

Local Nature Action Plan Field Guide

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LNAP field guide

This document is intended to assist those with little or no ecological background. It will help you assess a site for wildlife, identify opportunities and understand how to make sure your site management benefits nature.

1.0 Artificial Light at Night (ALaN)

Humans may be more comfortable having lit areas at night, but artificial light at night can affect wildlife. There are many insects that only pollinate at night and many animals and birds that mate, feed and explore only at night.

- How is your site lit at night?
- Avoid installing new lighting in nature areas unless there is no alternative
- Use new planting to screen light pollution
- Install light shields on streetlights to reduce light spread
- Avoid lighting up hedgerows, trees, water bodies and nest boxes



2.0 Pollution

Pollution comes in many forms. The main types that impact wildlife are noise, litter and pesticides. How is your site impacted by these pollutants?

2.1 Noise

- Reduce noise by planting dense scrub; try to use some evergreen species to provide year-round screening
- Target nature improvement away from main areas of human activity

2.2 Litter

- Litter picking immediately before and after significant grounds works such as grass cutting will improve the site for nature
- Organise removal of historic litter
- Obvious hot spots, could you place a bin?

2.3 Pesticides

- Must be reduced or stopped
- Are they essential to the management of your site?
- Why are the pesticides being used?
- Could undesirable plants be managed with a strimmer?
- Can you design out weeds?

More food sources = more insects = more insect eating species = more wildlife

3.0 Food, water, shelter

Like humans, all wildlife, need good access to food and water. The more you have on your site, the more and varied wildlife your site could support or attract.

3.1 Food

- Can you plant any fruit trees? Look for edges away from pathways, near existing scrub
- Can you plant fruiting hedgerows? Blackberries, redcurrants, blueberries, sloe etc
- Can any structures have a green roof installed? Sedum is a very low maintenance green roof choice
- Is there room for any of these high insect value trees to be planted on your site? Oak (Pedunculate and Sessile), Willow, Birch (Silver and Downy), Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Poplar species (inc. Aspen), Crab Apple, Scots Pine, Alder and Elm.
- If you're having tree work done think about what you can do with the timber on site. It's a great source of food and shelter for insects, best left on site in discreet piles or as large enough pieces that don't pose a hazard to visitors.

Top tip

Tree work should be done between September and the end of February to avoid bird nesting season (unless unavoidable).

- Do you have shrub beds? Are they pollinator friendly? (see *Useful Links for more information*)
- Areas for wildflower meadows need to be large, flat and easy for cut and collect machinery to access

- Can you lay your hedges instead of flailing them? If you are still flailing them, can you reduce cut to 1/3 each year across the site?
- Are leaves cleared from your site? Make use of them on site; they are great for feeding and sheltering insects and feed your soil ecosystem. Remove leaves from pathways and pile them in discreet locations or spread them under hedgerows as a mulch.



3.2 Water

- Are there any open bodies of water such as streams, rhines, ponds, lakes etc?
- Keep water bodies through your site open and accessible - don't pipe them
- Can you increase open water, new ponds or reopen piped streams?
- Can wildlife easily enter and exit water on your site, maybe consider ramps, rocks or creating sloping banks?

3.3 Shelter

- Can you leave areas of long grass, preferably min 10mx10m patches or long linear stretches of 30m+?

Long grass is a very valuable habitat and easier to manage on a small site than a wildflower meadow. Cut this grass once a year or, better yet only cut a third of it each year.

- Dense thickets of scrub are brilliant for wildlife and welcoming brambles onto your site will offer shelter for a range of insects, birds and animals. Is there enough to cut back a different section each year to end up with a range of ages and show you are managing it?
- Are there discreet locations to leave small (2mx2m) habitat piles of grass cuttings, twigs or logs? Using vegetation waste on site is better for the environment, cheaper

and provides another resource for nature. Keep piles of cuttings, logs and twigs in discreet areas to avoid garden waste dumping and away from open water to prevent pollution.

Top tip

Prevent disturbance of log piles in publicly accessible areas by wiring them together.



4.0 Access

Wildlife needs to move around freely, to mate, find food and shelter. Human infrastructure like roads, pavements and fences can be deadly to wildlife and cut them off from resources. Look for ways to help wildlife move through our built human landscape safely:

- Think like wildlife – if you are small and shy can you easily get into and out of the site safely?
- Are there ramps/grass slopes for smaller mammals next to steps?
- Do ponds or water bodies have shallow areas that wildlife can walk in and out of?
- Fencing
 - Is the site fenced, bordering fencing or containing fencing?
 - What type of fencing etc. garden fencing, livestock mesh, post and rail? Can wildlife get through? Small mammals need 13cm holes, foxes and badgers 30cm+ and deer need 90cm+.
 - Remove barbed wire, if possible, to make it safer for deer to jump over
 - Is there any fencing that can be removed, e.g. livestock fencing in an area with no livestock?
 - Post and rail is the best option for wildlife friendly fencing – it has nice wide gaps allowing a variety of wildlife to pass through.
- Can the site be safely connected to other nearby sites without going across roads? Is there vegetation, or shelter on these routes? Are they lit or unlit? Protect dark routes for night-time wildlife movements.

- Would the site benefit from a wildlife tunnel? This is a small tunnel built under obstructions with fencing to guide wildlife into it. They can be expensive, so should be considered if there are no better options (see *Useful Links*).
- Can an existing water culvert under or bridge over, a road be adapted for wildlife? A ledge within an existing pipe or passage under a road could be installed where suitable to adapt it for wildlife use (see *Useful Links*).

5.0 Local information

- Do you have any local information about wildlife seen by residents around the site?
- Look at corridors of open space leading to and from the site, how do they connect?
- Are there gardens which could help make the links/corridors?

6.0 Land use

Consider a 'Natural to Non-natural' approach for your site. This is a simple method of working out how much to do on your site. It won't work for every site but breaking it down into two percentages will take a lot of the stress out of deciding what to do or where to start.

Natural - ponds, open streams, rough grass, wildflower meadows, trees individual or grouped (think of canopy cover), bramble and other scrub, pollinator friendly shrub beds.

Non-natural – pathways, roads, car parking, buildings, sports areas, playgrounds, amenity mown areas.

If your site is a light-use amenity site, aim for 70% natural to 30% amenity

If your site is a heavy-use amenity site, aim for 30% natural to 70% amenity

7.0 Useful links

[Pollinator Friendly Plants](#)

[How did the otter cross the road? - South Wales Argus](#)

[Wildlife kerb - aco.co.uk](#)

[Wildlife tunnel - aco.co.uk](#)

[Shedding light - CPRE](#)

[England's light pollution and dark skies - CPRE](#)

[Lighting - Threats to bats - Bat Conservation Trust](#)