



PARISH NATURE RECOVERY PLANS

SUMMER 2020

VERSION 5





INTRODUCTION



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: where swifts and swallows are a central feature of our summer evenings; where hares continue to enthral people as they play in the fields and meadows; where bees and other insects thrive, not decline, and where there are far more ponds, meadows, wild flowers, hedgerows and trees. 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.

The John Clare Countryside project - launched in September 2019 - aims to deliver this vision through the creation of an extensive and accessible nature recovery area across the landscape to the west and north of Peterborough, designed, led and supported by residents, landowners, farmers, businesses and parish councils.

This nature recovery area will be supported by Natural England and other statutory agencies and incorporated into local policy documents including Local Plans. It will be distinguished from other nature recovery areas because it is community led and it combines both natural and built heritage with links through John Clare to literature and the arts. The overall agenda will promote the physical and mental health of its residents and the adjacent communities of Stamford and Peterborough. It covers an area of 11,500 Hectares.

SPECIFICALLY, THE PROJECT AIMS 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. 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
4. Promote **public health and wellbeing**, providing opportunities for access to and understanding of nature-rich countryside
5. Create **new jobs and economic opportunities** allied to the delivery of these objectives, particularly in tourism, visitor attractions, farming and nature conservation
6. Through this work, create more resilient countryside and communities, where nature is at the heart of our approach to tackling the climate emergency.

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 and appreciation and engagement with its heritage and history.

At one level, significant increase in key wildlife habitats will be achieved through the expansion of existing nature reserves and other wildlife-rich sites, and by creating new reserves through land purchase or management agreements with private landowners. The aims will be to establish a much larger area of land actively managed for nature and to create natural corridors and stepping-stones between key sites.

This work will be largely taken forward by the key partners within the project, including Natural England, Langdyke Countryside Trust, the Wildlife Trust BCN, Sacrewell Farm, PECT and Nene Park Trust, working with local landowners.

Just as important is the part local residents can play in the delivery of the nature recovery area. 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 each of the parishes within the project area.

This document aims to be a starting point in taking local action; providing guidance, advice and support to help each parish 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 parish 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 NATURE RECOVERY PLAN?



A parish nature recovery plan should set out a medium-term plan for the creation of more nature rich habitats in the villages and the surrounding countryside. We suggest that each plan covers an initial ten-year period, although many of the projects that parishes 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 and 5 new ponds as well as monitoring and recording key species, such as the number of bats detected flying around the village, hedgehogs seen in gardens, or swifts and swallows nesting on buildings.

Parish 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 council.

Parishes could also choose to work together to form parish clusters to help support larger plans.

If you are unsure on any element on your nature recovery plans, the partners in the John Clare Countryside can offer advice and guidance.



CREATING A NATURE RECOVERY PLAN



We recommend the following steps to create your parish 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. This can be added to your baseline map.
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
- Churches and their grounds
- School grounds / wildlife area / amenity areas
- Woodlands
- Mature Trees / Tree Preservation Orders
- Orchards
- Hedgerows
- Grasslands / Road verges with wildflowers
- Access and Footpaths
- Animal boxes
- Nature reserves
- Farmland
- Waterbodies / ponds
- Waterways / rivers

Some parishes 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.

Within your Nature Recovery packs you will find some blank maps to help you produce your plans, along with a map showing the existing habitats within your parish. Examples can be found on the following page.

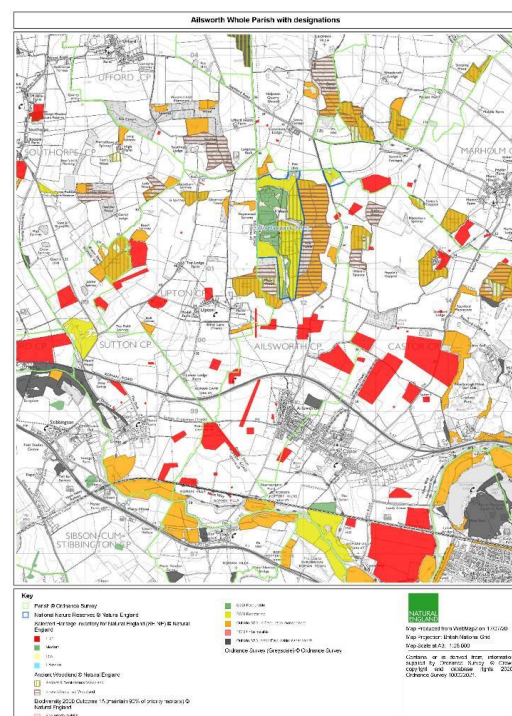
HOW TO CREATE YOUR MAP?

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/>.

Maps can be produced in both hard copy and digital form, depending on the availability to each group. Digital maps for each parish can be found [here](#).

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 areas 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 20th 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](#)

Public Footpath

ACCESS AND FOOTPATHS



DESCRIPTION

We all need access to green space for our mental and physical health. The Covid 19 crisis has proved that the quality of everyday life is greatly improved when we can access natural green areas on a regular basis. The words of the Wildlife Trust sums up our reliance on natural spaces for a healthy life. "Everyone should have the opportunity to experience the joy of wildlife in their daily lives."

One of the aims of this project is to encourage responsible access to the countryside for all residents. There is great potential to welcome people from the urban areas into the countryside, but this must be thoughtfully planned and resourced so that everyone can enjoy being in nature without overwhelming it.

The private ownership of land must be respected and the views of those who make their living from the land must be paramount. Public Rights of Way are the most practical and cost-effective way of encouraging this.

