



**Birmingham &
Black Country**
Wildlife Trust

A Wilder Birmingham and Black Country: Our Strategy for 2022-2030

Working for nature's recovery



Our strategy for a Wilder Future

Our Vision

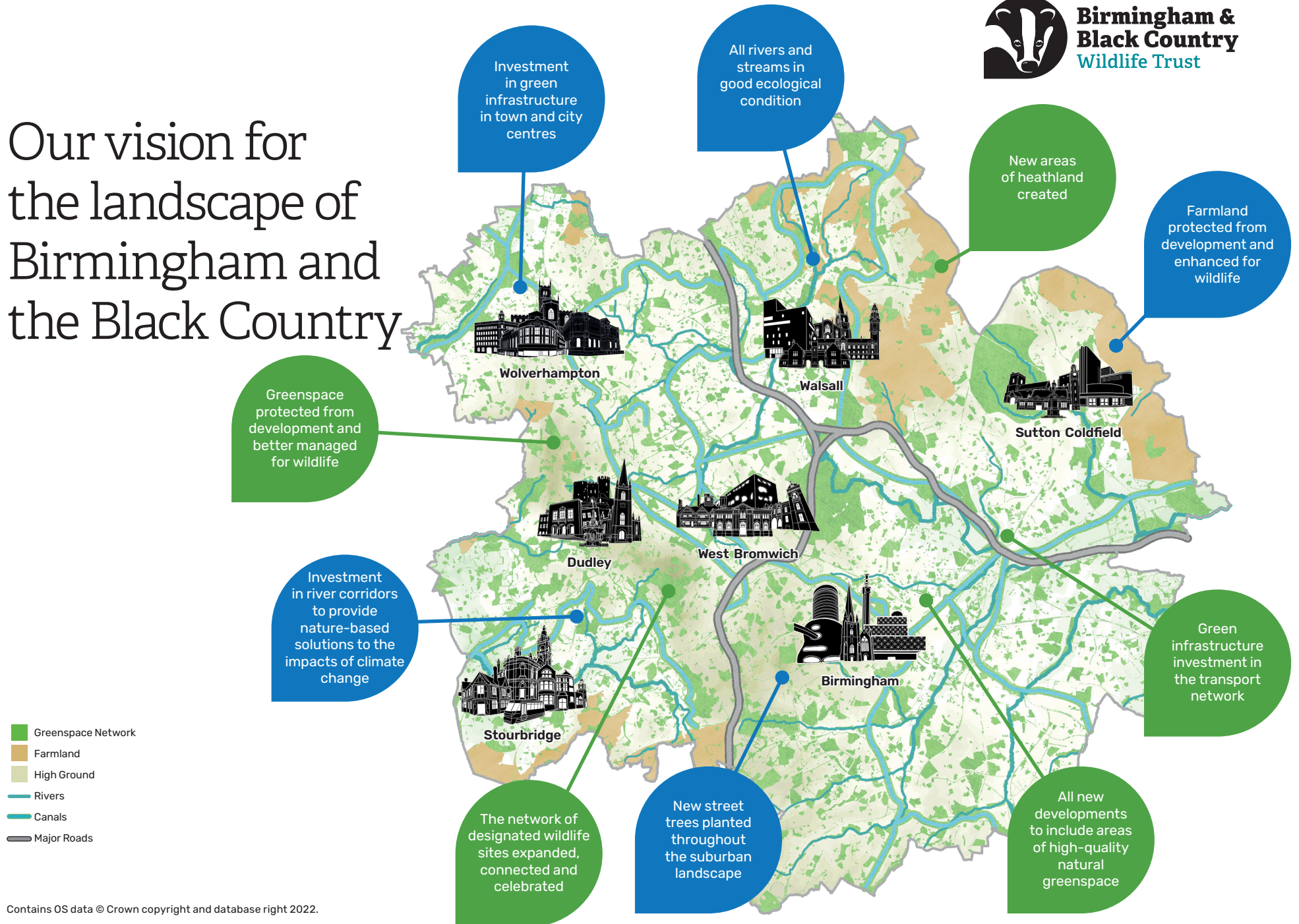
A Wilder Birmingham and Black Country with more green and wild spaces where nature thrives, and where everyone has an equal opportunity to access nature in their daily lives.

