



**YOUR**

**WILDER TOWNS,**

**WILDER VILLAGES**

**TOOLKIT**

Love **Essex** • Love **Wildlife**



**Essex**  
Wildlife Trust

# THANK YOU

## FOR CHOOSING TO BECOME

## A WILDER TOWN OR WILDER VILLAGE

You're helping to achieve **Essex Wildlife Trust's vision** of a **Wilder Essex**.

A vision for a Wilder Essex is only possible with support from local councils like you. We have now entered the most vital decade for nature, there is an urgent need to tackle the climate emergency, restore damaged habitats and connect our protected areas to the rest of the landscape.

We want our county to be thriving with wildlife, where every person can access nature.

Essex Wildlife Trust was founded in 1959, giving us the benefit of over sixty years of experience in tackling environmental challenges covering our land, rivers and sea.

With this expertise, we want to guide, support and empower parish and town councils with action they want to take for nature in their town or village. Our collective aim is to facilitate significant and measurable impact for nature conservation, and together, we will strive to create a Wilder Future.



Front cover photo: Queen White-tailed bumblebee on Yellow tree peony by Nick Upton/2020VISION Registered Charity Number 210065

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House sparrow photo: Ben Hall/2020VISION

## Our vision for wildlife

**We need more, bigger, better and crucially **connected spaces for wildlife.****

Joined up, nature rich spaces allow plants, animals, seeds and water to move from place to place and **enables the natural world to adapt to change**. It gives plants and animals more places to live, feed and breed.

To recover, wildlife cannot be confined to nature reserves. Our towns and villages can be part of a **nature recovery network**, they can act as stepping stones and corridors for wildlife to adapt and thrive.



Urban cowslips photo: Tom Hibbert

## Our vision for people

**We need more and better **access to nature for all.** We need to be connected to wildlife.**

Spaces for wildlife need to be publicly accessible. The link between green or blue spaces and health has now been recognised, there is evidence there are multiple benefits to reconnect people and nature. **We need wildlife** and wildlife needs us. Our towns and villages can provide those vital gateways to the natural world.



Evie and Tom photography

# Get involved

## Every town and village in Essex has a role to play in protecting wildlife and connecting people to nature.

As a public authority in England you have a duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of your policy or decision making. Conserving biodiversity can include restoring or enhancing a population or habitat. This was formalised within Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

It is not only local wildlife sites, local nature reserves and sites of special scientific interest which are valuable to wildlife. Other areas of land which hold blue, green and brownfield spaces are also vital in the recovery of nature and there are a variety of actions you can take to make your town or village wilder.



Green-veined white butterfly on wildflower photo: Paul Hobson



Bee bus stop

Essex Wildlife Trust has considerable experience of working in partnership with local authorities, offering advice and expertise. All of this support can be targeted at different levels according to local circumstances, and can be both strategic or project based. By drawing on our experience, we can, in a variety of ways, help your authority respond to its obligations under the NERC biodiversity duty.

Through the Wilder Towns, Wilder Villages project you can expect support in the form of 1-2-1 meetings, site-visits, webinars or consultancy which will be in response to the actions as a council you want to take, the level of support required and the needs of your council.



# Understand why

## Towns and villages play a role in protecting our species and habitats in Essex.

Biodiversity is essential for the processes that support all life on Earth, including humans. Without a wide range of species and habitats, we cannot have the healthy ecosystems that we rely on to provide us with the air we breathe and food we eat. There are **56 habitats** and **943 species** of principal importance for conservation of biodiversity in England. Those relevant to Essex include; arable field margins, traditional orchards, coastal saltmarsh, seagrass beds, intertidal mudflats, hedgerows, freshwater ponds and rivers, lowland mixed deciduous woodlands, wood pasture and parkland, lowland meadows and grassland, wet woodland, open mosaic habitats on previously developed land, floodplains and grazing marsh.

We have created priority lists of species through a species evaluation tool that focuses on an Inspire and Protect criteria, alongside whether they are a 'National Conservation Priority' and an 'Essex Conservation Priority'.

