

West Midlands Nature Delivery Plan 2026 - 2029

Together we are making the West Midlands
the best place to live, work and visit



West Midlands
Combined Authority



Greener
Together



The West Midlands Combined Authority is very grateful for the time given, advice and insight of the following organisations for their involvement in the production of the West Midlands Local Nature Recovery Strategy and this West Midlands Nature Delivery Plan.



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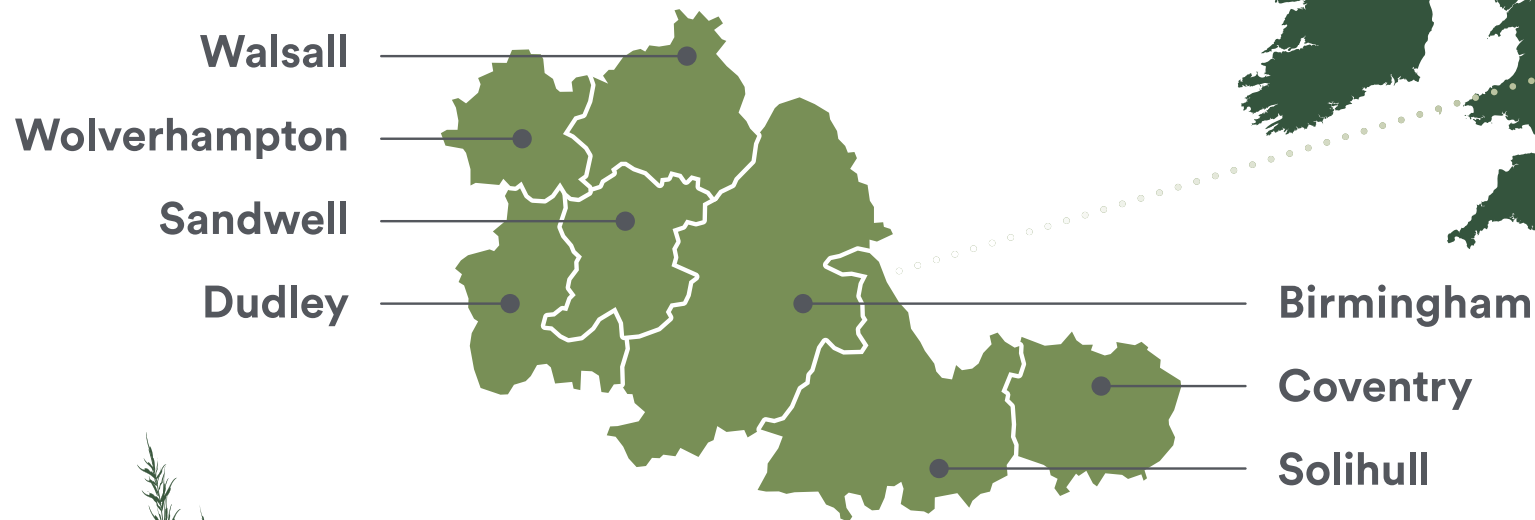
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West Midlands Combined Authority

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) is a partnership between local authorities working together to make their region the best place to live, work and visit. The WMCA was created through a devolution deal in 2016, and the organisation works to bring powers and money from central government to the region.

We have seven constituent local authority members who make up the WMCA Board (Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton).



Foreword

The UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world; this has implications for the environment, for society and for the economy. Nature recovery is a priority for the UK Government, but also for the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) region and the 3 million people who live here. Creating places that people can easily access to enjoy nature is important for health and wellbeing; a thriving natural environment will help us respond better to climate change; and nature also provides economic value for the region.

This is reflected in our recently published West Midlands Growth Plan, which recognises the role nature plays as part of our approach to place, including the distinctiveness of communities across the region, as well as challenges that we need to overcome. From a natural environment perspective, we now have a greater understanding of where, and how, we can address these through our Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

This new strategy is a call to action. For the first time, we now have clear priorities, and locations, where we see the need to safeguard and improve nature. We also have clearly identified actions that everyone can get involved in delivering, from large organisations down to individual people and communities.

Alongside this, we have worked hard to understand the ways that we can ensure delivery is not reliant on short-term funding, through our work on nature finance. This will see the launch of a Nature Investment Hub for the region, bringing together investors with over two hundred projects needing finance. We are also looking to launch a West Midlands Habitat Bank to make it easier to retain the potential benefits required through Biodiversity Net Gain within the West Midlands.

Delivery will require a collective approach. Together, we can ensure that the West Midlands remains a vibrant and thriving

region, where nature and people coexist in harmony. With your support, we can achieve the priorities set out in this Plan to create a legacy of environmental stewardship for future generations. Thank you for your commitment to nature recovery in the West Midlands.

Richard Parker
Mayor of the West Midlands



Making the West Midlands the best place to live, work and visit: our natural environment context

The natural environment across the WMCA region is a vital asset, supporting biodiversity, climate resilience, public health, and economic prosperity.

