

Nottinghamshire

Wildlife Trust



Wilder

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE



Wildlife is in freefall

This document sets out the scale of the challenge facing nature and society in our county, and outlines some big ideas that could help to turn the tide.

Every day we are losing what is precious and essential

Looking out of your window, or walking around outside, you might think that all is well with our wildlife.

However, it's not...

We have lost much of our wildlife and wild places over decades.

The wildlife rich places that remain are much smaller and more fragmented than ever.

There is increasing pressure on wildlife and wild places in the county from housing, infrastructure and intensification of land management.

Impoverishment can be hard to spot at a distance. In this apparently green and pleasant land, surrounded by countryside, it can be hard to reconcile the view we see before us with tales of decline. Yet common plants and animals are becoming scarce and the rare are disappearing altogether.

We're facing an ecological crisis.



© Richard Miller

Society is in trouble

It's not just wildlife that is in trouble; people are too. Runaway climate change is dangerously close to becoming a reality. Our waters are polluted and full of plastic. Our soils are washing away and our air isn't clean.

Mental health problems, obesity and loneliness are on the rise. The social and economic cost of our failure to deal with these issues is huge and growing.

Society is losing its connection with wildlife and people living in the most socially and economically deprived areas of our county have least access to wildlife and wild places.

We know, however, that restoring nature and our connection to it can help solve many of the most pressing environmental, economic and social problems we face.



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What nature does for us



We know from research across the globe that a healthy, wildlife-rich natural world is essential for our wellbeing and prosperity.

Healthy soil is an essential foundation of all life, but is currently being lost ten times faster than it is being created. Soil erosion and pollution is also killing the rivers that we rely on for our water, with 86% now classed as unhealthy.

A large and growing body of evidence shows that nature not only keeps us alive and gives us a home, but can also help us stay mentally and physically well.

Individuals with easy access to nature are 40% less likely to become overweight or obese and

national research, as well as our own experience, shows the huge impact nature can have in combatting mental illness.

It is undeniable that time spent in natural spaces can, and does, significantly improve people's lives.

“ People are part of the natural world and we depend upon it for our existence ”

© Helena Dolby



What's the solution?

Tip the balance in favour of nature's recovery



Recovery of nature is not just good for nature, but good for us too.

We want Nottinghamshire to be vibrant, dynamic and full of life.

We want senses to be filled with the sounds and sights of wildlife.

We need more, bigger, better and more joined up wild places.

We want more people to be given the opportunity to experience and take action for wildlife in their daily lives, and feel better for it.

We need to care for and nurture our remaining wild places.

We need to inspire the creation of thousands more places so that wildlife and people can thrive.

We need to build wildlife into decision making at all levels.

We need to make wildlife more visible in debates about priorities.

We need to enable and empower people to take action in their own lives to benefit wildlife on their doorstep and in their communities.



© Mike Vickers



© Electric Egg



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Making more space for wildlife

Our nature reserves are vitally important but on their own they are not enough to allow wildlife to recover as they only account for a tiny area (less than 1% of the surface area of the county).

They were our emergency responses to try to save places under threat; safe havens from which wildlife could spread back across the landscape when the time was right. They were never meant to be the end point.

There are other important habitats remaining in the county too, but these are still not enough to halt the decline.

We need more than a patchwork of nature reserves. We need a supportive, interconnected mesh of different species and habitats – from wilder areas to wild urban spaces, window boxes, gardens and verges – all together creating a buzzing, thriving, functioning Nature Recovery Network.



© Terry Whittaker / 2020VISION





How could we create a Nature Recovery Network?

Stage 1: Protect the wildest places

These are nature reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Local Wildlife Sites – our core sources of wildlife. At sea they include Marine Protected Areas. These places need to be protected from harm, improved through good management and where possible increased in size.

Stage 2: Make connections between them

Smaller patches of habitat can act as 'stepping stones' and 'corridors' between bigger areas. This means creating and looking after features like hedges, ponds, streams, small woods and meadows to provide habitat and make it easier for wildlife to move through the landscape.

Stage 3: Find space for wildlife in the wider landscape

This network should sit within a wider landscape characterised by nature-friendly development and farming. This would include encouraging a wide range of people to increase the amount of wildlife habitat in places like farms, parks, retail parks, churchyards, road verges, gardens and golf courses. It would need high standards of basic regulation.

