



Wilder Horsham District

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End of Year Report April 2023 – March 2024

Contents

Achievements Summary3

Project Progress - Comments on
2023-246

- Landowner Engagement Highlights 6
- Nature Recovery Award 8
- Wilder Horsham District Volunteers.....11
- Community Engagement Highlights.....13
- Organisation Engagenent Highlights.....15
- Horsham District Council Parks and
Countryside Department.....15

Project Progress – Proposed
Deliverables.....16

COVER IMAGE

Honeybee, Lydia Petch

Introduction

Wilder Horsham District is a five-year partnership between Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT) and Horsham District Council (HDC), working to deliver a Nature Recovery Network for Horsham District.

The project officially commenced in September 2020 when project staff came into post and has since been working closely with local communities and landowners to help reverse the decline in species and habitats and enrich the natural environment for all residents and visitors. This report summarises Wilder Horsham District’s achievements for the financial year dated 1 April 2023 – 31st March 2024.

Achievements Summary

LANDSCAPE RESILIENCE

Highlights

- 56 site visits were made during the year. 29 of these were revisits as the project builds relationships.
- The primary objective of the project is to help build a Nature Recovery Network. It is therefore encouraging to see groupings of neighbouring landholdings beginning to emerge. For example, around Pulborough and Storrington we are working with Conservation partners and private landowners to improve and connect habitats.
- Another example of this is the Adur River Recovery Project, in which we are a partner. A Project Officer, Mel Sanders, was appointed in August 2023, based at Knepp Wildlife Foundation. We have worked with Mel and Pete King of the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust to deliver advice to the 27 land holdings in the project with the aim of re-naturalising the river at a landscape scale to benefit both wildlife and farming.
- These wildlife corridors link into the Weald to Waves project in which Horsham District Council and Sussex Wildlife Trust are both partners.
- We are beginning to see clusters of landholdings doing great things for nature emerge in different areas of the District helping to build the landscape connectivity that wildlife needs. The Pulborough, Storrington and West Chiltington area is a good example.
- The Council's Parks and Countryside department set out 26 Wildways meadow areas across the district, relaxing the existing mowing regime to create new long grass areas, as part of a three-year trial. These mini-meadows reduce habitat fragmentation in urban areas.
- Our dedicated volunteer force now numbers 90 conservation volunteers, and 28 survey volunteers. We completed 35 volunteer workdays across a range of tasks including leaky dam building, scrub management, hedgerow laying and invasive species removal, with our volunteers offering an incredible 1,483 hours to the project in this year alone.
- The Nature Recovery Award ran an additional four rounds, with 9 successful applicants being awarded a total of nearly £33,000 for projects that implement practical schemes that improve and connect habitats for wildlife in the Horsham District.

	2023-24	Project Lifespan
Sites and Partnerships		
New landowner sites visited	27	107
Landowner site revisits	29	71
Horsham District Council sites	3	12
Partnerships/projects involved with	14	21
Organisations engaged with	18	30
Area of sites advised on (hectares)	4,256	8,132
Nature Recovery Award		
Total Applications	21	51
Successful Applications	10	29
Funding Value Awarded	£32,951.89	£74,457.13

	2023-24	Project Lifespan
Work Party Volunteers		
Number of work parties	35	65
Total volunteer hours	1483	2420
Total volunteer in-kind contribution	£29,660	£48,395
Practical Works		
Hedgerow planted or improved (m squared)	270 metres	540 metres
Leaky dams created	26	82
Ponds created	22	31
Trees planted	7269	7373
Invasive species removal measures	5 sites	12 sites
Bird/bat boxes/bug hotels	26	55+
Water storage (ponds, scrapes and leaky dams)	1.97 million litres	2.5 million litres

