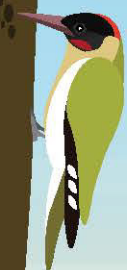


Wilder Somerset

2030



More space for nature where wildlife thrives
with more people on nature's side



Come with us on a journey

What you're doing right now for wildlife and the natural world, whether at home, school, at work, or on your land matters. Small things add up to make a difference. But the challenges nature is facing are vast, so we are all going to have to think bigger, think bolder and take more action together to have the impact that's needed. We can bring nature back, but we need to do much more, and faster. And we need you with us.

In 2019, we asked you for your ideas on how we can work together to tackle nature's decline. We know you share our deep concerns about the loss of habitats and wildlife, the state of our rivers and soils, and the climate and ecological impacts that have already arrived. Your ideas are building blocks within this plan.

The UK is one of the most nature depleted countries on the planet. We have lost so much wildlife. Nature has been squeezed out by the increasing pressures of development,

infrastructure and damaging land management practices, often fuelled by human consumption.

What remains is often found isolated in nature reserves. Many of us have never known a time when birds, insects and mammals were everywhere, or experienced a wildflower meadow in full glory. Over time, and with each generation, we have got used to this as being normal. It is not.

The climate crisis is now one of the key drivers of nature's decline, and the breakdown of ecosystems reduces our ability to store carbon and adapt to a changing climate. The next decade must see a seismic shift in our collective behaviours to reverse the spiralling loss of nature and prevent catastrophic climate and ecological breakdown. It is what we do now that will affect us, and every generation to come.

**Our future has to be wilder.
It can be if we work together.**

Our 10-year plan: Wilder Somerset

Our work over the decades has slowed the rate at which species have been lost, and has protected important habitats in Somerset but we must now take a more radical and urgent approach, and involve many more people in acting locally for nature's recovery.

We, Somerset Wildlife Trust will always work to deliver positive outcomes for nature ourselves - managing our nature reserves and developing key projects that protect and restore the natural world. After almost 60 years of working on the ground in Somerset, we have an unparalleled knowledge of the county, its habitats and wildlife. This, combined with our experience and skills, underpinned by pioneering science and sound data, will enable us to support, lead and co-ordinate nature's recovery in Somerset.

We'll continue to fight for change in the wider social and political arena, and we will be braver in standing up for nature. We'll amplify all our voices working through, and with, the 46 Wildlife Trusts supported by over 800,000 members across the UK.

Alongside this, we will also be putting a priority on supporting you at home, in your communities, schools, places of worship, businesses, on your land and farms, in putting nature first. Whether you want to 'wild' a public space in your community, engage with planning decisions or increase wildlife on your land, think bigger and then ask us how we can help bring your ideas to life. You're on this journey too.

We will bring more people to our cause. People like you and your neighbours, as well as organisations, businesses, farmers and landowners. We will bring energy and unity, building a movement of people who will champion nature and ensure that it is at the heart of every decision, every policy and the wider Somerset economy.

We need to be bold and act quickly, but we cannot do this alone. This is your plan too and we need your help to deliver it.