The Wildlife Trust will strengthen our position as the strategic nature conservation leader in Birmingham and the Black Country, influencing how our landscape evolves to adapt to changing populations, lifestyle and land use.

We will engage with all sections of our community to make nature an integral part of people's lives. We will work together to help reverse nature's decline, creating better places to live and improve health and wellbeing.

Birmingham and the Black Country will become a place where wildlife and wild places are abundant, accessible and thriving.

Our vision for the landscape of Birmingham and the Black Country



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Tackling the nature and climate crisis

The natural world is in crisis. We know this. We see the rapid and accelerating loss of our natural world.

Nature is declining at rates unprecedented in human history. Between 1970 and 2016 global species have declined by 68% ⁽¹⁾, and in the UK 41% of species have declined since 1970 and 15% of species are at risk of extinction ⁽²⁾.

We face similarly stark challenges in Birmingham and the Black Country. 18% of open spaces surveyed in the 1980s had been lost to development by 2018, and now only 36% of our region remains undeveloped ⁽³⁾. Similar patterns of decline in wildlife can be observed too; between 1980 and 2020 we have seen a 70% decline in records made of the 20 most recorded bird species in our region ⁽³⁾.

We need to take urgent action to reverse nature's decline before it's too late. We need to create more space for nature to thrive in Birmingham and the Black Country. We don't want the next generation to learn about our iconic native species from history books. We want everyone to experience the benefits of connecting with nature in our towns and cities. We also know that the future of wildlife is inextricably linked to addressing climate change; we cannot solve one crisis without tackling the other – nature's recovery is vital for tackling climate change. We need to protect and restore our landscape for the sake of people, nature and the climate.

We are proud of our history. We were the first urban Wildlife Trust in the UK and for over 40 years we have been leading the way in urban nature conservation. We are the only charity uniquely focused on protecting and enriching the habitats and wildlife of Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton. As a part of the network of Wildlife Trusts, we work to ensure that our local action delivers national collective impact and helps address global issues. Although the achievements we have made since 1980 fill us with pride, there is still so much more to be done. Our ambitious strategy for a Wilder Birmingham and Black Country highlights the need for urgent change. We believe that everyone has a crucial role to play in achieving nature's recovery and we need everyone to play their part; taking meaningful action to help tackle the nature and climate crises. There is growing public support for the environment and recognition that change needs to happen now.

To achieve our vision of an increasingly biodiversity-rich landscape we have ambitious plans to increase the scale of our work to protect, enhance and expand that heritage. By 2030 we want to see 30% of land restored for nature, we want to support and empower at least 1 in 4 people living in our region to take action for nature, and we want to help nature to help us tackle the climate crisis.

Join us for a Wilder
Birmingham and
Black Country.
Together we can
achieve nature's
recovery.



Why Birmingham and the Black Country is special

Birmingham and the Black Country is home to a huge variety of species and our landscape contains many rare and important habitats.

As well as more common species, you may be surprised that rarer birds including dipper and peregrine falcon are found here. There are also signs of the elusive otter in our waterways. Pelsall North Common in Walsall is home to a small but important population of the nationally scarce tormentil mining bee (*Andrena tarsata*).

Networks of high quality habitats are essential for ensuring a rich diversity of species and a landscape that is more resilient and able to adapt to the challenges posed by climate change. Birmingham

and the Black Country has a rich natural heritage including historic countryside with ancient woodland, hedgerows and unimproved grasslands, large areas of heathland and nationally important historic parks and gardens.

Our Portway Hill Nature Reserve was designated a UNESCO GeoPark site in 2020 and is a great example of the rich geology of the area. The many streams, rivers and canals that crisscross our towns and cities, our factories and workplaces are vital wildlife corridors, just as important as open spaces and nature reserves. From Sutton Park National Nature Reserve in the north to The Leasowes in the south, and the many other green open spaces and nature reserves in between, there is much here to cherish and protect, and many places that have a special place in the hearts of local communities.

