ROCKINGHAM FOREST VISION

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Parish Nature Recovery Guide

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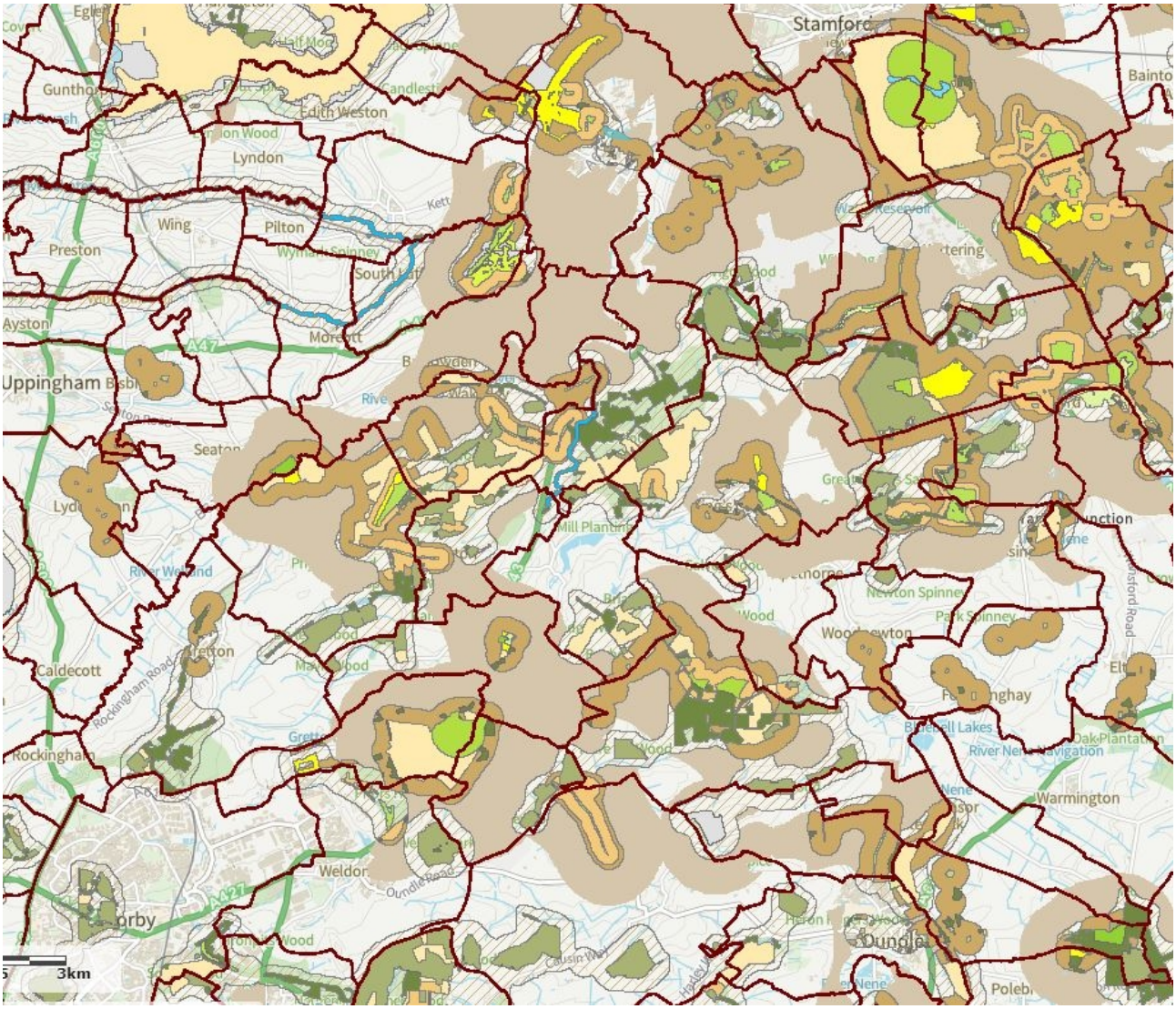

Cover image – based on MAGIC Database (www.magic.gov.uk)

Parish Nature Recovery Guide

Rockingham Forest Vision partners

Introduction

This guide aims to help communities boost nature in their locality, parish or town, thus contributing to a new vision for Rockingham Forest.

Initially the guide is for the 35 parishes and towns in the northern part of Rockingham Forest as this is the area of the current Rockingham Forest Vision project. However it may then be rolled out more widely in 2025.

The guide is part of the Building the Links for Rockingham Forest project developed by Rockingham Forest Vision (www.rockinghamforest.org.uk) and funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. This two-year partnership project, to Dec 2024, will link people to the habitats and wildlife of the northern part of Rockingham Forest. It aims to connect local communities to the natural and cultural heritage of Rockingham Forest and raise its local and national profile. We see this as a first step towards connecting the core remaining wooded areas with enriched and biodiverse landscapes.

The project partners are:

- Nene Rivers Trust
- North Northamptonshire Council
- The Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs and Northants
- Natural England
- Forestry England
- The Royal Forestry Society
- East Mercia Rivers Trust
- Hazel Woodland Products
- Butterfly Conservation

As a key part of the project, support is being offered to communities to help them develop Nature Recovery Plans. As well as this guide, additional community support includes:

- support for parish Tree or River Wardens who would receive training and support;
- guided walks, training courses and volunteering opportunities that could be promoted to the local community;
- guidance and support for biodiversity in Neighbourhood Plans;
- networking with other parish and town communities;
- promotion of community nature recovery activities on our project website;
- exploring with project partners ways of working with local landowners to get funding for nature recovery;
- guidance on applying for small grants for parish nature recovery projects.

Planning a route to parish nature recovery

This guide aims to help you recognise the biodiversity assets in your parish or local area and then explore with others some opportunities for nature recovery . It will help you explore the past, present and potential future use of the land for nature recovery in your parish.

Communities know most about their local area and have a clear sense of where they feel boundaries lie. However, it is very useful to consider how the area is understood by others, such as North Northamptonshire Council and Government agencies. For this reason, it is generally best to conduct the project within a parish boundary.

The guide encourages you to develop a plan – the Nature Recovery Plan – with both long-term aspirations, and short-term objectives for realistic success. Every community and area is different, so each plan will be different in vision, scale and timing. It will depend on your available resources of volunteers, time and money and on the level of partnership with other stakeholders and even with neighbouring communities and parishes.

The Nature Recovery Plan could either build on an existing Neighbourhood Plan or help to develop the environment section of a new Neighbourhood Plan.

How to use this guide

Many people will already be acquainted with the term nature recovery and why there is a need to plan for it. However, if you need a quick refresher you may find the two appendices useful.

Otherwise, you may be able to jump straight in, and start working through the sections which are arranged roughly in chronological order. There are two important pieces of research to carry out as you get started. You will need to find out what's already known about the nature, habitat, land use and ownership of your area and at the same time you need to find out who your allies might be. This is covered in sections 1 and 2.

Section 3 describes what a Nature Recovery Plan may look like. It introduces the Lawton Principle and suggests ways of categorising the component parts of your area. Sections 4, 5 and 6 offer advice on types of action on these different component parts. These sections are the longest in the whole guide. In section 7 there is advice on agreeing and publicising the Nature Recovery Plan while section 8 deals with the all-important matter of funding.

After all that working from home it will be a relief to get out and do things on the ground and this is covered in section 9. This outdoor work could be carried out right through the project.

Of course there is inevitable overlap between some sections. The guide is not prescriptive so you may not need to follow every section of the guide, or in the order described.

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1) Map what is already known about your area

Mapping nature

➢***As you start to explore existing maps of your parish or local area, start trying to assess which mapping system will be easiest for you to use later.***

Sitting at your desk you have an amazingly wide range of sources available to explore what is currently known about your parish or local area. Many of these sources will present data in the form of maps, some of which you may later want to amend, creating your own maps to show land uses, different nature areas and features.

Here are four mapping systems which may be useful at different stages and for different purposes. We would recommend Parish Online as probably the easiest and most useful. It can also be used for mapping other parish matters such as Neighbourhood Plans.

