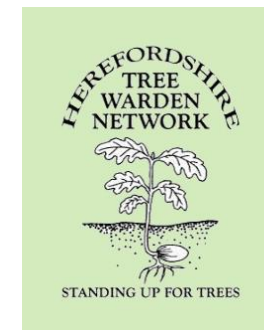


1- Parish Council Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

- . A Parish BAP is a document that identifies local species and habitats, assesses threats, and sets out actions to protect and enhance biodiversity.
- . It's a way to target conservation efforts at a local level, focusing on the specific needs of the parish.
- . The plan may include actions like habitat creation, species protection, improved land management practices, and public awareness campaigns.



2 Why a Parish Council BAP is important:

i.) **Conserves local wildlife:**

Parish BAPs help protect local species and habitats, contributing to overall biodiversity conservation.

ii.) **Improves the local environment:**

by implementing the plan, parishes can enhance green spaces, improve water quality, and create more attractive places for people to live in and enjoy.

iii.) **Engages the community:**

Parish BAPs involve residents, businesses, and organizations, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for the local environment.

iv.) **Meets legal obligations:**

Parish Councils have a duty to consider biodiversity in their decision-making, and a Parish BAP can help demonstrate that they are fulfilling this duty.



3 Key Components:

1. Assessment:

identifying habitats, species, and potential threats to biodiversity in the parish.

2. Prioritization:

determining which habitats and species are most important to protect and enhance.

3. Action Planning:

developing specific actions to address threats and promote biodiversity.

4. Implementation:

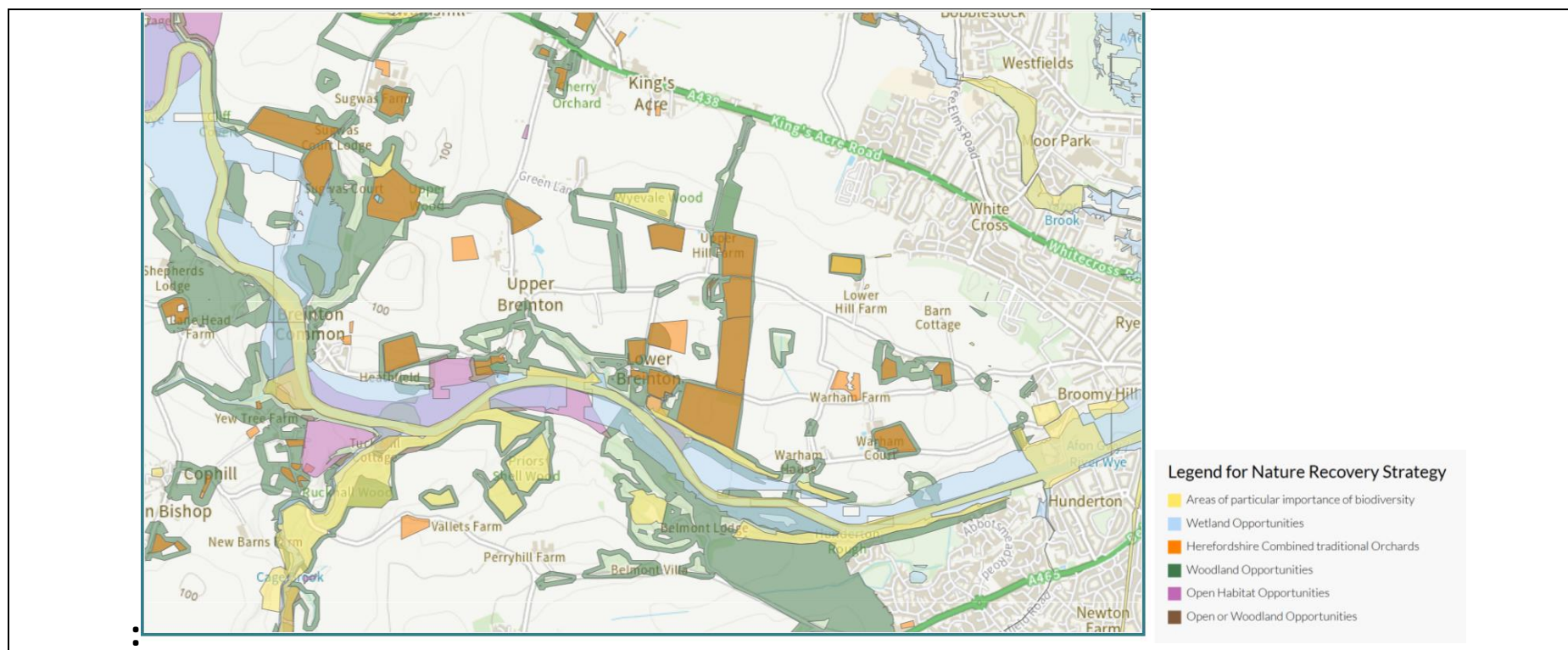
putting the plan into action through projects, policy changes, and community engagement.