Important wildlife sites in Birmingham and the Black Country include:

45

Local Nature Reserves, a total area of **1,208** hectares

644

Local Sites designated for their wildlife or geological importance, a total area of **4,702** hectares

17

Sites of Special Scientific Interest, a total area of **1,090** hectares

2

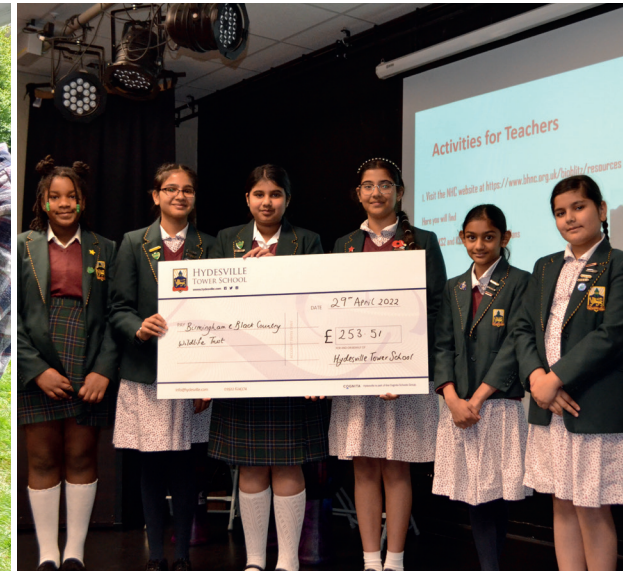
National Nature Reserves: Sutton Park and The Wren's Nest, a total area of **843** hectares

2

Special Areas of Conservation: Fens Pools, Dudley, and Cannock Extension Canal, Walsall, a total area of **21** hectares

Connecting people with our region's wild spaces

Despite the wealth of wildlife and important habitats across Birmingham and the Black Country, we know that across our urban areas, access to high quality, nature-rich spaces is unequal and that as a result, many people are fundamentally disconnected from the natural world. This reflects and reinforces the unequal health outcomes that many residents already face, with evidence clearly showing that people who lack contact with nature are more likely to suffer from multiple physical and mental health problems ⁽⁴⁾.



In Birmingham and the Black Country, we have a young and diverse population that is growing fast ⁽⁵⁾. Accommodating these rising numbers will add to the pressure on our natural spaces and the risk that inappropriate development will present significant challenges for both our wildlife and our well-being. It is therefore vital that we work inclusively to make sure that every community is able to take action to protect, enhance and enjoy their local natural spaces.

Throughout our conurbation there are countless people in every community who care for wildlife, are deeply concerned about climate change and want to help bring about nature's recovery where they live. In order to unlock this reservoir of support, we need to harness their collective energy, nurture an army of environmental champions and empower schools, businesses and communities across the region to take action for wildlife in their local green spaces.

About us

Our Vision

A Wilder Birmingham and Black Country with more green and wild spaces where nature thrives, and where everyone has an equal opportunity to access nature in their daily lives.

Our Purpose

Lead Nature's Recovery in Birmingham and the Black Country, empower and support people to take positive local action for the benefit of wildlife and nature, and ensure natural habitats play a key role in addressing the ecological and climate emergencies.

Our Approach

We work for nature's recovery; protecting, restoring and creating wildlife-rich, accessible spaces that benefit people and wildlife.

We are ambitious in our desire not just to slow, but to reverse the decline of wildlife.

We lead by example, using evidence-based approaches to demonstrate how nature's recovery can be achieved in urban areas.

We demonstrate what is possible, and inspire, empower and enable people from all backgrounds, cultures, identities and abilities to bring about our vision with us, embracing the diversity of our society to change the natural world for the better.

We look to establish common cause and work in partnership with others, to develop new, innovative ways to do what's right for nature and deliver impact in support of our vision.

We speak with a bold and confident voice, to tell the truth about the state of nature and what needs to be done to put it into recovery.



Our goals

We have identified three priority areas for our work:

1 Nature is in recovery, with abundant, diverse wildlife across Birmingham and the Black Country

By 2030 we want to see

30%

of Birmingham and the Black Country's landscape managed for the benefit of wildlife.



We will work to protect, restore and connect wilder landscapes where wildlife and people can thrive.

2 People are taking action for nature and the climate across Birmingham and the Black Country

By 2030 we want to see

at least

1 in 4

people across Birmingham and the Black Country taking action for nature.



We will inspire and engage people to take action for wildlife and enable communities to develop a positive and meaningful connection with their local natural environment.

