



Warwickshire Coventry & Solihull
Local Nature Partnership

WARWICKSHIRE LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

Part 1

Forewords

Introduction

Strategic Area Description

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Summary Sheet

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Themes & Actions



Warwickshire
County Council

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Foreword LNP Chair

David Lowe: Chair of the Warwickshire Coventry and Solihull Local Nature Partnership (WCS LNP)

The recovery of nature is not a new concept in Warwickshire; nor is partnership working. However, the Warwickshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) heralds a promising new era; a strategic approach to draw together all the threads of activity happening throughout the county and weave a living tapestry as important as that of the Sheldon Tapestry that hangs in the Warwick Museum.

The Warwickshire LNRS has been prepared by the constituent members of the WCS LNP after extensive local group and public engagement to find out what makes Warwickshire's wildlife so important. From these discussions, plus the Local Biodiversity Action Plans fostered by the partnership, we have fashioned a strategy that looks to meet all our hopes and dreams for Warwickshire's past, current and future biodiversity.

Now that we know what we must do, it is time for all communities and sectors of society to adopt the aims and objectives within the Warwickshire LNRS's and reconstruct a Warwickshire where natural capital is core to all our understandings. After all, natural capital is what brings us life; the oxygen we need to breathe; the water we need to drink; the stress-release to get us through the day. However, it will not come easy and will need dedication, resources and financing.

The Warwickshire LNRS has been written by the people of Warwickshire for the biodiversity of Warwickshire. It is a strategy that pledges our support to protect, conserve and enhance Warwickshire's wildlife and its habitats. It holds actions, objectives and priorities that we must meet should we wish to continue to hear the dawn chorus across our towns and countryside; have clean water to drive industry and grow our food; have pollinators to maximize yields.

As Chair of the WCS LNP, I am honoured to have overseen the production of the Warwickshire LNRS and I, speaking on behalf of the LNP members, pledge to do all we can to help you make all within the strategy a reality.

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Foreword County Councillor

Cllr Darren Cheshire, Warwickshire County Council's Portfolio Holder for Environment, Heritage and Culture.

In Warwickshire, we are justly proud of our cultural heritage background: From the coal mining in the north, manufacturing in the heartlands and agriculture throughout. The past has shaped our landscape and the biodiversity that lives within our rural and urban communities.

However, it is time we ask ourselves some basic questions:

Why do we pollute the water in our rivers and aquifers that we rely on for drinking, brewing and irrigating our food? Why don't we work with nature to allow our water to flood our flood plains and not our homes, businesses and transport networks. Why don't we store this life-giving resource in times of excess ready for the lean months?

Why don't we promote nature friendly farming and embrace innovation to reduce our reliance on chemicals yet increase productivity.

What do we, as the current landscape stewards and architects, want the future to look like?

The Warwickshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy has been shaped by Warwickshire residents, industrialists and landowners to create places where we would be proud to live and work.

This vision for the future, includes towns and villages with more trees, wildlife rich public open spaces, green roofs and road verges. Places that link to rural landscapes of functional hedgerows that connect to more resilient, wildlife rich woodlands, ponds and grasslands.

How do we create this future?

We need to all work together in our gardens, parks and fields. We need to work with businesses to invest in our natural capital to increase its (and our) wealth.

Warwickshire is leading the way in this new approach towards environmental net gain. This delivery of the Warwickshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy will be our legacy of responsible stewardship of the natural world that we will leave for future generations.

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Introduction

What is a Local Nature Recovery Strategy?

Welcome to the Warwickshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are locally led plans mandated by the Environment Act 2021. They aim to recover nature and improve the environment by focusing on actions with the greatest impact on nature recovery. The Warwickshire LNRS in collaboration with the other 48 LNRS will cover the whole of England, to become a Nature Recovery Network across the country. More information on LNRSs can be found on the UK Government's LNRS webpages¹ and in Appendix A.

The Warwickshire LNRS

The Warwickshire LNRS is split into 4 parts:

- Part 1: Introduction to the LNRS
- Part 2: LNRS Themes and Priorities (including species priorities)
- Part 3: LNRS Delivery and Monitoring
- Part 4: LNRS Glossary

The LNRS habitat map for Warwickshire is embedded into Part 2 and can be viewed online via the Warwickshire Local Nature Partnership website (<https://www.wcslnp.co.uk/lhrs>). The map includes:

- **Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIB):** Existing sites of high value for nature, including nationally designated sites (e.g., SSSIs, SACs, LNRs), irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland and veteran trees, and Local Wildlife Sites. These areas are protected and play a vital role in conserving biodiversity. The nationally designated sites in Warwickshire currently include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), one Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and several Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). The only irreplaceable habitats present in Warwickshire are ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees.
- **Areas that Could Become Important for Biodiversity (ACB):** ACBs are places where action should be focused to bring the greatest benefits for nature and the wider environment. They represent the best opportunities to create, expand and connect habitats to support wildlife and improve natural systems - helping wildlife thrive and strengthening natural systems. This layer is created by combining the Potential Actions for Nature Recovery layer with the Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIB) layer removed. The result is a single map showing a vision for expanding Warwickshire's nature network, focusing on areas where action should be prioritised during the lifetime of this Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-nature-recovery-strategies/local-nature-recovery-strategies>

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What will the Warwickshire LNRS do and not do?

The Warwickshire LNRS will:

- Identify locations and activities that will have the biggest impact to improve nature recovery over this first iteration of the LNRS (envisaged to be 8 years).
- Be used by local authorities when developing planning strategies and to inform decision making.
- Be used to incentivise locations for habitat creation within Biodiversity Net Gain implementation.
- Continue to support nature recovery actions in Nature Improvement Areas.
- Provide evidence for farmers, land managers and advisers of which management actions will improve a site for nature.
- Be used by local groups and individuals for community or home-based nature recovery projects, and as an educational resource.