5. Monitoring and Review:

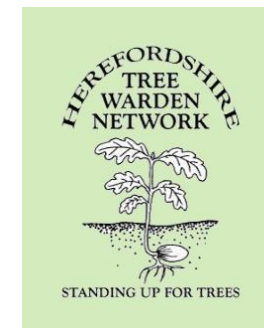
regularly assessing the effectiveness of the plan, changing as needed.



4 Use LNRS maps of your Parish *e.g. this is Breinton Parish*



Source [Nature Recovery Strategy map Herefordshire Council](#)

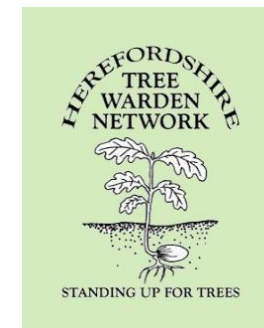


5 Mapping your Parish Biodiversity identifies:

land ownership, trees of interest, woodlands, public open space, highway verges, wildlife corridors, meadows, ponds

Create a new layer on your Parish map with opportunities:

- new woodlands
- new hedgerows and restoration
- restoring traditional orchards
- tree planting locations in hedges and elsewhere
- mature tree maintenance and restoration
- new ponds and scrapes, natural flood controls
- wildflower meadows and species-rich verges
- grassland and scrub habitat
- nest box locations



6 For example, the Breinton Parish priority habitats

Traditional orchards and remnants of ancient woodlands and
River Wye SSSI SAC wetland potential



Notes on the development of Parish Biodiversity Action Plans

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Why create a BAP and what is the value of biodiversity?

Natural capital is the parts of nature that provide benefits to people. We depend on it for the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. It boosts our health and wellbeing. It captures and stores carbon and has a vital role to play in helping us adapt to the impacts of climate change. Natural capital is also an economic concept. It considers nature as a stock of assets, which we must invest in. Ecosystem assets need to be in a healthy state to support the benefits society relies on. <https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/2024/10/09/state-of-natural-capital-report-for-england-published-today/>

Declines in nature increase the impact of climate change such as flooding and extreme temperatures in urban areas. The loss of pollinators threatens essential food production. With such high stakes, why is nature in steep decline?

Nature should be central to strategic decision making but is often absent or a secondary consideration. If the current decline in nature is ignored, we will all suffer the consequences. We have witnessed the decline in nature because we extract more from the environment than it can sustainably supply. Society is depleting its reserves of natural capital at a rapid rate, now exacerbated by the impact of climate change.

The research data in 2020 showed the UK has experienced extinctions and declines in abundance, biomass and distribution of insects. Declines in abundance or distribution have been seen in bees and hoverflies, butterflies and moths, beetles, and freshwater insects, but some species are increasing in biomass. There are a variety of drivers behind insect decline, such as habitat loss, chemical use and climate change, and their impacts differ across habitat, species and time.

The key findings of the 2024 State of Natural Capital Report by Natural England: because our ecosystem assets are degraded, they are less able to cope with the impact of future changes. Our assets are already very highly impacted by land and sea-use change, pollution, natural resource use and exploitation and climate change. There is currently a very rapid increase in the severity of impacts of climate change, associated invasive species (including pests and diseases) and land and sea-use change. This puts the assets and benefits we rely on at risk.

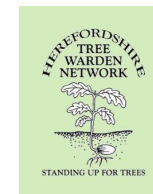
There are three main ways to reduce risk to natural capital:

- 1) restore ecosystems.
- 2) reduce the impacts of drivers of change.
- 3) make natural capital central to decision-making.