Public Rights of Way are shown on the City Council Definitive map. Once a PRoW has been added to the map, it needs a legal action to remove it, regardless of if the land is publicly or privately owned.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 provides that footpaths and bridleways that existed in law on 16th Dec 1949 and are not recorded on 1st Jan 2026 are extinguished by statute on 1st Jan 2026, subject to some specific exemptions.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

- Are all the known footpaths, bridleways and byways in your parish marked on the Peterborough City Council Definitive Map?
- How are they classified? If it does not say Yes to the question Definitive? they are not protected by law.
- Does the Green Wheel Cycle route or any other cycle routes or national trails go through your parish
- Are there popular routes that are regularly used that are not on the map?
- Are there any other routes that you would like to see included? These can be traditional routes used for many years, or new routes that might open up potential new areas of green space. It is important to be mindful that public access to private land must be with the agreement of the landowner.

SUGGESTED SYMBOL / LEGEND

- | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Definitive Footpaths | • Permissive Footpaths | • Restricted Byways | • Other routes of Public Access |
| • Bridleways | • Bridleways | • National Trail | |
| • Byways | • Horse Route and Byways | • Green Wheel | • Quiet Lanes |

REFERENCES

- Peterborough City Council - [Definitive Map](#)
- Sustrans – [Peterborough Green Wheel](#)
- Ramblers- [Rights of Way Law](#)



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?

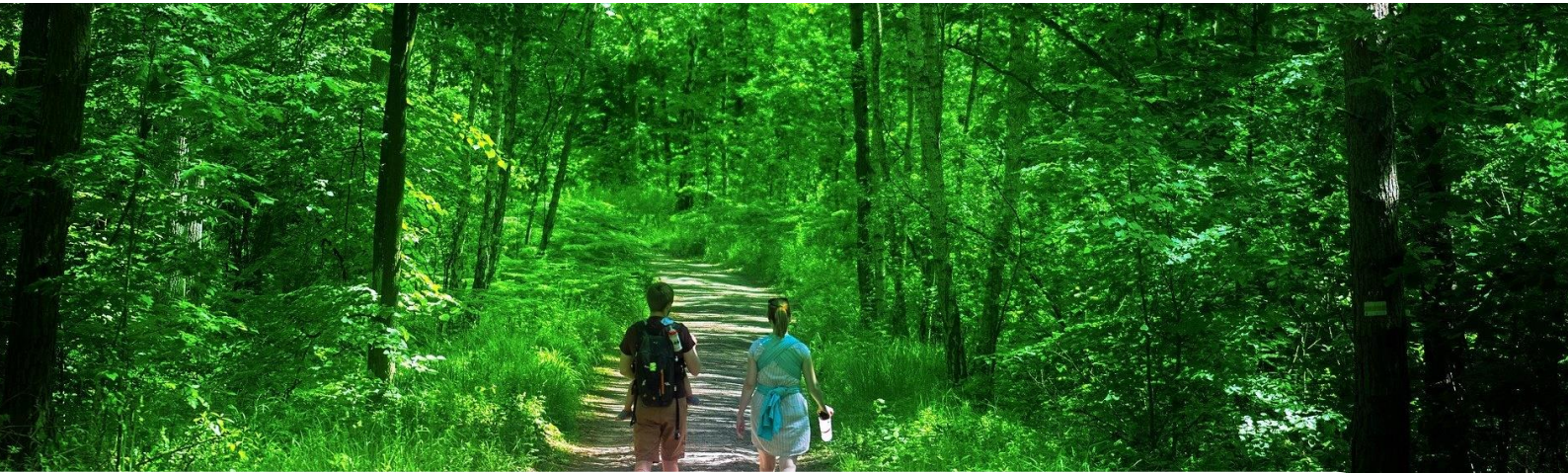
SUGGESTED SYMBOL / LEGEND

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
Average
Poor



Green lanes

Woodlands*

*Indicate size and age



B – Broadleaf, C – Conifer, M – Mixed, PS – Protected
species

R – Rare flora or fauna, F – feature: pond, bank etc

Orchards



N – New

O – Old

Grasslands/Wild Meadows



G – Good, A – Average, P – Poor

Access and Footpaths



D – Definitive P Permissive R- Restricted F – Footpath

BR – Bridleways BY- Byways

Churches and Grounds

CH

B – Bat roost in the building /grounds

M – managed church grounds, W – less managed church grounds
House Sparrow

Animal boxes



Bird



Swift Box



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 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

Again, the project partners can assist with this decision making by advising on particular habitats that might be encouraged in each parish based on the existing habitats and what could be most realistically created or improved.

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 parish nature recovery plan will be different, reflecting the geography and geology of each parish 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. Ensure it’s the right tree for the right place.
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"*)

Parish 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 parish 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 parish aims to achieve each year.

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

The John Clare Countryside partners can help as follows:

- 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.

Again, the partners can help advise on this.

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 parish will be maintained. This might include links to external organisations or groups who will benefit from the opportunities of working and visiting the parishes.

WHAT'S NEXT?



We hope that every parish in John Clare Countryside will develop its own nature recovery plan and that this process can be completed in 2020. This would allow the Partnership time to make grant applications for habitat creation and to develop a programme of work across the parishes for the 2020-21 season (subject to any remaining Coronavirus restrictions of course).

The John Clare Countryside Partnership will then review all the plans and consider whether additional projects might help link up these local efforts across the project area. It will then create a single nature recovery map for the whole area.

For further details or any questions contact:

chair@langdyke.org.uk



**Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Northamptonshire**