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Highlights

- The project has engaged all the major and a high percentage of the smaller environmental community groups in Horsham District and continues to maintain relationships and support projects with these groups.
- We have supported community groups with site visits, habitat management advice, grant funding, resources, and linking contacts.
- We continued to work with the Storrington and Arun Valley Sussex Wildlife Trust Regional Group included speaking at their Nature Recovery event in November.
- The Parks and Countryside Team worked extensively with Horsham Greenspace Forum to develop Wildways projects in Horsham town, alongside West Sussex County Council, as well changing moving regimes in other parts of the district.
- Consultation with a wide number of community groups and Parish and Neighbourhood Councils on the draft Greenspace Strategy.
- The Adur River Recovery Project also has a community aspect and working with Adur Council the project has provided support on the development and distribution of a survey about the River Adur, as well as developing a River Festival between May and October.
- Our communications and media presence continued to grow using social media, blogs, print and radio interview. We also updated and refreshed our project webpage, created new project posters and a printed banner to take to events, and have started a series of videos documenting the project.
- The Sussex Wildlife Trust Communities and Wildlife team continue to contribute greatly appreciated time and resource towards supporting the project through landowner/community group visits, communication materials and wildlife talks and walks.

	2023-24	Project Lifespan
Community Links		
New community groups engaged with	3	33
Parish/neighbourhood councils we've had bespoke contact with (%)	-	80%
Parish/neighbourhood council and community group talks and events	4	33
Communications		
Blogs posted	10	26
Facebook followers' growth 23/24	16%	
Twitter followers' growth 23/24	19.3%	
Instagram followers' growth 23/24	41%	
Webpage views 23/24	4,271	21,090

Organisational Resilience	
Highlights	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presentations to the Horsham Association of Local Council and Members of Horsham District Council, as well as numerous Member briefings with the new administration of the Council. ▪ Presentation and interactive session with the whole Parks and Countryside Team to explain the project, what it is starting to achieve and how the whole team can contribute to WHD. ▪ Several policies and strategies were produced that support the project, including Regulation 19 of the Horsham Local Plan, Green Infrastructure Strategy and Guidance, and a draft Greenspace Strategy. ▪ A continued programme of staff talks ran throughout the year, with topics including an update on the Wilder Horsham District project. ▪ A survey of staff, repeating the one undertaken at the start of the project, to understand how well the project is embedded in the Council. 	
	Project Lifespan
Time Spent	
PDAGS, staff and member talks (number, hours)	16 talks, 50 hours
Training/CPD for staff and members at HDC (hours)	44.5

Project Progress Comments on 2023-24

Landowner Engagement Highlights

As in previous years we have been delighted by the level of support and interest in the project from land managers and owners of all types and sizes of landholdings. Land of any size can be critical when it comes to landscape connectivity.

Steve Tillman, our new Land Advisor, has added to our capacity this year taking a lead on engagement with some of the sites and, in particular, helping applicants through the Nature Recovery Award Process.

Our engagement this year has been a mix of, for us, new sites and follow-ups to sites previously visited. We feel that this continuity of engagement and building of relationships is a vital part of the project. This year the Senior Land Advisor and Land Advisor made 56 site visits this year including 27 new sites and 29 repeat visits to sites previously visited, representing 4,256 hectares within the District. These sites are District-wide, north and south, urban and rural, small and large sites and covering almost the whole range of habitats in the district.

The demand for engagement means that effective partnership working with other organisations is essential.

We have continued to work with HDC Parks and Countryside, especially around their own sites, with Sandgate Park one of several new sites we have engaged with. Many HDC sites are well placed to contribute to the NRN, especially around Storrington, Pulborough and Horsham Town itself.

The Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust (OART) have continued to be a key partner working both on the sites signed up to the Adur River Recovery Project and other sites across the Adur catchment.

The Senior Land Advisor attended a meeting of the *Arun and Western Streams Catchment partnership* in February which has led to some closer working with the Arun and Rother Rivers Trust and the Environment Agency.

We have continued to work with Knepp Wildlife Foundation, and Sussex Wildlife Trust are partners in the developing Weald to Waves

project. A large part of the Weald to Waves corridor maps onto the Wilder Horsham District's own Draft Nature Recovery Network so the aims of the two projects, building connectivity for wildlife, are very much aligned.

