

# **LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND WILDLIFE TRUST**

## **FIVE-YEAR DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2010 - 2015**

### **Introduction**

The Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust is a locally based voluntary organisation concerned with all aspects of nature conservation. Established in 1956 by a small group of naturalists, it has grown considerably in recent years and developed important work for nature conservation and for local people who care about the future of their natural environment.

This strategy defines the Trust's overall direction and provides a framework for the delivery of work programmes and projects within expected available resources. It also identifies key growth and development areas that will need additional resources to deliver. This strategy will inform an annual work plan and budgets to be agreed each year.

This strategy has been prepared against a background of worldwide recession and considerable economic uncertainty going forwards. The strategy has therefore had to balance the threats and challenges facing the natural world with realism about the likely level of resources available to enable the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust to maintain and develop its nature conservation work and public engagement with our mission.

### **Our Vision**

A Living Landscape rich in wildlife, valued and enjoyed by all.

### **Our Mission**

To protect and enhance the wildlife and wild places of Leicestershire and Rutland and to engage people with their local environment.

We aim to be recognised as an effective, authoritative, influential, inspirational and active local wildlife champion.

### **Living Landscapes**

Wildlife needs room to thrive and must have more opportunity to move across the countryside in order to adapt to whatever unpredictable conditions arise in the future.

Living Landscapes represents a bold vision of restoring, recreating and reconnecting fragmented habitats to create a resilient and healthy environment, highly valued and accessible for people; full of wildlife and rich in opportunities for learning, health and well being. This will require new thinking and fresh approaches.

The Trust has identified a number of Living Landscape priority areas within Leicestershire and Rutland, namely Charnwood Forest, The National Forest, Leighfield Forest, Rutland Water, Soar and Wreake Floodplain and Rutland & North East Leicestershire Limestone area.

## **Key work areas**

Our work encompasses 3 broad areas that together will create a Living Landscape:

- **Local places** – protecting and enhancing wildlife and wild places
- **Local people** – inspiring people about the natural world and encouraging everyone to take action for wildlife
- **Local action** – standing up for wildlife and the natural environment

To achieve success in these areas the Trust will need to be well managed and effective, widely recognised and respected whilst being adequately resourced and supported.

## **Our work in context**

Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust is an independent charity. We belong to a powerful conservation network of 47 Wildlife Trusts across the UK taking effective action to protect our unique natural heritage. The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) acts as a national voice, generates support and provides leadership for the movement.

## Local places

Protecting and enhancing wildlife and wild places

### Nature Reserves

The Trust currently manages 34 nature reserves covering more than 1,074 hectares (2,653 acres), including 20 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, two National Nature Reserves and a Special Protection Area.

The Trust's nature reserves provide protection for an amazing diversity of wildlife, some rare and threatened, as well as giving people the opportunity to enjoy and learn about the rich variety of habitats that were once widespread.

So much wildlife has been lost in the last 50 years or so that our nature reserves also play a critical role as reservoirs for species and communities, which will need assistance in spilling back into the wider countryside.

During the period 2010 – 2015 our key aims will be to:

- Further improve the management of existing nature reserves for the benefit of wildlife and people as set out in the management plans
- Implement Environmental Stewardship work programmes and adhere to cross-compliance regulations to obtain Single Farm Payment
- Enhance the management of grassland nature reserves by securing better control over grazing and hay making
- Bring into full management and maximise the potential of the newly created wetland habitat areas at Rutland Water Nature Reserve and in the Soar Valley
- Facilitate and support appropriate biological and geological recording and monitoring on Trust nature reserves
- *Acquire further strategic areas of land to buffer, enlarge and link nature reserves, creating extensive areas of robust habitat that are feasible to manage effectively – with a particular focus on the Living Landscape priority areas of Charnwood Forest, The National Forest, Leighfield Forest, Rutland Water, Soar and Wreake Floodplain and Rutland & North East Leicestershire Limestone area*

### Local Wildlife Sites and Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS)

Local Wildlife Sites are the most important places for wildlife that are not protected by law and a healthy network of Local Wildlife Sites is essential to ensure that the wider countryside provides a welcoming place for wildlife. RIGS are non-statutory places of geological importance that also offer opportunities for educational use and scientific study.

