Nature Recovery Workbook for Ryedale & North Yorkshire Parishes:



This booklet has been put together by members of Ryedale Environment Group (REG), which is a grassroots organisation helping Ryedale to reduce its carbon footprint. There are several subgroups in REG including Beyond Plastic, Restoring Ryedale, Plastic Free Pickering, Paths for Everyone and more. Please see our website for more information about REG.

DISCLAIMER

Please note that we have done our best to ensure that the information included was accurate at the time of printing, but as this is a printed booklet, there is the potential for details included to change. Please always undertake your own checks and due diligence to ensure these tips, ideas and actions are appropriate, safe and practical for you.

Please also note that the images and places in this booklet are for illustrative purposes only. Their appearance does not indicate personal endorsement or specific association.

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Howardian Hills National Landscape

Ryedale Environment Group

North York Moors National Park

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1. Introduction

Nature recovery begins locally.

Across Ryedale and North Yorkshire, communities are increasingly recognising the importance of restoring habitats, improving biodiversity and building landscapes that are more resilient to climate change. Parish and town councils are uniquely placed to help lead this work.

Small local actions, when connected together, can create significant positive change for:

- wildlife
- people
- flood resilience
- water quality
- landscape character
- climate resilience
- community wellbeing

How to use this workbook:

You can use this workbook to:

- identify opportunities for nature recovery
- plan local projects
- support parish planning
- engage volunteers
- create biodiversity action plans
- monitor progress over time

The workbook is intended to be practical, accessible, action-focused, and adaptable for different communities.

This workbook has been designed to help:

- parish and town councils
- residents
- schools
- volunteer groups
- local organisations

This workbook will help identify practical actions that can be undertaken to support nature recovery in the local area.

1.1 Why Nature Recovery Matters in Ryedale?

A Landscape Rich in Wildlife

The area of Ryedale contains a remarkable diversity of landscapes and habitats, including but not limited to:

- the North York Moors
- the Howardian Hills
- river valleys, rivers and wetlands
- ancient woodlands
- species-rich grasslands and hay meadows
- farmland habitats
- peatlands and moorlands
- villages, towns and urban green spaces

Together, these landscapes support a rich variety of wildlife, including:

- birds
- mammals
- amphibians
- insects and other pollinators
- fungi
- wide range of plant species.

Nature also provides important benefits for local communities, including opportunities for recreation and enjoyment, improved health and wellbeing, cleaner air and water, carbon storage and natural flood management.

However, nature across North Yorkshire is under increasing pressure from:

- habitat loss and fragmentation
- pollution
- invasive species
- climate change
- intensive land use and development
- the loss of traditional land management practices.

The North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy aims to help address these pressures by identifying priorities and opportunities to restore, create and connect habitats across the landscape.

1.2 Understanding the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

What is a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)?

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are statutory, locally led strategies established under the Environment Act 2021. They are designed to guide and coordinate action to restore nature, recover biodiversity and improve the wider environment.

They identify:

- important existing areas for nature
- priorities for nature recovery
- opportunities to create, restore and improve habitats
- locations where action could have the greatest environmental benefit
- opportunities to improve connectivity between habitats and support wider nature recovery

The Importance of Connectivity

Wildlife benefits from landscapes where suitable habitats are connected or located close enough together for species to move, disperse and maintain populations.

Hedgerows, rivers, streams, ponds, grasslands, woodlands and other semi-natural habitats can all contribute to ecological connectivity. Improving connections between existing wildlife-rich areas can help expand and strengthen nature recovery across the wider landscape.

LNRS can help identify opportunities to create, restore or improve habitats in locations that connect and expand existing areas important for nature.

"30 by 30"

The UK has committed to effectively conserve and manage 30% of its land and seas for nature by 2030. This commitment supports the global "30 by 30" target agreed in 2022 as part of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework at the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

The UK's 30 by 30 commitment is embedded within the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan and is supported by measures to protect, restore and improve wildlife-rich habitats.
Local Nature Recovery Strategies can contribute to this wider ambition by identifying where habitat restoration, creation and improved management can deliver the greatest benefits for nature.

1.3 The Role of Parish and Town Councils

The Role of Local Councils

Public authorities have a legal duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity. When carrying out this duty, they must also have regard to any relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Parish and town councils can play an important role in supporting nature recovery locally. They can contribute by:

- managing land, green spaces, and buildings for biodiversity;
- taking relevant LNRS priorities into account when commenting on planning proposals;
- supporting local volunteers and community groups;
- improving habitats within their own landholdings; and
- helping to coordinate and promote community-led nature recovery projects.

Parish Leadership

Nature recovery works best when local communities are involved.
Councils can help:

- coordinate projects
- build partnerships
- support long-term stewardship

Thoughts / Notes:



2.1 Mapping your Parish for Nature

Understanding Your Local Landscape

Before planning nature recovery projects, it is useful to understand what is already present in your parish. Mapping existing habitats, important wildlife sites and connections between them can help identify where nature is already thriving, where habitats could be better connected, and where there may be opportunities for restoration or improvement.

