

A short
guide to



Local Wildlife Sites



What are Local Wildlife Sites?

From mystical ancient woodlands to quiet churchyards and bustling flower-rich roadsides; and from field-bordering hedgerows to tiny copses the UK enjoys special, often unnoticed wild places where nature thrives.

Whether they are in the depths of the countryside or nestled in busy towns and cities, these Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are exceptional areas of land.

They are identified and selected locally, by partnerships of local authorities, nature conservation charities, statutory agencies, ecologists and local nature experts, using robust, scientifically-determined criteria and detailed ecological surveys. Their selection is based on the most important, distinctive and threatened species and habitats within a national, regional and local context. This makes them some of our most valuable wildlife areas.



Claxby Roadside,
Lincolnshire

HELEN SMITH



Duffield Millennium
Meadow, Derbyshire

KIERON HUSTON



Thwaite Common,
Norfolk

HELEN BACZKOWSKA



Burgess Park,
Southwark, London

MATHEW FRITH



Embleton and
Beadnell Coast Local
Wildlife Site,
Northumberland

NACHY WATTE



Helmeth Wood,
Shropshire

KATESINGLETON



Staffordshire
Moss Farm

STAFFORDSHIRE WT



Aylestone Meadows,
Leicestershire

NEILL TALBOT

Why Local Wildlife Sites matter

People need nature

For many years the social value of Local Wildlife Sites has gone unrecognised. But research shows nearby wild green space greatly improves mental and physical health

They are sanctuaries

Churchyards, workplaces and other spaces can be managed for wildlife, with many social benefits including access to nature

They will rebuild nature

Local Wildlife Sites are vital building blocks in landscape scale conservation projects designed to restore, connect and recreate habitats for wildlife and people

They can be buffers

Local Wildlife Sites next to or near to protected areas can protect wildlife from surrounding land uses

They are brilliant for wildlife

Local Wildlife Sites are vital havens, where much of our amazing wildlife lives, including rare species. Even small sites act as 'stepping stones' across the wider landscape

They bring wildlife to us

Nearby Local Wildlife Sites support the wildlife we see in our gardens and parks

They are nature highways

Features such as rivers, verges, hedgerows and embankments act as corridors along which wild plants and animals can move

Local Wildlife Sites are...



...the places where our wildlife lives

As changes in land use have eroded the natural habitats that once covered the UK, Local Wildlife Sites are now 'islands' in a 'sea' of intensively-managed urban, coastal and rural landscapes. Alongside our statutory protected sites, they support a wealth of wildlife, both common and rare.



...the building blocks for the restoration of nature

To reverse the centuries-long trend of wildlife loss and provide for nature's recovery, we have to expand, restore and recreate habitats on a landscape scale, way beyond the boundaries of traditional nature reserves and wildlife sites. This is The Wildlife Trusts' vision for a Living Landscape.

As the natural green fabric of our towns and countryside, Local Wildlife Sites have a huge part to play. They make up a web of stepping stones and corridors for wildlife, forming key components of ecological networks.



...as important to people as they are to wildlife

They contribute greatly to our quality of life, health, well-being and education, and add economic value to local communities.



...often privately owned with limited access

Despite this, the very existence of this natural habitat network contributes to the wildlife we find in our gardens, parks and other public natural spaces.



...free providers of vital services

Conventional economics ignores the natural services we rely on to maintain a healthy and sustainable environment - for example, clean air and water, carbon storage, pollinators and food production, and flood resilience. Local Wildlife Sites help provide these benefits for free.



...unable to survive indefinitely

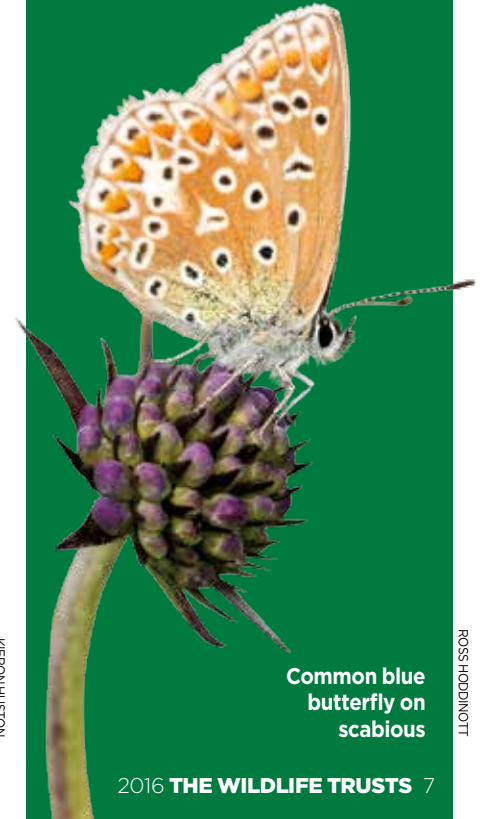
Below a critical size, a wildlife-rich area lacks the resilience to withstand dramatic events such as disease, flood or drought, or the steady attrition of nearby hostile land use. Little by little, species start to disappear.