Our vision

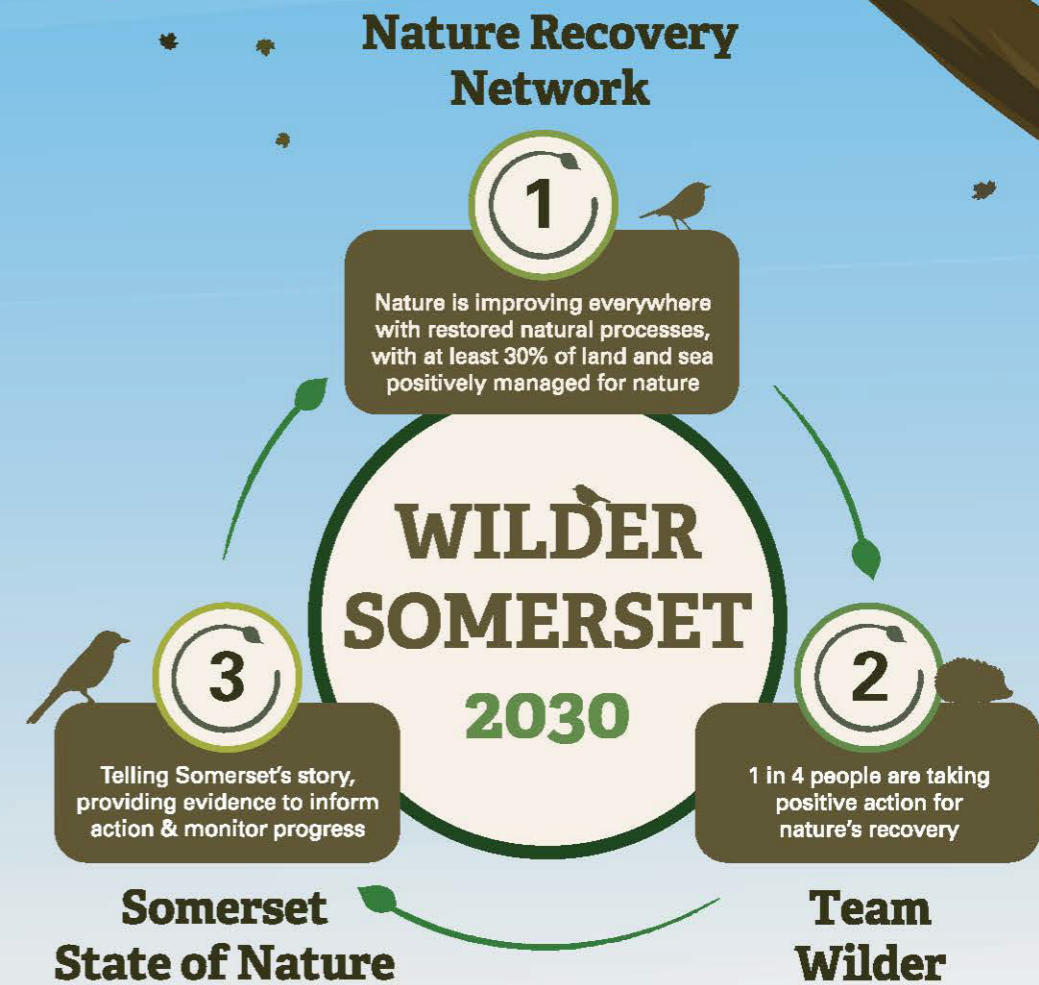
A Somerset wide nature recovery network creating more space for wildlife, benefiting everyone and playing its part in helping us reverse biodiversity loss and tackle the climate crisis.

Our mission

Working for the changes needed for nature and people to thrive together.

Our goals

- 1 More space for nature**
Nature is improving everywhere with restored natural processes, connected and protected through a Nature Recovery Network, with at least 30% of land and sea managed positively for nature.
- 2 A movement for nature**
Everyone has the opportunity to experience nature, with at least 1 in 4 people taking action for nature's recovery across Somerset as part of Team Wilder.
- 3 Telling Somerset's story**
The story of nature's recovery in Somerset is told through our online State of Nature platform that informs action and monitors progress.



More space for nature

Nature is improving everywhere with restored natural processes, connected and protected through a Nature Recovery Network, with at least 30% of land and sea managed positively for nature.

Currently only 10% of the county can be classified as being in good natural or semi-natural condition with species-rich natural habitats supporting abundant and diverse wildlife, enabling it to move, reproduce and thrive. This figure includes all the county's nature reserves, Local Wildlife Sites and legally designated sites. Consider what it would be like without them.

Tripling the amount of land managed for nature is a significant challenge, but one we must deliver together.

To achieve our aim, we need to create a strong, interconnected network of wild spaces; connecting natural spaces, restoring the resilience of our ecosystems at a landscape scale, and providing us with healthy soils, clean air and water.

Working with our peers, partners, communities, farmers and landowners we will develop positive 'restoration pathways' and identify key actions that can be used to improve habitat connectivity and create space for nature. Land of any size can contribute to the Nature Recovery Network – nature reserves, community spaces, gardens, farms, parks, churchyards and schools – it works at any scale.