Spanning 90,000 hectares, and encompassing seven local authorities, the WMCA region comprises a unique patchwork of heavily populated urban and post-industrial landscapes, 520 miles of canals, parks, brownfield sites, surrounding agriculture and an estimated 4.9 million urban trees that form a rich and complex landscape.

Despite being a largely urbanised region, it holds significant ecological value and potential:

- Nature in the WMCA region contributes £676 million in ecosystem services annually, regulating climate, supporting physical and mental health, reducing pollution, and increasing property values.

- The tree canopy alone (14.4% of land cover) stores 1.9 million tonnes of carbon, removes 206 tonnes of pollutants annually, and provides £73.45 million in yearly benefits.

However, our region's nature is under pressure from a range of sources, including:

- Habitat loss due to land development
- Poor land management and fragmented ecological networks, pollution from roads, industry, and agriculture
- Invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed
- Recreational pressure damaging sensitive habitats
- Climate change accelerating habitat degradation and species loss

Addressing this will require urgent and large-scale action. To ensure a resilient, prosperous, and equitable future, we must invest in and protect our natural capital.

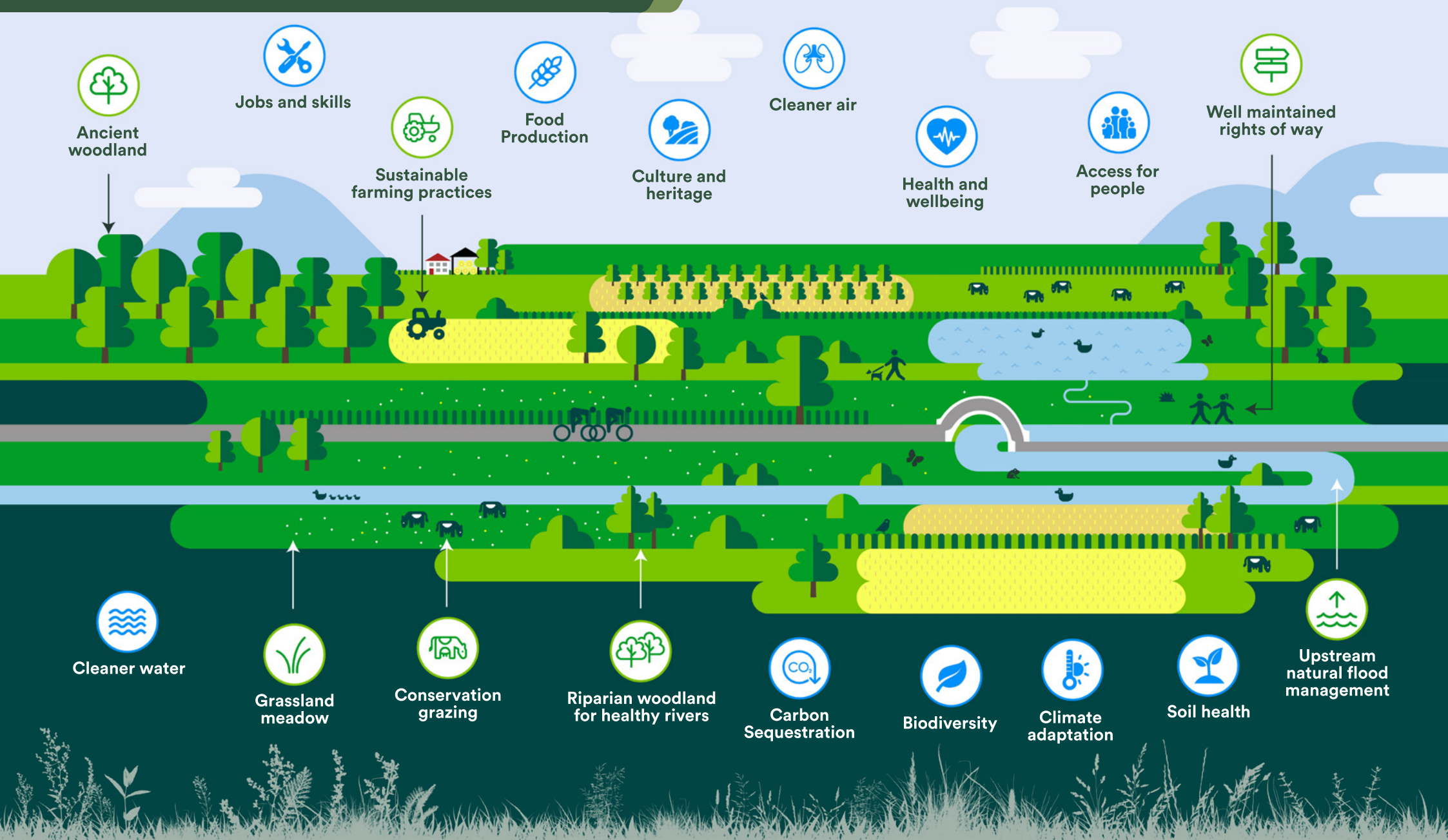
By recognising its true value, ecologically, socially and economically, we can build a region where nature and people thrive together.



