



SOLIHULL HABITATS & NATURE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

3 year project April 2017 – March 2020



European Union

European Regional
Development Fund

Project summary

In April 2017, Solihull Council was successful with a funding application to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to undertake a wide range of habitat and nature improvement projects across the borough.

The application was made under the ERDF Priority Axis 6d: Preserving and Protecting the Environment and will result in improved conservation status for 121 hectares of habitat.

The three year programme of woodland, grassland, wetland and water quality improvements will be delivered across publicly accessible green space within Solihull.

The funding will be used to undertake 28 individual habitat improvement schemes that collectively will increase and strengthen the capacity of the natural environment to deliver ecosystem services across the region. All of the proposed schemes are located in the urban areas of Solihull.

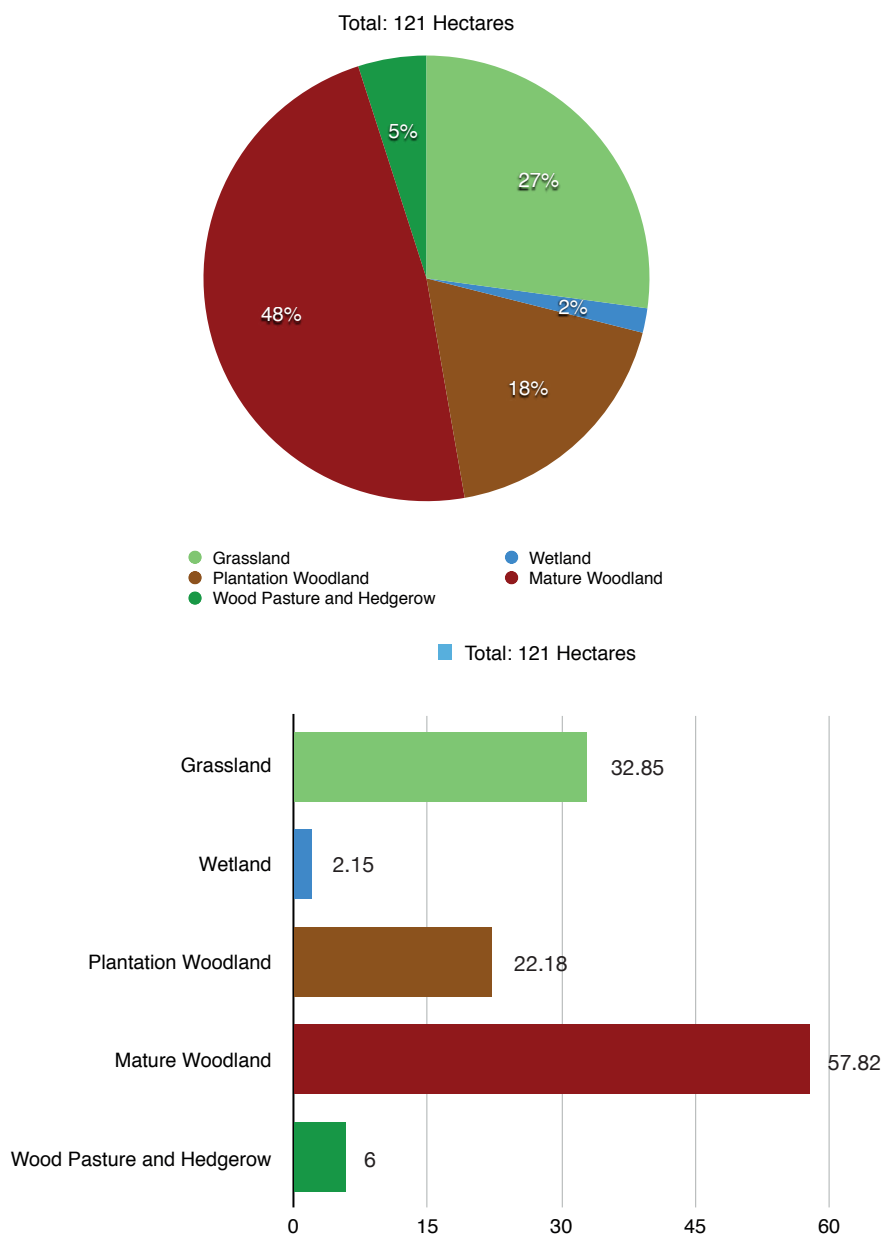
The Environment Agency and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust are strategic partners on the delivery of the project.