You do not need to produce a professional ecological survey to get started. Local knowledge, existing maps, site visits and information from the North Yorkshire and York Local Habitat Map can all help build a picture of your parish.

Anybody can contribute to the audit:

- interested councillors
- local residents
- local environmental/natural history groups
- volunteers
- schools/community groups
- professional ecologists where specialist surveys are required

Start with what you know

Your parish may already have valuable wildlife habitats that are not obvious from a map. Speak to local residents, landowners, farmers, community groups and natural history organisations to find out what wildlife is present and where nature has changed over time.

The North Yorkshire and York LNRS Local Habitat Map can then be used alongside this local knowledge to explore existing areas important for nature and potential opportunities for recovery.

Habitat and Landscape Mapping Checklist

Existing habitats and wildlife features

- woodlands and areas of scrub
- veteran and ancient trees
- hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- species-rich grasslands and hay meadows
- roadside verges and other grassland
- rivers, streams and becks
- ponds and other waterbodies
- wetlands and marshes
- orchards
- heathland and moorland, where present
- churchyards, cemeteries and burial grounds
- allotments, gardens and other community green spaces
- parks and public open spaces
- Local Wildlife Sites and other designated nature sites

Connections and opportunities

- hedgerows, rivers and other features that connect wildlife habitats
- gaps or breaks between existing habitats
- opportunities to create new habitat alongside existing wildlife-rich areas
- areas where habitats could be restored or better managed
- flood-prone or poorly drained areas that could provide opportunities for wetlands or natural flood management
- land where tree planting, hedgerow creation or grassland restoration may be appropriate

Land and community resources

- parish or town council-owned land
- land managed by community groups or other local organisations
- landowners who may be interested in nature recovery
- existing volunteer groups and local environmental projects

Thoughts / Notes:

2.2 Parish Biodiversity Audit

Actions You Can Take Now

Establishing a Biodiversity Baseline

Once you have mapped the habitats and features in your parish, the next step is to build a picture of the wildlife that uses them.

You do not need to carry out a professional ecological survey to get started. Existing biological records, local knowledge and simple, repeatable surveys can help you understand what species and habitats are present and how they change over time.

Start by finding out what is already known

Check:

- existing species records for your parish or surrounding area;
- the North Yorkshire and York Local Habitat Map;
- Local Wildlife Sites and other designated sites;
- records of priority or notable species;
- records of invasive non-native species;
- existing habitat information;
- locations of veteran and ancient trees; and
- information held by local natural history groups, recording groups and residents.

Useful sources include the North Yorkshire and York Local Habitat Map, MAGIC, iRecord, the NBN Atlas, INNS mapper and iNaturalist. The North & East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre (NEYEDC) can also be contacted to undertake a search.

Remember that species records are not a complete inventory of the wildlife in your parish. Areas with fewer records may simply have received less recording effort.

Thoughts / Notes:

Suggested Community Survey Activities

Choose surveys that are realistic for your community and, where possible, use the same methods and locations each time. This makes it easier to compare results over time.
Possible activities include:

- Bird surveys – record species seen or heard from a consistent route or location.
- Bat walks – look for bats using suitable routes and follow appropriate guidance.
- Pollinator counts – use a standardised method such as a Flower-Insect Timed Count (FIT Count).
- Verges and grassland surveys – record flowering plants, grasses and notable species.
- Pond and wetland surveys – record aquatic plants, amphibians and other wildlife where appropriate.
- Tree surveys – record veteran trees, ancient trees and notable mature trees.
- Hedgerow surveys – record hedgerow condition, structure and species diversity.
- Invasive species surveys – record the location and extent of invasive non-native species.
- Watercourse surveys – record habitat condition, litter, pollution indicators and, where appropriate, carry out structured water-quality or biological monitoring.

For activities such as bat surveys, water-quality testing or species identification, consider working with an experienced ecologist, local recording group or established monitoring scheme. Ensure that appropriate methods, permissions and health-and-safety precautions are followed.

Encourage Residents to Record Wildlife

Everyone can contribute to understanding the biodiversity of the parish.
Encourage residents to:

- record wildlife they see in gardens, parks, fields and along footpaths;
- photograph plants, insects, fungi, birds and other wildlife where appropriate;
- upload observations to citizen-science platforms;
- take part in organised local recording days;
- share historical wildlife observations and local ecological knowledge; and
- record the date and location of observations wherever possible.

Platforms such as iNaturalist allow people to upload observations with photographs, dates and locations, which can then be viewed and identified by the wider community.

For pollinators, the UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme's Flower-Insect Timed Count (FIT Count) provides a particularly useful standardised activity: volunteers count flower-visiting insects for ten minutes and submit the results. FIT Counts can be carried out in gardens, parks and other suitable locations between April and September.

