

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
DATE 5th NOVEMBER 2025**

Officer: Helen Ball (Town Clerk)

TOWN COUNCIL APPROACH TO NATURE RECOVERY & REWILDING

Purpose of Report

To consider the development of a Nature Recovery & Rewilding Strategy

1. Introduction

Shrewsbury Town Council recognises that the twin crises of **climate change** and **biodiversity loss** require local leadership and coordinated action. As custodian of a diverse portfolio of public open spaces — ranging from extensive countryside land and river corridors to formal parks, play areas, and community green spaces — the Council is committed to managing its land in a way that supports **nature recovery, enhances biodiversity**, and provides long-term environmental, social, and wellbeing benefits for residents and visitors alike.

This **Nature Recovery and Rewilding Strategy** sets out a framework to guide how the Town Council will restore and enhance biodiversity across its estate, connecting people and wildlife through a mosaic of managed and naturally evolving spaces.

2. Strategic Context

This Strategy aligns with:

- The emerging **Shropshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)** and its identified priorities for habitat creation, connectivity, and species protection.
- The **Shrewsbury Town Council Climate Emergency Action Plan**, which recognises the value of natural capital and ecosystem services in climate mitigation and adaptation.
- The Shrewsbury Town Council Corporate Plan of which the core values of Creating a greener and better-connected Shrewsbury & Taking Positive action to tackle climate change are relevant
- The Council's **Biodiversity Duty** under the Environment Act 2021.
- The **Shrewsbury Big Town Plan** and aspirations to create a greener, healthier, and more resilient town.
- The Shrewsbury Town Council Tree Strategy

- The Shrewsbury Town Council Ash Die Back Policy
- The Shrewsbury Town Council Land Adoption Policy

3. Vision

“To create a thriving network of connected, biodiverse, and resilient habitats across all Shrewsbury Town Council-managed land, where nature and people coexist and flourish.”

4. Objectives

1. **Protect and enhance existing biodiversity** across all Town Council landholdings.
2. **Restore and reconnect habitats** to enable species movement and resilience.
3. **Integrate rewilding principles** where appropriate, particularly within larger or less intensively used open spaces.
4. **Promote nature-based solutions** for climate resilience — including flood mitigation, carbon sequestration, and cooling.
5. **Engage the community** through education, volunteering, and citizen science.
6. **Embed biodiversity considerations** into all land management and maintenance operations.

5. Scope of the Strategy

The Strategy applies to all land owned, leased, or managed by Shrewsbury Town Council, including:

- Countryside land, wetlands, community woodlands and river corridors
- Parks and recreation grounds
- Cemeteries and closed churchyards
- Allotments and community gardens
- Verges, incidental green space, and amenity grass areas

6. Approach and Delivery

6.1. Landscape Zoning

The Council’s estate will be viewed as a **continuum from wild to formal**, ensuring that every site contributes appropriately to biodiversity recovery:

Zone	Description	Typical Actions
A. Nature Recovery Land	Large or semi-natural sites where ecological processes dominate.	Habitat restoration (woodland, meadow, wetland), invasive species control, minimal intervention management.
B. Transitional/Rewilding Areas	Edges of formal parks, buffer zones, less used areas.	Reduced mowing, wildflower establishment, natural regeneration, creation of pollinator corridors.
C. Managed Green Spaces	Formal parks, sports pitches, civic spaces.	Biodiversity enhancements integrated into design (flower beds for pollinators, tree planting, wildlife features).

6.2. Habitat Enhancement Priorities

- **Grasslands:** Transition 30–50% of amenity grass to meadow or pollinator-rich habitat through reduced mowing and seed introduction.
- **Woodlands and Trees:** Increase canopy cover and diversity; promote natural regeneration and deadwood retention, bring current woodlands into cyclic management.
- **Watercourses and Wetlands:** Work with partners to restore riparian habitats, improve water quality, and create wetland features where feasible.
- **Urban Habitats:** Encourage wildlife-friendly planting, green roofs, and nesting/roosting features in built environments.

6.3. Connectivity

Link fragmented habitats through a **Shrewsbury Green Network**, using river corridors, cycleways, verges, and hedgerows to form ecological corridors connecting urban and rural landscapes.

6.4. Maintenance and Operations

- Adopt **cut-and-collect mowing** regimes to improve soil fertility balance and wildflower diversity.
- Eliminate use of **pesticides and peat** wherever possible.
- Train staff in **biodiversity-sensitive management** and identification.
- Integrate monitoring and adaptive management into maintenance schedules.

6.5. Community Engagement

- Develop **“Friends of” and volunteer groups** to support rewilding initiatives.
- Partner with **schools, colleges, and local environmental organisations** for citizen science projects.
- Use **interpretation boards and digital mapping** to inform residents about nature recovery sites and progress.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

Progress will be monitored through:

- Baseline ecological assessments and habitat mapping.
- Annual biodiversity audits.
- Reporting to the **Recreation & Leisure Committee** and integration with the Council’s climate reporting framework.

Key performance indicators (KPIs) may include:

- Hectares of rewilded land.
- Increase in species richness.
- Reduction in mowing frequency and chemical inputs.
- Number of volunteer hours contributed.

8. Partnership and Collaboration

Shrewsbury Town Council will work closely with:

- **Shropshire Council** (to align with the LNRS and planning policies)
- **Environment Agency, Severn Rivers Trust, and Shropshire Wildlife Trust** (for habitat and watercourse restoration)
- **Community groups and residents** (for local stewardship)
- **Academic and research partners** (to inform evidence-based management)

9. Implementation and Review

An **initial three-year delivery plan** will be prepared to identify:

- Priority sites for rewilding and enhancement.
- Funding opportunities (e.g. LNRS implementation grants, biodiversity net gain funds, and UKSPF).

- Communication and engagement actions.

The Strategy will be **reviewed every five years**, or sooner if required by national or local policy changes.

10. Conclusion

Through this Nature Recovery and Rewilding Strategy, Shrewsbury Town Council seeks to lead by example — demonstrating how local authorities can balance recreation, amenity, and ecological recovery within a single coherent approach.

By connecting people with nature and restoring the town's green network, Shrewsbury can continue to be known not only as **"The Town of Flowers,"** but also as a **"Town for Nature."**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) That the Report be noted
- (ii) That the Town Council adopts a Strategy on the basis of this report