Finding natural solutions

Delivering more space for nature and restoring ecosystem health through the Nature Recovery Network is critical to achieve climate adaptation and resilience. Encouraging nature's help to store carbon, absorb more water during increasingly extreme flood events and allow species to move in response to warmer temperatures is key. The climate and ecological crises are inexorably linked so it is vital that our strategy is delivered with **both at its core.**

'Wilding' - managing land in a way that mimics how nature works when left uninterrupted, and working with other landowners to do the same - is an essential part of our Wilder Somerset strategy, and an important approach to delivering Somerset's Nature Recovery Network. Restoring ecosystem health is vital, and this can be supported by returning missing species and ecosystem engineers such as beavers or pine martens, where evidence shows they can have meaningful impact, and to help ensure common wildlife doesn't become rare.

Climate adaptation

Actions to deal with the changes we are already experiencing or are inevitable from climate change.

Climate resilience

Prepare for and recover from the effects of climate change.

Our nature reserves

Our goal is for our nature reserves to remain core areas within our Network but strengthened and buffered through nature-based solutions that support healthy ecosystems that sustain us, wildlife and the local economy.

We will continue to manage our nature reserves as core sites within the Nature Recovery Network, protecting and connecting a variety of species-rich habitats. Our nature reserves, and those of our partners, have been quietly providing natural solutions for decades; storing carbon, benefitting water and air quality, and providing space for people to connect with nature for their own wellbeing, while providing high quality, biodiverse wildlife habitats for rare and vulnerable species.

These special places provide refuge for wildlife, including populations of threatened species, playing a vital role in recovering nature across Somerset. As the wider landscape is improved for nature, species will be able to travel freely between sites, spread out, and increase their populations.

Working with others across landscapes

To achieve our goals, we will build on and strengthen our work with peers and existing partnerships, such as the Avalon Marshes and Local Nature Partnership, Councils and our work with the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Exmoor National Park. We must also develop new partnerships and focus on the strengths and expertise we all bring to support each other to champion, restore and protect the natural environment, and help deliver Somerset's Climate Emergency Strategy.

We will work closely with communities and partners to create a Nature Recovery Network connecting the Blackdown Hills to the Vale of Taunton and up onto the Quantock Hills. From Brean Down on the Coast, across the Mendip Hills through to the ancient Forest of Selwood, then back across the Polden Hills we will expand and connect existing woodland, heathland and grassland networks to provide vast landscapes that allow species of all kinds opportunities to expand. At the county's heart lies the Levels and Moors, one of the UK's most important lowland wetlands. Here we will encourage thriving wetland habitats that also provide essential nature-based solutions to climate change, water quality and flood storage, whilst locking up vast amounts of carbon in our county's richest natural assets, peat.

Important too will be our renewed focus on our coast. Its expanse of carbon-rich saltmarsh, mud banks and intertidal habitat, supports a huge array of wildlife, including nationally

important fish stocks and bird populations as well as many sensitive and rare invertebrate communities. The Severn Estuary is one of the UK's most significant marine environments and is of global importance. We will work with partners to protect our marine environment; restoring intertidal areas, including the saltmarshes, that provide vital carbon storage, coastal protection and improve catchments that feed into the estuary.

Nature-friendly farming

Somerset is predominantly an agricultural county with 74% of land in some form of agricultural production. Somerset's farming communities have the potential to lead the way in allowing nature to thrive across the county. There are already a growing number of farmers committed to developing nature-friendly and regenerative farming techniques. We will find ways to work with and support farmers to continue developing and expanding these techniques.

Since World War2, the implementation of national agricultural policy and the desire for ever cheaper food, have driven changes in land management, including the intensification of farming practices, resulting in a devastating loss of biodiversity.

Government policies are now starting to identify new opportunities for farmers and land managers to deliver a wide range of public goods and services. Through new regenerative practices farming can be more sustainable; soils can be healthier and store more carbon, water and living organisms. Importantly farmers and landowners can work

Regenerative Farming

Practices that actively restore ecosystems and increase biodiversity, by improving soil health, water quality and reducing inputs such as fertilisers

together across vast landscapes to reconnect habitats and reinstate natural processes while restoring wildlife abundance and diversity. A farmed landscape will always be important in Somerset for food production and to provide jobs, or indeed a vocation, but it is also the most important landscape for fighting climate change and reversing ecological decline. Farmers can truly be custodians of the land. Working with and supporting farmers to restore nature, reversing climate change and ecological declines, and contributing to Somerset's Nature Recovery Network is one of the biggest opportunities for landscape-scale change we have.