3. LNRS Overarching Priorities

Overarching Priorities for Nature Recovery

The following overarching priorities apply across all habitat types within the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

They were developed through the preparation of the LNRS and engagement with stakeholders, organisations and communities involved in nature recovery across the area. They represent the key aspects of nature recovery that the strategy seeks to support across North Yorkshire and York.

When considering potential restoration, creation or management projects in your parish, keep these priorities in mind. Projects that address one or more of these priorities can help contribute to the wider aims of the LNRS.

Thoughts / Notes:



The Priorities

1. Improve ecological connectivity

Enhance connectivity between areas of good-quality existing habitat by creating appropriate new habitats between existing sites. This can help wildlife move through the landscape and improve connectivity for key species.

2. Support key species

Take action to benefit key species, particularly species that require specific habitat management or other targeted interventions.

3. Control invasive non-native species

Control, and where appropriate seek to eradicate, invasive non-native species (INNS) that threaten native wildlife, habitats and ecosystems.

4. Work together for nature

Work collaboratively across sectors and communities to coordinate action for nature recovery. Increase public knowledge, awareness and understanding of nature and the benefits it provides.

5. Improve the evidence base

Enhance the ecological data and evidence base, and share knowledge between organisations, communities and individuals undertaking actions to benefit nature.

What does this mean for your parish?

When considering a project, ask:

- Will it connect existing habitats?
- Will it benefit a priority or key species?
- Will it help control an invasive species?
- Can we work with other groups or landowners?
- Can we record what we do and monitor the results?

4.1 - Hedgerows & Nature Corridors

Page 21 of LNRS document 2

Why Hedgerows Matter

Hedgerows are an important part of Ryedale's farmed landscapes.

They provide:

- food and forage;
- shelter and cover;
- nesting and breeding habitat;
- places for wildlife to feed and overwinter; and
- routes and stepping stones that can help wildlife move through the landscape.

Well-managed hedgerows are tall, wide, well buffered and alive with wildlife, providing food, shelter and commuting opportunities for many different species.

Planting along historic boundaries and well-planned new hedgerows, using a range of plants and trees, increases connectivity within the landscape, as well as providing shelter, shade and forage for livestock. Where hedgerows are well managed they are also climate resilient.



Species Spotlight:

- Yellowhammer
- Tree sparrow
- Hedgehog
- Brown hare
- Barn owl

Suggested native Species:

- Hawthorn
- Blackthorn
- Hazel
- Holly
- Dog rose
- Rowan
- Field maple
- Crab apple

Actions:

Quick Wins

- Allow some hedges to flower and fruit
- Reduce hard annual grass trimming and move towards less frequent cutting
- Leave rough grass margins beside hedges
- Create ‘dead-hedges’

Medium-Term Actions

- Plant native species-rich hedgerows
- Restore neglected hedges
- Add hedgerow trees

Partnership Projects

- Work with local farmers
- Connect habitats between villages and woodlands
- Develop parish hedgerow maps

Relevant LNRS Priority Level

Ref LNRS Priority FRM_P05 (P.24, Doc 4)

Action(s) to be taken, and by when?

Thoughts / Notes:

4.2 Rivers, Becks & Wetlands

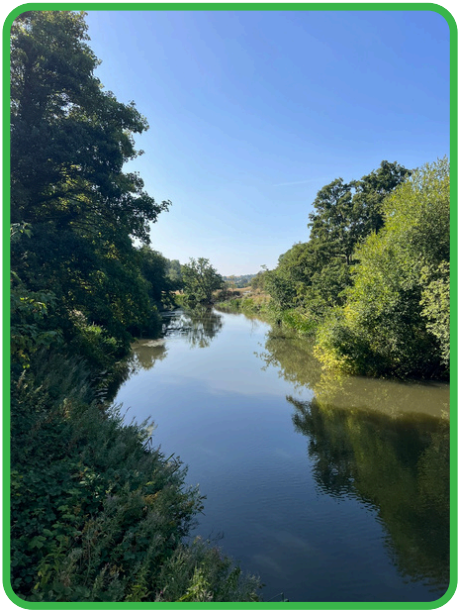
Pages 50 - 51 of LNRS document 2 (P. 52 of document 4)

Why Water Matters

Healthy rivers and wetlands support: biodiversity, flood resilience, water quality, and climate adaptation.

Ryedale's rivers and becks are central to the local landscape and the area has been heavily shaped by bodies of water.