### Priority list 2

Our Priority List 2 species are a lower organisational priority than Priority List 1, but are still important across our portfolio of work. They are listed in order.

- |                             |                                       |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Dark-bellied brent goose | 10. Fisher's estuarine moth           |
| 2. Orchids                  | 11. Heath fritillary                  |
| 3. Stag beetle              | 12. Overwintering waterbirds          |
| 4. Beach-nesting birds      | 13. Cuckoo                            |
| 5. Brown hare               | 14. Native oyster                     |
| 6. Glow-worm                | 15. Priority invertebrate assemblages |
| 7. Skylark                  | 16. Shrill carder bee                 |
| 8. Breeding waterbirds      |                                       |
| 9. Seal                     |                                       |

### Priority list 1

Our Priority List 1 species are nationally and locally important, conservable on our own sites, align with our expertise, and are accessible and familiar. This list incorporates our ten focus species in order.

- |                       |                                                     |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Pollinators        | 12. Otter                                           |
| 2. Hedgehog           | 13. Barn owl                                        |
| 3. House sparrow      | 14. Starling                                        |
| 4. Toad               | 15. Kingfisher                                      |
| 5. Dormouse           | 16. Badger                                          |
| 6. Swift              | 17. Kestrel                                         |
| 7. Bats               | 18. Turtle dove                                     |
| 8. Great crested newt | 19. Priority coastal and saltmarsh plant assemblage |
| 9. Ancient trees      | 20. Nightingale                                     |
| 10. Water vole        |                                                     |
| 11. Reptiles          |                                                     |

### Priority list 3

Our Priority List 3 species are important but a lower priority relative to other Essex species. They are listed in order.

- |                                      |                              |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Beaver                            | 11. Woodland butterflies     |
| 2. Priority grassland communities    | 12. Polecat                  |
| 3. Tawny owl                         | 13. Stoat                    |
| 4. European bass                     | 14. Red kite                 |
| 5. Grizzled skipper                  | 15. Desmoulin's whorl snail  |
| 6. Peregrine falcon                  | 16. Scarce emerald butterfly |
| 7. Woodland breeding bird assemblage | 17. White-clawed crayfish    |
| 8. Lesser spotted woodpecker         | 18. Hornet robber fly        |
| 9. Harbour porpoise                  | 19. Sea aster mining bee     |
| 10. Oxlip                            | 20. European eel             |
|                                      | 21. Seagrass                 |



Woman holding hedgehog photo: Tom Marshall

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# Get support

With our expertise and knowledge we can support you with the actions you want to take. Use the steps below to help achieve our vision of a **Wilder Essex**.

1

## You have signed up to be a Wilder Town or Wilder Village.

To kickstart your wilder journey decide on the action you would like to take in your town or village. For examples of actions you could take and handy tips and links to further guides, see pages 8-16.

2

## Get support from our Urban Engagement Officer.

For support, guidance and advice, set up an initial conversation with our Urban Engagement Officer **Danielle Carbott** by emailing [daniellec@essexwt.org.uk](mailto:daniellec@essexwt.org.uk).



Community garden photo: Paul Harris/2020 VISION

3

## Create an action plan.

Get an action plan in place for your local authority, outlining the steps you are taking to restore or enhance biodiversity in your town or village.

Public engagement and consultation is key to success. Ensure you are bringing your local communities on the journey with you, involving and empowering them to take action with you. Social media platforms, letters to residents, interpretation signage and webinar events can all play a role in raising awareness and outlining key actions you are taking to create a Wilder Town, Wilder Village. Don't forget to use your Wilder Towns, Wilder Villages Essex Wildlife Trust emblem to showcase you are contributing to the Wilder Essex vision.

Read through Local Government Association's guides on improving community engagement and coordination at [local.gov.uk](http://local.gov.uk).

If you are interested in consultancy, please refer to page 17 for a full list of services our EECOS team can provide.

4

## It is time now to take action!

If you would like Essex Wildlife Trust to promote your success stories, please keep us up to date via online meetings, email or invite us to your event days.