The Warwickshire LNRS should:

- Support local or government targeting of funding applications, opportunities and advice.
- Be used by funding bodies to target grant awards.

The Warwickshire LNRS will not:

- Require owners or managers of land to make specific proposed land use changes.
- Place new restrictions on developing land.
- Identify areas to be given legal nature protections that create restrictions on how land can be used.
- Prevent nature conservation work in areas not prioritised by the LNRS.
- Provide detailed site specific advice. The recommendations within the LNRS are still subject to detailed checks at a site level

Governance and Structure

Warwickshire County Council is the principal owner of the Warwickshire LNRS having been appointed by the Secretary of State to oversee its preparation. However, the Warwickshire, Coventry & Solihull Local Nature Partnership (WCS LNP) is the lead delivery organisation to promote and enact the strategy. More information on the WCS LNP can be found in Appendix B and on the [LNP website](#)² along with other user-friendly resources.

The LNRS will have no impact without the active participation of many landowners and managers, the LNP will strive to encourage and support them to keep doing what they are already doing for wildlife and to do more.

² [Warwickshire Coventry and Solihull Local Nature Partnership | WCSLNP](#)

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Why are the LNRSs required?

Nature and wildlife are declining at an alarming rate across the UK. The State of Nature (2023) report indicates that one in six species are at risk of extinction in Britain. Since 1970, wildlife has declined by 19% on average, and many important habitats are in poor condition. Yet, nature provides essential ecosystem services- such as clean air and water, pollination, climate regulation, and flood control - that are fundamental to our survival. Without these services, societies would struggle to grow food, maintain health, or adapt to climate change. Protecting and restoring nature is not just an environmental priority, but a human one. Together, all the LNRSs around the country will create a national approach to recovering nature.

Figure 1 illustrates the benefits and co-benefits that nature provides as divided into the four ecosystem services divisions.

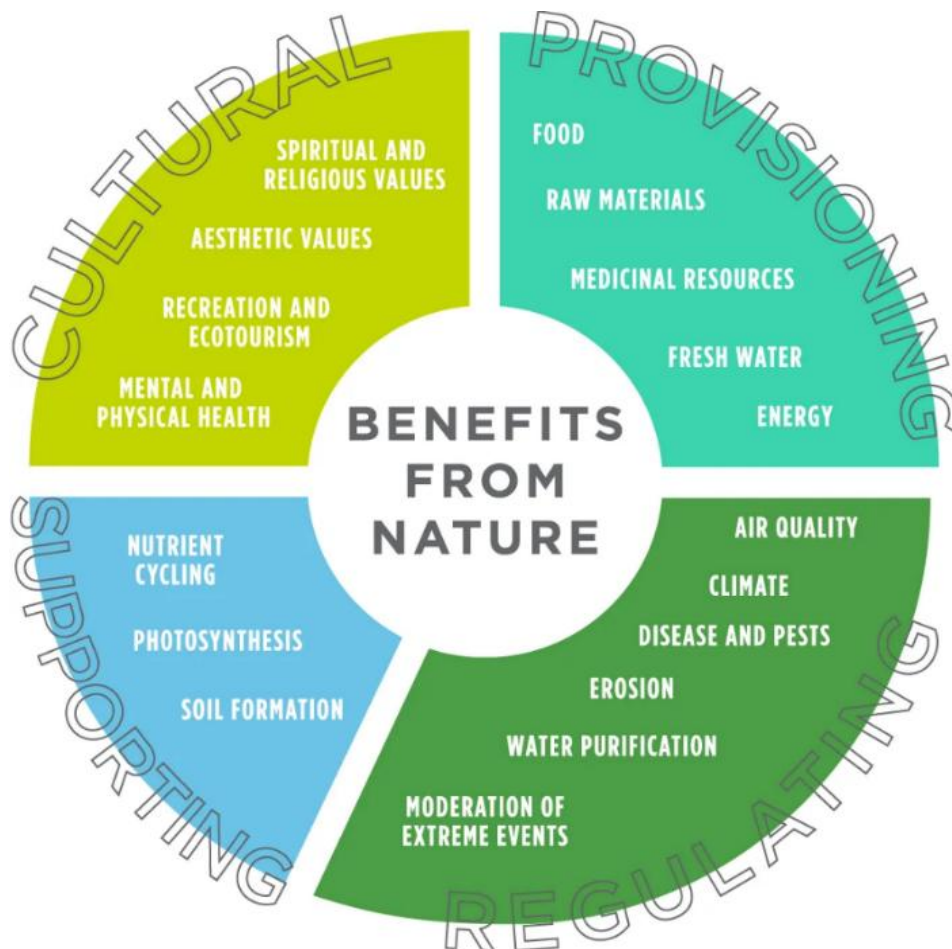


Figure 1: Benefits and co-benefits supported by nature

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Strategy Area Description

The Warwickshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), as shown in Figure 2, covers the administrative county of Warwickshire and includes the five districts and boroughs of North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Rugby, Stratford-on-Avon, and Warwick. Solihull and Coventry are not part of the Warwickshire LNRS, as they fall within the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) LNRS.