3 Nature is playing a central and valued role in helping to address local and global problems

By 2030 we aim for

500

hectares of land to be improved to provide nature-based solutions to the ecological and climate crises.



We will help nature to help us by restoring and creating habitats that can draw down carbon from the atmosphere, reduce local flooding and pollution, whilst promoting nature-based solutions to help improve our physical and mental wellbeing.

Goal 1: Nature is in recovery, with abundant, diverse wildlife across Birmingham and the Black Country

By 2030
we want
to see

30%

of Birmingham and
the Black Country's
landscape managed
for the benefit
of wildlife.



This goal is in line with global and national commitments to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030.

We will actively reverse ecological decline across our region. We want to see wildlife increasing as a result of direct action to protect, restore and create valuable nature-rich spaces. Our work creating a connected network of sites and wildlife corridors - the nature recovery network - is critical to our vision of a biodiversity-rich Birmingham and Black Country landscape.

Our call to action

Why is this needed?

Nature is in decline

41%

of all UK species have decreased
in abundance since 1970 ⁽²⁾

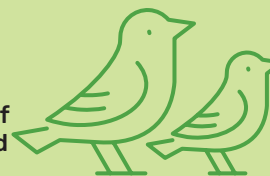


15%

of UK species are
threatened ⁽²⁾

70%

decline in records made of
the 20 most recorded bird
species in our region ⁽³⁾



All important ecological spaces to be designated for their wildlife value and protected from development.

That local planning authorities ensure that only the right developments are built in the right place.

What we will do

- Play a leading role in producing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and in the partnerships that deliver it.
- Restore and enhance threatened habitats and secure investment to enable a measurable recovery of declining species.
- Significantly increase our delivery of landscape-scale nature recovery projects.
- Continue to create new high quality sites for wildlife and people.
- Acquire more land and establish new nature reserves that help create an interconnected network for wildlife.
- Manage our own sites as exemplars for nature conservation, setting quality standards for public access and engagement.
- Secure positive changes to management of local green spaces and support others to create new sites for wildlife and people.
- Support more people to influence local planning policies and decisions.

Space for nature to be created in all new developments to provide homes that are good for people and wildlife, and for all new developments to exceed statutory biodiversity targets.

Goal 1: Case Studies

The Wildlife Trust have been working for nature's recovery for four decades, leading the way on delivering urban rewilding projects to enhance biodiversity and create wildlife-rich spaces for local communities to enjoy.

In just the last 10 years, we have delivered over 700 biodiversity projects at 214 sites covering an area in excess of 250 hectares, as well as enhancing or creating nearly 13 kilometres of linear habitats such as river corridors and hedgerows.

Habitat Creation: Castle Vale Meadow

In 2013 this little used and biodiversity-poor open space on the edge of Castle Vale estate in Birmingham was transformed to create two new species-rich meadows.

green hay from 'donor' sites at Eades Meadow SSSI and Draycote Meadows SSSI, and strewn over two days with support from the local community.

The project was designed in conjunction with The Community Environmental Trust and The University of Wolverhampton and developed by harvesting

The meadows are managed by Birmingham City Council and monitored as part of PhD research by the University of Wolverhampton.

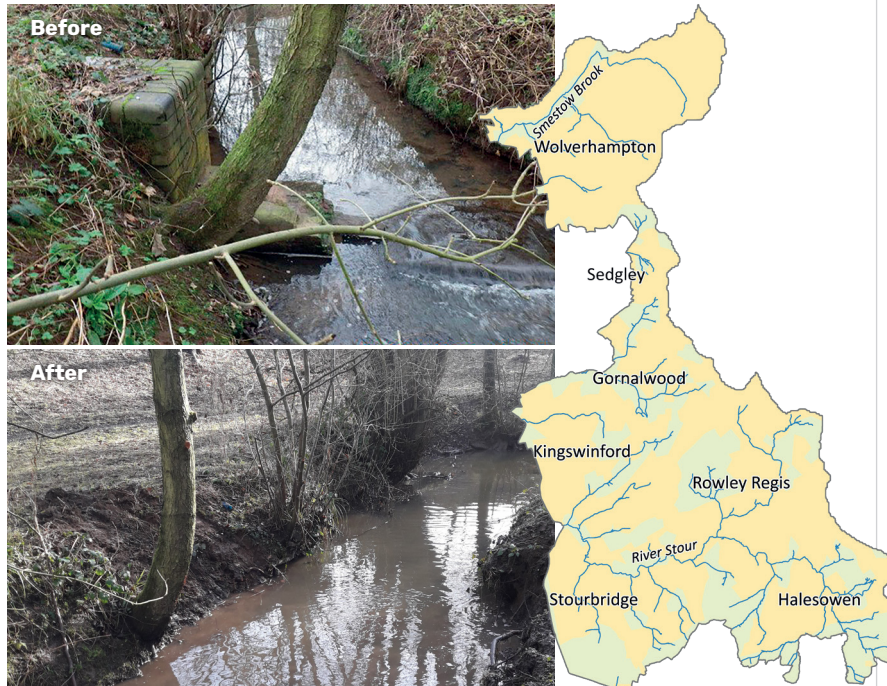
Strategic River Restoration Project: Love Your River Stour



