



Once you have developed your plan, you will need to put it into action. Think about how you can work with other organisations, neighbouring communities and how you can share resources or bulk buy goods

Plan how you can link in to other activities or national events taking place such as 30 Days Wild by the Wildlife Trusts, National Insect Week, Dawn Chorus Day or Open Farm Sunday.

Consider how you will monitor the progress of your work, the frequency of collection and what you will do with this information.

Promote the great work that you are doing through your local newsletters, social media and press and finally don't forget to tell Natural Cambridgeshire how you're getting on.

## ACHIEVING DOUBLING NATURE



The work you do as part of the nature recovery plans will help achieve the doubling nature ambitions, which will:

1. Deliver significant **protection of species and restoration and enhancement of key wildlife habitats** for the landscape we know and love
2. Create **healthy communities in healthy environments**. Improved green space and access to nature will help people to enjoy and appreciate the nature around them, leading to healthier and happier lives
3. Create a more **resilient countryside and communities**, where nature is at the heart of our approach to tackling the climate emergency
4. Raise levels of **local pride, aspiration, and community cohesion** by helping communities to understand, appreciate and enjoy their natural environment
5. Support a **green transport infrastructure**, where priority is given to walkers, cyclists, and riders
6. Pilot and champion **best practice sustainable development** in all aspects of future development
7. Produce **new jobs and economic opportunities** allied to the delivery of these objectives
8. Influence **environmentally friendly farming practices**, sustainable tourism, and recreational activities.

The achievement of these objectives will create a better quality of life for residents and visitors through a sustainable local environment with easy access to rich and inspiring nature.

Doubling nature is something that everyone – from individuals, through to developers, farmers, and councillors – can adopt in their decision-making processes to play a part in the delivery of nature recovery.

*#DoublingNature*