Warwickshire holds a unique place in history as the first county to have its antiquities documented in detail by Sir William Dugdale in *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (1656). Later, *The Victoria History of the County of Warwick* (1904) by Herbert Arthur Doubleday described its geology, natural history, and human heritage, listing species recorded at the time. His description remains true today albeit exacerbated by the increased fragmentation of the landscape from development, road and rail infrastructure plus the changing climate:



Figure 2: Warwickshire's five districts (Source: Warwickshire County Council. State of Warwickshire)

“In treating of the flora of a county, it is well to refer not only to that which is now prevalent; but also, so far as knowledge serves, to that which has prevailed in the past, but whose existence has become impossible owing to altered surroundings. In few of our midland counties have the changes incidental to the growth of population been more marked than in Warwickshire. A glance at a map of the county, and a study of the names of localities, will show that formerly heaths, wastes, commons and marshes existed, indeed were extensive in all parts of the county; and the records of the older botanists show that plants characteristic of such localities, though now in many cases either extinct or very rare, were then of more frequent occurrence; but heaths, wastes and commons have been enclosed and reclaimed, marshes and bogs drained, and the only portions of the county which at the present time really represent these past conditions, are some of the wilder portions of Sutton Park [**now no longer in the County of Warwickshire**]. The distribution of plants is to a certain extent determined by climate; proximity or otherwise to maritime influences, altitude, and by the general character of its rocks, whether igneous, calcareous or sandstone. The insular position of Warwickshire, and the absence of any great irregularities in its surface produce a mildness of climate; while it is free from the disturbing influences of either sea or mountain. Although everywhere undulating beautifully, the greatest altitude is only 855 feet above sea-level, and the average altitude about 380 feet above

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the sea, or well within the lowest zone of climatic influence. Its rocks are varied, beginning with the Cambrian and ending with the Inferior Oolite, but these are often in a degree obscured by the sands, gravels and clays of the drift, and these deposits materially affect the character of the flora. Throughout its area Warwickshire is well covered with trees, many of the woods being extensive, probably remains of the Great Forest of Arden, and are often rich in characteristic plants, as in the well-wooded district around Atherstone and Hartshill.” (Victoria History of the County of Warwick, Herbert Arthur Doubleday, 1904).

The publication continues by noting flora distinctive of each area, which was repeated in the Computer-Mapped Flora in 1971 and Warwickshire’s Wildflowers (S Falk, 2009) afterwards.

Today, this proud tradition of documenting Warwickshire’s natural heritage continues through the Warwickshire Biological Records Centre and the tireless efforts of local recorders in the community. Their meticulous observations and data collection provide an invaluable evidence base for understanding species distribution, monitoring trends, and informing conservation priorities. These records underpin the Local Nature Recovery Strategy by ensuring decisions are grounded in the best available knowledge. The commitment of Warwickshire’s recorders, past and present, remains central to safeguarding biodiversity, enabling us to track changes and trends over time and respond effectively to the challenges of habitat loss, fragmentation, and climate change.

Geology

The vegetation, species and crops grown in Warwickshire are influenced by the type of soils and these are determined by the underlying geology. Figure 3 Rock Types in Warwickshire illustrates the occurrences of different rock units as they occur at



Figure 3: Rock types in Warwickshire

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the surface.³ On this map, the yellow patches are the younger Jurassic sandstones, ironstones and limestones; the red corresponds to early Jurassic clays and limestones; the pink is Triassic clay and sandstone; the green is the Carboniferous rock of the Warwickshire Coalfield, and the blue is the ancient Precambrian and Cambrian rocks of north Warwickshire'. Source: Jon Radley (28/01/2016).

The harder ironstones and limestones form high ground. In brief, the soils in Warwickshire range from light to medium silty loams, with sandy soils in the north and centre, and heavier loams in the south.⁴ The corresponding pH levels of these soils are primarily neutral, with pockets of acidity and more calcareous alkaline areas along the river Avon and limestone ridges in the south.

Landscape

The County is sub-divided into nine National Character Areas (NCAs),⁵ based on landscape, geology, biodiversity, history, culture and economics.

- The Cotswolds (NCA 107) are dominated by steep scarps crowned by open wold with wooded valleys.
- The Dunsmore and Feldon (NCA 96) is a predominantly open rural, agricultural landscape, crossed by numerous small rivers.
- The Northamptonshire Uplands (NCA 95) is a landscape of gently rolling hills and valleys with open field systems, and distinctive nucleated villages with scattered broadleaved woodlands.
- The Severn and Avon Vales (NCA 106) consists of a low-lying open agricultural vale landscape made up of distinct and contrasting vales.
- The Arden (NCA 97) comprises farmland and former wood-pasture where mature oaks are set in hedgerows. Distinctive field boundaries, historic parklands and narrow river corridors are key features that are all on the doorstep of a heavily urbanised area.

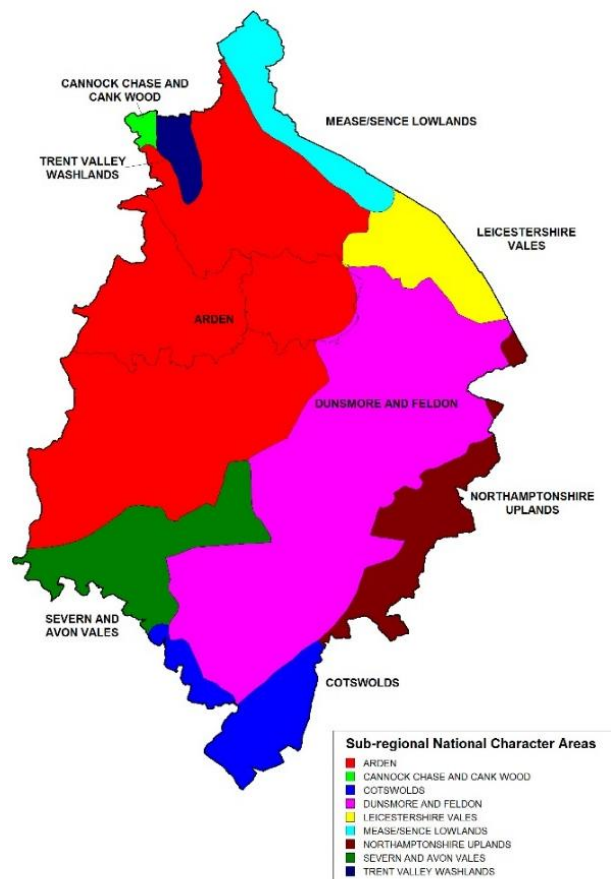


Figure 4: National Character Areas for Warwickshire

³ Heritage and Culture Warwickshire. *The Geology of Warwickshire – Our Warwickshire*. [Online]. 2016. [Accessed 03.12.2024]. URL: < [The Geology of Warwickshire - Our Warwickshire](#) >