Highlights included a substantial wetland restoration project at Mayes Park near Warnham. One issue with restoring Natural Water Connectivity is the way that water has been managed historically. In particular the Sussex Countryside is riddled with land drains that suck the water from the land and hurry it away.

At Mayes, partly funded by the Nature Recovery Award, 1.3km of land drains have been broken up and about 500m have been removed completely creating a series of scapes and pools across the site. This will provide habitat for wildlife as well as a water source for livestock. Mayes is introducing a farming system that will use conservation grazing to recreate a mosaic habitat, retaining the current butterfly interest while providing a wealth of new opportunities for other species.



At Mayes Park, before (above), a landscape devoid of water and after (below), the removal and breaking up of the land-drains has transformed the site.



This year we have also made a particular effort to help the Sussex Black Poplar Partnership restore the Black Poplar, the rarest timber tree in Britain, to Sussex.

The Black Poplar is Sussex's only native poplar and our subspecies is restricted to Britain, France and Germany. Its deeply fissured bark is usually dark, hence the name, and it can reach an impressive 38 metres in height and 200 years in age. As it ages it develops burrs, rounded outgrowths, on the trunk and, very often, a distinctive lean. It is a tree of wet woodlands, one of our richest and rarest habitats, and is a popular food plant for many moth species including, unsurprisingly, the Poplar Hawk-moth. It is a valuable source of pollen and nectar for other insects and of seeds for birds.

Its county decline began with the destruction of floodplain woodland and continued when faster growing hybrid poplars began to be planted in the nineteenth century, supplanting it as a timber tree. At one point it was so rare in Sussex that a countywide search found only 38 specimens including only two sites in Horsham District, Arundel and Henfield. The Sussex trees were composed of clones of just five individuals, three males and two females. Female trees were rarely planted because they produce large amounts of fluffy wind-blown seeds.

We aim to plant both male and female, a mix of clones and at least six trees at each site. The hope, of course, is that the species will begin to set seed naturally producing new genetic combinations.

We collect trees grown at the Millennium Seedbank at Wakehurst and plant them in damp sunny areas with plenty of room to grow and, preferably away from non-native poplars to avoid hybridisation. Sometimes we'll plant them as part of a wet woodland mix but more often as individual trees in the landscape. The Partnership has been planting Black Polars since 1997 so some of the early trees are now a quarter of a century old. In the future we hope that mature Black Poplars and their wet woodland habitat will, once again, be a common site in Horsham District and the rest of the Sussex landscape.



Planting Black Poplar at Horsham Football Club.

We also have a new variation on our logo for use for use by landowners and groups who are working with the project.



Our new "supporter's logo"

Nature Recovery Award

The Nature Recovery Award is our grant fund that aims to support landowners and community groups wishing to implement practical schemes that improve and connect habitats for wildlife in the Horsham District. Funding of up to £5,000 is available per project, helping to ensure landowners and community groups wishing to support nature's recovery are well supported and not limited by access to funds.

Across the 4 rounds run in 2023/24, we are thrilled to be funding 10 successful applicants for a total value of £32,951.89. As detailed in the table below, we have been delighted at the range of projects ideas, varying greatly in scale, location with the district and habitat and species impact, but all contributing towards the creation of a Nature Recovery Network in Horsham District.

Projects funded in previous years are also well underway and making exciting progress in aiding nature's recovery. You can learn more about all our past grant recipients and their projects on our webpage.



A deer fence at Rackham Cottages has prevented over-grazing (above) and the heath, which is one of the UK's rarest habitats, is already showing signs of recovery.

Food is not typically a limiting factor for Swifts who can travel huge distances at high speed to find insects. They collect large numbers in a special pouch in the back of their throat and bind it with saliva into a large ball or "bolus" to bring back to their young. Sussex Swifts can easily pop over to the continent to find insect rich areas.