Nature and its benefits in an urban area

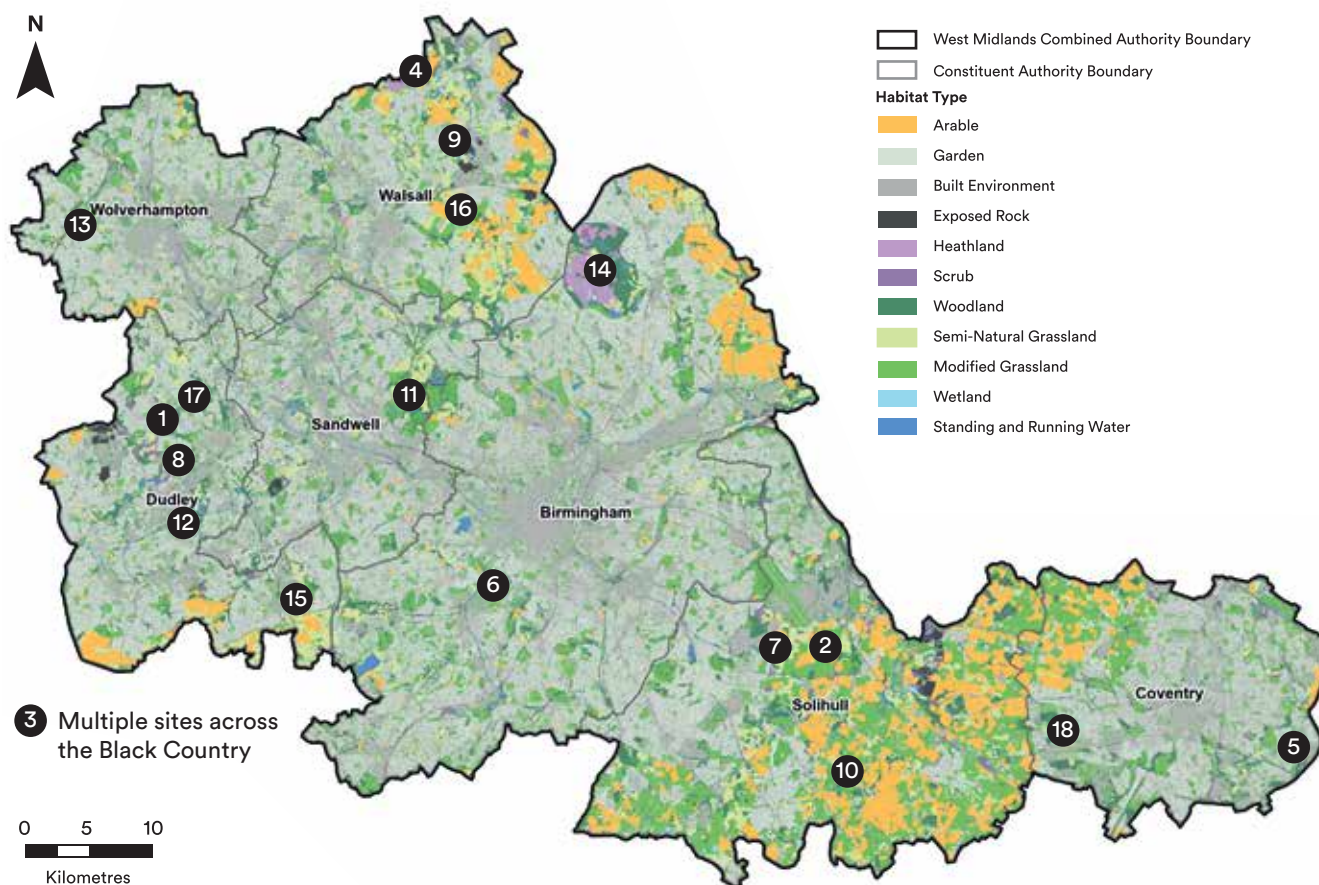


Nature and its benefits in a rural area



WMCA region key areas of importance for biodiversity

1. Barrow Hill and Tansey Green SSSI
2. Bickenhill Meadows SSSI
3. Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark
4. Chasewater and The Southern Staffordshire Coalfield Heaths SSSI
5. Claybrookes Marsh SSSI
6. Edgbaston Pool SSI
7. Elmdon Manor LWS
8. Fens Pools – SSSI and SAC
9. Jockey Fields - SSSI and location for irreplaceable Habitat Lowland Fen
10. River Blythe - SSSI
11. Sandwell Valley SINC
12. Saltwells - NNR
13. Smestow Valley - SINC
14. Sutton Park – NNR, SSSI, location for Irreplaceable habitat Ancient Woodland
15. The Leasowes SSSI
16. Walsall Arboretum SINC
17. Wrens Nest – NNR
18. Tile Hill Wood – SSSI and location for Irreplaceable habitat Ancient Woodland



Acronyms: SAC - Special Areas of Conservation | SSSI - Site of Special Scientific Interest | NNR - National Nature Reserve | LWS - Local Wildlife Site | SINC - Site of Importance for Nature Conservation.

Note - the map is not exhaustive and is provided as an indication of key nature sites in the region.