⁴ [Countryside survey topsoil_pH_bulkdensity]

⁵ Natural England. *National Character Area Profiles*: [Online]. 2024. [Accessed 23.11.2024]. URL: < [Natural England - National Character Area Profiles - National Character Area Profiles](#) >

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- The Leicester Vales (NCA 94) are an open landscape of gentle clay ridges and valleys which gives way to the Mease/Sence Lowlands (NCA 72) a gently rolling agricultural landscape centred around the rivers Mease, Sence and Anker.
- The Trent Valley Washlands (NCA 69) comprise the river flood plain corridors of the middle reaches of the River Trent’s catchment in the heart of England. It is a distinctly narrow, linear and low-lying landscape, often clearly delineated at its edges by higher ground, and it is largely comprised of the flat flood plains and gravel terraces of the rivers.
- The Cannock Chase and Cank Wood (NCA 67) forms a plateau, rising above its surroundings.

The Warwickshire Landscape Character⁶ study adds further detail to the NCAs with the seven areas: Arden, Avon Valley, Feldon, Cotswolds, Mease Lowlands, High Cross Plateau and Dunsmore. These are further divided into areas for which there are specific recommendations to retain and enhance their individual features of importance, of which many are brought forward in this strategy.

The Warwickshire Landscape Character areas have made a significant contribution in the designation of the Nature Improvement Areas and project areas brought forward and approved by the Local Nature Partnership of which there are four that include Warwickshire and cross into the West Midlands, Staffordshire and Worcestershire LNRSs.

- Tame Valley Wetlands NIA - The Tame Valley Wetlands landscape covers the Tame Valley between Birmingham and Tamworth, in North Warwickshire and south-east Staffordshire, following 29 km of the middle River Tame, and lower sections of tributaries including the River Anker, Bourne, Cole and Blythe SSSI. [The Tame Valley Wetlands](#) has a wide variety of habitats that host a rich diversity of [wildlife](#) and rare species. Home to several of the most important [wildlife sites](#) in the Midlands, this regionally important river corridor is also a vital north-south migration route, providing essential resting and feeding places for hundreds of migrating birds.



Figure 5: Warwickshire Landscape Character Map

⁶ Warwickshire County Council. *Landscape architecture service – landscape character and guidelines*. Online. 2024. [Accessed 23.11.2024]. URL: [Landscape architecture service - landscape character and guidelines – Warwickshire County Council](#)

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- Dunsmore Living Landscape NIA - At the heart of the Dunsmore area lie 20 woodlands covering 618 hectares. They represent more than 10% of the whole of Warwickshire’s ancient woodland. These woodlands are a treasure trove of biodiversity, home to many species of insect, butterfly, plants and birds. This area also tells a fascinating story of prehistoric Heidelberg man and the rise and fall of empires. From the discovery of a half a million year old hand axe in a quarry near Bubbenhall, to Roman barracks at Baginton, Saxon settlements at Wappenbury and Norman fortifications at Brinklow, a visitor to the area is able to discover much of the nation’s history. Grand landscape designs at Coombe Abbey and Stoneleigh Abbey have also left their mark, not least in the nationally important collections of veteran and ancient trees.
- South-West Warwickshire NIA (in draft) – an ancient landscape area of wooded river valleys and pastures that makes a significant contribution to sustaining landscape permeability for species movement through the country; linking the south of Warwickshire to the northern Tame Valley Wetlands through Solihull and Coventry’s strategically significant ‘Meriden Gap’ that separates the urban settlements of Birmingham and Coventry.
- Sherbourne Valley – covering an urban living landscape area where people, nature and culture can thrive. The Sherbourne and its minor tributaries flow from Corley Moor, right under and through the heart of Coventry city centre and out to Whitley Abbey, this 9 mile waterway is rich in built, natural and cultural heritage; from scheduled monuments to precious natural habitats and unique histories.

Habitats

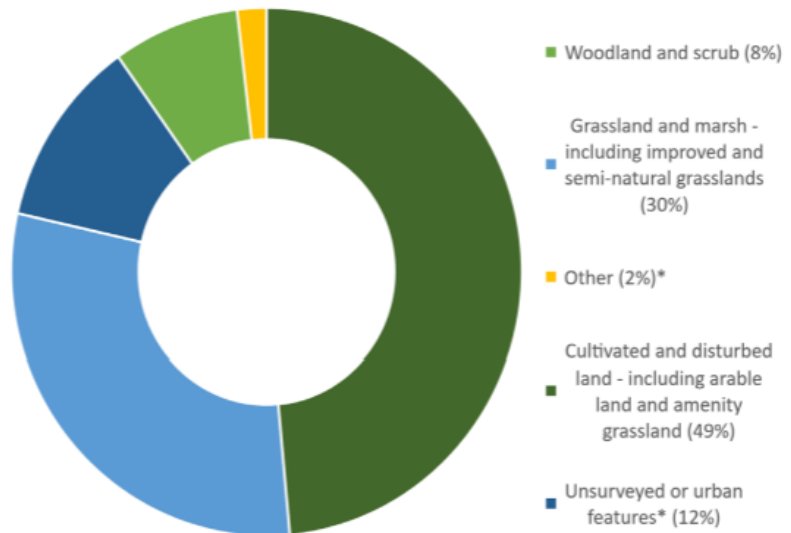
Warwickshire’s habitats and Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) have been systematically mapped and updated annually since 1997 by the Natural Capital Assessment Partnership.⁷