Much more of a problem are nesting habitats. The huge emergent trees that were their homes in the past are long gone but for centuries they found a ready substitute in leaky old houses with lots of nooks and crannies that served as nest holes. However, new builds tend to lack these and in recent years even many of the old buildings have been sealed up. This is a particular problem for Swifts which are very site faithful once they have chosen a nest hole. To the extent that they will repeatedly bash their heads as they try to re-enter a hole that has been sealed during the winter while they were away.

Fortunately, there is a solution and putting up Swift boxes can provide new nesting opportunities for young Swifts.

The Nature Recovery Award has provided funds for the *Storrington and Arun Valley SWT Local Group* to put up a new tranche of boxes in the Pulborough and Storrington area. West Sussex Golf Course, Greener Shipley and the Partridge Green Bird Group have received funds to do the same.



Swift expert Paul Stevens, with one of the new boxes.



Putting the boxes up. Sometimes a ladder will do the job

It isn't just the Swifts that have benefitted, Some of the projects have included artificial nests for Swallows or House Martins as well. These hirudines build their nests out of mud and in dry springs this can be hard to find. Artificial cups can serve as substitutes when supplies of mud fail and can also attract these social birds to build new nests alongside the artificial ones.

As always Natural Flood Management has been a big part of the project. Slowing the flow of water off the land has lots of benefits including both flood and drought alleviation, improved water quality and, of course, lots of good habitat creation for wildlife.

We are always keen to get Nature Recovery Award Applications featuring new ponds or scrapes and several have been funded or completed this year. A pond was restored at Dyke Farm near Pulborough and a new pond was created at Field of Dreams near Henfield.



Sometimes you need something with a bit more beef!



At the new pond at Field of Dreams with Gabrielle Gardner

Comments on 2023-24 Continued

Applicant	Project Details
Successful Applicants 2023/24	
Millar Maple Farm	To purchase and install Barn Owl, Tawny Owl and Kestrel nesting boxes in suitable locations across the farm to support the local bird of prey populations.
Dyke Farm	To restore a silted up and overgrown pond adjacent to a stream and leaky dam habitat to re-introduce wetland habitat into the landscape.
Storrington and Arun Valley Sussex Wildlife Trust Regional Group	To install a second wave of Swift nesting boxes to increase breeding sites for the species across the Storrington and Arun Valley.
Mayes Park (x 2)	To break up and remove 1.3km of land drains that had been funneling water off the site to re-wet the land, allowing Mayes Park to hold more water, slowing the flow of it leaving the land to help reduce flood risk downstream and create entirely new interlinking wetland habitats.
Homelands Farm Stables	To dig and create a network of scrapes (an intermittent shallow pond in a wetland or floodplain) to introduce new wetland habitat to support new aquatic, amphibious and bird species.
West Sussex Golf Course	To install Swift boxes with caller systems and Barn Swallow nest cups on properties at the Golf Course to support the local Swift and Swallow populations.
Benlands Nature Reserve	Additional funds to purchase bentonite clay and complete an ongoing pond creation project.
Greener Shipley	To buy and install nest cups for Swifts and House Martins.
Partridge Green Bird Group	To install Swift nest boxes and calling systems around the village of Partridge Green to support the local Swift population.

Wilder Horsham District Volunteers

We would like to take the opportunity to say a **huge thank you** to all our volunteers for all your incredible support and time given to the project, and for always bringing a smile (and often homemade sweet treats too!) to our volunteer days, no matter the weather.

You are all an integral and valued part of the project team, supporting the development of the Nature Recovery Network and enabling us to hugely increase the scale and impact of our on the ground delivery for nature recovery in Horsham District.

Survey Volunteers

Our 28 survey volunteers will help us survey various sites around Horsham, principally for plants, butterflies (and other invertebrates), and birds. This will help generate a baseline for sites that are trying to improve for wildlife and help inform management changes to those sites. This year, we provided survey technique and ID training to our volunteers ready for surveys to commence in spring/summer 2024.

Work Party Volunteers

Our 91 work party volunteers help us carry out vital conservation tasks on privately or publicly owned land holdings within Horsham District, with the aim of improving land for wildlife to help nature's recovery.