Stage 4: Provide a bigger overall area for wildlife

By looking after our wildest places and creating habitat between them, the overall area of wildlife-friendly land increases. This area needs to be safeguarded. Here, land management or development should be required to strengthen the network of habitats and not weaken it. This makes wildlife populations less likely to decline.

- Sites with protection
- Tree Line
- Pollinator Pathway
- River Trent
- Recreational Line



Imagine a Nature Recovery Network for Nottinghamshire...

If you could travel forward in time. What would Nottinghamshire be like twenty years from now? How could things improve? Little differences add up; the air is cleaner, and the drone of vehicle noise has almost vanished from our streets. Most buildings have green roofs; some even have green walls. Housing estates now have rich areas of greenspace, many incorporating old hedgerows and trees. Farm fields have colourful wildflower strips running alongside, or ponds, or thick hedges. There are more hedgehogs, swallows and housemartins, and a lot more pollinators and other insects.

Finally, the major change dawns on you. The biggest change is in the people, not the landscape. They look healthier and happier, seem more willing to stop and chat. There's less stress and anxiety in their lives and people seem to understand that the natural world is the foundation of our wellbeing and prosperity; this understanding is greatest amongst children who get the fact that we depend on it and it depends on us - which, after all, is how it is.

What will tip the balance?

We want people thriving because of nature and nature thriving because of people

Over the past six decades Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust has worked hard to protect wildlife and wild places. We have achieved a great deal but our actions alone are not enough.

Today, we have to look beyond the boundaries of our land and the limits of our delivery.

We need more people on nature's side and more space for nature to thrive.

There are thousands of people from all walks of life in the county who love wildlife and would be willing to take action.

Research shows that 25% of the population need to be behind any large scale social change.

We need people to be talking about the importance of wildlife and our natural world. We need people to be demonstrating to those in power that there is an appetite and urgency to create a better deal for nature. We also need people to be taking whatever action they can, on their own or collectively.

We will need 1 in 4 people to join us, in whichever way they want, in creating a Wilder Nottinghamshire.

We need to decide what kind of future we want – wilder, or not?

We're ready...will you join with us?

A New Environment Act

We need an ambitious new Environment Act that moves the law beyond simply protection of nature and enables, or requires, people and organisations to do what is needed for nature's recovery.

Together with other organisations, we are calling for new laws that don't just slow the decline of wildlife and the natural world, but reverse it.

The new Act must set out clear principles and targets. It should have Nature Recovery Networks at its heart and establish an effective, independent watchdog to hold governments and public bodies to account.

This national legislation is essential for us locally and could create a radical context for all decisions affecting wildlife and wild places – driving changes to every area of public policy from education and planning to agriculture and business.

We must have our local voice heard and make sure that the Act delivers on this promise. This is a once in a generation opportunity.

But it doesn't stop at legislation.



Better homes for people and wildlife

More and more people live their lives with little or no contact with nature. This disconnect affects mental health and even has an impact on life expectancy.

The poorest people in our society have the least access to green spaces.

Integrating nature into the built environment can help to address these problems.

There is huge pressure for new housing right across Nottinghamshire. We accept that people need homes, but so too do our mammals, birds, wildflowers and insects.

New homes should be inspiring and beautiful places to live, places where people and nature thrive side by side. We need a new approach that puts the natural environment at the heart of development and planning.

We believe every new development should give back more to nature than it takes away – securing a real and measurable 'net gain' for wildlife and the environment.

The focus needs to move to where and how we build houses, not just how many we need to build.

Imagine if the starting point for decisions about housing was to map our woods, meadows, parks and river corridors and identify where new habitats are needed; and then locate and design new housing around this. This is exactly what we need to do.

Built in the right way, in the right place, new housing developments can make a positive contribution to nature and to the health and wellbeing of people who live there.

(Re)wilding

You don't need to have a huge area of land to make it more wild.

We are excited by the possibility of finding places where intensive management can be reduced to allow nature to take control so that wildlife might bounce back on a grand scale.

We believe parts of the Sherwood Forest landscape can be re-wilded, to restore great swathes of heathland and allow open forest to return – proving space for threatened species such as the nightjar and woodlark to thrive and room for more common species to increase in number.