West Midlands Nature Delivery Plan context

This West Midlands Nature Delivery Plan includes:

1. A summary of the natural environment context.
2. A summary of the West Midlands Local Nature Recovery Strategy, its purpose, vision, aims, priorities and actions.
3. The region-wide and place-based key deliverables for 2026-2029 to help achieve our ambitions.

This Plan has been created in partnership with regional stakeholders, and ongoing collaboration is essential for its delivery.

The region's Natural Environment Plan, launched in 2021, was the starting point for regional collaboration on nature. Two government programmes devolved to the region have had a significant influence on this Plan:

1. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

The requirement for LNRSs across the whole of England was set out in the Environment Act 2021, which passed through parliament in November 2021.

In June 2023, the Secretary of State appointed the WMCA as the 'Responsible Authority' to produce the LNRS for the region. It is one of 48 strategies in England, which together comprise a Nature Recovery Network.

The West Midlands LNRS covers the 7 constituent authorities of the WMCA: Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton. Within the LNRS, these are referred to as 'WMCA region'.

2. The Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) programme

A key barrier to delivery is the lack of financing available for nature; it is estimated that 80-90% of natural environment projects are currently supported through government funding of one type or another. This is unsustainable in the long-term and will not be sufficient to halt the decline of nature.

The UK Government has been exploring how private finance might be brought in to more effectively bolster public funding. One of the routes to do this was through the Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) programme where four areas in England, including the WMCA, received funding from Defra to understand how private finance could be secured for natural environment projects.

The focus of our work is on a Nature Investment Hub and a West Midlands Habitat Bank (outlined in more detail in the section on key deliverables).



West Midlands Local Nature Recovery Strategy summary

The LNRS marks the first time a detailed, unified view of nature in the WMCA region, along with a strategic vision, clear priorities for nature recovery and target locations for action, has been brought together in one place.

The West Midlands LNRS applies a broad approach to nature recovery by identifying how we can provide wider environmental or societal benefits using nature-based solutions. The LNRS:

- Maps the most valuable existing areas for nature
- Agrees priorities for nature recovery
- Aligns local actions with broader regional and national priorities for biodiversity and ecosystem restoration
- Maps specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals (adopting nature-based solutions) with guidance on actions

There are actions for everyone, from environmental organisations and local authorities to landowners, businesses, educational institutions and engaged citizens, to see where nature recovery efforts will be most effective.

The LNRS does not:

- Require owners or managers of land to make specific proposed land use changes – this will remain their choice
- Place new restrictions on developing land – it will, however, be one source of evidence used to inform the preparation of plans that will determine where development should occur
- Designate new protected areas
- Does not exclude action outside of mapped priorities

The West Midlands LNRS includes the following:

A West Midlands LNRS vision and 6 aims

An interactive LNRS map identifying places for action

10 priorities across 3 themes with 62 associated actions. Case studies demonstrate how the priority is already being delivered by stakeholders in the region.

Monitoring, governance and nature finance

Supplementary information in appendices

To find out more and to read the full LNRS visit www.wmca.org.uk/lnrs

VISION: our overarching strategic statement for nature in the West Midlands

By 2030, through collective action, nature in the West Midlands will be thriving, valued by all, and central to a healthier, more resilient and prosperous region. We will recover nature by restoring habitats and species and use nature-based solutions to ensure that people and wildlife can flourish together - now and for future generations.

6 AIMS: high-level aims for nature recovery

1. Deliver actions that recognise the urgency and scale required for nature recovery in the WMCA region that support the government's Environmental Improvement Plan's '30 by 30' aims
2. Increase the region's tree canopy cover to at least 25% by 2050 with at least 20% tree canopy cover in every ward, creating greater equity in the distribution of tree canopy cover across the region
3. Strengthen and create habitat networks that provide an environment for our species to thrive across and beyond the region
4. Unlock funding and investment opportunities for nature recovery and nature-based solutions
5. Create a region where everyone can experience and access nature ('Green in 15')
6. Create greater awareness and drive for the use of nature-based solutions to address key societal challenges



3 THEMES with 10 PRIORITIES: the priorities are the detailed outcomes required to recover nature in the region

Nature recovery	A	Our most important terrestrial habitats and ecosystems are maintained and improved, making them more resilient to existing and future pressures and threats
	B	Terrestrial habitats are more joined up to create stronger ecological networks
	C	The ecological functionality of freshwater networks and wetland habitats are maintained and improved at a landscape and catchment scale
	D	Increased long-term sensitive management of rural land for nature, soils and agriculture
	E	The urban environment is improved to become nature rich
	F	Species populations are maintained and improved across the region, including suitable species reintroductions
Delivering wider environmental benefits	G	Public access to nature is improved across the region, focusing on equitable opportunities that support biodiversity
	H	Nature-based solutions (NbS) are adopted to help address climate related impacts and risks faced by our land, nature and communities
Enabling delivery for nature recovery	I	Improved evidence and knowledge to enable scaled-up delivery of nature recovery
	J	Improved capacity of stakeholders to contribute to nature recovery



West Midlands Nature Delivery Plan – summary of key deliverables (2026–2029)

Turning the LNRS priorities, suggested actions and activities into a plan with key deliverables is critical.