This year, we had our busiest work party programme of the project to date, completing 35 work parties throughout the seasons. Our volunteers gave us an incredible 1483 hours of their time, for an in-kind contribution of £29,660 to the project, helping us exponentially increase our conservation impact.

Highlights from this year's programme:

- Helping with the planting over 6,000 trees in a 10-acre field at Gaywood Farm to transform the field into a wet woodland, one of the UK's most species-rich habitats. You can hear the full story in our [video here](#).
- As a beaver proxy, we built 26 leaky dams across a variety of sites to help control the flow of water across the land, helping to prevent flooding in winter and storing water in the dryer months.
- Cleared 4 different sites of their respective invasive plant species, including Rhododendron and Himalayan



We had some big work parties out for the tree planting...



Including help from our colleagues in the Finance and Operations Department. Here Maggie and Michelle get into the swing of planting a healthy species mix.

Balsam, to help restore our native ecosystem to the sites.



The volunteers get stuck into the Himalayan Balsam. The flowers might look pretty but they are like sweets for bees - not actually very good for them



More pesky Himalayan Balsam removed. Steve and Rich stand amongst the devastation.

- The Volunteers got involved with the Black Poplar planting too.



Dyke Farm had some Black Poplars and more leaky dams built to go with a pond restoration.

- We got stuck into the hedge laying once again. Improving the hedges as habitat and as wildlife corridors.



Pointing up the stakes while the hedge-layers get to work in the background.



Getting to work with the bindings to secure the hedge.

- At Mayes Park we followed up the wetland creation (see above) by planting some wet associated trees including Black Poplar and lots of willows. Willows are great trees for a wet habitat and incredibly easy to plant as they will readily propagate from cuttings. We supplemented the whips we had by simply cutting branches from a variety of willow trees. The ends of these were sharpened to a point, a slot was opened in the ground with a spade and in the cuttings went. Willow is incredibly hardy and despite the fact that we planted these in January on one of the coldest days of the year by the spring the vast majority were sprouting fresh green growth. These trees were planted along the ghylls to increase the width of the woodland.



Julia plants a willow cutting in the frosty ground.



After a working hard on the planting the volunteers were rewarded with a barbeque featuring burgers made from cows kept for conservation grazing, in other words happy cows!

Community Engagement Highlights

Community Groups

The project has engaged all the major and a high percentage of the smaller environmental community groups (for a total of 33 groups) in Horsham District and continues to maintain relationships and support projects with these groups.

Horsham District is fortunate to have a very active set of community groups working for wildlife and nature's recovery, and as a project we look to support each individual group in the way(s) that best support their needs. This has included site visits, project and site management advice, funding community projects through our Nature Recovery Award, giving talks on the project at events and sharing resources and key contacts.

One highlight has been the emergence of a strategy for building wildlife corridors across Horsham Town itself. This project initiated by the *Horsham Green Spaces* group and supported by the HDC Parks and Countryside team and Wilder Horsham District is called *Wildways* and has huge promise for building a Nature Recovery Network within Horsham Town itself.

Another highlight has been engaging with the Storrington and Arun Valley Sussex Wildlife Trust Regional Group, which has led to many successes including funding part two of their exciting project

to install Swift boxes across Storrington and Sullington, Pulborough, Amberley and Billingshurst through the Nature Recovery Award, and developing a plan of action (with several other actors) to map and tackle key 'headwaters' of the invasive Himalayan Balsam across the District.

The Sussex Wildlife Trust Communities and Wildlife team continue to contribute greatly appreciated time and resource towards supporting the project through landowner/community group visits, communication materials and wildlife talks and walks.

Parish Councils

We have already had bespoke contact with 80% of the Parish/Neighbourhood Councils in Horsham District, which included two workshops in February 2023 where 50 attendees from 28 of the 35 Councils attended the day designed to inspire and inform local Parish Councils how they can act for nature in their Parish. This year we supported Parish Councils engaging with projects initiated following the workshops.