What's in a name?

These sites are named differently across the UK.

England Local Wildlife Site
Isle of Man Manx Wildlife Site
Northern Ireland Site of Local Nature Conservation Importance
Scotland Local Nature Conservation Site
Wales Site of Importance for Nature Conservation

There can be local variations too eg: County Wildlife Site, SINC, Site of Nature Conservation Importance



Common blue butterfly on scabious

ROSS HOOD/NOTT

KIERON/HUSTON

Middleton Moor
South, Derbyshire - a limestone pasture

How do Local Wildlife Sites compare with other protected places?

There is a general misconception that all the best nature conservation sites are nationally designated and legally protected.

This is not the case. While Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are crucially important, they represent only a small sample of our most important habitats and species. Many places are not designated as SSSIs, and have no legal protection despite being of equal or greater value for wildlife.

By contrast, for Local Wildlife Sites, all sites which meet the given criteria are selected, some of which are of SSSI quality. Consequently, in some counties Local Wildlife Sites are where most of our special wildlife can be found.

Common lizard

STEWART CANHAM

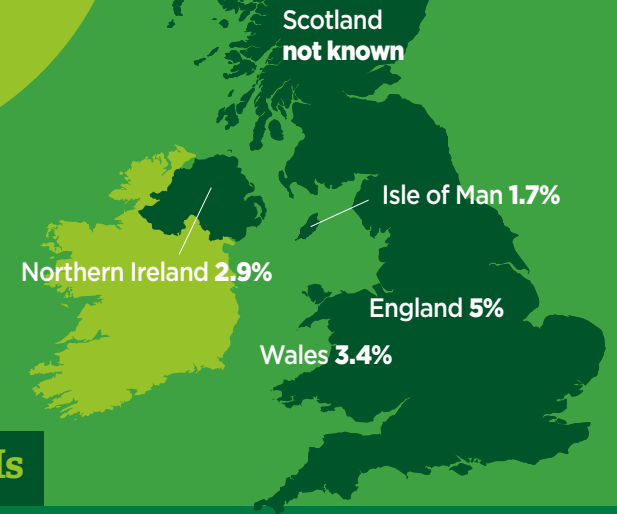


Hoe Common, Norfolk



NEAL TRAFANKOWSKI

Local Wildlife Site facts



Land area

The map shows approximate percentage land area of Local Wildlife Sites, by country

Compared to SSSIs

In some counties, LWS are the best sites for biodiversity:

Nottinghamshire

10% of the county is covered by LWS. Sites of Special Scientific Interest cover just 1.5%.

Greater London

1,570+ Local Wildlife Sites exist inside Greater London - almost 20% of the Capital. There are just 37 SSSIs.

Wiltshire

75% of broadleaf woodland is in Local Wildlife Sites. Only 10% is in SSSIs.

Derbyshire

978 hectares of semi-natural grassland outside the Peak District National Park is within Local Wildlife Sites. Only 179 ha are within SSSIs.

Bedfordshire

5x more of Bedfordshire's area is LWS than SSSI.



"In our patch Local Wildlife Sites support the vast majority of our wildlife. They lack the status of national sites, but may have just as much wildlife value. Without these sites and their sympathetic owners we would have virtually no wildlife."

Matt Jackson, Head of Conservation at Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust



RACHEL JAMES
Volunteers restoring a pond on a Local Wildlife Site in Purbeck, Dorset

What LWS mean to me



“There are butterflies everywhere, and flowers. There must be something sweet about the land here. People keep telling me to plough and reseed but I can’t – so much of the earth is being ripped up.”

Barbara Rogers, site manager and farmer, Shropshire



“When we found this place with its untouched fields, we were delighted to take over management. I can’t believe I actually live here. It really connects you to the land, to nature. It’s just so peaceful.”

Jon and Marilyn Dunkelman, site owners, Monmouthshire



“The reason we work so hard to look after these commons is for the sheer joy of having them here. We have many volunteers in the village who come and help to manage the land for the wildlife and for future generations to come and enjoy.”

Adrian Sampson, site volunteer, Suffolk



Kestrel with common shrew

ALAN WILLIAMS

Who treasures and protects these places?

Because Local Wildlife Sites are often privately owned, they rely on the sheer commitment of the landowners, farmers and volunteers who are prepared to carry out sensitive habitat management. Without such care and effort, a site will gradually decline.

There are also many local organisations such as The Wildlife Trusts who work in partnership to help care for these special places and advise landowners on land management and grants.

Did you know?

Although not protected by law, LWS are recognised across the UK in national planning policies, which set out requirements for protection through local policy and plans

Do you own or manage a **Local Wildlife Site?**

Contact your local Wildlife Trust via wildlifetrusts.org. They can either offer expert advice or point you in the right direction for help with surveys and management options.



Cover: Duston Mill Race LWS, Northamptonshire, Matt Johnson. Back cover: grass snake, Colin Varndell. For more information contact The Wildlife Trusts, The Kiln, Waterside, Mather Road, Newark, Notts NG24 1WT. 01636 677711. Reg. Charity No 207238. May 2016