Nature-friendly developments

The scale of development in Somerset is rapidly increasing, with much more housing planned, along with significant infrastructure developments. Important habitats are disappearing and they cannot be replaced within our lifetimes. The planning system is undergoing a transformation nationally, so as part of The Wildlife Trust movement we will continue our advocacy work at a national level, whilst working at a local level to influence planners and decision makers to put Nature Recovery Networks at the heart of local planning policy.

Everyone should have access to nature on their doorstep. Nature rich housing developments, with nature integrated from the early planning stages, can provide people with easy access to nature where they live and work.

Planning for nature must be at the heart of every development and planning decision.



What we are going to do

- Manage and improve our nature reserves as the heart of the Nature Recovery Network, delivering natural solutions and protecting precious wildlife until the wider landscape is improved enough for species to spread.
- Through our nature reserves inspire and support communities, farmers and landowners across the county and beyond, to contribute to the Nature Recovery Network.
- 'Wild' key areas of Somerset; acquiring new land and working with our farming neighbours to buffer and connect our nature reserves to the wider landscape, restoring natural processes and providing a foundation for natural solutions to support carbon and water storage and improved soil health.
- Develop large landscape-scale projects, with partners, to deliver nature's recovery through transformational approaches such as wilding, species introductions and the restoration of healthy ecosystems, using the best science and evidence to lead this work.
- Provide high quality ecological and environmental services to influence planning and deliver better developments for nature and achieving Biodiversity Net Gain through our consultancy, First Ecology.

What we are going to influence

- As part of our national body, The Wildlife Trusts, influence and shape national and local policy, and legislation to achieve nature's recovery, and put natural solutions at the heart of tackling the climate crisis, embedding the Nature Recovery Network in all local planning and policy decision-making frameworks.
- Challenge and influence planning policies and decisions to achieve the best outcomes for nature, going beyond the legally required minimum targets, establishing 'wildbelts' and ensuring that developments that do go ahead deliver positively for both nature and people.
- Work with partners to improve soil health - the foundation of all healthy ecosystems - that delivers significant benefits such as carbon and water storage, as well as important healthy habitats that support an abundance of wildlife of all kinds.
- Seek to improve the water quality of our rivers and water courses to ensure it is safe for people and wildlife.
- Develop and expand our work with farmers, landowners, communities, and partners to achieve our targets of nature improving everywhere with at least 30% of land managed positively for nature.
- Working proactively with land managers and the farming sector to reduce and gradually phase out the use of damaging pesticides and chemicals.

What we are going to call for

- A planning policy system at national and local levels embedding the Nature Recovery Network, delivering developments that prioritise people and nature, only approving developments that deliver positive outcomes for nature.
- Clear strategies at both national and local government levels that put nature-based solutions at the heart of all plans to tackle the climate crisis.
- The delivery of strong and ambitious Environment and Agriculture legislation with nature's recovery at their heart, and an independent and well-resourced Office for Environmental Protection, an effective watchdog for nature.
- Government support for a transformation in farming to regenerative practices.
- An end to practices that are damaging for nature, including the overuse of pesticides and the use of peat compost, and to ensure that action to reverse the decline of insects is given the greatest priority.



A movement for nature

Everyone has the opportunity to experience nature, with at least 1 in 4 people taking action for nature's recovery across Somerset as part of Team Wilder.

To achieve our goals, we need more people taking action for nature - a critical mass that can tip the balance for nature's recovery. Awareness of the environment is higher now than it has been for several generations, but our collective behaviours do not yet match our concern or the scale of the challenge. We need to move people from being aware of the issues to actually doing something about them.

We already have amazing volunteers and supporters giving their time to help us manage our nature reserves, running events, working with schools and helping us manage our offices. We know from our consultation you want to do more and want us to help you do it.

Positive choices for nature everyday

Choices we make at home, around our schools and workplaces can make a difference, whether it is a wilder corner of your garden, a field margin left for wildlife, your newly planted window box or the bug hotel the children made at school. Your lifestyle choices also matter: what you eat, buy, wear, what you do in your garden, on your land, how you heat your home, or travel.