- Denne Neighbourhood Council is coordinating a wildflower meadow planting scheme to help create a pollinator corridor in the parish by submitting several meadow management site proposals to Parks and Countryside for review.
- Parishes that have had visits from the project include, Nuthurst, Amberley, Ashurst, Henfield and Rusper.

Communications

Our communications and media presence continued to grow using social media, blogs, print and YouTube videos. We also updated and refreshed our [project webpage](#), created new project posters and a printed banner to take to events, designed a logo to certify recipients of the Nature Recovery Award, and have started a series of videos documenting the project. There have also been regular articles in the Council's magazine, known as Our District, which is delivered to every household in the district.



The project team frequently give talks to Parish Councils and other community groups. Here Steve and Rich give a project update to the Storrington and Arun Valley Group.

Organisation Engagement Highlights

One of the important aspects of the project is to embed the principles of nature recovery throughout the Council and not just those Departments that would naturally be involved, such as Parks and Countryside. A staff survey was conducted at the start of the project. The same survey was carried out during this year. This showed that there is considerable interest in the project with a 12% increase in the response rate. Of those that responded most had some knowledge of the ecological crisis with a small fall in those with no knowledge. Most staff were aware of the project. There is less understanding of the objectives of the project but the number with no knowledge had fallen.

There has also been a slight improvement in the extent to which staff feel the principles of nature recovery and creating a nature network are embedded in Horsham District Council and their understanding of how best to support the creation of a nature recovery network in their role. Overall, the results show that education and awareness campaigns on these topics have had an impact. The programme of staff talks has continued, with an update to all staff on what the project is starting to deliver. The greater focus this year has been on informing Members about the project. Several briefings were held throughout the year, including with the new Leader and new Cabinet Members, and to a group of cross-parties Members. An all Member presentation also took place which was very well attended. Demonstrating the interest in, and support for, the project.

HDC Parks and Countryside team

In January 2024, the Council acquired Bramber Brooks, a major new site in the south of the district.. It is 13.8 ha / 34 acres of grassland and scrub next to the River Adur and part of a larger Local Wildlife Site. It is expected that a further 3ha / 7 acres known as Saltings Field on the opposite bank of the river will also return to Council control from Parish management. This provides significant new opportunities for the Council to improve grazing marsh habitat.



A bird's eye view of the new HDC site at Bramber Brooks.

A new service – Sustainability was formed by the amalgamation of the Sustainability and Parks & Countryside teams, recognising shared themes and expertise.

Project Progress

Proposed Deliverable

Task No.	Deliverable	Responsible party	Date of completion	Progress to Date
1.	Map a Nature Recovery Network (NRN) for the Horsham District which ultimately achieves better, more, bigger and joined up sites for biodiversity.	SWT	End May 2025	The first version of an NRN map for the Horsham District was published in August 2021 and is now being used to inform priority engagement areas. The map will be updated as new data and landowners are added and habitats connected by the project and partners. Developing work on NRNs by the LNP, SWT and others will be incorporated. The map will be kept up to date in accordance with evolving best practice.
2.	The NRN should ultimately aim to cover 30% of Horsham District and seek to achieve a 20% increase in the number of designated sites in positive management	SWT	End May 2025	The areas identified by the NRN map cover a total of 29483 hectares (including the areas of the South Downs National Park and the High Weald AONB within the District). Horsham District is 53096.21 hectares in size, so the area identified by the map covers 55.53% of the district. However, this stage is only identifying land with potential to be included in the NRN and, obviously, we do not expect to achieve change on all this land. To achieve a functioning NRN covering 30% of the district it is necessary to target considerably more. Up to the end of March 2024, the project has advised on 15.3% of Horsham District's 53026 hectares.
3	Identify priority areas within the NRN as a basis for focusing the work of the project.	SWT / HDC	Annually	A prioritisation exercise was undertaken in early 2022 which identified the priority areas of the Weald to Waves corridor, including stretches of both the Arun and Adur River systems. This guided our landowner engagement in 2022/23 and was also responsible for our involvement in the successful ELMS bid for the Adur River Restoration project.
4.	Link the Wilder Horsham District NRN to the evolving Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the work of the Sussex Local Nature Partnership.	SWT	April 2022	A presentation was given to the Sussex Local Authority Network run by the Nature Partnership. As Horsham District Council is a Supporting Authority in developing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, it has regular meetings with the team developing this Strategy, including how the district-wide NRN will form part of this document
5.	Link the developing NRN to existing landscape and catchment initiatives within the Horsham District to increase wildlife benefit.	SWT	End May 2025	We have engaged with 28 existing initiatives. The Weald to Waves project is particularly important as it crosses the district and maps, not by coincidence, onto part of our own NRN. Other important initiatives include the Arun to Adur Farm Cluster, the Upper Adur Farm Cluster, the Adur River Recovery Project and the Arun Valley Wader Project.