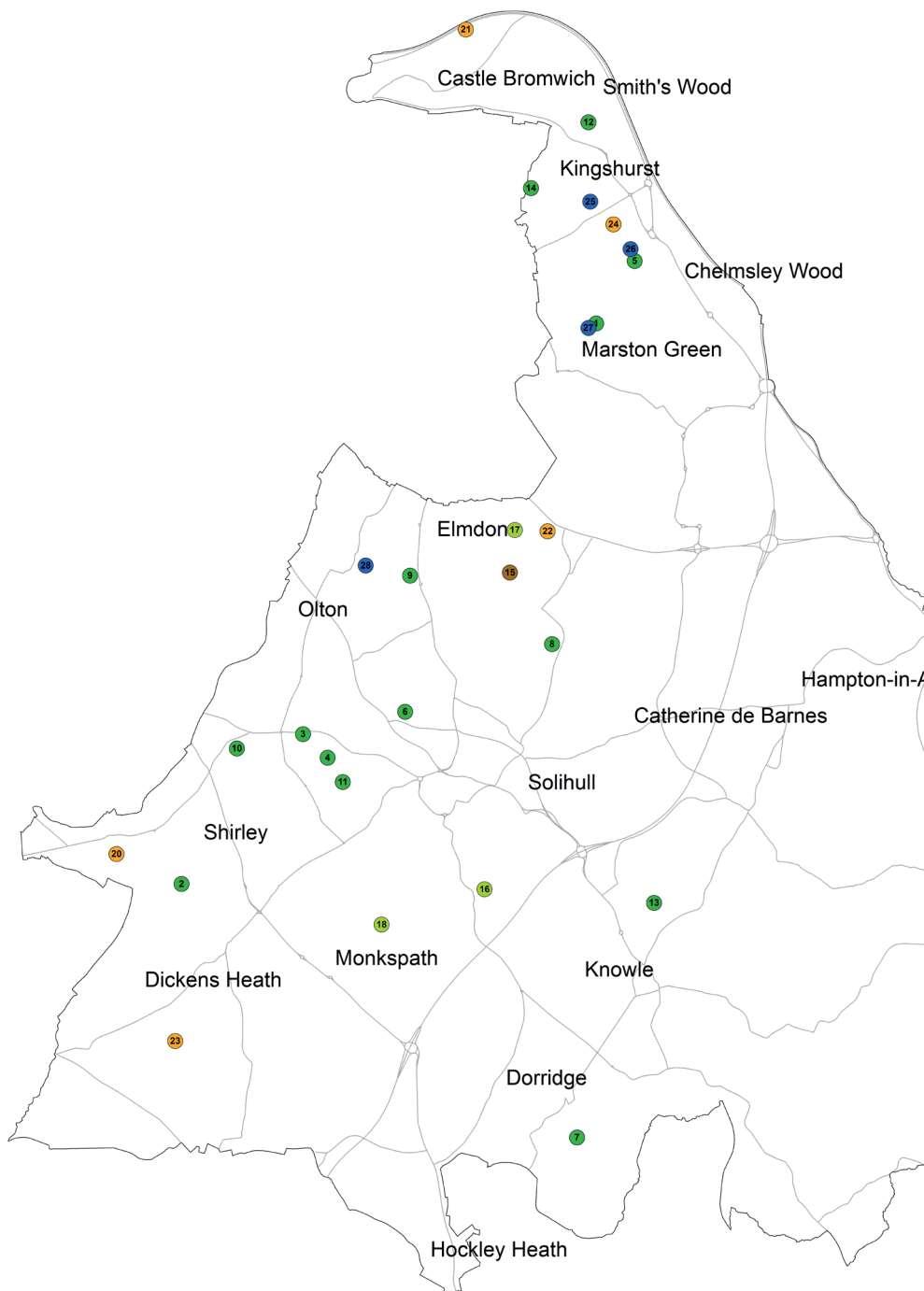
European Regional Development Fund

The project has received £966,552 of funding from the ERDF as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014 – 2020. The Department for Communities and Local Government is the Managing Authority for ERDF. Established by the European Union, ERDF funds help local areas stimulate their economic development by investing in projects which will support innovation, businesses, create jobs and local community regenerations.

For more information visit <https://www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding>

The 28 projects can be categorised by their habitat types:



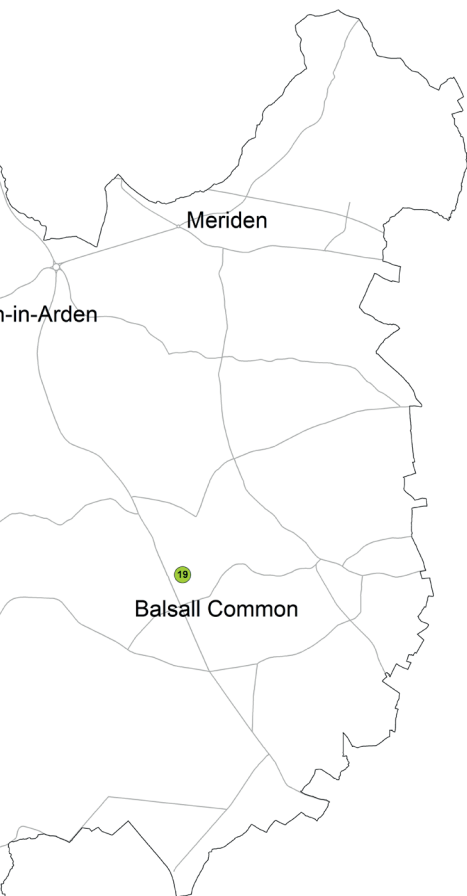


Location of proposed Solihull habitat and nature improvement schemes

Site Locations

Type

- Grassland
- Mature Woodland
- Plantation Woodland
- Tree & Hedgerow planting
- Wetland