Funded by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, this project has supported the creation of a new team of five staff and trainees. The project aims to naturalise watercourses along the River Stour catchment by removing and bypassing manmade barriers and improving terrestrial habitats.

Community involvement and engagement is a significant part of this project. Local community groups are encouraged to support through practical volunteering, and people can learn how to care for the river into the future through different educational experiences.

An ecosystem services assessment is also underway as part of the project.



Goal 2: People are taking action for nature and the climate across Birmingham and the Black Country

By 2030
we want
to see

at least
1 in 4
people across
Birmingham and the
Black Country taking
action for nature.



In order for nature to recover, we need many more people on nature's side. Evidence shows us that if 1 in 4 people - over half a million of our residents - take visible action we can create a social 'tipping point' where the majority will follow ⁽⁹⁾. To achieve this, we need to enable a huge growth in activity, scaling up our impact and inspiring diverse new communities to help bring about nature's recovery.

Why is this needed?

80%

of city dwellers love nature but don't get enough of it ⁽⁶⁾



1/4

of people will experience a mental health issue every year in England ⁽⁷⁾

1/3

of the adults in the West Midlands are inactive ⁽⁸⁾



What we will do

- Work proactively to engage and understand the diverse communities of Birmingham and the Black Country to ensure that every resident has a positive and meaningful connection with their local natural environment.
- Develop 'Team Wilder', a community-based approach to inspire and enable unprecedented numbers of people to take independent action for the wildlife.
- Ensure children have enjoyable and memorable first experiences of nature and wildlife on their doorstep through our primary school outdoor learning programmes.
- Expand the role of young people as key stakeholders and future custodians of our local environment.
- Develop our outdoor learning and accredited training programmes to enable more people to have the skills to care for nature.
- Help more people to realise the physical and mental health benefits of spending time in nature through expanding our provision of health and well-being in nature courses.
- Inspire a network of gardeners to create a living landscape by making space for wildlife in their gardens and shared outdoor spaces.

Our call to action

Every resident to have access to a high quality natural space within walking distance of their homes.

Every school in Birmingham and the Black Country to give their children a positive experience of wildlife through their outdoor learning provision.

Greater investment in training and 'green jobs' to manage our green spaces.

Greater integration of our natural health environment in public health decision making.



Goal 2: Case Studies

Between 2011 and 2021 we helped thousands of people to connect with nature through engagement and learning and inspired communities to take action for nature.

We worked with 60 schools to provide curriculum-led educational services to over 50,000 children, provided 39 trainees with the skills and experience to develop a career in the sector, and delivered a weekly programme of events and nature activities to over 40,000 local people.

Thanks to a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we have delivered a successful traineeship programme. Natural Prospects aims to challenge the barriers to working in the environmental conservation sector and targets residents from Birmingham and the Black Country aged over 18 with a passion for working in nature. It offers practical, hands-on experience whilst gaining a City and Guilds Level 2 Work Based Certificate in Environmental Conservation along with a bursary. Since it began in April 2019, all trainees who have completed the programme are now in employment (90% in the environmental conservation sector) or further education.

Cohort 1



"I've been taken on with a company that do grounds maintenance all across the Midlands... I just want to thank you as if it wasn't for the Trust I wouldn't be working here, I really do appreciate it!"