Flooding and water quality are also major local concerns



LNRS focus species:

- Curlew
- Lapwing
- Water Vole
- Common Frog
- Freshwater fish

Species Spotlight:

- Otter
- Kingfisher
- Water vole
- Frogs and toads
- Dragonflies

Example:

The Ryevitalise Landscape Partnership



Actions:

Quick Wins

- Organise beck clean-ups
- Reduce mowing beside watercourses
- Encourage residents, community buildings and other suitable properties to install rainwater butts
- Encourage pesticide-free gardening, especially near drains and water courses
- Look to join a water monitoring / citizen science project

Medium-Term Actions

- Create village rain gardens
- Restore ponds
- Plant vegetation beside water courses
- Designate land that floods to nature

Partnership Projects

- Develop natural flood management projects
- Install leaky dams in upstream areas where appropriate
- Work with landowners on floodplain restoration
- Create a community water monitoring group

Action(s) to be taken, and by when?

Relevant LNRS Priority Level

Ref LNRS Priorities

- URB_P01 and URB_P04 (Doc 4, P.64, P.68)
- WET_P03 (Doc 4, P.56)
- WET_P07 (Doc 4, P61)
- WET_P02 (Doc 4, P.55)



4.3 - Moorland & Peatland Recovery

Pages 44 - 45 of LNRS document 2 (P. 25 of document 4)

Why Peatlands Matter

Healthy peatlands store carbon, reduce surface run-off, improve water quality, and support rare wildlife.

The North York Moors contain nationally and internationally important peat habitats.



LNRS focus species:

- Adder
- Black Grouse
- Curlew
- Juniper

Species Spotlight:

- Curlew
- Golden plover
- Merlin
- Red grouse
- Sundew plants



Example:

Moor to Restore project.

Actions:

Awareness Actions

- Promote peat-free compost
- Support wildfire awareness
- Encourage responsible access
- Host talks on peatland restoration

Volunteer Actions

- Support conservation volunteering
- Promote local restoration projects
- Join peatland conservation days
- Support sphagnum planting projects
- Help monitor erosion and footpath damage

Relevant LNRS Priority Level

Ref LNRS Priority UPL_P07 (Doc 4, P.32)

Action(s) to be taken, and by when?

Thoughts / Notes:

4.4 - Woodlands, Veteran Trees & Orchards

Pages 48 - 49 of LNRS document 2 (P. 43 of document 4)

Why Trees Matter:

Trees provide habitat, shade, carbon storage, flood mitigation, and landscape character. Veteran trees are especially important for biodiversity.

Ryedale contains:

- ancient woodland,
- historic parkland landscapes,
- veteran trees,
- and historic orchards.

Why orchards are important:

They create habitat, support pollinators, preserve heritage fruit varieties, and become social spaces.

Why Deadwood Matters?

Deadwood supports fungi, beetles, birds and small mammals and is a important wildlife habitat in Britain.

LNRS focus species:

- Hawfinch
- Northern Hairy Wood Ant
- Juniper

Species Spotlight:

- Tawny owl
- Great spotted woodpecker
- Tree roosting bat species

Example:

Thompson Wood - Northallerton





Actions:

Quick Wins

- Identify veteran trees
- Reduce strimming around trunks
- Install bird and bat boxes
- Retain standing deadwood where safe

Medium-Term Actions

- Plant community orchards
- Establish mini woodlands
- Grow local trees
- Open a micro tree nursery in your parish

Partnership Projects

- Plant trees and restore woodland-edge habitats
- Create connected woodland corridors
- Develop parish canopy coverage targets

Community Orchard Ideas

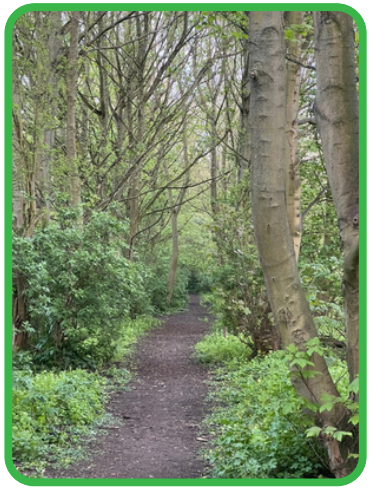
- school orchards
- village orchards
- heritage apple projects
- community harvesting events

Action(s) to be taken, and by when?

Relevant LNRS Priority Level

Ref LNRS Priority WLD_P01 (Doc.4, P.45)
Ref LNRS Priority WLD_P04 (Doc 4, P.50)

Thoughts / Notes:



4.5 - Species-Rich Grasslands & Verges

Pages 46 - 47 of LNRS document 2 (P. 35 of Document 4)

Why Grasslands Matter

Species-rich grasslands are among the most threatened habitats in the UK. Many have been lost or degraded through agricultural intensification, changes in land management and development.

In Ryedale and across North Yorkshire, traditional hay meadows, species-rich roadside verges, churchyards, village greens and other grassland areas can provide valuable habitat for: pollinators and other insects; butterflies and moths; beetles and other invertebrates; small mammals; birds; and fungi and a wide variety of plants.