⁷ Natural Capital Assessment Partnership (previously the Habitats Biodiversity Audit), 1997 - 2025. [Natural Capital Assessment Partnership \(NCAP\) | Warwickshire Wildlife Trust](#)

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Warwickshire has 92 sites with national statutory protection of which 28 are Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), 63 are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and 1 Special Area of Conservation (SAC). These sites account for 1% of Warwickshire’s 197,756 hectares.⁸ When including the 489 Local Wildlife Sites, which are of county-level importance, the total area coverage rises to 3%. An additional, 1,210 potential LWSs await surveying. Of the 489 Local Wildlife Sites, 237 were assessed as being in good or favourable management condition at the time of survey; the remaining sites, either lack data or require improved management.



*Urban features, e.g. buildings / roads and other ‘artificial’ surfaces are not included in the Phase 1 survey process and so are included in un-surveyed areas. ‘Other’ includes ‘heathland’, ‘mire’ and ‘swamp, marginal and inundation’ wetlands, ‘tall herbs’, ‘open water’ and ‘rock exposure & waste’.

Figure 6: Proportion of Broad Habitats across Warwickshire (NCAP, 2019)

Heathland and wetlands are the rarest broad habitat types across Warwickshire. Heathland covers less than 0.01% of the local authority area (10 hectares), with 35% found in North Warwickshire Borough Council and 55% found in Stratford District Council. The wetland habitats of ‘mire’ and ‘swamp, marginal and inundation’ habitats collectively represent 0.1%.

The most widespread habitat type is ‘cultivated and disturbed land’, comprising 49% of Warwickshire. This category includes ‘amenity grassland’, ‘arable land’, and ‘introduced shrub’. In contrast, the ‘Woodland and Scrub’ category - which encompasses ‘parkland’, ‘woodland’, ‘recently felled woodland’, and ‘wet woodland’ - covers 7% of the county⁹, compared to a national average of 13%.¹⁰

Urban features such as roads and buildings cover approximately 7% of Warwickshire. When considering ‘improved grassland’, set-aside, and arable land as the primary agricultural land uses across the sub-region, these collectively account for an estimated 69% of the county. Additionally, around 10% of Warwickshire’s grasslands are classified as semi-natural, supporting distinctive plant communities associated with calcareous, neutral, acid, or marshy grassland types.

⁸ Ordnance Survey. OS Boundary-Line: Warwickshire District and Borough Boundaries [Data set – Open Govt license]. Ordnance Survey, 2024.

⁹ These figures are derived from historic environment and local habitat datasets and not taken from the National Forestry Inventory

¹⁰ Forest Research. Woodland Area & Planting. In: Forest Research. Forestry Statistics 2023. Midlothian: Forest Research, 2023.

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Species

Warwickshire’s central location in the midlands sees the movement of species both northward and southward, resulting in a significant overlap of both northern and southern notable species distributions. The colonisation of species is continuing with those that utilising the River Avon and Tame and their tributaries and wetlands. These species include the migratory fish listed within the Special Areas of Conservation and RAMSAR designations associated with the Humber and Severn estuaries. The Worcestershire and Gloucestershire colonisers also include Beckstein and lesser horseshoe bats and other mammals such as otter. From the north, Warwickshire has seen the arrive of invertebrates such as the Black Darter dragonfly and potentially beavers.

Monitoring colonisers verses visitors can be problematic and, therefore, it is often easier to document local extinctions than to confirm the establishment of new arrivals. Figure 7 illustrates the timeline of local extinction for 78 plant species recorded as lost from Warwickshire.

A similar trend is observed among larger moth species. Nineteen species are considered extinct, with an additional 24 likely lost before 1950. Over the past 30 years, a further 41 species have experienced significant declines. However, since 1980, there has been a positive shift, with 33 species showing population increases and 29 new species establishing residency in the county. (David Brown, Larger Moths of Warwickshire, 2006).