As your actions evolve and progress, ongoing guidance and advice will be available through our Urban Engagement Officer.

If you would like to be added to our mailing list to keep up to date with new campaigns and projects within Essex Wildlife Trust, sign up through your local group contact at [www.essexwt.org.uk/local-groups](http://www.essexwt.org.uk/local-groups).

# Actions

Towns and villages can be gateways to the natural world, **welcoming and supporting wildlife** right on our doorsteps. For guidance on each of these actions, continue to pages 9-16.

Council buildings present opportunities for biodiversity enhancements, for instance installing bird and bat boxes or creating green roofs and walls.

Urban hedgerows and mini copses can become corridors allowing wildlife to roam.

Careful consideration needs to be given to the indirect effect of light pollution.

Wild pockets can become safe havens for wildlife.

Beaches and shorelines are important for biodiversity and positive management in these areas can promote conservation and access.

Council-owned land offers opportunities for enhancing biodiversity and creating connectivity across the urban landscape.

Road verges can be managed to enhance connectivity, protecting and supporting variety of wildlife.

Stopping the use of pesticides is vital for many of species, in particular pollinating insects.



Carder bee approaching peas photo: Leanne Manchester



# Action for Insects

## Promote insect recovery.

Essex is one of the most important counties in the UK for insects, with its flower-rich meadows, post-industrial sites, ancient woodlands and coastal habitats providing a diversity of habitats that supports a wide range of insect species. However, insect numbers are experiencing a catastrophic decline with 41% of species threatened by extinction.

Reasons for this include habitat loss and fragmentation, use of pesticides, unsympathetic management, general loss of wildflowers across the landscape and climate change.

There are over 4,000 species of insect in the UK that carry out the pollination of our native wild plants and our food crops. Without the power of insects, many of our crops could fail.

**There are a number of actions you can take to support your local insects.**



1

**Follow some of Bug Life's handy tips on helping pollinators locally.**

View the guide at [friendsoftheearth.uk](http://friendsoftheearth.uk).



For more detailed guidance please refer to **verge management** on page 10 and **pesticide use** on page 11.

2

**Join our Action for Insects campaign run by The Wildlife Trusts that aims to reverse the decline of insects.**

Through targeted actions across the landscape we can make a positive difference. Visit [wildlifetrusts.org/action-for-insects](http://wildlifetrusts.org/action-for-insects).





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Wildflower road verge photo: Katrina Martin/2020VISION

# Verge management

## Transform local verges into wildlife havens.

Our road verges can be a diverse habitat with over 700 species of wildflowers calling them home, from the simple dandelion to the delicate bee orchid. If managed correctly road verges can act like stepping stones and corridors for our wildlife, as well as providing essential food and shelter.

However, many of our verges have become degraded and fragmented through intense mowing regimes, pesticide use, litter and increased nutrients in our roadside soil.

Whilst some road verges, particularly at junctions and certain bends need to be cut regularly for driver and pedestrian safety, **there are a number of actions you can take to revive your road verges.**



Dandelion photo: Richard Burkmar



Red campion photo: Richard Burkmar



Yellow rattle photo: Les Binns

1

**Follow some of PlantLife's handy tips on managing road verges for maximum flowering plant diversity.**

View 'The good verge guide' at [plantlife.org.uk](http://plantlife.org.uk).



2

**Explore a variety of wildflowers using PlantLife's meadow ID guide.**

View 'Plants of Wildflower meadows' at [plantlife.org.uk](http://plantlife.org.uk).





Recreation ground photo: Springfield Chelmsford

# Pesticide action

## Commit to a **pesticide-free** future.

Pesticides are used throughout towns and villages in the UK for a variety of reasons which include weed control, insect control, invasive species control and maintenance of facilities such as sports pitches, parks, playgrounds and open spaces.