NERR137 Edition 1 State of Natural Capital Report for England 2024 – risks to nature and why it matters (NERR137)

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A Statutory Duty for Parish Councils to Consider Biodiversity

Under the 2021 Environment Act, public authorities ([including town and parish councils](#)) operating in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Government guidance published on 17 May 2023 clarifies that, as a public authority, town and parish councils must:

- consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.
- act to deliver their policies and achieve their objectives.

Town and parish councils, unlike other authorities, are not obliged to publish a report on their actions, but the Government guidance required all public authorities to complete their first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by 1 January 2024 (though this is not being policed for town and parish councils). They were required to agree their policies and objectives as soon as possible after this and must then reconsider the selected actions within five years of completing their previous consideration, or more frequently if they choose.

To comply with the guidance, town and parish councils could as a minimum:

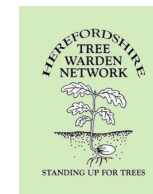
- have biodiversity as an agenda item for a meeting (if not already, as soon as possible).
- note what action they are already taking to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- agree what further steps they should take to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

All these steps may inform an agreed biodiversity policy. Guidance for town and parish councils on developing a local nature action plan has been [published by South Gloucestershire Council](#), as well as a [model policy](#) and field guide for those with little or no ecological background.

In accordance with the duty imposed on town and parish councils by Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, updated by Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021, town and parish councils must consider what action the authority can properly take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective.

Notes on the development of Parish Biodiversity Action Plans

prepared by Cllr Emil Morfett (Breinton Parish Council)



This duty also means that town and parish councils can spend funds in conserving biodiversity.

Herefordshire County Council encourages biodiversity planning [in Parish Councils](#). In Herefordshire, [Fownhope Parish Council](#) adopted an environmental and sustainability policy as did [Dormington and Mordiford Parish Council](#). [Wigmore Group Parish Council](#) has adopted a biodiversity policy and a concise biodiversity action plan. [Llangarron Parish](#) has also adopted a biodiversity policy. [Cusop Parish](#) adopted a biodiversity policy and formed a working group to address key issues in the parish. [Hereford City Council](#) has an active Climate and Biodiversity Committee and is working on its biodiversity action plan.

This report outlines the steps we can all take to generate a Parish Biodiversity Action Plan. You can create a baseline map showing your area as it is now using the available data or [the Local Nature Recovery Strategy LNRS for Herefordshire](#).

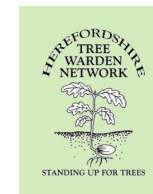
[The latest LNRS maps for Herefordshire can be found here.](#) <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/lnrsmap>

The areas indicated on the LNRS maps show existing priority habitat, opportunity areas for woodland, and open habitat. The colour coding of the map indicates if the areas are high, medium or low priority depending on their potential for nature recovery. The LNRS map also has an overlay that demonstrates where the land could revert to wetland. This occurs where the priority areas overlap with the wetland overlay to demonstrate a potential for wet woodland or open wetland. The LNRS map also indicates areas of traditional orchards as small refuges that could become wildlife corridors with thoughtful actions such as growing wider hedges, tracks enclosed by hedges with enhanced ponds and wetlands.

The LNRS map was created using least cost path analysis and has its flaws and omissions, which could be corrected, in future, by Herefordshire Councils' consultants through more collaborative research. For example, the important geospatial data mapped and submitted to the LNRS team on current and potential Hereford City tree canopy cover was not incorporated into the maps due to funding constraints.

Notes on the development of Parish Biodiversity Action Plans

prepared by Cllr Emil Morfett (Breinton Parish Council)



Consider following these key steps:

- examine your Parish LNRS maps online to identify key priority habitats.
- use your network to identify landowners for permissive access.
- engage with local experts to guide volunteers where possible.
- check important habitats on the ground using public footpaths and roads.

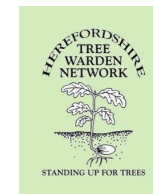
Protect the existing spaces with landowners permission. Use the network of volunteer Tree Wardens to help identify experts from the County. It makes sense to find out who owns the priority habitat in your area and to approach them through a recognised organisation such as the Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust, Ancient Tree Forum or your volunteer Tree Warden network.

Each land owner will have management plans to counter climate change and enhance biodiversity and it is important to engage with them to understand the best plan of action for your Parish. Gather the records for each key area of priority habitat and enable the community to share and understand the data. Volunteers collect species records in various apps but 'iRecord' seems to be the most populated with local records. iRecord collates wildlife sightings from many sources, checked by experts and made available to support research and decision-making. It is operated by the [Biological Records Centre](#) (HBRC) as part of the work of the [UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology](#) (UKCEH).