- **Parish Online** (www.parish-online.co.uk). This is a chargeable online mapping tool for parishes. Most North Northamptonshire parish councils have now purchased this mapping system. There is a 1 month free trial and 35% discount for parish councils participating in this project, bringing the cost to under £50 per year.
- **Google Earth** (https://earth.google.com/web). This is a free application that lets you view satellite images, maps, terrain and other features. It can quickly give you an overview of the whole area without getting muddy boots!
- **Google My Maps** (https://mymaps.google.com). A free online mapping service where you can add and annotate layers. The map can be freely shared with residents and other stakeholders to investigate and send feedback.
- **Ordnance Survey maps** (https://osmaps.com). Explorer 1:25 000 scale OS maps show key features such as field boundaries, rights of way and broad habitats. A paper map can be used with tracing paper overlay marking boundaries, areas and features. Alternatively an enlarged photocopy can be used with annotations and additional markings for personal use, but beware of copyright and licensing laws if you intend to publish the map. Parish councils can use the North Northamptonshire Council licence. This paper based approach could easily and non-technically engage a small group of people around a table or outdoors.

Remember with all four mapping systems, some features may have changed since the map was created or the satellite photograph was taken.

Searching online records and maps

➢***Explore your parish through some online records and maps***

Here are some other sources of online maps and data that may be useful for you.

- **Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre** (https://northantsbrc.org.uk/services/ourservices). What important wildlife has been recorded in your area? There are important sources of biological data readily available to all community groups in Northamptonshire from Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre. NBRC holds information on sites, species and habitats across the county and can provide you with a map showing all the environmental information held for your area and whether it is protected by law or planning policies.
- **British Geological Survey maps** (https://www.bgs.ac.uk/map-viewers/bgs-geology-viewer). This free app lets you access detailed information about the geology all around you. Tapping the map reveals the bedrock and superficial geology as well as explaining how certain features were formed.
- **Defra's MAGIC maps** (www.magic.gov.uk). This brings together information on key environmental schemes and designations from environmental agencies like Natural England

and the Forestry Commission. You can use it to explore features including statutory designations (e.g SSSIs), habitats and landscape features.

- **Land Registry searches** (www.gov.uk/search-property-information-land-registry). These can identify landownership and title plans etc, but each search costs £3.
- **Historical maps** (https://maps.nls.uk). Surprisingly, old maps of our local area can be found on the National Library of Scotland by using *Map Finder with Marker Pin*. Place the pin and historical maps will be shown in the right hand column.
- **Linesearch before you dig** (https://lsbud.co.uk). You may need to consider the services that run under or over any land you want to improve for nature. This website shows you things like water pipes, sewer pipes, BT lines, overhead or below ground electric cables and gas pipes.
- **Planning documents**. You may also want to explore summaries of key biodiversity planning documents:
    - Rockingham Forest Natural Character Area
    - Northamptonshire Biodiversity Action Plan

Identifying landowners

➢***Identify and mainly focus on the publicly owned and accessible land.***

Determining who owns the land is not always easy but it is a crucial stage in planning for nature recovery. It is certainly useful to distinguish public from private land on the base map. Schools, churches and councils (parish or county) will probably own some parts of your area, especially such things as recreation grounds or roadside verges. With these publicly accessible spaces it may be easier to make plans and raise funding for any new management of the areas or features. Private landowners may welcome discussions with the parish council or other community groups about their plans for the future, especially in terms of future agricultural and agroforestry grants.

Really usefully MAGIC maps (www.magic.gov.uk) can be used to explore the ownership or tenancy of some land that has received government grants. Click on *Land Based Schemes*, then *Agri-Environment* followed by *Countryside* and *Environmental Stewardship*. Then click the <i> icon on the top of the screen and move the mouse to any shaded area.

The clerk of the parish council may also be able to help you identify private landownership.

- Parish or town council-owned land may have most potential to influence change - target most effort here first.
- North Northamptonshire Council-owned land may have medium potential to influence - target efforts here gradually.
- Privately owned land may have least potential to influence change - not a high priority at first but worth mapping on the plan for the future. You may be able to explore some alternative land management opportunities with any willing landowners by liaising with the Rockingham Forest Vision partners particularly Natural England, the Forestry Commission and the WildlifeTrust BCN.

Surveying open spaces and fields

➢***Survey local open spaces and fields from old records, maps and nearby roads or public rights of way.***

Although you can gather much information on your local area while sitting at your desk, carrying out field surveys is a great way to get even more local and up to date information. The type of surveys you can do will clearly depend on the expertise and enthusiasm of volunteer recorders.

Some parishes may already have a lot of evidence about the wildlife and natural habitats in their area from previous surveys but others may need to do surveys as part of the planning work.

One recommended place to start is to record the current field use – is it being used for grazing, arable crops or growing trees? What is it's name? Does it have fences or hedges? Are there field margins? How many large trees are there in the hedgerows? Is there any public access? Such a survey does not require specialised wildlife experience or expertise and is an excellent way to get to know your parish area at first hand.

Some of the fields you may wish to survey can be seen from roads and public rights of way which can be found on the 1:25000 OS maps. But many habitats are on private land so you should obtain permission from the landowner before carrying out a survey. Even if you don't need to go off the public rights of way you should let the landowner of the adjacent land know. You should tell them who will be carrying out the survey, when, why and how it will be done. Make sure that they get a copy of the results.

Recording with photos

➢ ***Identify and encourage volunteers who can record your mapping and planning activities using photos and even video.***

➢ ***Use old photos of the local landscape to take another photo from the same fixed point to record and demonstrate changes over time.***

Photos and simple video can also be used for promoting and visualising your Nature Recovery Plan. However, from the beginning make sure that your photos are catalogued. Which grid references using an Ordnance Survey mapping website, which field, which particular oak tree does it show? The electronic file may record the location and time the photo is taken, giving the file a name. However putting it in an electronic folder or album will save much time and frustration later. It is wise to create a database of photos at the start of planning and when doing your wildlife and field surveys.

At a future season or year follow up photos could be taken from the same positions. These paired, fixed point and time delayed photos can be used as a visual record of changes over time. This can provide a valuable baseline to evaluate changing landscapes and habitats – for better or worse!

Building a Biodiversity Base Map

➢ ***Create one or more maps or layers of the parish or local area identifying the existing land uses, designations, opportunities and ownership.***

A Biodiversity Base Map is an annotated representation, possibly in different layers, or GIS rasters, of some of the key habitats, species, land use and ownership within the boundary of your parish or local area. You can start to create it from the combination of existing maps and data and surveys described above, adding to it as you move on to the next stages of your project.

First, decide on the boundary of the area you'd like to explore. Often this will be the parish boundary, which can be found on Parish Online, OS maps and MAGIC maps.

Different layers of your Biodiversity Base Map could cover different items, such as:

- Designated land (eg. Pocket parks, Local Nature Reserves, SSSIs)
- Woodlands (eg. trees of interest, hedgerows, copses)
- Grasslands (eg. pastures, roadside verges, churchyards)
- Wetlands (eg. ponds, rivers, streams)
- Species or habitat records from NBRC or other sources as numbered annotations for particular sites linked to more detailed lists or descriptions.
- Public and private landownership

2) Join together and communicate with others

Identifying volunteers

➢***Recruit volunteers with different interests, skills and backgrounds related to nature in the parish.***

➢***Confirm how the different skills and interests of the planning group could be used and supported.***

People living and working in your parish often have all the knowledge and resource that is needed to manage the local environment, so start by giving all those people the chance to contribute. By talking with them it is possible to bring together the community's collective knowledge of the natural environment on a large-scale map.

Volunteers with different skills, social contacts, ages and backgrounds are essential to develop a realistic and generally acceptable plan. People without prior wildlife knowledge or experience can still helpfully contribute with their IT, promotional or communication skills. The most important thing is their enthusiasm to get involved.

- Volunteers who are parish councillors will definitely help explore the options democratically.
- Volunteers who are landowners will often have considerable local knowledge of other landowners and uses of land.
- Volunteers with experience in online mapping or recording wildlife will be able to explore and record the range of biodiversity in the parish.
- Volunteers who are Tree Wardens or River Wardens will have support networks that can provide additional guidance.
- Volunteers who are good communicators are gold dust! Whether using face-to-face means, social media, the written word or powerful images, all can make a huge difference to any project.