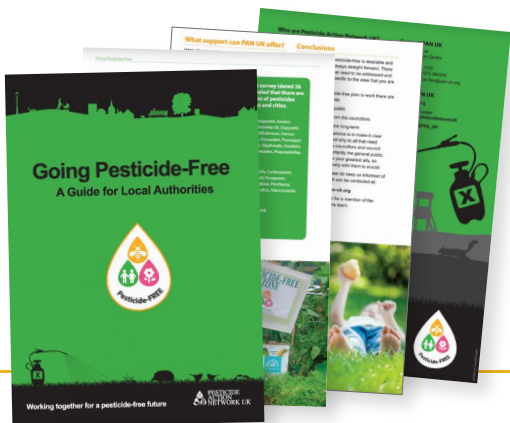
Not only do pesticides have a negative impact on health, they are also threatening our urban biodiversity by reducing the abundance and diversity of plant species, contaminating our aquatic ecosystems, harming the invertebrate population and affecting soil health.

**It is possible to become pesticide-free and there are a number of actions you can take to achieve this.**

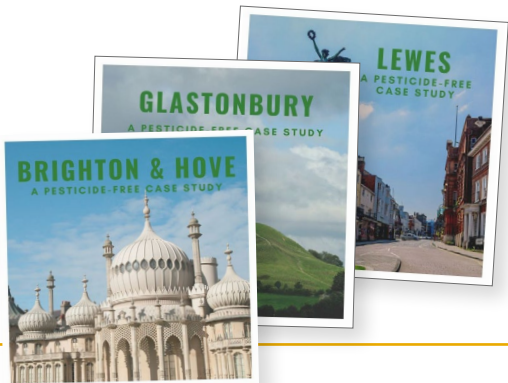


Park with canada geese photo: Ben Hall/2020VISION

- 1 **Follow PAN UK's guide on how to become pesticide-free.**  
View their guide: '**Pesticide Free Towns - A Toolkit for Local Authorities**'.



- 2 **Explore the success stories of towns and villages that are already free from pesticide.**  
View success stories on the Pesticide Action Network UK website: [pan-uk.org](http://pan-uk.org).





# Hedgerow management

Strengthen **natural corridors** to join up landscapes.

Hedgerows are a key feature of our landscape and are crucial to tackling habitat fragmentation. They are natural corridors that enable our wildlife to roam and ultimately thrive.

Hedgerows combine the habitats of scrub, woodland and woodland edge and are full of our UK native species such as spindle, guelder rose, honeysuckle, hawthorn, blackthorn, dog rose, hazel, elder, bramble and more.

Some of our hedgerows have a degree of protection, for example if it is more than 20m long, older than 30 years or next to an SSSI site, nature reserve or village green. However, many are lost to mismanagement, inappropriate cutting and simple neglect

**To reverse this trend, there are a number of actions you can take.**



1

**Explore Hedgelink's advice for local authorities.**

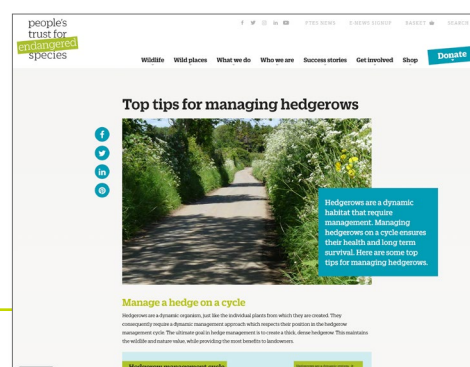
Take a look at Hedgelink's document hub:  
[hedgelink.org.uk/resources/local-authorities](http://hedgelink.org.uk/resources/local-authorities).



2

**Follow People's Trust for Endangered Species top tips for hedgerow management.**

View 'Top tips for managing hedgerows' by the People's Trust for Endangered Species.





Header photo: Chafford Gorges Nature Discovery Park

# Brownfield biodiversity

## Support sustainable reuse of previously developed land.

Brownfields are derelict, previously developed areas of land such as quarries, old railway lines, discarded industrial sites, neglected urban areas and disused airfields. Although not often seen as a vital habitat for wildlife, the cycles of disturbance, bare ground, sparsely vegetated areas and low nutrient soils give rise to a variety of habitats and can be species rich. They are key component in our wider landscape and provide habitats that are missing in our agricultural countryside.

