



Nottinghamshire
Wildlife Trust

Transforming our towns and city for **people & nature**



Together we can realise a once in a generation opportunity to transform our urban areas for wildlife and people.

Our shared experience over the past two years has highlighted, like never before, that people must have access to wildlife rich greenspaces on their doorstep.

With almost 90% of us living in towns and cities that are feeling the impact of the decline of the high street and endless pressure to build yet more homes, it is now time to take a stand.

We are calling on government, planners and politicians to take a nature first approach. This will help put wildlife into recovery and secure a greener recovery for our urban landscapes and the people that live, work and learn in them.

It's time for our towns and our city to be transformed from grey to green and we can all play our part.

Cover image: Members of Wild.NG labelling wild flower species growing on pavements in Nottingham © Wild.NG

Communities are increasingly taking action for nature and are no longer prepared to sit back whilst remaining wild areas and greenspaces disappear. They want to see leadership from decision makers to tackle the nature and climate crisis and they want their voices to be heard.

What we want

- Protect nature - we are still losing natural spaces at an alarming rate and creating harsh environments where nature struggles to thrive e.g. herbicide use on our pavements and extensive mowing regimes; we need to do more to protect nature in our urban areas
- Fairer access to nature - the poorest people in our society have least access to nature, this situation must be addressed by Council's committing to minimum standards to ensure better local access to natural spaces
- 20% gain for nature - all developments must strive to deliver a 20% increase in nature onsite and, as a last resort offsite, backed by the Government's Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) standard

In addition, all Councils should plan ahead to identify new areas where nature could be restored to help deal with climate change, benefit species and improve health and wellbeing.



Our vision for a Wilder Nottinghamshire

Our vision of a Wilder Nottinghamshire is achievable if the environment is at the heart of policy - not an afterthought.

Good policy can shape our towns and city into urban oases by replacing barren greenspaces with a network of habitat to support nature's recovery and harnessing nature-based solutions to link fragmented landscapes.

Reimagining our city and our towns, from Retford & Worksop to Newark, Mansfield, Beeston and Bingham with more spaces to connect with nature, more places where we can gather, relax and recharge will enable wildlife and people to thrive.

Our commitment

Since the 1960's Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust has fought to protect wildlife close to where people live and will continue to stand up for wildlife and to hold decision makers to account. As we face up to the nature and climate crises people and communities taking action for nature on their doorsteps will be key to nature's recovery.

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust is committed to providing advice, support and encouragement to those fighting to protect wildlife on their patch and people taking action in their own lives or within their community.



Any space, green or otherwise, anywhere in the county can be improved for wildlife



Nature depleted

Spending time in nature is good for us, yet levels of engagement with nature are not equal across society. Those on low incomes, from ethnic minorities or older age groups are much less likely to visit greenspaces frequently.

Most people's experience of nature is on sites, close to home, yet the distribution of greenspace is also unequal. Many of our most deprived districts and boroughs have the lowest levels of greenspace. This is why we are calling for new legislation to provide minimum standards for accessible natural greenspace.

Nature on your doorstep

We can all help make our towns and cities wilder by campaigning to protect important areas of habitat or volunteering to care for areas such as nature reserves, parks or community gardens.

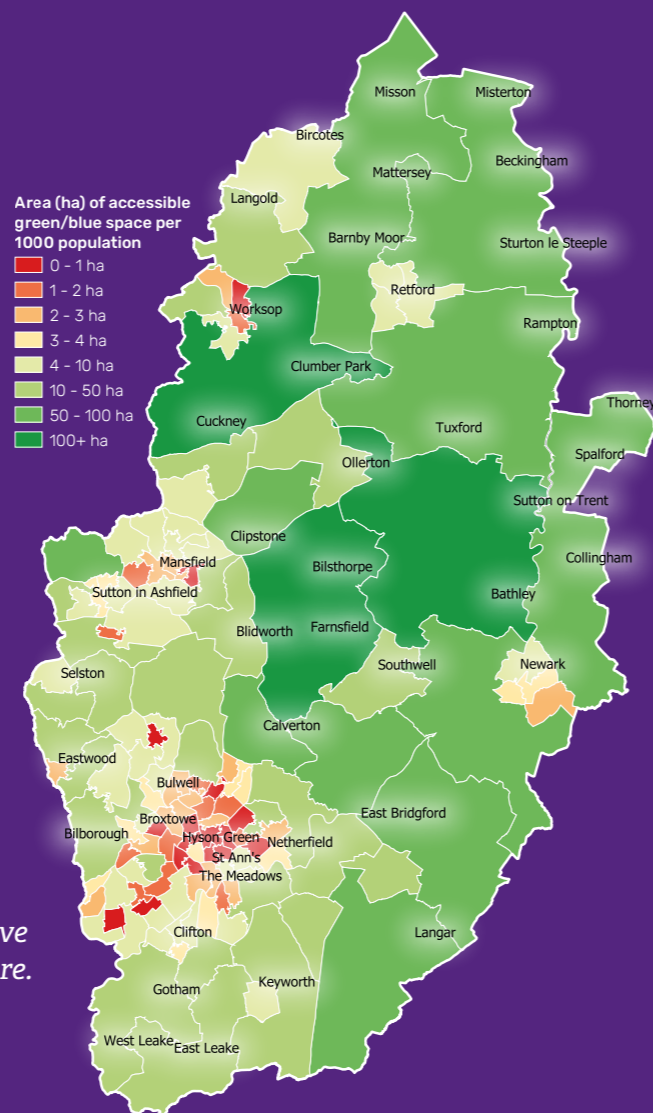
Our urban centres and suburbs provide significantly less access to natural green space, depriving residents of an accessible connection with nature.