Restoring and creating flower-rich grasslands can help to: support biodiversity; improve the character and appearance of the local landscape; provide connections between fragmented habitats; provide food and shelter for wildlife; and increase the resilience of local ecosystems to environmental change.

"Messy can be healthy"

A perfectly short lawn isn't always the best option for wildlife.

Allowing some areas of grass to grow longer and reducing the frequency of mowing can provide opportunities for wildflowers, grasses and invertebrates to thrive. These insects can then provide food for birds, bats and other wildlife.

Rather than making every area look perfectly neat, consider creating a mosaic of habitats: some areas can be closely managed for recreation and access, while others can be allowed to flower, grow longer and provide habitat for wildlife.

Remember that the long grass is managed intentionally rather than neglected.

LNRS focus species:

- Lapwing
- Short-eared owl
- Waxcap Fungi
- Devil's-bit Scabious

Species Spotlight:

- Common knapweed
- Oxeye daisy
- Meadow brown butterfly
- Bumblebees
- Skylark

Case Studies / examples:

Restoring Ryedale:

Kirby Misperton: After 4 years of cut and collect on a 100m stretch of verge, the grass was considerably less prevalent and 25 species of wildflower were counted.

Pickering: Trial by Pickering Town Council with success observed after just 3 years. 4 verges and a community park are now managed as part of the scheme.

Actions:

Quick Wins

- Reduce mowing frequency
- Leave selected areas to grow longer
- Remove grass cuttings after mowing
- Create pollinator strips or small-flower rich areas using suitable native plants
- Add signage explaining wildlife management
- Encourage residents to adopt wildlife-friendly mowing in gardens and community spaces

Medium-Term Actions

- Restore roadside verges through changes to mowing
- Create or restore small meadow areas
- Introduce native wildflower planting
- Survey local grassland habitats
- Improve management of churchyards and cemeteries for wildlife

Partnership Projects / Long-term actions

- Work with highways authorities and landowners to develop verge management and restoration plans.
- Establish volunteer groups to survey and monitor local grasslands.
- Work with local environmental organisations to collect, propagate and use appropriate local wildflower seed.
- Monitor grassland management over time to assess changes in plant and invertebrate diversity.

Action(s) to be taken, and by when?

Relevant LNRS Priority Level

Ref LNRS Priority

- GRA_P07 (Doc 4, P.42)
- URB_P03 (Doc 4, P.67)
- URB_P04 (Doc 4, P.68)
- URB_P02 (doc 4, P.66)







4.6 - Farming for Nature

Pages 42 - 43 of LNRS document 2 (P. 20 of Document 2)

Why Nature-Friendly Farming Matters

Farming plays a major role in shaping the landscape of Ryedale and North Yorkshire. Farmers and land managers manage large areas of the countryside and have an important role to play in protecting and restoring nature.

Nature-friendly farming approaches can help to:

- improve soil health and structure;
- reduce soil erosion and nutrient loss;
- slow and store water, helping to reduce flood risk in appropriate locations;
- provide food and habitat for pollinators and other insects;
- support farmland birds and other wildlife;
- improve water quality by reducing the movement of nutrients, sediment and pollutants into watercourses; and
- support resilient and sustainable local food systems.

Healthy soils, functioning ecosystems and a diverse network of habitats are important foundations for a resilient agricultural landscape.

Important Principle

Nature recovery should work with farmers and land managers, not against them. Farmers and land managers have valuable knowledge of the landscape, its soils, habitats and changing conditions. Their practical experience and long-term stewardship are essential to developing nature recovery projects that work alongside productive agriculture.

Successful nature recovery should seek opportunities that deliver benefits for wildlife, farms and local communities together.

LNRS focus species:

- Harvest Mouse
- Turtle Dove
- Tree Sparrow
- Rare arable flowers

Species Spotlight:

- Barn Owls
- Hare
- Hedgehog
- Yellow Rattle
- Hawthorn

KEY MESSAGE:

Avoid:

- blame
- anti-farming language
- unrealistic demands

Instead, promote:

- partnership,
- collaboration,
- resilience,
- shared stewardship.

Example:

Birkdale Farm (see LNRS Doc 2, P.29)

Actions:

Relationship Building

- Invite local farmers and land managers to parish meetings and nature-recovery discussions
- Celebrate and share examples of nature-friendly farming already taking place
- Organise voluntary local farm walks or visits
- Share information about relevant land management and stewardship opportunities
- Introduce and build relationships between farmers, parish councils, community groups and local environmental organisations

Practical Actions

- Encourage the creation of field margins and buffer strips where appropriate
- Share information about nature-friendly farming approaches
- Support the use of cover crops and other measures for soil improvement
- Support opportunities for farmers to access advice, funding and relevant environmental schemes.