Key volunteers can be recruited by word of mouth, village notices or social media. Try to establish a core team of enthusiasts early. Once you are under way, more generally interested residents can be involved.

It is easier to retain willing volunteers if you are able to make meetings and activities sociable and enjoyable, with plenty of food, drink and fun, but also with a clearly defined purpose.

Involving stakeholders

➢***Use the stakeholder interest/ influence grid to help you determine the level of engagement with each of your stakeholders.***

Stakeholders are people who have an interest or concern and it is important to identify and engage with them to help support your Nature Recovery Plan. To make your plan successful, you will need to carefully consider who your stakeholders are and the level of interaction you will need with them.

The stakeholder interest/ influence grid (below) relates the potential to influence against the interest in local nature recovery in Rockingham Forest. This will help you plan how frequently and intensively that you communicate and engage with different people and groups. For each stakeholder you might also consider:

- The influence that you might want them to make.
- How and when you might communicate with them.
- Starting any conversation from their main interest.

Influence potential	**High**	**Keep satisfied with progress** • Site users eg dog walkers • Residents • Landowners • Funders	**Engage and review regularly with plans** • Parish Councillors, Clerk • Volunteers • Tree and River Wardens • Managers of nature areas
	Low	**Monitor interests and reactions** • Local sponsoring business • Local supplying business • Local shop and community centre • School and parents group	**Keep informed for future engagement** • County Councillors • NNC Officers • Neighbouring parish councils • Project Officer
		Low	**High**
	Interest in local nature recovery		

Working with other groups

➢***Explore which groups in your parish or local area might work with you to develop a Nature Recovery Plan.***

It is important to have the right support to help you develop and deliver your Nature Recovery Plan. Below is a list of organisations and groups you could consider contacting for help and possible partnership:

- The Parish Council
- Neighbouring town and parish councils
- Any grouping of local landowners and tenant farmers
- Parochial Church Council
- "Friends of" groups
- Recreation groups e.g. Walking or gardening
- Women's Institute
- Retirement club
- Local history group
- Local conservation volunteer group
- Scouts and guides or other youth group
- School and Parents Association

If you think you will need funding or public liability insurance, you could try to partner with an existing group such as the Parish Council, Women's Institute or Scouts. Their existing public liability insurance could cover your project at no extra cost. You may also find it easier to raise funds through an existing established group (with its own bank account) rather than on your own.

Collaborating with neighbouring parishes and parish councils whilst developing a Nature Recovery Plan can achieve greater outcomes by improving landscape scale impacts on habitats including better wildlife corridor connectivity and resilience.

The Project Officer will be a key contact for you, providing support and guidance alongside the project workshops. They will also be able to guide you to other project partners and organisations who could offer specialist advice and support.

Communicating with stakeholders

➢***Present the Biodiversity Base Map(s) to the local community and key groups.***

A clear communications plan can prevent a lot of worry and misunderstanding from stakeholders. Good communications are one of the most important factors to consider when designing your plan. It is very important to plan clearly who will be the main contacts, how they will be contacted and then who they will keep informed. To bring as many people as possible on board with the proposed changes they must know what the change is and why it is proposed. Key stakeholders must know at the earliest stage. You can then introduce them gradually to the possible changes of local land use, management and environmental features.

Here are some ways in which you could present your Biodiversity Base Map(s), and build support for developing your Nature Recovery Plan:

Passive approach

- Poster on noticeboards with associated leaflet and special display in a local shop, church or village hall.
- Article, with photos and graphics, for the local press or parish magazine.
- Parish or other website.

Active approach

- Display at a local event such as an annual fete.
- Special event inviting residents to hear about your project.
- Presentation and discussion with Councillors or at a Parish Council meeting.
- Presentation to a neighbouring parish Councillor or group.
- Talk from visiting expert about key species or habitat.

Residents and other stakeholders could give any additional information and ideas about nature recovery.

- At any meetings, displays or events people could add their comments and suggestions on the Biodiversity Base Map with post-it markers.
- A simple online survey (eg. using Google Forms) could gather comments and suggestions, with paper copies in a local collection point.

Developing a vision for nature recovery

➢***With other people or groups develop a clear vision for the future of nature in your parish or local area.***

➢***Get feedback on the vision for nature recovery and how it could be achieved. Use this to get more support for developing your Nature Recovery Plan.***

Most importantly, your community needs to develop and communicate a clear vision for the nature of your parish or local area. Successive generations in your parish or local area will undoubtedly want to inherit a sustainable and healthy environment for both people and nature.

3) Plan for nature recovery

Using Habitat Opportunity Maps

➢***Contact the Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre to obtain your parish Habitat Opportunity Maps as pdf files.***

➢***Use the Habitat Opportunity Maps and your Biodiversity Base Map to mark on a new layer where there are opportunities to create the five areas on the diagram below.***

For the next stage of the plan NBRC will be able to provide some Habitat Opportunity Maps identifying the opportunities for restoring and creating habitats in the parish. Natural Capital Solutions along with partners have produced a series of these maps for Northamptonshire. They show opportunities to enrich and create new habitats for the benefit of both people and wildlife. They also identify potential areas for the expansion of key habitats which are able to deliver particular benefits including biodiversity. These benefits are often referred to as ecosystem services and include regulation of flooding and air quality, and cultural benefits such as people's access to green space.

Opportunities have been mapped to enhance biodiversity for three different broad habitat types (broadleaved and mixed woodland, semi-natural grassland, and wet grassland and wetland). These Biodiversity Opportunity Maps highlight areas that are best located in terms of their connectivity between existing habitats and are therefore most appropriate from an ecological point of view. The remaining opportunity maps highlight the top 10% of sites for each respective service.

Guide to using Habitat Opportunity Maps

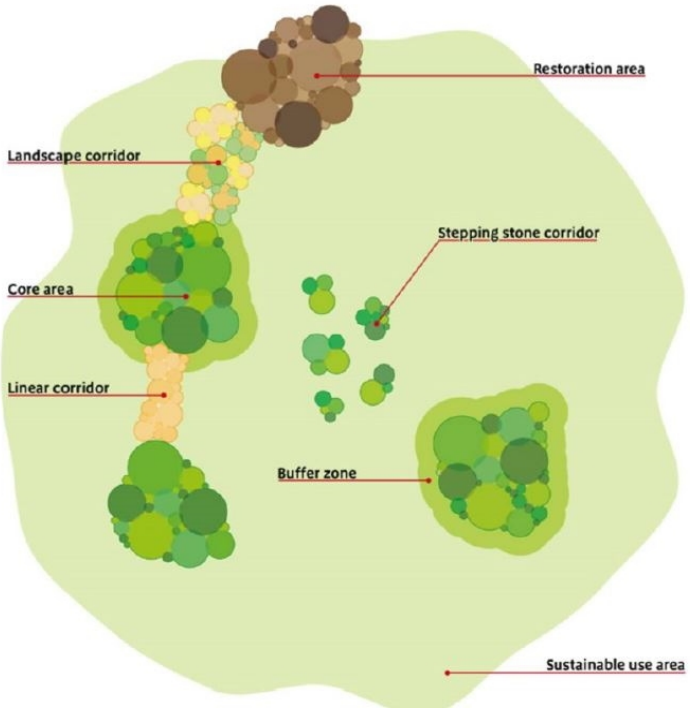
Creating a network of nature-rich sites

➢***Start to prepare your Nature Recovery Plan by mapping and describing the different areas for nature recovery.***

In 2010, Professor John Lawton presented a report to the UK Government, called Making Space for Nature. The report called for the creation of a nationwide ecological network operating at all levels from the parish upwards. This differs from the earlier conservation approach of nature in isolated reserves. The report described five components of an effective ecological network:

Five components of an ecological network

ref. - Making Space for Nature



- **Core Areas:** with the highest wildlife value.
- **Restoration Areas**: where species and habitats can be restored.
- **Corridors and Stepping Stones:** that allow movement and interaction.
- **Buffer Zones:** that protect richer areas (core and restoration areas, corridors and stepping stones) from the pressures of human influence.
- **Sustainable Use Areas:** areas of greater human influence and resource use.