Brownfield sites can deliver high quality green infrastructure for both people and wildlife.

**To protect these spaces, or to manage them for wildlife there are a number of actions you can take.**

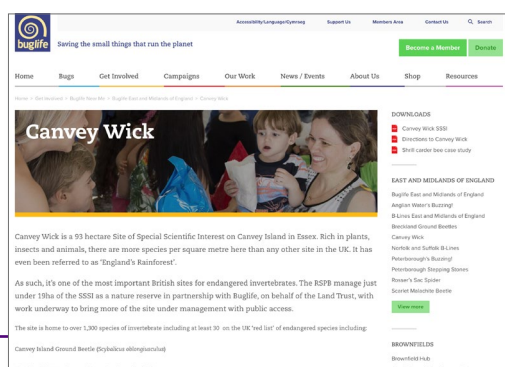


Common Spotted Orchid at Chafford Gorges Discovery Park Nature photo: Matthew McGettigan

1

**Learn more about a brownfield site in Essex that has been designated as an SSSI.**

**Read about Canvey Wick at [buglife.org.uk](https://buglife.org.uk).**



2

**Read through the Bug Life's guidance on brownfield biodiversity.**

**View 'Planning for Brownfield Biodiversity'.**





Urban trees photo: Benjamin Elliott

# Urban trees

## Make trees matter.

Trees fulfil a valuable role in our towns and villages, benefiting biodiversity, health and wellbeing. They clean the air we breathe, cool our urban areas, absorb carbon dioxide manage flooding and provide vital habitats. They support a variety of species in built-up areas, as they provide space to feed, shelter and breed.

Protecting and enhancing urban tree cover is a challenge many local authorities are facing, with many streets trees under threat.

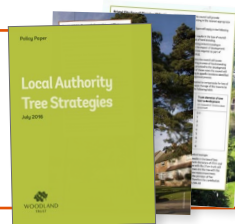
**To protect our urban heroes there are a number of actions you can take.**



Urban trees in Silver Witch Green, Stanway

1

**Read Woodland Trust's Local Authorities Tree Strategy.**



2

**Follow Woodland Trust's tree planting guide.**



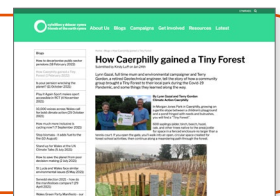
3

**Use Woodland Trust's species handbook as support.**



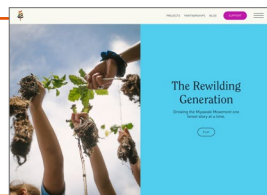
4

**Explore a tiny forest case study from Friends of the Earth Cymru.**



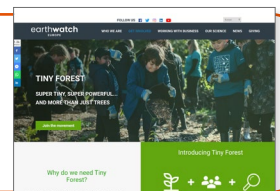
5

**Discover the Miyawaki Movement.**



6

**Grow a tiny forest with Earthwatch Europe guidance.**





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Badger photo: Terry Whittaker/2020VISION

# Light Pollution

## Let in the natural night sky.

Artificial light is directly linked to negative impacts on bats, insects, birds, reptiles, mammals and plants by interfering with natural day-night rhythms, night navigation and night habits. In urban areas particularly, artificial light can create a sky glow that wipes out the natural night sky and reduces visual capabilities and disrupts orientation.

It is estimated that light pollution is reducing nocturnal pollination by 62% in some areas.