The key deliverables identified in this section of the Plan provide a focus for collaboration over the next 3 years. They involve multiple stakeholders and have the potential to create lasting impact against multiple LNRS priorities.

- The **region-wide key deliverables** are mostly new and were developed in a stakeholder workshop following the production of the LNRS.
- The **place-based key deliverables** are focused on initiatives that are being delivered, or are planned, by stakeholders for 2026-29, building on years of action to support nature. This is not an exhaustive list.

Further information on each of the key deliverables, as well as the main LNRS priorities they are helping to deliver, is included in this section of the Plan.



Region-wide key deliverables:

West Midlands Nature Investment Hub and project pipeline development – WMCA

West Midlands Habitat Bank – WMCA

Unlocking the Power of Canals – Canal and River Trust

Nature integration with key initiatives (WMCA):

- WM Adapt
- Net Zero Neighbourhoods
- Spatial Development Strategy
- Kids' Streets
- Transport
- Health
- Skills

Nature recovery guidance (WMCA):

- Climate resilient nature
- Stepping Stones for Nature
- Habitat connectivity
- Design codes
- Nature training for planners and developers
- Nature for Schools

Community Environment Network (WMCA):

- New grant funding
- Technical guidance and support
- Nature Literacy training

General nature resources (WMCA):

- Online tools
- Factsheets and guidance
- Campaigns and events

Place-based key deliverables:

Birmingham City of Nature – Birmingham City Council

Coventry Green for All – Coventry City Council

Walsall Nature and Health Strategy – Walsall Council

Solihull nature engagement initiatives – Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

Urban rewilding – Sandwell Council

Pendeford Mill Nature Reserve Tree Nursery – City of Wolverhampton Council

Geodiversity and biodiversity for Dudley's nature recovery - Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Natural Rivers and Green Corridors 2 - Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust

Tame Valley Wetlands NIA – Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

Doorstep to Landscape – Natural England

Sandwell Valley Country Park – RSPB

West Midlands Nature Investment Hub and project pipeline development

Lead: WMCA

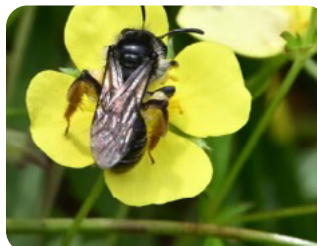
Delivering LNRS Priority I and J

Using place-based data, and working with regional and national stakeholders, we have a clear understanding of the challenges and opportunities for attracting funding and investment for nature projects. Over 200 projects have been identified in the pipeline, with a £100m funding gap. These are all at different stages of investment readiness. To support delivery of these projects, WMCA will:

1. Launch the **West Midlands Nature Investment Hub** in early 2026, to support organisations in securing funding and investment for delivery and maintenance. The initial projects on the Hub will be those that are ready to attract funding.
2. Provide **ongoing development support for projects in the pipeline** to move them towards investment readiness so that they can be added to the Hub. This will involve advice on moving through the investment readiness stages and technical support to achieve that.

This work is taking place in a wider context of unlocking private investment for the region, including Investment Zones and the Local Net Zero Accelerator, that will provide opportunities for a more joined up approach. We will also work alongside other investment initiatives.

Example of projects ready to launch on the West Midlands Nature Investment Hub



Purple Horizons – Pollinator Project

An award-winning flagship nature recovery project that aims to restore and connect habitats across Walsall and Staffordshire.



Love Your River Cole (LYRiC)

Enhance and re-naturalise 12km of the River Cole in Birmingham and Solihull, to boost biodiversity and improve public access.



Ripple Effect – Pond Creation

Creating and restoring ponds across the 'Meriden Gap' in Solihull and Coventry to improve wetland connectivity.



8 Hills – Community Orchard Creation

Orchard creation and restoration of intensively managed modern orchards to traditional orchards that have more diverse habitats.

West Midlands Habitat Bank

Lead: WMCA

Delivering LNRS Priority I and J

WMCA will complete a business case for a **West Midlands Habitat Bank for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)** and integrate our Local Nature Recovery Strategy opportunities alongside nature investment work. This would be owned collectively by local authorities and WMCA.

In preparation, the WMCA has provided targeted financial and technical advice to local authority teams to unlock BNG sites – 7 sites have been advanced totalling 187 hectares.

This will realise the potential for BNG delivery of 852 saleable units, meeting 48% of regional demand to 2035. It will also ensure that benefits are realised within the region, rather than from purchase of units in other parts of England.

The potential economic benefit is estimated at a value of £36m in revenue generated over 30 years.