To create an ecological network that operates more naturally and effectively, Lawton called for some simple measures - more, bigger, better and joined-up sites within the landscape. Some or all of these five areas, corridors and zones can be developed in your parish or local area. Be ambitious and think about nature recovery in your parish for the long term. Future generations will value this planning. Think of more, bigger, better, joined-up spaces for nature.

4) Identify the nature-rich Core Areas

Promoting and managing the protected sites

➢***Identify the most nature-rich sites as Core Areas for nature recovery. They could cross parish boundaries so consult with neighbouring parishes.***

➢***Contact the managers or landowners of these sites (eg. SSSIs or LWSs) to explore what support could be offered from volunteers in the parish (eg. for monitoring, recording or simple management).***

➢***Mark these potential Core Areas on a layer for the final Nature Recovery Map.***

Promote the value of these particular sites if there is public access and with agreement from the managers or landowners. Your most nature-rich areas may already be recognised with some designation, providing higher levels of protection from development. These may include statutory designations such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), or non-statutory designations such as Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs).

SSSIs - SSSIs form a national network of sites which also underpin sites designated to meet international obligations. All National Nature Reserves (eg. Easton Hornstocks NNR) are also designated as SSSIs. Certain activities are prohibited in SSSIs and there are legal duties concerning how the areas should be managed and protected.

LNRs - Parish and town councils can create LNRs if North Northamptonshire Council has given them the power to do this. The local authority must control the LNR land - either through ownership, a lease or an agreement with the owner. As a manager of an LNR you need to care for and protect its natural features. You must also make your land accessible for any visitors.

Guide to LNRs from Natural England

LWSs – Parish and town councils can propose candidate LWSs to the NBRC. They are identified and selected locally, by partnerships of local authorities, nature conservation charities, statutory agencies, ecologists and local nature experts, using robust, scientifically-determined criteria and detailed ecological surveys. They have some protection through the local authority planning policies. They are often on private land. As well as being Core Areas, equivalent to SSSIs, they can also be Corridors, Stepping Stones or Buffer Zones in a local nature network.

Guide to Local Wildlife Sites from The Wildlife Trusts

Most of these Core Areas will have management plans because even designated and protected sites need management. For example, woodland may need regular coppicing, grassland may need scrub clearance. All will need regular species monitoring and recording. Local volunteers can help with both active management and monitoring. Several of the Rockingham Forest Vision partners (Natural England, Forestry England, North Northamptonshire Council and the Wildlife Trust BCN) manage these Core Areas and are continually looking for new local volunteers. Key contacts for these organisations and volunteering opportunities are on the Rockingham Forest Vision website (www.rockinghamforest.org.uk/building-links).

Understanding environmental laws

➢***Be aware of the biodiversity duty of parish councils.***

➢***Consider applying for designated status for any unprotected site after reviewing its wildlife value.***

Parish and town councils have responsibilities relating to biodiversity and planning, and a duty of care when working in sensitive habitats or where there are protected species. It is useful to know which pieces of legislation and planning policy offer protection to the natural environment.

The Environment Bill 2020 is key legislation that is still being worked on and will protect and enhance our environment. It aims to restore natural habitats, increase biodiversity, reduce waste and make better use of natural resources. It also aims to halt the decline in species and protect 30% of the UK for nature by 2030. It will also require new developments to improve or create habitats for nature, such as through Biodiversity Net Gain.

As a public authority in England parish councils have a duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their policy or decision making. Many species of plants and animals in England and often their supporting features and habitats are protected. What you can and cannot do by law varies from species to species.

If one of your best sites is not already protected, you could apply for its designation as a Local Wildlife Site or Local Nature Reserve. The Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre can give advice and support to parish and town councils and other volunteer groups on new potential designations.

Biodiversity duty for public authorities from DEFRA

Guide to UK environment law from UK Environmental Law Association

5) Identify the Restoration Areas

This section deals with areas and features that already exist and suggests what you may be able to do to improve them. The next section will offer suggestions for creating entirely new features.

The potential Restoration Areas already have some biodiversity value but the component habitats and species could be enriched with careful, sensitive management. In some cases wildlife will thrive when left alone and undisturbed. However many of our most valuable habitats need ongoing management in order to survive. Often this will involve traditional methods like hay cutting and low intensity grazing on grasslands, or coppicing of woodlands. With many areas, a small change in management can make a big difference. For example, simply mowing grassland less frequently will result in more wildflowers for bees and areas for butterflies to breed.

Restoring areas and features

- ***Identify any sites as potential Restoration Areas for nature recovery. These are sites such as churchyards, recreation grounds or old hedgerows where a change of management could enrich the existing habitats.***

- ***Check how the sites are managed. For some sites discuss the value and methods of alternative management.***

- ***Mark these potential Restoration Areas on a layer for the final Nature Recovery Map.***

- ***Add numbered annotations to the layer, with a key giving more details.***

Mown grassland

Churchyards, cemeteries, recreation grounds, sports fields, parks, school grounds and roadside verges can all benefit biodiversity by having less closely mown grass, more native shrubs, hedgerows and trees and sloping, gradual boundary edges to each of these habitats.

All these publicly-accessible areas could benefit biodiversity by having different mowing regimes and a biodiversity management plan. However avoid locations for long grass that are at high risk of anti-social behaviours, such as dog fouling and littering.

There is likely to be a reaction to reducing the regularity of mowing because many people see tidiness as a virtue. You will have to work hard to overcome what seems to be a British pre-occupation with tidiness.

The Meadows Hub from Plantlife

Churchyards and cemeteries

These are often very old indeed and were sometimes previously hay meadows. The church grounds have often escaped the damaging effects of fertilisers and ploughs, so contain remnants of ancient grassland where fungi and wildflowers flourish. They can therefore be seen as representing relics of former countryside or unimproved pasture, supporting a variety of plants that are now rare such as devil's-bit scabious and betony. This ancient habitat can be improved with less mowing allowing the grassland plants to flower and seed but with the mown grass removed after the seeds have shed.

Action Pack from Caring for God's Acre

Guidance on conservation in churchyards from The Church of England

Recreation grounds, sports fields, parks and school grounds

Sympathetic management can maximise the benefit of boundary features, such as hedgerows and tree belts. Unused corners of recreational areas can be mown less and managed to increase the growth and range of wildflowers and therefore the value as food and shelter for invertebrates, small mammals and birds.

Increasing biodiversity in school grounds from Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust

Roadside verges

With the massive loss of unimproved grassland in post-war years, roadside verges now provide an important habitat for plants. Nationally up to 700 plant species could be associated with verges, all providing food and shelter for birds, small mammals and invertebrates. Typical plant families found on verges include umbellifers, vetches, bedstraws and knapweeds. The most valuable verges for wildlife are usually wide ones on less fertile soils, where management has been sympathetic, or on new road schemes where topsoil has been removed and sub-soil allowed to re-vegetate naturally. Some areas have to be cut for safety reasons, as with roadside hedges.

The greatest challenges with verge management are the cost of removing the mowings, mowing before seed-setting, control of injurious weeds such as ragwort and inappropriate planting with non-native species. Species diversity can be enriched by avoiding any mowing until early August and removing cuttings wherever possible. This will usually involve negotiations with highways or grounds maintenance teams from North Northamptonshire Council, or possibly neighbouring landowners. When surveying your verges be careful of the traffic and possibly provide interpretive signs, such as "Feed the bees".

Pollinator Strategy from North Northamptonshire Council

Practical guide to managing grassland roadside verges from Plantlife

Nettle and bramble patches

Much maligned, nettles are one of the most important native plants for wildlife in the UK, supporting over 40 species of insect. In some location they are by far the easiest way of boosting biodiversity and should be embraced and managed with this in mind. However they can provide a challenge when trying to establish other habitats such as meadows.

Brambles (wild blackberries) can be invasive and without management on a cyclical rotation threaten to take over other habitats such as grassland. However, a mature bramble in a sunny location is one of the best native plants for an array of species, including pollinators, small mammals and nesting birds. They are also popular with people who like eating the berries.