- Record all the wildlife you see
- Securely store and keep track of your records
- Benefit from automatic data checks and review by experts
- Share your sightings with the recording community
- Explore dynamic maps, reports and graphs of your data
- Explore data shared by other recorders in your area
- Contribute to science and conservation

Notes on the development of Parish Biodiversity Action Plans

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What is missing from the government geospatial analysis in your area?

The existing data sets available online are enough to define the key habitats in your Parish to protect and enhance to improve local biodiversity. From a simple desk study we identified several key local habitats in Breinton Parish including :

- heritage and traditional orchards
- ancient woodlands
- deciduous woodlands
- improved grasslands

What was missing in our Parish at Breinton?

- The 400m buffer zones on SAC sites i.e. the banks and cliffs of the River Wye SSSI SAC
- The wetland potential for the Wye floodplain
- Hedge networks crucial for many species
- The spring fed ponds, ephemeral ponds and streamlines

Make plans to survey important habitats using these links for guidance:

The digital mapping illustrates these zones are often sinuous, discontinued, poorly connected or fragmented islands of biodiversity. The user guidance to the National Habitats Map gives insight into planning enhancements and improvements to existing priority habitats.

[The National Habitat Networks Map User Guidance May 2020.](#)

National guidance includes these steps to explore in your Parish BAP:

- decreasing habitat fragmentation
- increasing extent of habitat
- restoring degraded habitat
- expanding, linking & joining the networks

Notes on the development of Parish Biodiversity Action Plans

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Use the Magic Maps DEFRA data website

For creating Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) in the UK, the [MAGIC website](#) is a highly valuable resource. It provides interactive mapping and data on the natural environment, including habitats, designated sites, and landscape types.

You may need expert help to import data sets from the various sources into a base map for biodiversity mapping. Finding a course on using Magic Maps or the Ordnance Survey base maps would be useful. MAGIC stands for Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside. The help menu of the Magic Maps website is not bad but the software is clunky, for example the legends are not displayed in a user friendly format. [This is a link to some initial guidance on using Magic Maps.](#) However, DEFRA's Magic Maps do have an extensive help library in the help menu: [Source DEFRA maps](#)

The data you display on DEFRA's Magic Maps can be downloaded as a geospatial file and saved to your local database. Just choose your preferred scale of 1:50,000 or 1:25,000 and save the data.

Look for spaces to add trees and ponds

Many lowland farms expanded their fields by removing hedges and trees for larger agricultural machinery access. This may, however, provide opportunities for replanting hedges and oak trees, left isolated or not replaced in fields. Often tree lines and hedge lines had developed gaps where trees are lost or hedges die back without replacement. [Tree and woodland cover Herefordshire Council](#). The latest County database incorporates the Ancient Tree Inventory. Check your parish area for omissions and opportunities. Use the link on the Woodland Trust website to update your findings. The [Ancient Tree Forum](#) collects and collates data on our ancient, veteran and notable trees in the landscape. [The best available information on your local ancient, veteran and notable trees](#), is shared by the Woodland Trust. The Herefordshire Tree Forum (HTF) website also has a wealth of easily accessible information and guidance on trees at <https://www.htreeforum.co.uk/>

Download a draft model policy template for your Parish Council to discuss:

A 'dumbed down' local nature action plan has been [published by South Gloucestershire Council](#), as well as a [model policy](#) and field guide for those with little or no ecological background. The model policy draft will aid discussion in Parish Council.

Notes on the development of Parish Biodiversity Action Plans

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Useful references for Herefordshire Tree Wardens to share on TPOs, the law, planning, conservation and hedges:

TPO map for Herefordshire

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/elections-1/administrative-map>

Trees and the Law

<https://www.htreeforum.co.uk/trees-and-the-law>

Trees and planning

<https://www.htreeforum.co.uk/trees-and-planning>

Conservation areas

<https://www.htreeforum.co.uk/trees-and-conservation-areas>

Felling Licences

<https://www.htreeforum.co.uk/felling-licences>

High hedges and other tree legislation

<https://www.htreeforum.co.uk/high-hedges-other-tree-law>

Join the Herefordshire Tree Wardens

https://www.htreeforum.co.uk/tree_warden_a