Nature integration with regional initiatives

Lead: WMCA

Delivering LNRS Priority I and J

Nature recovery must integrate with wider activity if it is to be successfully realised. LNRS priorities, actions and place-based activity for investment will be integrated with other regional activity such as:

- the **WM Adapt** neighbourhood adaptation pathways – WMCA is already working with the University of Birmingham, local authorities and key stakeholders on climate adaptation planning across 7 neighbourhoods.
- **Net Zero Neighbourhoods:** WMCA is already working with local authorities to address net zero solutions at a neighbourhood scale.
- **Spatial Development Strategy (SDS):** WMCA is producing a long-term plan that set outs where new homes, jobs, transport and green spaces should go across the whole region.
- **Kids' Streets:** bring nature into the roll out of people first spaces around schools to support better health outcomes.

- **Transport:** WMCA and TfWM will work together to ensure that nature-based solutions are incorporated into transport schemes at the design phase, and where feasible, to enhance the public realm around projects.
- **Health:** co-develop initiatives with health partners to improve access to green space for improving physical and mental health, reducing health inequalities, and mitigating the effects of deprivation on wellbeing.
- **Skills:** opportunities for training relating to nature will be identified through Adult Skills (relating to the WMCA employment and skills strategy), where the Colleges FE sector are the first point of contact.



Unlocking the Power of Canals - Our Prospectus for canals of the West Midlands 2025 - 2030

Lead: Canal River Trust (CRT)
Delivering LNRS Priority B, C, E, G, H and J

Our region's canals are not relics of the past, but living assets, woven through our communities, shaping our identity, and offering solutions to the challenges of today and tomorrow. That makes it all the more important that they are embraced and celebrated.

CRT's ambition is to position canals in the West Midlands as a 21st century asset for inclusive and sustainable growth, as places for nature, health and wellbeing, as well as helping build climate resilience. The prospectus puts forward actions to unlock this potential, and the nature-related actions include:

- **Climate resilience:** use canals to manage drought, flood, and urban overheating.
- **Boost biodiversity:** plant native species and create wildlife corridors.
- **Nature-based health:** expand 'Canals on Prescription' for preventative wellbeing.

- **Accessible blue spaces:** ensure canals are within a 10–15 minute walk for all.
- **Support Nature Cities:** help urban areas become recognised for nature leadership.

Nature recovery guidance

Lead: WMCA
Delivering LNRS Priority I and J

A wide range of guidance required for effective delivery of nature recovery has been identified with regional stakeholders including:

- Assess the **climate resilience of key nature assets** in the region, and work with stakeholders to prepare and progress solutions.
- Support regional partners by developing **Stepping Stones for Nature** guidance, sharing approaches to community asset ownership, case studies and identification of appropriate sites.
- Produce **Habitat Connectivity** guidance and training for infrastructure and landowners where barriers to habitat connectivity occur.
- **Design codes** providing guidance to support nature planning policy.

- **Develop nature recovery training for planners and developers** to enable a better understanding of the implications and opportunities relating to nature and the LNRS.
- Build on the regional air quality schools programme and, working with local authorities, provide **Nature for Schools** materials to embed nature into relevant activities.



The LNRS provides a comprehensive guide of priorities and actions that need to be taken to support nature recovery in the West Midlands.

Effective communication and engagement with people and organisations in the region is vital for success.

Community Environment Network

Lead: WMCA
Delivering LNRS Priority I and J

Communities will play a critical role in the delivery of natural environment priorities for the region. Following the award of £1.5m in environment grant funding to over 50 community organisations since 2021, WMCA established the Community Environment Network (CEN) to enable peer-to-peer learning and ongoing collaboration.

An Advisory Group, which includes representation from local authorities and community groups, guides the work of the CEN.



Whilst the focus will not wholly be on nature, this is the CEN's initial focus. The CEN will support communities on nature by:

- **Bringing new grant funding** opportunities to support and grow the Network, and for community activities to deliver for nature and engage more people in improving their local environments.
- **Providing technical guidance and support** from experts across the region to help communities with their project delivery.
- **Producing Nature Literacy training** for community groups and provide skills and training sessions. Help communities to identify opportunities for people to volunteer.

General nature resources

Lead: WMCA
Delivering LNRS Priority I and J

Turning the comprehensive information in the LNRS into something that is accessible for everyone to easily see what actions could be taken where they live, and how to get further information on how to take that action, is an essential next step.

New resources will be key to this, providing a more user-friendly way of accessing the spatial data collected through the LNRS work. Resources will include:

- **Online tools** to make the LNRS information more digestible and accessible.
- **Factsheets and guidance** – these will be simple overviews tailored to different audiences and produced alongside regional stakeholders, as well as more detailed guidance that will support delivery of different activities in the LNRS.
- **Campaigns and events to engage the public and businesses** – these will link with existing organisations through the Community Environment Network to inspire action.

Place-based key deliverables 2026–2029

Nature Towns and Cities is a UK-wide initiative led by Natural England, National Trust, and The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Three local authorities, Birmingham City Council, Coventry City Council and Walsall Council, have been recognised by the initiative so far and these will play an important part in progressing cross-cutting nature delivery over the next three years.