The edges can be cut back annually to ensure bramble does not encroach into unwanted areas. Part of the patch can also be cut back to ground level in the winter, every two years, to ensure a varied structure and encourage flowering and fruiting on newer canes.

Stinging Nettles from The Wildlife Trusts

Bramble from Fareham Borough Council

Old ponds

Many old ponds have suffered neglect or even been filled in, often as a result of changes in farming practices. Others occur on public land and can be equally threatened by the widespread encroachment of trees and bushes, pollution and invasive species. Many unmanaged ponds become overgrown with emergent plants such as reeds. So to restore the rich habitat of a pond some of these emergent plants need to be removed. But ponds in woodland, those surrounded by old and valuable trees, and those with important associated bog and fen habitats are worthy of conservation in their own right and should often not be disturbed. Not all pond restorations need to include mud removal and sometimes light works to reduce encroachment of trees and bushes around the pond edge are sufficient.

Guidance on restoring old ponds from Norfolk FWAG

Guide to pond management from Freshwater Habitats Trust

Old hedgerows

Ancient hedgerows can date back to the early enclosures, 500 or so years ago. They are often found on parish boundaries. Many mature and veteran trees can be found within hedgerows. Unfortunately as traditional management techniques have declined, the age structure of hedgerows trees has become biased towards mature trees as very few young trees are planted or allowed to grow on. They are sometimes no longer used as barriers for livestock and often have missing sections or are very thin at the base. So restoration for wildlife and landscape can include infill planting, cutting an A-shaped hedge on a 2 or 3 year cycle and marking young trees, especially elm and oak, so that they can grow to full height.

Hedges can sometimes be dated by recording the number of tree and shrub species in a 30m line of hedge. Each extra species adds 100 years to the approximate age of the hedgerow.

Hedgerows from The Wildlife Trusts

Hedge-related information from Hedgelink

Guide to hedgerow wildlife and management from PTES

Old orchards

Traditional orchards share many of the characteristics that make wood pasture and parkland so valuable for biodiversity. They include standard fruit trees planted at low densities, with the grassland beneath the trees grazed by livestock. However many traditional orchards have been lost by neglect or deliberate removal for development or more productive agricultural uses.

The best orchards for biodiversity are lightly managed, with widely spaced and longer-lived trees on half standard or standard rootstocks, growing in unimproved grassland with a range of fruit types and varieties. Orchard fruit trees can share many of the same physical characteristics as many older native woodland trees. A fifty-year old fruit tree can have fissured bark, rot holes from pruning wounds and some dead branches, all of which create ideal food sources and habitats for many specialist beetles, bracket fungi and birds.

Guidance on restoring and managing old traditional orchards from The UK Orchard Network

Old trees

Old trees are a key feature of the Rockingham Forest area. They can often mark parish boundaries and can be found on both public and private land. Key habitats in Rockingham Forest are wood pasture and parkland with scattered ancient and veteran oak trees. Wood pasture and parkland is a mixture of habitats, with scrub and denser woodland groves and more open grassland. Old trees also occur in ancient woodland and old hedgerows. It is important to record all the ancient and veteran trees in the Rockingham Forest area as so few are on the Ancient Tree Inventory.

Ancient Tree Inventory from The Woodland Trust

Guidance on protecting and restoring ancient and veteran trees from The Ancient Tree Forum

Old woodlands

Complete loss of woodland has been substantially reduced in recent years but lack of appropriate management is now a greater threat than habitat destruction. The cessation of coppicing in the last 200 years has resulted in substantial losses of woodland biodiversity, as they have become densely shaded.

Ancient woodland is a key habitat in Rockingham Forest (www.rockinghamforest.org.uk/woodland). There is an urgent need to update the Ancient Woodland Inventory with the many small unrecorded ancient woodlands. (www.rockinghamforest.org.uk/ancient-woodland).

Wood pasture and parkland are also key habitats of Rockingham Forest. (www.rockinghamforest.org.uk/parkland)

MyForest from The Sylva Foundation

Woodland Creation Campaign from The Forestry Commission

Learning opportunities about creating and managing woodlands from The Royal Forestry Society

Advice and information on small woods from The Small Woods Association

Deadwood and understorey

The understorey is the shade tolerant, smaller trees and shrubs that grow below the canopy layer. This layer as well as shrubby, gentle woodland edges are often missing from many woodlands. Restoring deadwood, understorey and more natural edges to woodland enriches the biodiversity value.

Up to a third of forest species depend on veteran trees and deadwood for their survival. Decaying wood is a hive of activity, food and home to a plethora of fungi, thousands of invertebrate species, and even birds and mammals. It is particularly important for the less visible majority of forest dwelling species: insects, especially beetles, fungi and lichens. Deadwood and its biodiversity also play a key role for sustaining forest productivity and environmental services such as stabilising forests and storing carbon.

Deadwood – Living forests from WWF

Streams, rivers, and floodplains

Rivers and streams can be rich wildlife corridors. Both the Rivers Nene and Welland (www.rockinghamforest.org.uk/rivers), together with their larger tributaries, provide extensive wildlife corridors at either edge of the Rockingham Forest area.
Our partners, the Nene Rivers Trust and the East Mercia Rivers Trust, are both able to offer support, guidance and possible funding to record, manage and develop wetland features and habitats. They also recruit and train volunteers as River Wardens. (www.wellandriverstrust.org.uk/river-wardens)

The Biodiversity Habitat Guide for rivers and streams from The Catchment Based Approach

Practical guides to river and stream restoration from The River Restoration Centre

Managing private landholdings

➢ ***Identify local landowners to ask them about the management of their land and how it could fit with any planned nature recovery in the parish or local area.***

Many nature-rich spaces in your parish or local area are likely to be in private ownership, managed as part of a farm, business or other landholding. If you know the landowner they may be able to tell you what they already do for biodiversity as part of an agri-environment scheme. Some may even welcome help with managing their biodiversity sites. Many farms now have agri-environment funding (eg. Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Land Management Schemes - ELMS) to manage their field edges, hedgerows and woodlands for biodiversity. They may also have management plans which control pollution, enhance biodiversity in field margins and hedgerows or even on the whole farm.

Agri-environment schemes have made a huge improvement to nature on farms. However there is still much scope to raise awareness amongst farmers of the options available. But do remember to respect differing opinions about how land is used and managed. There are lots of different nature friendly ways of producing food!

Wildlife Corridors or Stepping Stones are hugely valuable on farmland. These are often provided by hedges, ditches and watercourses which are valuable for a range of species including invertebrates, birds, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians. If landowners allow, insect and bird surveys can reveal the value of these habitats. As well as providing an important refuge for wildflowers, pollinating insects and ground-nesting birds, field margins also provide Buffer Zones between farming operations and sensitive habitats such as hedgerows, watercourses and ditches.

Guide to Integrated Farm management from LEAF

Developing management plans

➢***Consider developing a simple management plan for any of the above sites with the manager and other key stakeholders. This could include Why a plan, What aim, How delivered, and What level of recovery?***

If you are intending to manage any area of publicly-accessible land, you are more likely to achieve your aims if they are set out clearly for everyone to see, with a description of the expected benefits. Your volunteer group will need to know what you want, and how you're planning to accomplish it. The best way to do this is to create a management plan, which will also help you prioritise your work. They may also include information on improving access so the local community can enjoy and appreciate the site.

6) Create new nature areas and features

Creating new habitats and features

➢***Identify those sites and areas where new habitats and features could be created without destroying valuable existing habitats, using the Lawton diagram.***

➢***Mark the potential Corridors, Stepping Stones, Buffer Zones and Sustainable Use Areas on a layer for the final Nature Recovery Map. They could cross parish boundaries so consult with neighbouring parishes, especially about potential Corridors and Stepping Stones.***

➢***Add numbered annotations to the layer, with a key to a description giving more details.***

➢***Consider and plan the way in which these new habitats and features should be managed, after getting advice from partners and online information and guidance.***

➢***Include some potential low-cost habitat creations on publicly accessible land.***

This section is all about creating new features or habitats to serve as the Lawton diagram's Corridors, Stepping Stones and Buffer Zones. The Biodiversity Base Map and Habitat Opportunity Maps should help to identify the best positions for creating new nature areas and features. It begins with very small-scale ideas that are quick and easy to achieve on either public or private land. These simple, low cost ideas could be promoted as a way of encouraging local people to become volunteers, join training sessions, meet other people and have fun doing practical things outdoors – all good for community health and wellbeing.