Urban areas are also centres of deprivation where people face increased barriers to quality housing, employment, education, health care.

People living in our towns and cities have least access to nature.

Access to nature

Publicly accessible green/blue space (per 1000 people) within Nottinghamshire. The red hues indicate the areas within Nottinghamshire that have the least access to green/blue space.



Declining species

In seeking a better future for wildlife and people in our towns and city we must recognise that wildlife is in trouble. Wildlife in urban areas is in trouble. The 2019 State of Nature report highlights that:

8,431 species

have been assessed using Red List criteria, of these, 15% have been classified as threatened with extinction from Great Britain, including species once common in urban areas such as the hedgehog and water vole.

41% have decreased in abundance

More species have shown strong or moderate decreases in abundance (41%) than increases (26%) since 1970, and likewise more species have decreased in distribution (27%) than increased (21%)



© Lesley Trask

Organisations such as Hedgehog Street and more locally Hedgepigs hedgehog rescue in Beeston, have been creating hedgehog highways by cutting holes in fences and walls to help these much loved creatures move more freely between gardens.



"Greenspace is a social justice issue, with people with lower incomes and non-white ethnicities often living in areas with low access to greenspace. This nature-deprivation is recognised in inner-city Nottingham, with its inclusion on the top 50 priority areas for investment to improve greenspace access in a 2020 Friends of the Earth report 4."

Iona McMillan, City resident, member of Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust's Keeping it Wild youth team



People are increasingly voicing their concerns about the climate & nature crises.



© Hathe Lavender

Build, build, build...

The challenges facing urban populations have been compounded by pressure for house building to drive economic growth rather than to meet local need.

This has placed an even greater squeeze on remaining green spaces and local services.

The Government has an ambition to build over 1 million extra homes but by leaving provision almost exclusively to the commercial sector, affordable housing remains out of reach for many.

Future decision on planning must strike a better balance between local housing requirements and the need to protect natural green space.

Pressure for new development is evident across Nottinghamshire, particularly in urban areas. It will be vital to put the natural environment at the heart of planning decision and the design of every development to ensure that we create great places for people to live.

We need a truly sustainable approach to development, driven by Local Nature Recovery Strategies that support the county's Nature Recovery Network. Unless we secure the fundamental shift, areas will become more sterile - further undermining the health and wellbeing of our communities and exacerbating peoples' disconnect with nature.

New housing allocation

Current house construction allocations for Nottinghamshire:



To accommodate almost 90,000 houses across our county and to provide space for future allocations, areas of greenspace and greenbelt will undoubtedly be sacrificed. But, if planned creatively adhering to the principle of Biodiversity Net Gain enshrined in the Environment Act. It is possible to build homes whilst also creating wilder places for people and nature. You can help by speaking out about damaging development and calling on your council to insist developers work with nature and create great places for people and nature.



With careful planning even homes in the heart of Nottingham, such as these houses in St Ann's, can be surrounded by valuable greenspace.

Urban living – an ecological emergency

The pressures of urban living can mean we pay too little attention to the natural environment and fail to realise how limited our access to wildlife rich greenspaces has become.

Whilst green gems such as parks, gardens, waterways and even the occasional green roof nestle amongst our buildings, dreary walkways and transport networks, these spaces are limited and often distant, creating a fragmented landscape for people and nature.