Birmingham City of Nature

Lead: Birmingham City Council
Delivering LNRS Priority E, G, H, I and J

Birmingham City of Nature is a long-term plan to make the city greener, healthier, and fairer. It empowers communities to co-create and care for green spaces, aiming for a community garden in every ward. Focused on environmental justice, it supports Green Champions, green job skills, and climate resilience. By 2047, the goal is to grow accessible green spaces from 600 to 1,000. Birmingham is now the UK's first official Nature City under the Nature Towns and Cities programme.

Coventry Green for All

Lead: Coventry City Council
Delivering LNRS Priority E, G, H, I and J

Coventry secured £989,685 from Nature Towns and Cities for its **Green for All** initiative to tackle green deprivation and boost climate resilience. The programme involves co-designing improvements to green and blue spaces, especially in underserved areas, and building nature networks like school allotments and community gardens. It includes a digital mapping tool to help residents explore and enhance local green spaces, plus training and apprenticeships to grow green skills. The initiative supports Coventry's goal to restore 30% of land and waterways for nature by 2030.



Walsall Nature and Health Strategy

Lead: Walsall Council
Delivering LNRS Priority E, G, I and J

Walsall has secured nearly £1 million from Nature Towns and Cities to deliver its **Nature and Health Strategy 2040**, aligned with the We Are Walsall 2040 vision. Key actions include microbiome research with the University of Birmingham, mapping green space inequalities, and launching Adopt A Space schemes for communities, schools, and businesses. A community grants programme with crowdfunding encourages local ownership, and plans are underway to develop strategic Local Nature Reserves.



Place-based key deliverables 2026–2029



Solihull nature engagement initiatives

Lead: Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC)
Delivering LNRS Priority B, D, E, I and J

SMBC is driving environmental action through three key programmes that empower residents and enhance the borough's natural landscape:

- **Planting Our Future** encourages community involvement in tree planting and green infrastructure, offering support to landowners.

- **Arden Free Tree Scheme** provides funding for individuals, schools, and businesses to plant hedgerows and small woodlands, helping restore the Arden landscape.
- **Love Solihull** is a volunteer-led initiative supporting local environmental projects and community pride through clean-ups and planting activities.

Together, these initiatives promote sustainability, biodiversity, and active citizenship across Solihull.



Sandwell Council – urban rewilding

Lead: Sandwell Council
Delivering LNRS Priority E, G and J

Sandwell Council are developing a programme of local rewilding projects. Working with local communities, sites are being selected at ward-level to showcase and curate small-scale rewilding projects that communities can own and tend to. These projects will be augmented by two borough-level showcase projects:

- **Sandwell tree planting** is a commitment to plant 10,000 new trees by 2030
- **Sandwell Valley Country Park** is the location for a range of nature interventions focused on the development of the historic kitchen garden to showcase home-grown produce and the promotion of native species.

Pendeford Mill Nature Reserve Tree Nursery

Lead: City of Wolverhampton Council
Delivering LNRS Priority E, H and J

The Pendeford Mill Tree Nursery will transform unused land into a hub for growing native trees in pots for planting in streets and community spaces, targeting areas with low canopy cover. Starting in Pendeford, it aims to expand, improving air quality, urban cooling, and community engagement.

A tree sponsorship scheme will invite public support, and future nurseries may be developed on council-owned land. The project is in early development, with space assessments and planning underway, and local groups like Friends of Pendeford Mill actively involved. Community participation will continue through planting, care, and long-term stewardship.

Geodiversity and biodiversity for Dudley's nature recovery

Lead: Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Delivering LNRS Priority A, B, E and G

Nature recovery benefits from a joined-up approach that considers biodiversity in tandem with geodiversity - including geology, landforms, and hydrology - as well as historical and cultural context. Three sites in Dudley demonstrate how diverse geological frameworks support resilient habitat mosaics across scales, enhancing long-term ecological stability. Ongoing delivery by Dudley's wardens at these sites includes:

1. **Wren's Nest** - vegetation clearance along quarry corridors to expose geological features and create wildlife transit routes.
2. **The Leasowes** - interventions such as dead hedges, leaky dams, and a revised cutting regime to reduce erosion and restore natural acidic soils in woodlands and grasslands.
3. **Saltwells** - the wetland in a former quarry is managed with channelised flows and rotational vegetation cutting, to maintain geological access and support amphibians and invertebrates.



Natural Rivers and Green Corridors 2

Lead: Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust
Delivering LNRs Priority C, F, G, H and J

Natural Rivers and Green Corridors 2 builds on earlier success to restore the upper River Rea and its tributaries in south-west Birmingham. The project is led by the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust, in partnership with the Environment Agency and Birmingham City Council.

The four-year project aims to re-naturalise river flow, reduce the impact of canalisation, weirs, and engineered banks, and introduce natural flood management. By improving habitats and making watercourses more visible and attractive, the project benefits both wildlife and local communities.



Tame Valley Wetlands Nature Improvement Area

Lead: Warwickshire Wildlife Trust
Delivering LNRs Priority C, F, H and J

Since 2017, river restoration projects along the River Blythe SSSI and River Cole have delivered key actions under the Environment Agency's River Restoration Plan.