Community Actions

- Promote and support local produce markets and farm shops
- Support community growing and allotment projects
- Organise local food, farming and nature events
- Create 'Meet your farmer' events to connect residents with local farmers and land managers
- Celebrate the contribution of local farming to the landscape, food production and nature recovery

Relevant LNRS Priority Level

Ref LNRS Priority FRM_P01 (Doc 4, P.21)
Ref LNRS Priority FRM_P03 (Doc 4, P.22)

Action(s) to be taken, and by when?



4.7 - Nature-Friendly Villages & Market Towns

Pages 52 - 53 of LNRS document 2 (P. 63 of Document 4)

Bringing Nature into Communities

Villages and towns can provide important habitat and connections for wildlife. Gardens, parks, churchyards, ponds, green spaces, roadside verges and traditional stone walls can all contribute to local ecological networks.

Even small areas can provide valuable habitat when they are managed in ways that support wildlife. Collectively, gardens, community spaces and other green areas can create a network of habitats and stepping stones through built-up areas.

Why Nature in our Villages & Towns Matters

Nature-rich communities can help to:

- provide food, shelter and breeding habitat for wildlife;
- support pollinators and other insects;
- improve connections between fragmented habitats;
- absorb rainfall and help manage surface water;
- provide shade and cooling in built-up areas;
- improve people's access to nature and support health and wellbeing; and
- create more attractive, resilient places to live.

Making space for nature in villages and towns can therefore benefit both wildlife and people. Small changes—such as reducing unnecessary mowing, planting suitable native species, creating wildlife-friendly gardens, protecting ponds and maintaining mature trees—can collectively make a significant contribution to nature recovery.

LNRS focus species:

- Common Toad
- Garden Tiger
- Hedgehog
- Swift
- Emerald Damselfly
- Bats

Species Spotlight:

- House martin
- Hedgehog
- Moths
- Bats

Examples:

- Pickering and restoring verges and a community meadow in the town
- Goathland and installing swift boxes

Encourage residents and households to: leave gaps for hedgehogs; avoid artificial grass; grow native plants; install bird feeders and nest boxes; reduce outdoor lighting; create mini ponds; and allocate 1 metre squared of their garden to nature-friendly planting to support pollinators

Actions:

Quick Wins

- Install swift boxes
- Reduce herbicide use
- Plant pollinator-friendly flowers
- Avoid planting non-native species
- Encourage wildlife gardening
- Create log piles and bug hotels
- Create dead hedges
- Retain mature trees and shrubs where possible

Medium-Term Actions

- Plant street trees and climbing plants
- Create wildlife ponds
- Plant night flowering plants
- Reduce hard landscaping where appropriate
- Improve churchyard habitats
- Litter pick 'unloved' alleys and street patches while retaining the vegetation and deadwood

Partnership Projects

- Develop parish or community biodiversity action plans
- Develop community wildlife trails
- Support school and youth nature projects
- Establish or support wildlife recording and monitoring groups
- Work with local landowners, community groups and environmental organisations to improve habitat connectivity through villages.
- Share local wildlife records and observations to strengthen the parish's biodiversity evidence base.

Action(s) to be taken, and by when?

Relevant LNRS Priority Level

Ref LNRS Priority URB_P04 (Doc 4, P.68)
Ref LNRS Priority URB_P01 (Doc 4, P.64)
Ref LNRS Priority WET_P03 (Doc 4, P.56)
Ref LNRS Priority URB_P02 (Doc.4, P.66)
Ref LNRS Priority URB_P04 (Doc 4, P.68)



5. - Dark Skies & Light Pollution

Page 63 of LNRS Document 4 (specifically Priority URB_P04)

Why Dark Skies Matter

Artificial light at night can affect wildlife that relies on natural patterns of darkness, including bats, moths, birds, hedgehogs and other nocturnal insects.

Artificial lighting can disrupt wildlife; light pollution can affect feeding, movement, migration, communication and breeding behaviour in nocturnal species.

Darkness is part of a healthy ecosystem; many species rely on darkness to navigate, find food, avoid predators and reproduce.

Dark skies benefit people too; reducing unnecessary light can improve views of the night sky, reduce glare and help preserve the character of rural landscapes.

Reducing unnecessary lighting saves energy; using less artificial light can reduce energy use and associated carbon emissions, while creating darker areas for wildlife.

Lighting can be wildlife-friendly; where lighting is necessary, consider using the lowest practical brightness, directing light only where it is needed, avoiding unnecessary lighting of trees and hedgerows, and using timers or motion sensors where appropriate.

Species Spotlight:

- Bats
- Owls
- Moths
- Nocturnal Pollinators

Example:

Hawnby, in the NYMNP, was the first village in the UK to be designated as a Dark Skies Friendly Community in 2023.

The wider NYMNP is designated an International Dark Sky Reserve.

Launched in 2024, the Dark Skies Friendly Community scheme is helping further communities achieve Dark Sky Friendly Community designation.