**To reduce the light pollution in your council there are a number of actions you can take to.**

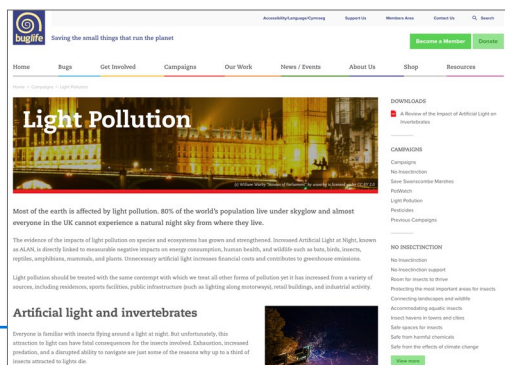


Urban fox photo: Jamie Hall

1

### Read Bug Life's light pollution solutions.

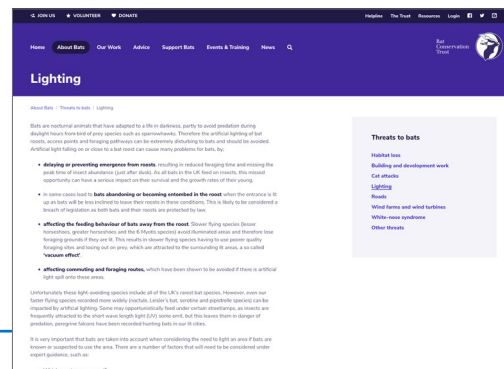
Visit [buglife.org.uk](http://buglife.org.uk) to see what you can do.



2

### Find out why bats are negatively impacted by light pollution.

Visit [Bat Conservation Trust website](http://Bat Conservation Trust website).





Apple growing in traditional orchard photo: Ross Hoddinott/2020VISION

# Orchards

## Restore **urban fruit** farms.

Orchards are areas of trees and shrubs for food, usually fruit, with the most common species in the UK being apple. Orchards provide a mosaic of habitats that include trees, grasses, shrubs and wildflower and therefore support a wide range of wildlife. Orchards can also be wonderful community hubs, bringing people of all age groups together to enjoy the displays of springtime blossom and the harvesting in autumn.

Over the last 70 years more than half of England and Wales orchards have been lost as we move away from small-scale farming to mass-produced farming.

**To bring orchards back to your town or village there are a number of actions you can take to.**



Child in orchard photo: Ross Hoddinott/2020VISION

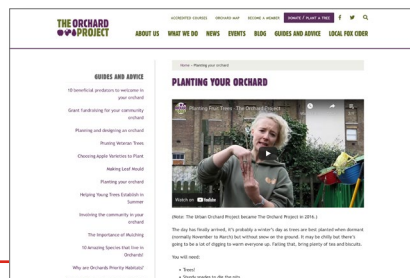
1

**Read the Orchard Project's guide to planning and designing.**  
Visit [theorchardproject.org.uk](http://theorchardproject.org.uk) for advice.



2

**Check out how to plant an orchard using Orchard Project's handy tips.**  
Visit [theorchardproject.org.uk](http://theorchardproject.org.uk) for guidance.



3

**Explore urban orchards using Susan Poizner's guide.**  
Visit [orchardpeople.com](http://orchardpeople.com) to view her guide; 'Growing Urban Orchards, The Ups, Downs and How-Tos of Fruit Tree Care in the City'.





Researching european eel in a London river Photo: Bertie Gregory/2020VISION

# EECOS

## Essex Ecology Services for local authorities.

### Site management plans

- Prepare habitat enhancement plans
- Prepare site management plans
- Review existing management plans

### Surveys & assessments

- Undertake site assessments
- Undertake surveys (e.g., for particular species)
- Carry out review of Local Wildlife Sites

### Habitat management

- Carry out management (e.g., conservation grassland cutting)
- Carry out habitat creation (e.g., ponds, reptile hibernacula)
- Provide training in management techniques



Grass snake being released into new habitat by Ecologistphoto: Terry Whittaker/2020VISION



Research ecologist using vacuum apparatus to sample invertebrates photo: Chris Gomersall/2020VISION

### Policy

- Review biodiversity/environmental policies

### Education/public engagement

- Produce interpretative material (e.g., for display boards)
- Lead public events (e.g., walks, talks)

**Essex Ecology Services (EECOS) is an ecological consultancy owned by Essex Wildlife Trust. All their profits are passed on to the Trust.**



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