It is time to demand better for people and nature. Good developments, which work with nature, should not be the exception. As we face up to the ecological and climate crisis it is vital that new developments utilise sustainable materials and technologies and contribute nature's recovery.

As part of their campaign to reduce the use of chemical weedkillers on local streets, members of Wild.NG have been highlighting the diversity of wild flowers found growing on city pavements.

Putting people and nature at the heart of planning

Planning should not simply be about deciding what can be built where. It should be about creating places where people and communities can thrive. To thrive, communities need access to nature.

Finding creative ways to restore nature to our towns and cities will help reverse decades of wildlife decline and signal commitment to tackling the climate and ecological crises. Providing people with places where they can connect with nature and escape the stresses of modern life on their doorstep will transform people's quality of life, breathe new life into tired urban centres where greenspace has been squeezed out.

By adopting a bold green vision our county's leaders could set Nottinghamshire on a course to a greener economic recovery, boost tourism and stimulate inward investment.

As we strive to secure 30% of the UK's land for nature by 2030 this wild green ambition could stimulate investment in existing greenspaces; bring people together and put urban wildlife into recovery.

Communities can play their part too. Across Nottinghamshire people are taking action for nature on their doorstep. With support from Wild.NG, residents in Nottingham are pushing the council to find ways to reduce pesticide use, whilst in Newark, local campaigners saved a group of trees next to the town library through their 'Stop the Chop' campaign.



Building wilder places

More emphasis must be put into 'Building with Nature', designing in more wild green space to create great places to live. As well as where development can take place, local authorities should have more say over what is built to help meet local need.

Where planning permission has been granted, councils should be able to insist development takes place within strict time limits. This would prevent artificial pressure to release yet more land. Whilst the Government continues to pressurise councils to sacrifice more green space, Local Government Association figures indicate that developers are sat on planning permissions for at least 1 million homes.



A vision of the proposed 'Green Heart' for Nottingham's Broadmarsh area.

© Nottingham City Council

What we want

- **Knowledge-based decisions.** Only two of Nottinghamshire's eight Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) employ ecologists to help guide planning decisions. We believe all LPAs should have access to qualified ecologists to ensure informed decisions when determining planning applications and that the mandatory 10% BNG is delivered.
- **Wildbelt** – in addition to better protection for existing wildlife habitats we're calling for a new planning designation to protect sites created to support nature's recovery - we're calling this Wildbelt.

Fight now or forfeit...

There is no time to waste.

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. What we do now will affect us, and every generation to come.

Right homes, right place

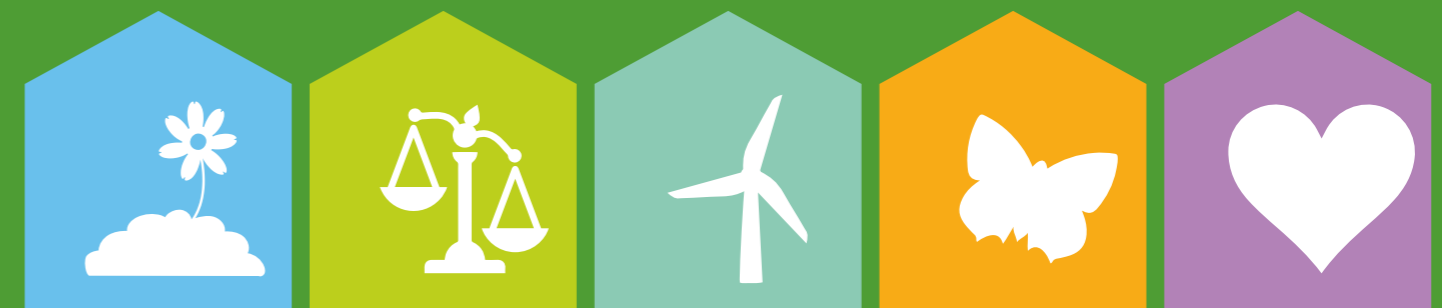
We recognise that people need homes to live in and not all housing development need damage wildlife. By designing in harmony with local surroundings, working with nature and constructing sustainable carbon neutral or carbon positive homes, good development can help create wilder places where people aspire to live.



Roof gardens such as this one at Victoria Centre Flats can provide access to nature in very built up areas.

© Nottinghamshire Post & Ian Hodgkinson

A good nature-rich housing development provides:



Connectivity

between wild places – enabling both wildlife and people to move through the landscape, and for natural processes to operate effectively.

Real, measurable gains for wildlife,

as all new developments make a demonstrable, positive contribution to nature's recovery,

Effective water management,

pollution and climate control provided by green spaces and water courses, sustainable urban drainage, green roofs, trees, woodlands, wetlands and other natural features.