Letting nature function properly across large areas so that it enhances water storage and water quality has real economic value, as well as public benefit.

There are 27,000 parks in the UK – what if more parkland was devoted to nature alongside other uses for people?

We could rewild hundreds of miles of road verges across Nottinghamshire – simply by cutting them less often – creating a network of linear roadside meadows where wildlife can thrive.

There are thousands of hectares of gardens across Nottinghamshire too that could all be a bit wilder.

Farming with nature

Over 70% of the UK's land is farmed in some way, so how this land is managed has a big impact on wildlife

A thriving natural environment underpins our future ability to grow food, but the decline of wildlife in the countryside is threatening this.

The recovery of wildlife depends on a farming policy which enables farmers to create and restore natural habitats alongside food production.

Successful farms need thriving wildlife because crops depend on pollination, natural pest control and healthy soils.

Farmers and land managers should be rewarded for delivering benefits to society such as creating habitats for wildlife, conserving soils and protecting communities against flooding.

Agriculture policy does not have to choose between wildlife and food production. Farming that works with nature makes sense – for now and for the future.

Successful farms need thriving wildlife



Wilder neighbourhoods, towns and cities

We want to bring wildlife into every neighbourhood, whether it's letting wild flowers bloom along our roadside verges, planting more street trees, installing swift bricks in our homes or including green walls and roofs in new developments.

The benefits of wilding our towns and cities are far-reaching and even small actions, like cutting the grass less often, can help turn towns into wildlife destinations.

We believe that wild patches in urban areas are crucial – offering essential habitat and stepping stones within the Nature Recovery Network.

Parks, allotments, school grounds and community spaces can all offer something for nature and bring people together – creating healthier and more socially connected communities.

Connecting with nature should be a really important part of everybody's life, whatever their age. A healthy environment relies on people who care. People who spend time in natural spaces as children grow into adults who care more about environmental issues and seek out natural spaces.

Wilder lives

Nature is vital for our health and happiness, but for most of us, our daily surroundings are artificial.

Being able to see birds near our homes, spending time in wild green spaces and walks along rivers and streams that are clean and clear reduces stress, fatigue, anxiety and depression.

We want to create opportunities for more people to get closer to nature in their everyday lives.

“ We believe that everyone deserves to live in a healthy, wildlife-rich natural world and experience the joy of wildlife every day. ”



Small actions in small spaces

As we all strive to make Nottinghamshire wilder, we must remember that everyone can play a part and every little helps.

Whether you choose to do something directly to help wildlife or choose to make lifestyle choices to promote a better environment the key is to do something.

If we all take action, we can look forward to a Wilder Nottinghamshire.



Click on the actions to learn more or visit nottinghamshirewildlife.org/actions



Make a hedgehog house



Grow a wildlife friendly veg garden



Make your garden wildlife friendly



Create a log shelter



Create a wildlife pond



Build a bee hotel



Plant a container garden



Make your garden chemical free



Go peat free



Compost your waste



Build a hibernaculum



Attract pollinators to your garden



Leave your car at home



Take part in citizen science



Conserve water

What next?

1. Let those in power know they must act now.

It's critical that Government and those in power understand how strongly people feel about the ecological and climate emergencies.

We have a once in a generation opportunity to ensure that nature's recovery is at the heart of public policy and law across Britain.

Help us to demonstrate to Government the swell of support for an ambitious Environment Act.

Our individual calls will, together, create a noise that can't be ignored.

Securing the legal grounding that nature and the environment deserve is an essential step, but as we have set out, there is much more work that we all need to be getting on with.

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2. Be part of nature's recovery.

We need to start building the Nature Recovery Network across Nottinghamshire now.

Everyone, whether you are a landowner, a planner, a gardener, a scientist or a teacher has a part to play.

We need at least 1 in 4 people to commit to creating a wilder world.

We need advocates, ambassadors, activists and leaders to work with us to tip the balance.

It is vital that we work with others because we all have the power to make a positive impact on the nature and climate emergencies.

**Be part of nature's
recovery**
visit [nottinghamshirewildlife.
org/wilder-future](http://nottinghamshirewildlife.org/wilder-future)