Site	Name	Area (ha)
1	Alcott Wood	6.15
2	Bills Wood	6.66
3	Browns Coppice	2.05
4	Cut Throat Coppice	1.2
5	Chelmsley Wood	2.06
6	Coldlands Wood	3.26
7	Dorridge Wood	4.99
8	Elmdon Coppice	4.14
9	Hobs Moat	2.51
10	Palmers Rough	7.99
11	Pow Grove	0.84
12	Smith's Wood	4.45
13	Wychwood	1.45
14	Yorks Wood	10.07
15	Elmdon Ward	6
16	Brueton Park (Lea Wood)	2.37
17	Elmdon Park	9.72
18	Hillfield Park	6.31
19	Lavender Hall Park	3.79
20	Colebrook Recreation Ground	0.8
21	Beechcroft	8
22	Elmdon Nature Park	18.55
23	Dickens Heath LNR	5
24	Cole Bank LNR	0.5
25	Smelly Brook 2, Babbs Mill LNR	0.05
26	Meriden Lake, Chelmsley Wood LNR	1.1
27	Low Brook, Alcott Wood LNR	0.2
28	Hatchford Brook, Olton Jubilee Park	0.8



Woodland Schemes

Solihull Council owns and manages 29 native woodlands. These are key landscape and biodiversity assets and important green spaces for people and wildlife. Eighteen of these woodlands have been selected for this project and will benefit from appropriate habitat enhancements.

The woodlands can be broadly separated into two categories, plantation woodlands and mature woodlands. The plantation woodlands are relatively young, having been planted by the authority during the last 30 years. Mature woodlands are much older and more ecologically valuable. Much of the mature woodlands are identified as ancient semi-natural woodlands which are a minimum of 400 years old.

A series of baseline ecological surveys will be undertaken followed by the production of site specific management plans. These plans will detail the individual management programmes required to bring about ecological enhancements.

Selective thinning and coppicing of trees will open up the canopy and increase light penetration to encourage greater diversity of woodland flora. The thinning will create space to enable selected trees to progress to maturity resulting in greater structural diversity within the woodland. In addition glades and rides will be established, deadwood habitats encouraged and non-native tree and shrub species eradicated. These management interventions will enable many more species of birds and insects to live in the woodlands and will make the sites significantly more attractive to visitors.



Grassland Schemes

Although once widespread in lowland Britain, the traditional hay meadow has been the grassland community most affected by modern farming practices. It is estimated that by 1984 semi-natural grassland had declined in the UK by 97% over the previous 50 years to less than 200,000ha, mainly through ploughing, re-seeding and fertilising of old grasslands.*

With the aim of helping to address the national reduction in species-rich grassland we will undertake five grassland improvement projects. Following soil analysis, five sites totalling 32.85 hectares of existing grassland have been identified for enhancement. Green hay, taken from a species-rich donor site will be applied onto our species-poor recipient sites (green hay is harvested wildflowers and grasses just as they are shedding seed and still 'green'). The hay is quickly transferred to the species-poor recipient site where it is spread allowing the seed to drop. The recipient sites will be prepared for the hay using a combination of mowing, herbicide application and cultivation techniques.

Upon completion, the newly created, restored or enhanced habitats will be incorporated into the long-term SMBC maintenance programme. For the grasslands this will be delivered through an annual hay meadow cut and collect to be carried out in late summer. Over time the annual harvesting of the hay will further deplete the nutrients in the soil which will favour a greater diversity of wildflowers.

*Source: (<http://www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/NeutralGrassland-September2-2015.pdf>)



Wetland Schemes

The project includes four watercourse enhancement schemes focused on the River Cole and its tributaries, the Kingshurst, Hatchford and Low Brooks. The proposed interventions will create and enhance a variety of wetland habitats. Streams that have been historically straightened will be re-engineered to encourage natural river processes including erosion and deposition. This will result in increased meandering and the development of in-channel features such as pools, riffles and beaches. This diversification of habitats has a positive impact on the ecological value of the watercourse.

Example Wetland Scheme – Meriden Lake

Meriden Lake is shallow artificial lake located in Chelmsley Wood Local Nature Reserve. It was created for its landscape and amenity value when a weir was installed across Kingshurst Brook. However, in recent years the lake has become problematic as silt accumulations have resulted in stagnation and large volumes of complaints from the general public regarding foul odours and safety concerns. The lake was de-silted in 2003 but is already in need of further intervention. However, due to the significant costs involved and regularity of these works this is not a sustainable option. The proposed scheme will alter the weir to drain the lake and create a mosaic of habitats including a new river channel, marsh, pools, wet meadows, woodlands and reed beds. New boardwalks, footpaths and interpretation will facilitate public access to these wildlife areas.

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