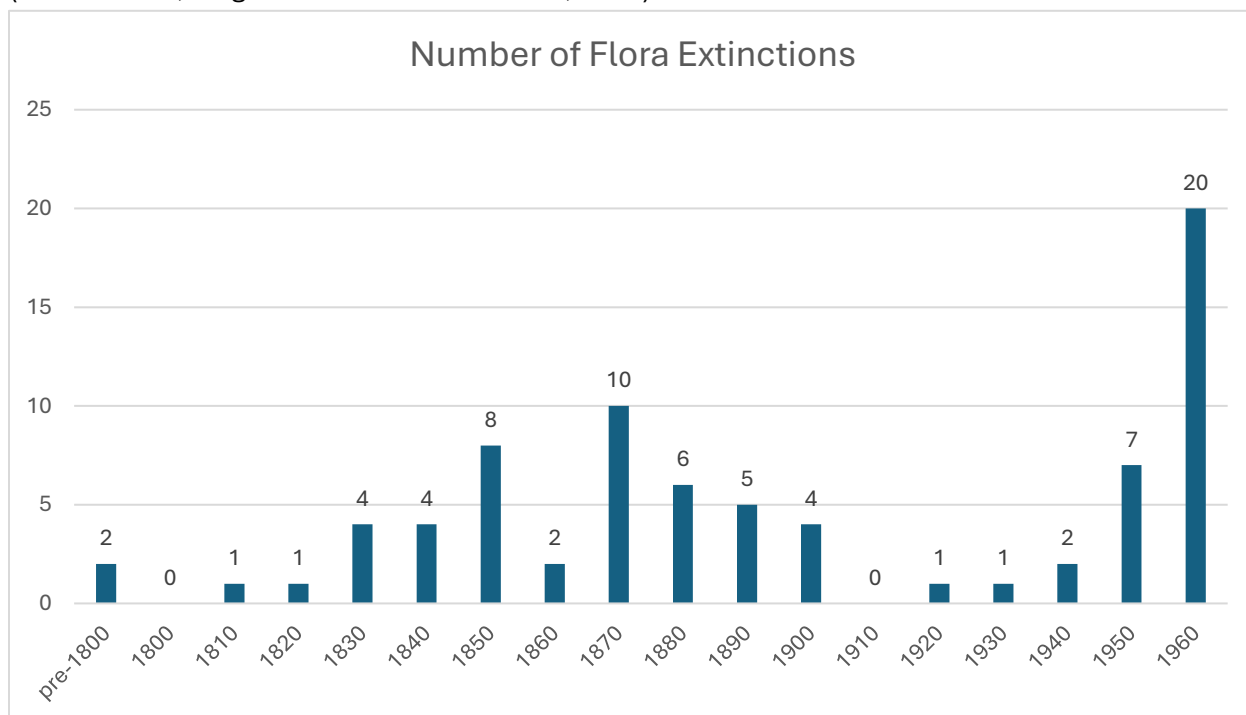


Figure 7: Last recorded decade for 78 Warwickshire extinct native plants, 1670-1960 (S Falk, 2009)

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Water

Warwickshire contains 72 river water bodies, either fully or partially within its boundaries. According to the Water Framework Directive (2022), only one of these is classified as having ‘good’ ecological status. Of the remainder, 42 are rated as ‘moderate’, 22 as ‘poor’, and 2 as ‘bad’.

Phosphates account for approximately 70% of the reasons for not achieving ‘Good’ with 71 out of 72 river water bodies failing for this reason, and 54 out of 72 failing for nutrient pollution. The top two significant water management issues are diffuse source and point source pollution, with the top diffuse source reasons being attributed to poor livestock management, urbanisation and poor nutrient management respectively, and the top point source reasons being attributed to sewage discharge (continuous and intermittent sources respectively).

Warwickshire’s water environment is essential to nature’s recovery. While water is available for new abstractions within the county’s catchments, it is subject to regulatory restrictions.¹¹ Any new consumptive abstraction is likely to be restricted by abstraction conditions requiring abstractors to stop when flows fall below a pre-set threshold. This is required to protect river ecology at lower flows and is set at an appropriate flow according to the resource balance in the Trent/Severn catchment downstream and at the local assessment point. Restrictions vary between watercourses, with some being more sensitive than others—particularly during dry conditions, when enforcement is more likely. Some watercourses have been closed completely to new abstraction; for the Tame Anker & Mease these include the River Anker (upstream of the confluence with the Sence), Bourne Brook, Darnford Brook and the Darklands Brook and for the Warwickshire Avon they include the River Leam plus some smaller tributaries such as the River Sherbourne, Finham Brook, Canley Brook, Blockley Brook, Batchley Brook and Upper Bow Brook.

¹¹ [Tame Anker & Mease ALS](#) and the [Warwickshire Avon ALS](#).

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Warwickshire’s aquifers are also under pressure. Overall, in the Tame Anker and Mease catchments there is limited water availability for further licensing from the principal aquifers. Whereas in the Warwickshire Avon there is a very limited water availability for further licensing. This demand on water coupled with the impacts of climate change means that water security, quality and aquifer recharge will continue to be significant concerns if the county’s water supply is to meet the needs for humans, livestock and crops as well as nature.