At least 1 in 4 people taking positive action for nature's recovery

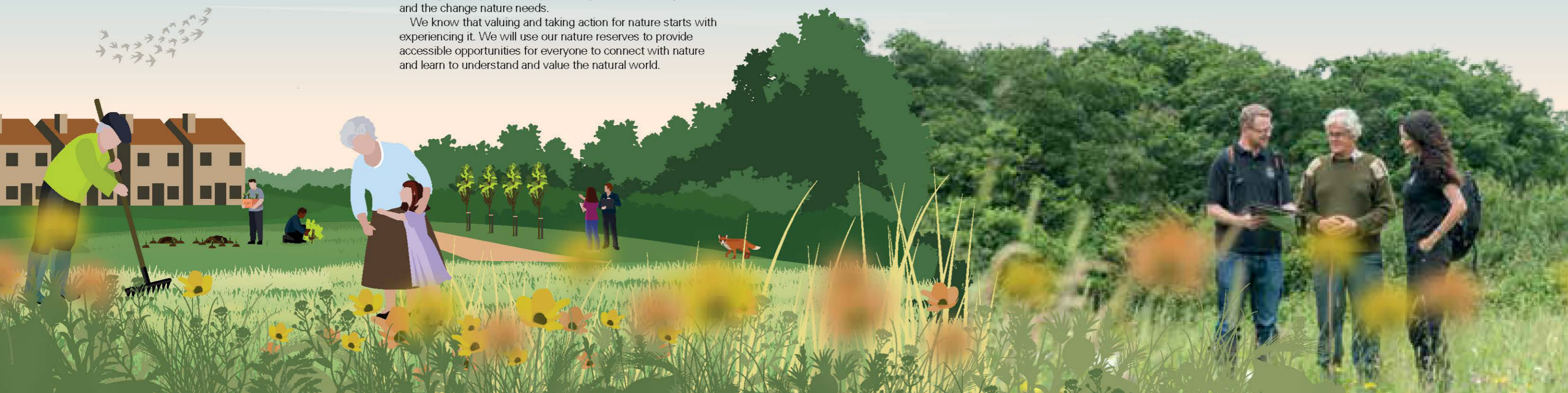
Evidence shows us that if 25% of the population - 1 in 4 people - take action, and are visible doing so, we create a social 'tipping point' - a magic moment when an idea or social behaviour crosses a threshold and where the majority will follow. Nature needs to be a priority for the whole of society, and we want to bring everyone with us, starting with finding and supporting those 1 in 4 people.

Already there are fantastic projects happening across Somerset in gardens, towns and villages - volunteer groups managing community space for nature or improving rivers, communities cleaning beaches along Somerset's 50 mile coastline, social groups fundraising for wildlife, parishes on the Levels developing climate adaptation plans, young people taking action, farmers changing to regenerative farming practices and businesses actively supporting their staff to contribute at work or in their communities.

We want to help you to do more together by becoming part of Team Wilder. A team of people taking action for nature across the county that they love; doers, champions, networkers, campaigners and changemakers. You will not be alone. We will support you. The weight of our growing membership, already numbering 20,000 plus, and the power of the Wildlife Trust movement will be behind all that you do.

We will support you, listen to you and develop practical resources that help you; toolkits, training, advice and bringing you together with others taking action. We will share our knowledge and skills, help develop your plans, connect communities and create a powerful peer to peer 'Wilder Action Network' to share our learning, successes and failures. Together we will take meaningful and practical steps to bring about the change we want, and the change nature needs.

We know that valuing and taking action for nature starts with experiencing it. We will use our nature reserves to provide accessible opportunities for everyone to connect with nature and learn to understand and value the natural world.