Gradually the scale of the ideas builds up to much more major projects, where you group's role may be helping to influence landowners to change their land use.

Planting a few trees

Planting trees is a popular community activity. However the right species needs to be planted in the right place at the right time. Funding can readily be found by community groups for planting native tree species on publicly-accessible land such as a recreation ground, sports or school grounds. Free native trees, guards and stakes may be available for community groups from The Woodland Trust,

Tree Council or The Conservation Volunteers. They can be planted as individuals, hedges, shelterbelts, copses or small woodlands.

How to Plant Trees from The Woodland Trust

Tree and hedge planting – A step by step guide from The Tree Council

Tree Management and Care Policy from North Northamptonshire Council

Carbon Management Plan from North Northamptonshire Council

Planting a new hedge

Mixed native hedges are a boon for biodiversity, providing food and cover. They can also create very valuable wildlife corridors, often through intensively-farmed landscapes, and can link other important habitats such as woods, ponds, grasslands and wetlands. The mix of native species can be selected to provide a long period of interest (flowers, berries, leaves and seeds) and a diversity of wildlife food and shelter.

Advice on the creation of hedgerows from Hedgelink

Erecting bird nest boxes

These are structures to provide cavities for hole nesting birds. They can also be popular with tree bumblebees and small mammals. Many species of bird use natural tree cavities including those excavated by woodpeckers, to raise their young. Such cavities are often not available in parks as the trees are not of a suitable age or safety requirements have meant deadwood features have been removed. Bird boxes of various designs are an effective alternative and provide instant nest sites.

Guide to Swift boxes from Action for Swifts

Build a bird box from The RSPB

How to build nesting boxes from The Wildlife Trusts

Make a nest box from The BTO

Essential Guide to nest boxes from The BTO

Erecting bat boxes

Bat boxes are artificial roosts designed to encourage bats into areas where there are few roosting sites. There are various designs of bat box from home-made wooden boxes to ready-assembled boxes and ones that can be built into walls. Different bat species need different designs but bat boxes are most suitable for crevice-dwelling bats such as Soprano and Common Pipistrelles. It can however, take several years before bat boxes are used. They can be positioned on trees, built into or attached to buildings. Pole mounting is also an option in some locations. It is best to put at least two or three boxes close to each other but with different aspects so bats can choose the one with the right temperature for a given season.

Build a bat box from The RSPB

How to build bat boxes from The Wildlife Trusts

Bat boxes from The Bat Conservation Trust

Making a log pile

Semi-permanent piles of wood, including logs, attract invertebrates and anything that feeds on them, including frogs and newts. Small mammals and hedgehogs also like them as shelter. They can be above ground with earth piled up to support them or dug into pits in the ground to encourage the wood to rot for beetle larvae.

Dead wood for wildlife from The RSPB

Logs or wood buried in the ground can encourage the wood to rot, providing a habitat for beetles to lay eggs. Some types of beetle, including lesser and greater stag beetles lay eggs in rotting wood, especially underground.

Build a log pile for stag beetles from The PTES

Log Piles for Wildlife from The RSPB

How to make a log shelter from The Wildlife Trusts

Log piles and rockeries from Froglife

Building a bee hotel

Bee hotels are structures that mimic the cavities where solitary bees nest. They need dry, hollow tubes or holes in logs and walls to lay their eggs. Bee hotels mimic these cavities where solitary bees nest by having a series of tubes of between 2 and 13 mm in diameter designed for bees to lay eggs. These can be made from paper straws, hollow stems of plants, drilled bamboo canes or drilled into logs. These are for cavity-nesting solitary bees which need dry, hollow tubes or holes in logs and walls to lay their eggs.

Build a bug hotel from The RSPB

Build a bee b and b from The RSPB

How to make a bee hotel from The Wildlife Trusts

Making a bee bank

This is a mound of compacted soil kept bare by occasional disturbance in a sunny locations adjacent to good nectar sources such as woodland edges, meadows, and water courses. It will attract solitary mining bees which nest in underground burrows.

Get wildlife rich at the bee bank from The RSPB

Beetle banks on farms from The RSPB

Planting a pollinator patch

Different species of pollinators prefer different plants, for example different bee species are active at different times of the year and have different length tongues. Some moths fly in the evening and at night so prefer night-scented plants. Some plants attract a wide range of pollinators to nectar. Food plants for caterpillars tend to be more host specific.

Plants for Pollinators from The Royal Horticultural Society

Gardening for bumblebees from Buglife

Gardening for Butterflies from Butterfly Conservation

Gardening for Moths from Butterfly Conservation

Making a hedgehog site

Nest and foraging sites for hedgehogs can be created in a variety of shady, dry places away from noise, crowds and dogs including hedgerows and dense shrubs, long grass and overgrown areas.

Hedgehogs from The British Hedgehog Preservation Society

Hedgehog campaign from Hedgehog Street

Building a compost heap

Many green open spaces, especially community gardens and orchards, have space for on-site composting. This avoids the transport required to remove green waste off-site to recycling facilities. It also produces local valuable organic material for the green space, for example to mulch trees against water loss. Compost heaps are also good habitats for wildlife.

Compost heaps from The RSPB

Digging a pond

Installing a pond is one of the best ways of attracting a wide range of new species and enhancing existing habitats on a site. However, finding suitable locations and gaining community support can be tricky due to perceived safety issues. But ponds do not need to be deep and careful design can usually reduce risk and enhance the biodiversity value.

The Freshwater Habitats Trust, formerly Pond Conservation, provides a wide range of information and advice including designing ponds, solutions to common problems, pond safety, what wildlife lives in ponds, how to create and manage ponds, and available sources of funding.

Guidance and information on ponds from Freshwater Habitats Trust

Creating ponds for wildlife from Freshwater Habitats Trust

Just add water Handbook from Froglife

Planting a community orchard

Community orchards have multiple uses demonstrating how nature and people can sustainably co-exist. As well as a biodiverse mosaic of habitats they can help to revive an interest in fruit growing, provide a public space for social and community events, picnics and quiet contemplation, a way of sharing knowledge and horticultural skills and stimulate us into growing food for ourselves again.

They can be planted as a linear or meadow orchard at any scale. Biodiversity is boosted if different fruit and nut tree species of heritage varieties are planted on standard rootstock at low density with minimal meadow management. Then after a generation they could become an agroforestry system combining fruit, livestock and pasture. Ultimately they could be similar to a wood pasture or parkland with old trees, dead and decaying wood, hedgerows and permanent pasture providing a biodiverse orchard ecosystem.

Apple and Orchard Guide from The Stamford Community Orchard Group

Community orchards - How to Guide from Gov

Creating a meadow

True wildflower meadows are beautiful habitats that have almost disappeared from our countryside. They require special conditions and management and are not easy to create. They have a mixture of many species of grasses and flowers growing together and persisting over many years. The key feature is that the grasses are not able to outcompete the flowers, because of low fertility soil, grazing and/or special mowing management.

How to create and manage a wildflower meadow from The Wildlife Gardening Forum

Start a wildflower meadow from The RSPB

Creating a meadow from scratch from Buglife

Setting up a community tree nursery

There is increased interest in collecting tree seeds by community woodland groups to grow-on in small nurseries into seedlings or transplants. Growing self-collected seed offers many educational and other social engagement opportunities, and the activities can be carried out by volunteers of all capabilities. You may want to propagate trees of local provenance or produce stock from a particular individual tree that you value. Personally collecting seed is one way of achieving this.