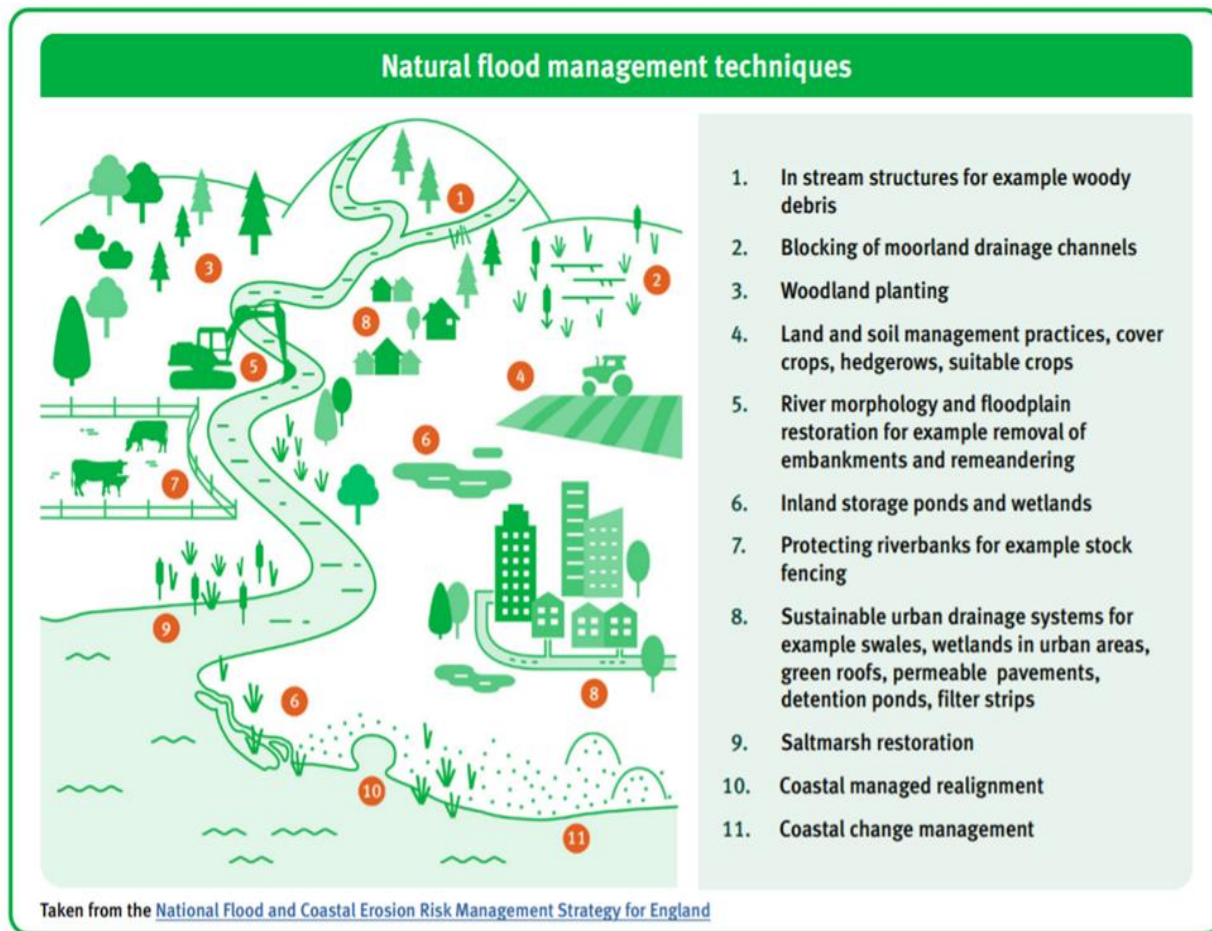


Figure 8: Natural flood management techniques essential for water resilience

Warwickshire has also seen excessive rainfall causing localised flooding that damages homes, crops as well as road and rail infrastructure. Causal factors being the historical deepening and straightening of watercourses and heavily modifying waterbodies that has reduced the natural processes of erosion and deposition affecting the way the watercourse interacts with its floodplain. There is, therefore, a need to make land available for natural flood management and making the most of nature-based solutions to help with the natural regulation of hydrological systems.

Warwickshire has a significant canal infrastructure which connects with the Warwickshire Avon at Stratford-on-Avon enabling some connectivity across natural water catchments areas as well as

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providing nature rich habitat. They, along with watercourses, are essential in connecting people with nature through recreation and tourism opportunities.

Farming

Warwickshire is traditionally a farming county, with rich fertile soils which support arable and pasture farming. However, horticultural industries are flourishing in the vales, together with tree nurseries supplying stock to meet tree planting commitments.

Warwickshire is the home to the National Farmers Union and the acclaimed Warwickshire Rural HUB that encourages farmers to adopt sustainable farming practices that enhance biodiversity, including pollinators, and minimise environmental impacts.

Agriculture plays an important role in the attractive rural location that underpins our wider economic base. With approximately 2000 farm holdings, managing 160,000 hectares of land, the local farms support 6,000 people, generating £138 million towards the Warwickshire economy. Warwickshire agricultural businesses are well placed to take advantage of the advancements of Agri-tech given their proximity to the University of Warwick's Wellesbourne Campus, a centre for innovation in Agri-tech.

The rural economy in Warwickshire consists of a wide variety of businesses from artisanal food and drink producers to hospitality businesses and farmers, contributing to a thriving community of businesses. Overall, 38.33% of employment and 37.8% of places of work are within a rural setting which means over 1 in 3 workplaces is based rurally in the county, and these make up 38% of the county's total Gross Value Added (approx. £7.4bn of £19.6bn total (Office of National Statistics/Inter-Departmental Business Register).

It is essential that nature's recovery is considered collectively within farm diversification, the growing variety of farming systems and those landowners that wish to maintain their current identity and prestige. Nature and environmental farming practices need to support landowner's income.

Wider Ecological Connections beyond Warwickshire

In order to secure the recovery of nature in the face of climate change we need to plan and act to help nature move through the landscape as it adapts to a warming climate. We need to think about Warwickshire's future wildlife. What species will need to be living here in 10, 50 and 100 years' time and how will they get here? More mobile species are already moving at a scale greater than an individual county and Warwickshire has an important role to play in supporting movement at this scale.

Calcareous (limestone and chalk) landscapes in the south of England contain the most species-rich habitats within the UK. When combined across the whole landscape, these habitats make the calcareous landscapes one of the best places to allow wildlife to recover and adapt to climate

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change. With a north south reach of 171 miles, Big Chalk¹² represents one of the best opportunities offered by the English landscape to support the northward movement of species to a new climate space. Warwickshire plays an important role as both a destination for these species and as part of a route further north. Big Chalk is a pan-England partnership programme designed to facilitate this recovery and movement across the calcareous (chalk and limestone) landscapes of southern England. It seeks to amplify the efforts of partners to create a robust ecological network on a scale hitherto unimagined.

The Arden Forest of small pastures within a woodland landscape stretches out of Warwickshire to the western reaches of West Midlands Combined Authorities, southward to Worcestershire and north into Staffordshire. This connected landscape including the ‘Meriden Gap’ between Coventry and Solihull represents a key cross-boundary ecological corridor and a vital green buffer that is taken into consideration within planning decisions with regard to settlement coalescence between Coventry and Solihull. It is essential to sustaining landscape permeability, supporting species movement, and delivering LNRS spatial priorities and plays an important role in the midlands region’s nature recovery.