Actions:

Quick Wins

- Turn off unnecessary lighting, particularly overnight.
- Use timers, dimmers or motion sensors where appropriate.
- Direct lights downwards and shield them to prevent light spilling into surrounding habitats.
- Reduce excessive or poorly directed floodlighting.
- Avoid illuminating trees, hedgerows, ponds and other areas used by wildlife where possible.

Medium-Term Actions

- Replace unnecessary lighting with warmer-spectrum, lower-intensity alternatives where appropriate.
- Carry out a parish lighting audit to identify unnecessary, poorly directed or excessive lighting.
- Review lighting around public buildings, car parks, footpaths and community spaces.
- Consider whether lighting can be reduced, dimmed or switched off during periods when it is not needed.

Partnership Projects

- Develop parish guidance on reducing light pollution and protecting dark skies.
- Include wildlife-sensitive lighting principles in relevant planning policies, design guidance and development comments.
- Work with landowners, businesses and community groups to encourage responsible outdoor lighting.
- Promote dark skies through community events, local communications and night-sky awareness campaigns.
- Where appropriate, work with neighbouring parishes and relevant organisations to protect larger areas of dark sky.

Action(s) to be taken, and by when?

Relevant LNRS Priority Level

Ref LNRS Priority URB_P04 (Doc 4, P.68)

6.1 Building Community Nature Projects

Why Community Involvement Matters

Nature recovery works best when communities feel connected to their local landscapes and wildlife, and have opportunities to take part in caring for them.

People are more likely to value and look after places when they:

- Understand them – know what makes their local environment special.
- Enjoy them – have opportunities to experience and appreciate nature.
- Feel involved – have a chance to contribute to decisions and practical action.

Volunteer projects and community-led activities can:

- improve habitats and support biodiversity
- bring people together and strengthen community relationships
- increase local pride and connection to place
- build knowledge and confidence
- encourage long-term stewardship of local nature.

Nature recovery becomes more sustainable when it is part of everyday community life.

Community Projects:

There are lots of ways for people of different ages and abilities to get involved in nature recovery. Projects can be as simple as a wildlife walk or litter pick, or develop into longer-term community monitoring and habitat restoration projects.

Thoughts / Notes:

Community Project Ideas

Easy Community Activities

- Organise litter picks while taking care to retain existing wildlife habitat.
- Hold tree and hedgerow planting days in suitable locations.
- Plant bulbs and other wildlife-friendly plants where appropriate.
- Organise local wildlife walks and nature talks.
- Carry out verge and grassland surveys.
- Survey local ponds and support wildlife-friendly pond management.
- Run pollinator awareness campaigns.
- Create community wildlife gardens or small habitat areas.
- Organise local hedgerow surveys and monitoring.

School Activities

- Build simple bug hotels using natural materials.
- Create wildlife-friendly school gardens and growing areas.
- Organise pond dipping and pond surveys with appropriate supervision.
- Run hedgehog-friendly garden campaigns.
- Take part in citizen-science projects and wildlife recording.
- Create school biodiversity maps showing habitats and wildlife around the school.
- Organise wildlife monitoring activities that can be repeated each year.

Parish-Level Ideas

- Hold an annual nature festival or biodiversity week.
- Establish a local species recording and monitoring group.
- Develop community composting projects where appropriate.
- Organise community orchard planting, maintenance and harvest days.
- Hold village meadow or grassland management days.
- Develop community wildlife trails.
- Organise **Bioblitz** events to record as many species as possible in a defined area over a set period, or other wildlife recording events.
- Create a parish biodiversity action plan.
- Work with local farmers, landowners and community groups on landscape-scale projects.

What is a Bioblitz?

A Bioblitz is a community wildlife-recording event where people work together to identify and record as many different species as possible within a particular area and period. It can involve experienced naturalists and complete beginners.

7.1 Creating a Parish Nature Recovery Plan

Turning Ideas into Action

A parish nature recovery plan can bring together local knowledge, community priorities and practical actions for nature. It does not need to be a highly technical or complicated document.

The most useful plans are:

- Simple and realistic – focus on actions that can actually be delivered.
- Community-supported – involve residents, landowners, farmers, businesses, schools and local groups where appropriate.
- Evidence-informed – use local wildlife records, habitat information and community knowledge to identify priorities.
- Linked to the LNRS – consider how local actions can contribute to the priorities for nature recovery identified in the North Yorkshire and York Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Adaptable – review progress and update actions as circumstances, knowledge and opportunities change.

Start small.

One well-planned project can provide a foundation for future action. As knowledge, partnerships and community involvement grow, individual projects can begin to connect and contribute to wider nature recovery across the parish.

Remember a parish nature recovery plan does not need to do everything. It is a way to identify what matters locally, agree achievable actions and keep track of progress over time.

Turning the Ideas in This Booklet into a Plan

Use the table below to help organise, prioritise and manage the actions suggested throughout this booklet.