These include creating buffer strips, wet meadows, scrapes and pools, restoring floodplains and paleo channels, installing fish refuges and log nests for Willow Tit, tree planting, and removing invasive species.

Further work with landowners will reconnect rivers to floodplains, expand wetland habitats, and remove barriers to fish migration, supporting a resilient catchment where nature and communities thrive.



Doorstep to Landscape

Lead: Natural England
Delivering LNRS Priority E, G, H and J

Doorstep to Landscape is a concept project aimed at strengthening nature connection and green infrastructure in deprived, inner-city Birmingham communities. It goes beyond creating green space, empowering residents to shape their environment and improve wellbeing.

Natural England is working across four key themes:

- Embedding quality **green infrastructure** into the Local Plan through collaboration with planning authorities
- **Inclusion** and tackling sociocultural barriers to nature access using evidenced approaches across planning, health, and green infrastructure
- Supporting WMCA with delivery of the **LNRS**
- Putting nature at the heart of **health and wellbeing** through partnerships and community-led action

Sandwell Valley Country Park

Lead: RSPB
Delivering LNRS Priority B, C, F, G and J

Sandwell Valley Country Park plays a vital role in enabling nature recovery across the West Midlands. As part of a wider landscape-scale initiative, its mosaic of meadows, woodlands, wetlands, and farmland provides essential connectivity for wildlife. The RSPB manage Sandwell Valley Nature Reserve, and with Natural England help deliver practical conservation, education, and volunteer opportunities.

Priorities for the next three years include:

- Delivery of a major wetland improvement project
- Continued working with volunteers and the local community to connect people with nature
- Improving the breeding successes of priority bird species including lapwing, oystercatcher, little ringed plover, and swifts.



Devolution: achieving better outcomes for the West Midlands

Devolution provides an additional opportunity for delivery that responds to what is needed in the West Midlands. The English Devolution Bill empowers combined authorities to lead LNRS delivery, coordinate partnerships, unlock funding, and monitor progress. It confirms 'Environment and climate change' as an area of competence, laying the foundation for further opportunities to devolve responsibilities and funding.

Integrated settlement

This is the funding route that combined authorities are developing with government.

The integrated settlement will allow for longer-term certainty around funding, as well as more flexibility for programmes to respond to regional needs. There is currently a small amount of funding identified for LNRS delivery in the integrated settlement and therefore details of further opportunities for devolution aligned with nature delivery are being explored with Defra.

Place-based pathfinder

Devolution also provides the opportunity to continually reflect on progress, and what could be done better.

Defra is working with WMCA on a '**place-based pathfinder**' (PBP) to explore how the government organisations working on the natural environment across the West Midlands (including Defra, Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission) could coordinate more effectively with regional and local organisations. In the WMCA, the theme for this PBP will be the natural environment and LNRS delivery.

As the regional LNRS partnership progresses, the aim will be for opportunities and challenges to be better addressed as a collective. Understanding how resources, programmes and delivery initiatives could be better tailored to the regional outcomes we now have clearly articulated in the LNRS, will be central to this.

Monitoring and governance

Monitoring

Understanding progress on delivery will be an essential part of the next steps to allow for review and iteration of the approach. We propose an **annual monitoring report to the West Midlands Nature Delivery Group** (below) that:

- reports on progress against the aims and priorities of the LNRS
- assesses progress on key deliverables
- includes challenges being faced to ensure the region can respond to devolution opportunities
- incorporates existing monitoring to reduce the burden on local authorities

Regional indicators of nature from this report can be incorporated into the annual **State of the Region** report.

A **more comprehensive report** will be produced to coincide with the end of the West Midlands Nature Delivery Plan 2026–2029 (or aligned with the LNRS statutory update if this comes sooner). This will be presented to WMCA Board and Overview and Scrutiny Committee alongside a new Nature Delivery Plan.

Governance

The government has already identified that strategic authorities, such as the WMCA, have a clear mandate to take a leadership role on the LNRS and wider environmental delivery. This will include: convening partnerships; coordinating action, funding, and investment in nature recovery and wider environmental delivery across the region; and monitoring and reporting on delivery. We will comply with the LNRS governance and reporting requirements as they emerge from government.

The establishment of a **West Midlands Nature Delivery Group** will ensure that there is representation from relevant stakeholders in the next phase of the work, and that it is driven forward in a collaborative way, whilst maximising outcomes across the West Midlands.

As a minimum, this group will contain representatives from the WMCA, constituent local authorities, Local Nature Partnerships, Natural England, Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission.

As the Group is established, terms of reference will be agreed to understand the role this plays alongside existing structures, such as the Local Nature Partnerships, to ensure added value and to avoid duplicating work already underway.

Task and finish groups will support the key deliverables. This will allow for wider representation from regionally significant environmental organisations, landowners, community groups, health organisations, infrastructure providers, and businesses in the delivery of the LNRS.

We will hold **annual events and ongoing campaigns** to engage regional stakeholders that are not involved in regular nature delivery activity, to ensure the effort is truly region-wide and integrated.

We will **work alongside neighbouring LNRS** teams to understand alignment and cross-boundary opportunities for delivery.

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