Learn to identify and grow native trees from The Conservation Volunteers

The Tree Growers Guide from The Tree Council

Planting a copse, shelterbelt or woodland

The Forestry Commission offers a range of grants for woodland creation on sites of one hectare or more. The grants cover tree planting, planning, maintenance, and tree health. They are available for landowners, public bodies, local authorities and environmental groups. The England Woodland

Creation Offer recognises the social and environmental benefits of woodlands. It offers financial incentives to help you plant the right tree, in the right place, for the right reason. From creating large mixed woodlands, to a strip of trees along a riverbank, you just need a hectare of land. And that can be made up of smaller plots – from 10m wide and 0.1 hectares for some projects.

Planting for the future from The Forestry Commission

Creating and managing woodlands from The Royal Forestry Society.

Advice and information from The Small Woods Association

Free trees, grants and advice to community groups from The Woodland Trust

Grants and advice to community and school groups from The Tree Council

7) Write the Nature Recovery Plan

Building the plan

➢***Use the Base Biodiversity Map to identify on the map opportunities for recovering species and habitats. This involves adding one or more layers to the map including the potential Core Areas, Restoration Areas, Corridors, Stepping Stones, Buffer zones and newly created nature areas and features.***

➢***The emerging Nature Recovery Plan and map needs to be discussed frequently with your group of volunteers and, at key stages, with other stakeholders such as the parish council. Feedback needs to be considered, alterations made where necessary and the final plan published.***

➢***Ask our Project Officer if any of the plan fits with the priorities and potential funding from our Government agency partners.***

➢***With all the volunteers, design a way of communicating and agreeing to the plan and map with key stakeholders.***

➢***Display and present the map and any associated text at an event with partners and key stakeholders to consider and agree plans for particular sites or features.***

➢***Celebrate the production of the plan and map and promote it widely.***

➢***Mark these potential Restoration Areas on a layer for the final Nature Recovery Map.***

➢***Add numbered annotations to the layer, with a key giving more details.***

Having identified opportunities for recovering species and habitats these ideas can now be shown on the Biodiversity Base Map. This involves adding one or more layers to the map which show the various areas of the Lawton Principle— the existing Core Areas, the Restoration Areas, and the proposed new nature areas and features. You may want to indicate on the map existing and potential Corridors, Stepping Stones and Buffer Zones, showing how they relate to the sustainable use areas where there is greater human influence and resource use.

For the Core Areas you may well be working in partnership with managers of protected sites, for example exploring volunteering opportunities for helping to manage and monitor the most biodiverse and protected areas. Aim to draw up a written statement agreeing the way the community will become involved.

On the Restoration Areas you may decide to draw up simple management plans for publicly-accessible sites. If agreements can be reached with private or public landowners these too can be recorded as part of the Nature Recovery Plan and shown on the Biodiversity Base Map.

Opportunities for newly creating nature areas and features of any scale could be mapped and then developed by volunteers, perhaps with further guidance and funding.

There are many sources of free information and advice to call upon when building your plan. Our Project Officer (info@rockinghamforest.org.uk) could direct you to sources of local advice. The websites listed above may also have further guidance and advice.

Looked at the right way, the plan that you develop could deliver important Government policies locally. These organisations may have priorities that may align with yours. So Government funding (eg. from Natural England, The Environment Agency or The Forestry Commission) could help your plan gain support and resources for local projects. Our partners can help you match your plans to more regional or national priorities.

Agreeing priorities

➢***Meet with key stakeholders to develop a clear vision and timescale for your plan.***

➢***Consult with the community to agree priority sites and features that should be managed or developed.***

While constructing your Biodiversity Base Map you will have already found opportunities for boosting nature in your parish or local area. The next sections of the guide suggest that these opportunities can be prioritised and brought together to create a Nature Recovery Plan— a plan to develop a joined-up system of nature-rich places in your parish or local area.

You may agree together with key stakeholders:

- A vision for nature in your locality or parish.
- A timescale for your plan – eg. 2, 5 or 10+ years.
- Priority species and habitats that you want to conserve.
- Core Areas with the highest wildlife value.
- Restoration Areas where species and habitats can be restored.
- Corridors and Stepping Stones that allow movement and interaction.
- Buffer Zones that protect richer areas (core and restoration areas, corridors and stepping stones) from the pressures of human influence.
- Sustainable Use Areas areas of greater human influence and resource use.

These are some examples of a vision for parish nature recovery:

- *By 2030, nature is more widespread, diverse and increasing in our village.*
- *Our public open spaces (including park, churchyard and school), as well as business premises are being managed to help nature's recovery.*
- *Tree canopy cover has doubled, providing habitat for nature, shade, carbon capture and fruit for residents.*
- *Road verges rich in wildflowers and insects are common.*
- *New housing developments and infrastructure protect valuable habitats and are net nature positive, creating connected wildlife habitats. They include features for garden birds, insects, bats and hedgehogs, and many older houses also boast these features.*
- *Gardens, public spaces and business premises are being managed with minimal use of biocides and no peat-based products, and there are many more garden ponds, wildflower patches, log-piles and scrubby corners.*
- *Native and scarce plants are increasingly found and celebrated in public spaces; nesting swifts or house martins are a source of pride for house owners and are increasing in the area, as are hedgehogs, toads and garden butterflies.*
- *Nature is supporting healthier and happier communities and is accessible to many more people.*

9) Gather the resources to put the plan into action

➢***Plan the resources of volunteers, time and money, as well as any permissions that will be needed.***

➢***Ask our Project Officer (info@rockinghamforest.org.uk) for further practical advice eg. on monitoring, recording, management plans and habitat creation.***

➢***Recruit and support more volunteers to create any agreed new habitats or features on publicly accessible land.***

➢***Recruit and support volunteers to help site managers monitor, record or manage the site.***

➢***Celebrate the work of volunteers and look for new nature recovery opportunities in and around the parish.***

In drawing up your plan you will, of course, have been thinking about the costs involved. There will be capital and maintenance costs and both of these could involve purchasing items and paying for labour that cannot be carried out by volunteers. For example, the creation of a new pond on a recreation field may involve you purchasing a liner and hiring a digger at the creation stage, but you may also need to plan for volunteer time or a paid contractor for it to be cleared in the years ahead.

Finding the funds

➢***Reseach possible funding for capital costs eg. of management, equipment, tools, events.***

➢***Apply for funding by confirming the need, why, who for, who by, where, when, what cost, what impact and benefit?***

It is important to have a range of funding sources to enable your plan to be implemented. Some changes of management to benefit wildlife (such as reducing mowing frequency) will also save money, so it's good to highlight this where possible. This will certainly help you gain more support for the changes you want to make.

There are local funding opportunities from:

- Sponsorship by residents or local business – sponsor a tree, pond or square metre of woodland
- The Building the Links for Rockingham Forest Community Fund
  - Rockingham Forest Vision
- Funding can readily be found by community groups for planting trees, hedges, orchards and copses with native species on publicly-accessible land such as a recreation ground, sports or school grounds.
  - The Branching Out Fund from The Tree Council
  - Tree planting programme from The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
  - Free trees for schools and communities from The Woodland Trust
- Community benefit money is available from nearby developments like solar farms, waste management and quarries.
  - The Augean Community Fund from Grantscape
  - The Mick George Community Fund from Grantscape
- Voluntary and Community grants from North Northamptonshire Council. They provide grants up to £5000 to support voluntary and community activity that improves the quality of life and increases community involvement.
- Member Empowerment Fund from North Northamptonshire Council. This is for small community-based projects via local Councillors.
- There may be funding related to new planning developments. These are managed by North Northamptonshire Council.

- The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge that local authorities can set on new development in order to raise funds for the infrastructure, facilities and services needed to support new homes and businesses - such as landscaping, recreation areas.
- Section 106 funding can provide off-site open space contributions from developers secured through the planning process.
- Biodiversity credits can be used, through Biodiversity Net Gain, to create new compensation habitats after planning permission has been given for development on particular habitats.

- The Chestnut Fund from The Conservation Volunteers (TCV). There are start-up grants (up to £150) for groups in their first year of existence to enable them to begin practical work and cover administrative expenses and support grants (up to £350) for existing groups to purchase tools, equipment and training.
- The Community Fund from The Co-operative Group. This is allocated via a local area committee to local projects.