ACTION	LOCATION	LEAD PERSON	PRIORITY	WHO COULD HELP?	TIME SCALE	RESOURCES NEEDED	STATUS / PROGRESS

Potential process of creating your own parish nature recovery plan:

1. Understand your Parish:

- Existing habitats and wildlife
- Local wildlife records
- Rivers, streams, ponds and wetlands
- Flooding and drainage issues
- Public and community green spaces
- Local Wildlife Sites and other designated sites
- Existing habitat connections and potential gaps
- Community priorities and local knowledge
- Relevant information from the LNRS

2. Identify Opportunities:

- Spaces with potential for habitat improvement
- Fragmented habitats and opportunities to improve connectivity
- Flood-prone or poorly drained areas
- Verges, grasslands, hedgerows and ponds that could be managed more positively
- Opportunities for pollinators and other key species
- Areas where existing habitats could be expanded or restored
- Community spaces where people could get involved

3. Prioritise Actions:

- Achievable with available resources
- Realistic to maintain over the long term
- Likely to provide meaningful benefits for nature
- Visible and engaging for the community
- Supported by local residents and relevant landowners

4. Build Partnerships:

- Volunteers and residents
- Parish and town councils
- Schools and youth groups
- Farmers and other landowners
- Conservation and environmental groups
- Local businesses
- Wildlife recording groups
- Local authorities and organisations

5. Deliver Projects:

- Affordable
- Practical to deliver
- Appropriate for the location
- Accessible to volunteers
- Easy to maintain
- Suitable for the wildlife and habitats already present

6. Monitor and Review:

- Record completed actions and changes over time.
- Repeat wildlife or habitat surveys where appropriate.
- Record new species and habitat information.
- Gather feedback from volunteers and the wider community.
- Identify what worked well and what could be improved.
- Review priorities and plan the next steps.

7.2 Overcoming Obstacles

When Things Don't Go to Plan

Don't be discouraged when you encounter an obstacle. Nature recovery is rarely a straight line. Projects may take longer than expected, plans may need to change and some approaches may not work the first time.

When you encounter a challenge:

- Reach out to other groups and organisations – someone else may have faced a similar problem.
- Strengthen partnerships – working together can open up new ideas, skills and resources.
- Brainstorm together – involve the people who know the place and the community best.
- Ask for help – don't be afraid to call on local groups, volunteers, landowners or organisations with relevant experience.
- Be patient – measurable outcomes may take time. Nature recovery is not always immediately visible; changes may be happening beneath the soil, in developing root systems, improving soil health or gradually rebuilding wildlife populations.
- Learn from setbacks – if something doesn't work, reflect on what happened, adapt your approach and use what you've learned next time.
- Think about the bigger picture – lots of small actions, connected together, can create much greater benefits for nature across a landscape.
- Start where you can – even a small area can make a difference. If you can only start with $1m^2$, start with $1m^2$. You can build from there.

Small actions add up

Nature recovery doesn't have to start with a large project. A single wildlife-friendly verge, pond, hedgerow or patch of long grass can become part of a much bigger network when similar actions happen across a parish.

Start small. Connect your actions. Learn as you go. Keep going.

8. A Vision for Nature Recovery in Ryedale

Nature recovery is about creating landscapes that are:

- healthier
- more connected
- more resilient
- richer in wildlife

Every parish, village and community can contribute. The landscapes of Ryedale have been shaped over generations by people living and working alongside nature.

The future of these landscapes depends on continued stewardship and collaboration.

Nature recovery belongs to:

- residents
- farmers
- landowners
- schools
- volunteers
- businesses
- local councils

No single person or organisation can deliver nature recovery alone. It is the combined effect of many actions, connected across the landscape, that can create lasting change.

Building a More Resilient Landscape

Healthy ecosystems help communities:

- adapt to climate change
- manage water & flooding
- improve wellbeing
- support food production
- strengthen local identity

By restoring habitats and improving biodiversity, communities can help create landscapes that are more resilient for future generations.

Final Message

Nature recovery is not about returning our landscapes to the past. It is about shaping a healthier, more connected and resilient future where people, wildlife, farming and communities can thrive together.

This workbook is an invitation for communities across Ryedale and North Yorkshire to learn about their local landscapes, work together and take practical action for nature.

Start where you can. Work together. Connect your actions. Help nature recover.

9. Further Information

North Yorkshire council wants to hear how the LNRS is being used and the progress that is being made. Please let them know via their email: lnrs@northyorks.gov.uk

Further Resources

The QR code below will take you to a webpage on the Ryedale Environment Group website. On that webpage there will be links and further resources to help with nature recovery. There will also be a downloadable version of this workbook that can be edited online or printed for use by your parish or community.

If you have any further questions or feedback then please email the Ryedale Environment Group on: secretary@ryedaleenvirogroup.co.uk

Thank you very much for reading and we hope this has been a helpful resource for you.

Ryedale Environment Group