Ben Hammonds Cohort 1

Cohort 2



"I will always be grateful for the opportunities I was given as a result of my time as a Natural Prospects trainee. It has allowed me to pursue my passion in working for the benefit of the natural world and I'm proud to now be a part of the Wildlife Trust staff."

James Benwell, Cohort 2

Cohort 3



"I see myself equipped with a wealth of experiences to draw on, a recognised conservation qualification and the confidence to go into the sector and apply for a job that I will genuinely value and appreciate; a job outdoors, working with nature and working with people."

Jane Grove, Cohort 3

Goal 3: Nature is playing a central and valued role in helping to address local and global problems

By 2030
we aim
for

500

hectares of land to be improved to provide nature-based solutions to the ecological and climate crises.



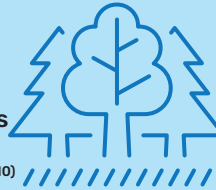
We are clear that the climate and ecological crises are inextricably linked and that nature's recovery is vital for tackling climate change. Understanding and investing in the natural environment provides the opportunity to reduce, mitigate and reverse a number of challenges faced by society. Our work will deliver nature-based solutions to problems such as flooding, pollution, the impacts of climate change and poor mental health.

Our call to action

Why is this needed?

Significant reduction

in the area of habitats and gardens (vegetation cover) in Birmingham and the Black Country since 1980 ⁽¹⁰⁾



100%

of the rivers and streams in Birmingham and the Black Country fail to meet good ecological status ⁽¹¹⁾



Tens of thousands

of new homes are planned to be built in Birmingham and the Black Country by 2030 ⁽¹²⁾



Significant resources to be invested in reducing the sources of pollution of our watercourses such as sewage, road run-off, agricultural chemicals and plastics.

Equal access to high quality green space and nature for all, with profits from new developments providing the funding to create new sites in the most nature deprived parts of the urban landscape.

What we will do

- Work with our partners to provide accessible, high quality wildlife-rich green space for all.
- Design and build nature-based solutions into our biodiversity enhancement and creation projects.
- Work with farmers to improve the management of agricultural land and reduce harm to our soils and water.
- Demonstrate through data and evidence that our work for nature's recovery locally helps to address the global ecological and climate crises.
- Develop and provide a new range of services to local authorities and developers that secure investment in nature's recovery and nature-based solutions.
- Deliver measurable improvements for our communities' health and wellbeing.
- We will become a carbon neutral organisation.

National and local government, developers and businesses to invest in nature-based solutions and green infrastructure such as wetlands, woodlands and street trees to tackle the impacts of climate change, poor air quality, pollution and flooding.

Goal 3: Case Studies

In 2020, The Wildlife Trust, in partnership with Birmingham City Council and the Environment Agency put together the River Cole project to deliver environmental improvements within the Birmingham Area.

These environmental improvements focused on improving the habitat quality and climate resilience of the River Cole through habitat re-naturalisation works; creating diverse habitats for invertebrates such as damselflies, fish and birds, and increasing flood capacity, to deal with severe weather.





How we will achieve our strategic goals



Develop our network of partner organisations, maintaining current and developing new relationships, linking with the priorities and initiatives of others, working in partnership to deliver our vision for nature's recovery.



Monitor and evidence the delivery of our strategy.



Identify and develop 'hubs' across Birmingham and the Black Country from where staff and volunteers can inspire and equip people to take action for nature.



Transform our digital capabilities and experiment with new and innovative technologies to maximise our impacts, from intelligent and strategic use of geospatial information and ecological data, to effectively increase our digital engagement with new audiences.



Reduce our reliance on grant funding, developing sustainable funding sources that support the achievement of this strategy.



Invest in our people and systems and build an organisation-wide culture of learning and excellence.



Broaden our skills as community facilitators and commit to a more inclusive approach; mobilising people to take action on the things that matter most to them.

Help us create a Wilder Birmingham and Black Country

Together we need to tackle the race against climate change and environmental damage. Join us to achieve our vision for a Wilder Birmingham and Black Country!



Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust



Charity no: 513615



Get Involved

Become a member:
bbcwildlife.org.uk/JoinUs

Make a donation:
bbcwildlife.org.uk/Donate

Volunteer with us:
bbcwildlife.org.uk/Volunteer

Sign up to our e-news:
bbcwildlife.org.uk/SignUp

Come to an event:
bbcwildlife.org.uk/Events



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