6	Provide bespoke advice to a minimum of 60% of Parish/Neighbourhood Councils, 80 community groups and 120 landowners. For this advice & support to reflect the geographical spread of the project's annual priorities	SWT	End of May 2025	Following hosting the Parish Council Workshops, have provided bespoke contact to 80% of Parish/Neighbourhood Councils. We have interacted with 33 community groups, which constitutes all major and most of the minor groups operating in the Horsham District. We have made advisory visits to 107 different landholdings spread right across the district. The project has also made 71 site revisits (not including work party visits) to build relationships.
7	Operate and promote the Nature Recovery Award. Report on the number of awards given, a description of the projects, including the type, total hectarage and distances of new or improved habitats.	SWT	Annually	21 applications were submitted to the Nature Recovery Award over 4 funding rounds. A total of £32,951.89 was awarded to 10 applications this year. £74,457.13 has been awarded during the life of the project so far. Award outcomes are stated in report cards issued at quarterly Steering Group meetings, and in the annual End of Year reports.
8	Report to the project board including a financial update, number of contacts and events for landowners, individuals, groups and organisations and projects that have received support/advice. Data should include hectarage & distances of new or improved habitat, as well as the contribution to Natural Capital Services, where possible.	SWT	Quarterly (papers to be distributed a week before the Steering Group meeting)	Held quarterly Steering Group meetings, with a consistent agenda of sharing project progress through report cards, a financial update, risk register reporting, and other varied topics relevant to specific Steering Groups. The report cards highlight the key achievements in the last quarter across the three strands of the project – organisational, landscape and community resilience.
9	Produce an annual report summarising the progress and achievements of the project, using suitable mapping and metrics.	SWT	Annually (a maximum of 2 months after the end of the financial year)	End of year project reports are produced annually, summarising the progress and capturing the achievements of the project. This report includes a greater number and variety of reporting metrics and description than its predecessor as the project develops its on-the-ground presence and impact. This will continue to grow across each annual report.
10	Establish links with key organisations, such as West Sussex County Council and neighbouring Councils, to develop joint projects/working that will help deliver the NRN.	HDC	End May 2025	The Weald to Waves and the Adur River Restoration Recovery project is driving partnership working with other Councils particular Adur and Worthing Council and West Sussex County Council. The Council has developed stronger links with the South Downs National Park Authority to help deliver the NRN.