Easy access to high quality wildlife-rich natural green space for everyone, providing daily opportunities to experience wildlife.

Improved health, wellbeing and quality of life for people living and working nearby.

Good developments:

- incorporate existing habitats;
- build in climate resilience and benefits for nature;
- create and restore ecological networks;
- support wildlife by creating new habitats to help bring nature closer to people.

What we don't want

Weaknesses in the planning system, inadequate resourcing of LPAs and unceasing pressure for new development result in:

- Homes built to suit developers' profit margins, not meet local need;
- Land banking – with plots released slowly to keep prices high – placing more pressure on councils to release more land;
- Tokenistic wildlife schemes based on narrow strips of amenity grassland and minimal tree planting.



Installing nest boxes can boost urban populations of species such as house martins and swifts. Community led projects such as Swift Street in Sherwood, Nottingham, can make a real difference.



Nature-based solutions

To tackle the ecological and environmental crises we must transform our relationship with nature. For centuries we have cleared and controlled our environment, disrupting natural processes. Instead of taming nature we must work with it and enable our planet to heal. We must design & implement 'nature-based solutions' into our towns & cities - solutions that are cost-effective and help build resilience by simultaneously providing environmental, social and economic benefits.

By harnessing natural solutions when designing and rejuvenating urban areas we can prevent or reduce flood risk, provide shade to help offset rising temperatures, support wildlife, reduce pollution, store carbon and improve people's health and wellbeing.

Nature provides

Natural ecosystems provide services that support our wellbeing. As well as improving how areas look, street trees cool the air and help remove pollutants and store carbon. They also support wildlife including insects, bats, birds and small mammals.

Several species that share our towns & cities with us act as natural biological control by feeding on pests such as aphids, mosquitoes & gnats. A pair of swifts might gather as many as 100,000 insects a day to feed to their chicks.

Exposure to nature not only makes us feel better emotionally, it contributes to our physical wellbeing. We shouldn't need to travel long distances to benefit from nature; connection can be achieved by taking a stroll through a city park, from a calm commute along a restored canal or simply taking a quiet moment to sit beneath a tree.



Severn Trent are embracing natural solutions to the issue of flooding in Mansfield.

A people powered nature recovery

Individuals and community groups across the county are playing their part through simple actions such as planting trees, creating ponds or caring for local greenspaces. More people are taking action for nature that ever before - you can play your part too.

Take action to transform our towns and city

By taking a nature first approach to reimagining our urban areas, Nottinghamshire can stand out from the crowd as urban centres across the UK seek ways to recover from the impacts of Covid-19 - securing investment that will reap rewards for generations to come. We're working to make sure councils and developers play their part too but you can make a real difference.

You can make a difference by:



Creating biodiversity-rich spaces in your neighbourhoods. These do not have to be big spaces, a window box planted with pollinator-attracting plants can support a wide range of species.



Making your voice heard in planning decisions to ensure nature is taken into account and speaking up about how your local green spaces and wildlife are managed.



Inspiring others to take action for wildlife through social media, local campaigning, and active engagement with local councillors and MPs to let them know you want to see action for nature.



Find out about local projects and groups taking action in your community. If you can't find a group locally why not team up with friends and neighbours to start one?



For more ideas and inspiration and let us know what action you've taken for nature visit nottinghamshirewildlife.org/take-action-wilder-nottinghamshire

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust

Our vision... is for people to be inspired and empowered to take action for nature and the climate, to create a Nature Recovery Network that helps address the ecological and climate emergencies.

Our purpose... is to bring about a wilder Nottinghamshire where people and wildlife are thriving together.

We believe...

- The natural world is valuable in its own right and is under threat
- People are part of the natural world and dependent upon it for our existence
- Everyone should have the opportunity to live in a healthy wildlife rich natural world
- We all have the power to make a positive impact on the nature and climate emergencies

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust is working to create:

Wilder lives – we seek to inspire, connect, encourage, enable and empower others and to ensure that 'nature-connectedness' is embedded in all that we do.

Wilder places – by restoring habitats and species working with landowners, developers, partner organisations, councils, communities and others we aspire to create space for nature to thrive. We will continue to campaign for ambitious environmental policy, legislation and investment as part of the nature recovery network.



To find out more visit [nottinghamshirewildlife/transform-our-towns](https://nottinghamshirewildlife.org/transform-our-towns)

Write to your council asking them to clarify what ecological expertise they have to ensure they make the right decisions.

nottinghamshirewildlife.org    

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