What we are going to do

- Build Team Wilder - our movement for nature, developing on and offline training and support for a range of inspiring action-oriented initiatives.
 - Wilder Champions: a volunteer programme supporting and training individuals to help us help others by championing action and offering advice to help benefit nature where they live.
 - Wilder Communities: supporting and working with communities and community leaders to take practical action and deliver the Nature Recovery Network in their local area.
 - Wilder Youth: which works with and empowers young people to take practical action for nature, growing our Watch Clubs and establishing a youth council, developing future generations of Wilder Champions.
 - Wilder Lives: a programme to provide opportunities for everyone to connect with nature, whether at home, school or at work, for their wellbeing and take action to protect it.
- Bring together the Wilder Action Network - a peer-to-peer support network to share learning, experiences and empower each other across Somerset.
- Provide fantastic nature experiences through our reserves network and identify flagship sites that can offer immersive and guided experiences, on site and online, to help people develop their own connection to the natural world and to be able to share it with others.
- Continue to recruit, support and train core volunteers to help us manage our nature reserves and support staff to deliver our strategy across Somerset.
- Have a clear commitment to diversity and inclusion in everything we do, listening to and learning from communities to make sure everyone has the opportunity to connect with nature.
- Work with farmers and landowners, providing specialist advice and support, to achieve nature's recovery together.
- Create new opportunities to support wildlife through Wilder Fundraising initiatives.
- Grow our membership and those fundraising for us to build our movement for nature and drive our work for nature's recovery.

What we are going to influence What we are going to call for

- Harnessing the strength of Team Wilder and as part of The Wildlife Trusts, we will campaign locally and nationally for legislation and policy that promotes nature's recovery giving people a voice in what happens in their own communities.
- Embed the value of nature in the work of others, such as teachers and healthcare workers, to highlight the importance of nature in their sectors to enable them to help spread our message with the people they work with and influence.
- Reinforce our connection with nature by providing accessible opportunities for people of all ages to experience and value the wonders of the natural world.
- Work with, learn from and support diverse communities to connect with and take action for nature.
- Nature to be embedded in the national curriculum at all levels for all ages including through a natural history GCSE.
- Positive environmental behaviours in all aspects of our lives.
- The government to take Action for Insects with an ambitious target for pesticide reduction and for everyone to become an insect champion, ending pesticide use at home and at work.
- Everyone to go peat free and the Government to set out clear targets to protect and restore the internationally important lowland peatlands of the Somerset Levels, and upland peatlands in our National Park.
- Decision makers in health, social care and planning to recognise the powerful benefits that nature can bring and maximise them in support of happy and healthy communities.
- You to get involved with us to deliver our plan for nature's recovery in Somerset and in your community.



Telling Somerset's story

The story of nature's recovery in Somerset is told through our online State of Nature platform that monitors progress and informs action.

It is vital that we understand what is happening to wildlife on a county and local scale both in terms of the biodiversity and bioabundance of species. Without an understanding of the health, distribution and location of habitats and species we cannot make the best decisions for nature's recovery or deliver the right natural solutions for climate change and people. If we do not notice wildlife declines, we run the risk of losing species forever.

To pinpoint the right actions to take, we need to apply innovative and meaningful recording and analysis methodologies that enable us to track progress, informing us of what is present, where and monitor the changes that occur over time. We will work closely with and support Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) in the development of an online platform to gain a strong measure of the health and quality of ecosystems across the county.

Establishing a clear baseline for nature and natural processes

SERC currently hold over 2.5 million records of species present in Somerset. Most are of protected or rare species and most are within higher quality habitats. There is a gap in our knowledge about the numbers and locations of more 'common' species such as hedgehogs, bumblebees and blackbirds. With your help and that of our partners, we will fill those gaps and use our collective data to improve the impact of our Nature Recovery Network.

Community science initiatives and Team Wilder

With SERC, through our Team Wilder programme, we will run seasonal community science initiatives that support the work of Somerset's specialist species groups and provide training through Team Wilder to help more people develop recording and monitoring skills. This data, over time, will enable SERC to monitor abundance trends across Somerset and will support the Somerset State of Nature report.

People's connection to nature and pro-environmental behaviours

The success of our strategy and our ability to restore nature depends on people appreciating the issues and the solutions. As part of the Somerset State of Nature strategy, we will survey and monitor public values, connections and actions for nature. Over time, as our work and the work of our supporters develops, we expect to see more people caring about nature and actively doing something to restore it.

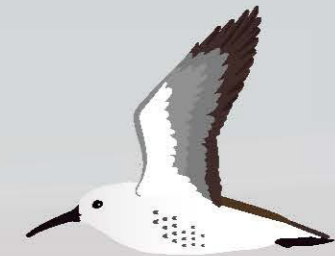
Monitoring natural solutions

Underpinning the Nature Recovery Network, overlaid with habitat and species data, will be additional data on the effectiveness of natural solutions, such as carbon absorption maps based on habitat types.