Proposed Deliverables Continued

Task No.	Deliverable	Responsible party	Date of completion	Progress to Date
11	Establish a volunteer taskforce to undertake practical tasks to support the establishment of the NRN and where possible to complete habitat surveys and ongoing monitoring of sites, with landowner's agreement.	SWT	End September 2021	The Wilder Horsham District volunteer taskforce was created in summer 2021, with the opportunity to be either a work party or survey volunteer. Our first work party was in November 2021, and there have since been 64 additional work parties. Our survey volunteers received training in spring 2022 and 2024 and will begin active surveys in 2024.
12	Hold three events (or equivalent) during the project to engage with the projects target audience, as well as an event to celebrate the successes & achievements of the project.	SWT	End May 2025	In 2023 the project held two identical Parish Council Workshops for the north and south of the district, providing inspiration, pre-packaged ideas and expert advice and support for Parishes wishing to contribute to the Nature Recovery Network. In January 2024 we held a thank you event for our work party volunteers.
13	Hold the equivalent of 3 days of training/CPD for staff and members at HDC per annum.	SWT	Annually	We have provided 14 hours of training/CPD and presentations to PDAGs, staff and member talks during this year. For the life of the project this totals 94.5 hours. This year's contribution has included briefings for new Cabinet Members, a whole Member presentation, attendance at a PDAG explaining the project, as well as an update to all staff on what the project is starting to achieve.
14	Integrate NRN principles (incorporating biodiversity net gain) into Council planning processes, including the Local Plan & its supporting documents.	HDC	End December 2022	Regulation 19 of the Local Plan incorporates policies which reflect the objectives of the project and has included a mandatory requirement for 12% on-site BNG. The Plan is supported by the Green Infrastructure Strategy and Guidance.
15	Identify biodiversity offset areas within the NRN to link with potential monies generated by biodiversity net gain.	SWT	End December 2022	The work to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy has commenced by West Sussex County Council and the Sussex Nature Partnership. The Strategy will be in place in summer 2025 and this will be the main mechanism to identify where Biodiversity Net Gain should be directed geographically. In the meantime, the NRN for the Horsham District is being used by the Council's planners, with a focus on areas with high priority habitats.

16	Review key HDC plans and policies to align them with the aims and objectives of the project.	HDC	End June 2023	Regulation 19 of the Local Plan incorporates policies which reflect the objectives of the project. Both the Green Infrastructure Strategy and Guidance, and the Greenspace Strategy have been reviewed and updated, and align with the project. For example, the latter highlights the importance of Council owned land in developing a Nature Recovery Network. The Climate Action Strategy also reflects these principles.
17	Develop a strategic approach to the management of Council land; including opportunities from development proposals and land acquisitions, to support the delivery of the NRN.	HDC	End December 2021	A review has been completed of Council land ownership and where this is located within the NRN. This has provided a high-level idea of opportunities for linking land, and potential land acquisition opportunities. Links are being made with landowners adjacent to these sites, such as the National Trust land adjacent to Sandgate Park near Storrington.
18	Review and implement appropriate land management practices on Council owned land to contribute to the development of the NRN.	HDC	Review – end March 2022 May 2025.	The process of reviewing and updating management plans has commenced. We reviewed our cutting regimes and trialled alternative approaches.
19	Review and update the Communications Plan. Report on the outcomes of this to the Steering Group; including relevant monitoring data.	SWT/HDC	Quarterly	Project communications are included in the Steering Group every quarter. The project continues to develop social media and blog content, and in the last year has created a series of videos on the project alongside updating promotional flyers and a promotional logo for the Nature Recovery Award.
20	Incorporate an online resource on the project's website, for groups/organisations to share experience and best practice.	SWT	End March 2022	Following the re-design of the Sussex Wildlife Trust website, a multi-departmental effort resulted in the updating and creation of a hub of resources for landowners and community groups. We have also created a page on our website where we will share case study examples of landowner projects we have supported.



The Wilder Horsham District Team

Richard Black (Senior Land Advisor)
Steve Tillman (Land Advisor)
Chloe Harrison (Project Support Officer)

With thanks to our counterparts at Horsham District Council –

*Helen Peacock (Head of Sustainability and Green Spaces),
Jacob Everitt (Senior Countryside Warden)
Pete Crawford (Parks and Countryside Manager),*

Wilder Horsham District
May 2024

A Final Note for this year

In April 2024 Chloe Harrison, our Project Support Officer, handed in her notice because she was taking up a new job that would take her to some of the remotest and most threatened habitats in the world. Chloe's contribution to the Wilder Horsham District project has been immense and she will be much missed. Her enthusiasm, professionalism and dedication have made her a fantastic colleague to work with and we wish her all the very best for her new role and the future.



Sussex
Wildlife Trust



Horsham
District
Council

