



Nature recovery in council owned parks and green spaces in Bristol



Our city's natural habitats and the species they support are vitally important to us all. In Bristol we have seen a loss of wildlife from the insects that pollinate our food to the very experience of nature that is so important to our health and wellbeing.

We need to work together to reverse the decline in wildlife by creating new spaces where nature can recover and thrive in our city. In 2020, Bristol partners came together to declare an ecological emergency and to produce the One City Ecological Emergency Strategy so that we can do that.

Creating new habitats

Council owned parks and green spaces are great places to see and enjoy wildlife, but there is more we can do if we want nature to thrive. We have used the West of England Nature Recovery Network (wenp.org.uk/nature-recovery-network/) to identify where and how we can connect existing patches of habitats like woodland and species-rich meadow to allow plants and animals to move freely between them.

Using the NRN 'map' we have surveyed 130 parks and green spaces in Bristol where we see the best opportunities to create new wildlife spaces and improve what is existing. This work is part of the council's commitment set out in its [Ecological Emergency Action Plan](#) and will help deliver the One City Ecological Emergency goal of 30% of land in Bristol being managed for the benefit of nature.

[See our map](#) to show surveyed parks in the Nature Recovery Network where we believe there is potential to create new wildlife space.

Based on the assessment so far, we have identified opportunities to create:

- **Woodlands: 5.6 hectares**
- **Orchards: 3.1 hectares**
- **Large native open grown trees: 9.4 hectares**
- **Hedgerows: 1 km**
- **Species-rich scrub: 1 hectare**
- **Species-rich grassland: 12 hectares**
- **Tussocky grassland: 5.6 hectares**
- **Ponds: 10**

Woodland, orchards and tree planting

Trees and woodlands are vital to our environment. They provide a habitat for wildlife, remove carbon from the atmosphere, help to prevent flooding, provide essential cooling and improve our health and well-being.

Our priority is to expand and connect patches of woodland.

We will plant native trees and allow woodland to establish naturally from seed. We will also plant orchards and native hedgerows and individual trees that can connect areas of woodland.

Our One Tree Per Child team and volunteers, will continue to support tree and woodland planting.

Woodland and tree planting will contribute to the city target to double Bristol's tree canopy by 2046.

Species-rich and tussocky grassland

Species-rich grasslands are found on land where lime, fertiliser or herbicides have not been used much over the last 10 years or more. Species-rich grasslands are now rare in the UK with 97% lost since the 1940s although there are still patches of meadow within Bristol's parks and green spaces.

Our priority is to expand and connect patches of species-rich grassland.

We will introduce native wildflower plants to attract pollinating insects. We will increase the number of wildflowers by cutting grass less often, by removing the cut grass, and introducing yellow rattle a plant that helps to keep the more vigorous grasses under control. We will also create areas of 'tussocky grassland' by cutting grass once every few years.

This will create areas of long grass which provides cover for insects and small mammals and allows several butterfly species to complete their lifecycles.

Wetlands

Many wetlands in Bristol have been drained and ponds have been filled in or lost. Ponds are a great place for a range of wildlife including newts, frogs and insects to live. We would like to create good sized ponds in some of our parks and green space, either as a single nature recovery action or combined with either tree planting or enhanced grassland management or creation.

Taking action together - next steps

The work we have done so far highlights the potential for nature recovery in our parks and green spaces both in helping to deliver the One City Ecological Emergency Strategy and contributing to the growth of the Nature Recovery Network.

The next step is to put together detailed designs for these new habitats on a site-by-site basis and then consult on these ideas in April 2022.

Many ideas will require funding and we will be asking communities to think about how they would like to be involved.