Heritage & Culture

Warwickshire’s nature is intrinsically linked to its heritage and culture as evidenced through historic sites such as Warwick Castle and its parklands that is one of the best Medieval Castles in the country attracting visitors from all over the world. Warwickshire has a landscape of designed parklands, buried settlements, barrows and ridge and furrow, which can be viewed throughout the county. Other historic sites include Edgehill where the first battle of the English Civil War took place, Shakespeare’s Birthplace on Henley Street in Stratford upon Avon and Anne Hathaway’s (Shakespeare’s wife) Cottage in Shottery, Charlecote Deer Park on the banks of the River Avon, plus Kenilworth Castle and its Elizabethan Garden, where fossils are evident in some parts of the surrounding sandstone walls.

Warwickshire also has historic market towns such as Henley in Arden, Alcester, Stratford upon Avon and Warwick. Royal Leamington Spa has regency buildings, mineral waters, historic buildings and the Jephson Gardens. Furthermore, with Shakespeare in the south, J R R Tolkien visiting the west, and George Eliot in the north of Warwickshire’s landscapes, nature has been a source of inspiration to be immortalised in English literature.

The beautiful rural setting also attracts visitors to the country parks and to cycle along a growing number of established routes throughout Warwickshire taking in rustic local villages and towns. There is a growing demand for ‘outdoor’ experiences. Warwickshire has a world-class reputation for its visitor economy based on the iconic attractions of Shakespeare’s Stratford and Warwick Castle in the south. To the east, Rugby School boasts the birthplace of the game that bears its name. In the north of the county, business tourism has traditionally been strong, supported by

¹² www.big-chalk.org

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significant meetings and events industry clustered around Birmingham, Coventry, and the NEC. Other visitor attractions of national significance include The Belfry Golf Course in the North Warwickshire and the British Motor Museum at Gaydon.

Scheduled Monuments are designated through Historic England and are equivalent to the nationally important ecological and geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest. They are conserved for education and culture.¹³ There are many historical sites in Warwickshire such as Baddesley Clinton, Stoneleigh Abbey and Coughton Court. Other local Monuments, Statues and Follies in Warwickshire can be found by going to the Heritage and Culture website.¹⁴ All of these and other places are visitor attractions and add to the cultural heritage, vibrancy and economy of the county.

Nature has played its part in creating Warwickshire's communities yet the disconnection with biodiversity has been never greater. Nature's recovery can only be successful if humans and nature can reconnect in a positive way to understand how wildlife and nature has shaped our lives and home.

Population

In 2024, Warwickshire had an estimated human population of 632,207 (Office for National Statistics, 2025)¹⁵ projected to increase to 716,378 by 2040 (Office for National Statistics, 2025).¹⁶ Eighty four percent of the area of Warwickshire is classified as rural, with 31% of the population living in these areas.¹⁷ The highest population density is in Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough with 1,794 people per square kilometre compared to 150 people per square kilometre in Stratford-on-Avon District.

Warwickshire is projected to have a population of nearly 675,000 by 2032, an 11% increase from 2022. This is a greater percentage increase than the 6.4% England average. Over the ten-year period from 2022 to 2032 Stratford-on-Avon District is projected to have the 3rd highest rate of

¹³ Ancient Monuments. *Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the Historic County of Warwickshire*. [Online]. 2024. [Accessed 09.01.2025]. URL: [Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the Historic County of Warwickshire](#)

¹⁴ Heritage & Culture Warwickshire. *Our Warwickshire. Monuments, Statues and Follies*. [Online]. 2024. [Accessed 07.01.2025]. URL: <https://www.ourwarwickshire.org.uk/content/subject/monuments-statues-follies>

¹⁵ ONS (2025) [Estimates of the population for England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

¹⁶ ONS (2025), [Population projections](#)

¹⁷ ONS (2025), [2021 Rural Urban Classification](#)

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population growth in England at 17.4% increase.¹⁸ The projected population change for Warwickshire is illustrated in Figure 9.

The age composition of the population is also projected to change over the next 20-25 years with both the proportion of working age adults (16-64 yrs) and those on state pension increasing, with the proportion of children (0-15 yrs) decreasing.

It is anticipated that most of the population increase in Warwickshire will be focused within or around existing major settlements although inevitably new settlements will be promoted. This population growth will inevitably increase pressure on greenspaces and natural

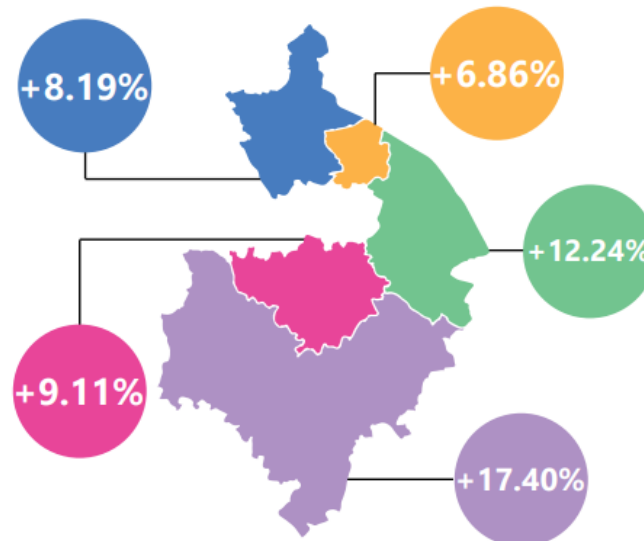


Figure 9: Projected population change between 2022 and 2032

assets, it is, therefore, essential for nature to be integral to the place-making of all large and small developments. Place-making that retains and conserves natural assets such as trees, ponds, hedgerows and nature rich habitat, whilst integrating them with new wildlife features like sustainable urban drainage, wildlife boxes and hedgehog highways with public spaces for nature to ensure that wildlife connectivity reaches the heart of the community.

The human connection with nature is crucial for the health and wellbeing of Warwickshire’s current and future population.

¹⁸ Warwickshire 2022-based Sub-National Population Projections, WCC Business Intelligence [2022 based sub-national population projections Briefing Note](#)