Future funding for farms

The Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMs) is the improved and more ambitious successor to the Countryside Stewardship scheme in England. It will pay landowners for locally targeted actions to make space for nature in the farmed landscape and the wider countryside, alongside food production. The scheme has three tiers of increasing value to biodiversity – The Sustainable Farm Initiative (SFI), Local Nature Recovery(LNR) and Landscape Recovery (LR). It is in an early stage of development, and it will be 2024 before it is available.

9) Monitor and record nature

Monitoring wildlife

➢***Identify and support local people who already monitor, record and photograph local wildlife.***

➢***Identify the particular sites or species where more monitoring or records are needed.***

➢***Ask for more support in gathering those various records and presenting them more widely.***

Monitoring and recording nature can be done throughout the development of a Nature Recovery Plan and Map. It will enable you to spot the changes and evaluate the success of your plan.

There will probably already be people in your parish who regularly record wildlife. It may be a particular taxonomic group such as butterflies, flowering plants, trees or birds or it may be every living thing in a particular woodland or field. So put out a message asking for recorders (and their records) on social media, the parish council website or the local parish newsletter.

There will be several local training sessions or workshops advertised on www.rockinghamforest.org.uk that could help participants improve their identification and recording skills.

Recording and monitoring approaches

New recorders could be introduced to the use of various monitoring and recording approaches:

- **Camera traps** – These are a cheap investment but need secure housing on public land.
- **Transects** – They can be done as part of a regular monitoring walk for a volunteer to record wildlife through an area. It could for butterflies, bats or birds eg. Butterfly Transect Counts (www.butterfly-monitoring.net).
- **Bat surveys** – There are many new gadgets on the market that will identify bats from their sounds eg. National Bat Monitoring Programme from the Bat Conservation Trust (www.bats.org.uk).

- **Phone apps** - There are a growing number of apps that make a stab at identifying plants, fungi, insects etc using the camera on your mobile phone. Treated with caution and backed up by the appropriate field guide, these can be a great way for new recorders to develop their ID skills.
- **iNaturalist** (www.inaturalist.org) – This website can also help with identification and recording.

Contributing to citizen science projects

➢***Consider contributing to some national citizen science projects putting your parish or local area on their map.***

There is a growing number of interesting citizens science projects that can provide information and guidance on recording nature.

- **iSpot** (www.ispotnature.org) is a citizen science project run by The Open University (OU) that was developed to help anyone learn about and engage with nature while sharing and building their wildlife identification skills.
- **The British Trust for Ornithology** (https://www.bto.org) organises surveys with superb online training which are suitable for all levels of bird-watching ability. Of particular value for local Nature Recovery Plans could be Birdtrack (https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/birdtrack) and Garden Birdwatch (https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw).
- **The Ancient Tree Inventory** (https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk) enables volunteers to map the oldest and most important trees in your local area and send the results to the UK Inventory as one way of protecting and celebrating the tree.
- **i-Tree Canopy** (https://canopy.itreetools.org) classifies land and tree cover across a given area, such as your parish, using random sampling of aerial imagery. It can calculate tree canopy benefits in terms of carbon dioxide, air pollution, and stormwater impacts.
- **Treezilla** (https://treezilla.org) is a citizen science project that is aiming to encourage members of the public, local groups and parishes to collaborate in mapping, measuring and monitoring trees. It has an online tree survey and ID guide.
- **Butterfly Conservation** (https://butterfly-conservation.org/butterflies/recording-and-monitoring) is encouraging the recording and monitoring of butterflies and moths through the Butterflies for the New Millennium recording scheme.

Submitting wildlife records

➢***Send any wildlife records to the Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre as a way of protecting your special sites.***

It is really important to send all wildlife records to the Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre (NBRC) so that they can be validated and become part of the public record. Even if you are submitting records to other organisations, for example through citizen science projects and to the landowner, it is essential that NBRC receives them as well.

Guide to entering records from NBRC

Validated records are very important. Planning applications for large housing and other developments must be submitted to NNC with an ecological report. The first phase of this is a desk-based assessment, where developers look at all the sightings of wildlife reported to the NBRC. You may have seen wildlife at a proposed development site but if you haven't reported it, it won't be a consideration in the planning application.

Appendix 1 - Why plan for nature recovery?

Biodiversity

The term biodiversity, or biological diversity, simply means the variety of all living things, including microbes, plants and animals – from single-celled organisms to the largest mammals and trees. Biodiversity also refers to genetic diversity within a species (essential for evolution) and also the diversity of various habitats (woodlands, wetlands, grasslands etc.) that provide food, water and shelter for these species. It includes not just the rare or the threatened but also the wildlife that is familiar to us in the places where we live and work.

Why conserve biodiversity?

Human life itself depends upon healthy ecosystems and the biodiversity they contain, but all life on earth has an intrinsic value that we, as our planet's dominant species, have a duty to protect. Biodiversity is important both for its own sake and because of the many benefits we derive from the natural environment – products like food, fibre, wood and water; services like carbon sequestration, pollination, nutrient cycling, soil formation, water purification, flood defence and opportunities for reflection and recreation – all are critical for our wellbeing and survival.

Species are linked in an infinite number of ways via food webs and the habitats they share. If one species becomes extinct, it may affect many more. If too many species become extinct then whole ecosystems can collapse, with severe consequences for the way we live. Although wildlife can exist without us, we cannot exist without wildlife, so by protecting wildlife we are improving life for ourselves.

Fragmentation and loss

Across the world biodiversity is under threat from human activity such as climate change, over-intensive or inappropriate farming, large-scale commercial forestry, forest clearance, mineral extraction, pollution and urban development. We need to take action now if we are to secure a healthy planet for the future.

We have seen huge losses of wildlife across Northamptonshire and Rockingham Forest. Our remaining habitats are largely disconnected from each other, often small and often in poor condition. Many are at risk from impacts such as climate change, invasive species and disease, nutrient enrichment and recreational disturbance. We all need to take urgent action to create, enhance, expand and connect wildlife habitats across the county, starting with the villages, towns and countryside where we live, work and play.

Appendix 2 - What is the Nature Recovery Network?

From housing estates to farms, nature reserves to road verges, a Nature Recovery Network is a joined-up system of nature-rich places of all sizes across all areas that allow wildlife and people to thrive. It allows plants and animals to move across the landscape and provides places for them to live, feed and breed. But it can only do this effectively if, like our road network, it is treated as a joined-up whole.

It is part of the Government's Environmental Plan that these networks will help to ensure nature's recovery across at least 30% of our land and sea by 2030.

Critically it will allow the natural world to adapt to change. This network of habitats will also provide a range of other critical benefits such as carbon sequestration, flood control, clean water, healthy soils and recreational opportunities. So restoring nature can help tackle the climate crisis and also improve human health.

The Lawton model

In 2010, Professor John Lawton presented a report to the UK Government, called 'Making Space for Nature'. The report called for the creation of a healthy ecological network operating across the landscape as a whole, not in isolated reserves. This approach is now being taken forward widely across the UK, and elsewhere in the world.

The Lawton Principle from The Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust.

The Northamptonshire Nature Recovery Network

This will form part of the national Nature Recovery Network, a key commitment in the government's 25 Year Environment Plan.

The Northamptonshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy will be one of about 50 area strategies in England. It is a new way of prioritising nature needs on a more local and focused level, working collaboratively with stakeholders, including parish and town councils, to agree these priorities. It will focus and co-ordinate action, funding and regulation. It will also help agree targets and aims for increasing biodiversity by mapping current levels of nature and then highlight areas for improvement. A key feature of an LNRS is that it will identify both areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity and areas where the recovery or enhancement of biodiversity could help address other environmental problems.

Some examples of environmental issues where LNRSs and nature-based solutions could play a role are:

- Climate change mitigation through tree planting
- Natural flood management and improved water quality
- Improved management of key species and designated sites
- Compensatory habitats based on Biodiversity net gain
- Links to the new Environmental Land Management Scheme for farming

Northamptonshire Local Nature Recovery Map

The Government will require local authorities to publish these maps. They will identify areas where the greatest benefit for wildlife and people can be achieved. Your Parish Nature Recovery Plan could influence this map as well as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.