Collectively all this data will become the 'Somerset State of Nature', which will be combined and shared centrally with nature's stakeholders across the county, via an online platform which essentially becomes the visible 'face' of the Nature Recovery Network. It will allow us to track changes and continue to refine the Nature Recovery Network over time to identify priority actions to achieve the greatest impact for nature.

Inform delivery of the Nature Recovery Network

The data collection for the Somerset State of Nature report will provide opportunities through Team Wilder and our partners to learn identification skills and aims to help connect people with nature. The State of Nature report will be used by our partners, Wilder Communities and ourselves to target the delivery of the Nature Recovery Network, inform policy and planning decisions and develop landscape-scale projects.



What are we going to do

- Support Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) to develop an online State of Nature platform that will give us a clear understanding of the health, location and abundance of species and habitats in Somerset.
- SERC and Somerset Wildlife Trust will work together through Team Wilder to deliver a seasonal community science survey to monitor abundance of common species across Somerset, The Great Somerset Wildlife Count, helping people identify and record species where they live.
- Survey, monitor and understand people's attitudes, values and behaviours towards nature and influence the general public to be proactive in supporting us to look after it.
- Deliver a comprehensive monitoring programme on our own nature reserves covering abundance, diversity and natural solutions.
- Target delivery of the Nature Recovery Network using the State of Nature report as our clear science-led evidence base.
- Continue to develop community science opportunities for the wider public of Somerset to engage and contribute towards the Somerset State of Nature report.

What are we going to influence

- As part of the Somerset State of Nature strategy, we will develop and embed long-term monitoring programmes that inspire participation and support good decision-making by Somerset planning authorities, planners and developers such as:
 - Where and how landscape projects are developed to achieve the best outcomes for nature.
 - Planning for Somerset to become resilient and adaptable to climate change.
 - Inform the Nature Recovery Network and local strategies that decide where developments should and should not be considered.
 - Ensure that biodiversity increases rather than decreases as a result of planning decisions and the building of homes and infrastructure.
- Work with partners including through the Local Nature Partnership, to identify priorities for landscape-scale action using the State of Nature report.

What are we going to call for

- Prioritisation of well-resourced and improved monitoring across all habitats and protected sites in Somerset to inform decision making.
- Policy makers and planners to use the Somerset State of Nature report in all decision making that will affect the natural world.
- Communities to be fully engaged in decision-making and have the opportunity to contribute in a way that benefits both their own local area and the wider landscapes of Somerset.
- Investment in the natural world based on science and evidence to deliver the Nature Recovery Network.
- The Local Nature Partnership and other stakeholders to lead the way in decisive nature positive decision-making.

Developing Somerset Wildlife Trust


To deliver our Wilder Somerset 2030 strategy we will need to build our charity, be clear in our priorities and ensure our own actions support our aims.

We will

- Support, inspire and enable others to take action while leading by example.
- Develop a Climate and Environment Strategy that delivers on our own environmental commitments covering all areas of our operation and land use including procurement, utilities, facilities and transport to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.
- Use our resources efficiently and effectively, harnessing the diversity, talent and commitment of our staff and supporters.
- Expand our supporter base and sources of income, including through embracing new opportunities to generate income streams that are compatible with our strategic goals and maintain financial stability.
- Embrace new ways to grow our impact and reach, with a particular focus on expanding our digital knowledge and experience.

Our Values

- We are passionate about nature
- We believe everyone can make a contribution to nature's recovery
- We love Somerset and prioritise its amazing wildlife and communities
- We are confident, evidence-based and brave in standing up for nature
- We encourage innovative thinking, a solutions focus and action for nature's recovery



You've read our strategy for a Wilder Somerset. We can't do this alone. If we work together to take action boldly and quickly, nature can recover. Together we can create a Wilder Somerset - a place where nature and people both can thrive.

Join us on our journey today.
Find out how: somersetwildlife.org/teamwilder



Somerset Wildlife Trust

34 Wellington Road
Taunton
Somerset TA1 5AW

01823 652400

enquiries@somersetwildlife.org
www.somersetwildlife.org

Charity number 238372
Company number 818162