During the period 2010 – 2015 our key aims will be to:

- Maintain core work surveying, monitoring and promoting favourable management of Local Wildlife Sites and advising and influencing land owners and managers.
- Work with the Wildlife Sites Panel to identify and designate Local Wildlife Sites within Leicestershire and Rutland
- *Enable the Local Wildlife Sites team to further develop its work and activities with a particular focus on the Living Landscape priority areas of Charnwood Forest, The National Forest, Leighfield Forest, Rutland Water, Soar and Wreake Floodplain and Rutland & North East Leicestershire Limestone area*
- Work in partnership with others to identify, conserve and promote the counties RIGS

*NB Items in italics are funding dependant*

## **Local people**

Inspiring people about the natural world and encouraging everyone to take action for wildlife

## **Education and outreach**

The Trust believes that it is vital to provide opportunities for people to learn about the natural world and the need to safeguard its future. In addition, we have a responsibility to educate the next generation so that they in turn will play a crucial role as future guardians of our natural heritage.

During the period 2010 – 2015 our key aims will be to:

- Deliver a wide range of courses, talks, events and activities plus other opportunities that enable people of all ages and backgrounds to engage with nature and experience wildlife at first hand
- *Further develop the Outreach Education Programme for primary school children aged 5 – 11 years, aiming to bring the natural world into schools*
- Incorporate comprehensive wildlife information and related educational resources on to the Trust's website
- Enable visitors to the newly expanded Rutland Water Nature Reserve to get the most from their visit, ensuring good facilities and infrastructure plus comprehensive information and interpretation on the reserve and its wildlife
- Continue to promote wildlife gardening and sustainable living
- Support the education programmes at the Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre and Brocks Hill Environment Centre
- *Develop a Forest Schools programme in Leicestershire and Rutland*
- *Initiate a school grounds project that enables the Trust to effectively meet the needs of schools wanting advice and support to create wildlife nature areas*
- Investigate the feasibility of creating an outdoor classroom facility at one of the Trust's nature reserves

## **Wildlife Watch**

Wildlife Watch, the Trust's junior club, provides valuable opportunities for children and young people to explore and discover local wildlife and get involved in fun and interesting projects.

During the period 2010 – 2015 our key aims will be to:

- Support the activities and development of Wildlife Watch and better promote it across the two counties
- Facilitate the formation of new Wildlife Watch groups with a focus on the City of Leicester and south Leicestershire

## **Volunteering**

The involvement, dedication and hard work of the Trust's volunteers, who contribute a wealth of different skills and experience, is fundamental to our work advancing nature conservation and awareness in the two counties. Our ability to involve, inspire and empower local people to take positive action for wildlife is essential to achieve our aims for the future.

During the period 2010 – 2015 our key aims will be to:

- Further develop volunteer engagement and provide focused support and training
- *Construct a new Volunteer Training Centre and Workshop at Rutland Water Nature Reserve to provide a centre of excellence supporting volunteers developing practical nature conservation skills plus wildlife monitoring and recording*

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- Support and strengthen the Trust's network of Local Groups
- Continue to develop the Volunteer Trainee Reserves Officer / Warden schemes at Brocks Hill and Rutland Water Nature Reserve, enabling trainee placements to gain comprehensive training and skills in practical nature conservation and make a significant contribution to managing the Trust's nature reserves
- Provide further Nature Conservation Training and Skills programmes and facilities to enhance the skills of Trust volunteers and the wider community in developing a greater understanding of wildlife

### **British Birdwatching Fair**

Described as the birdwatcher's Glastonbury, the Birdfair is now the biggest event of its kind in the world and provides an important showcase for birdwatching / wildlife organisations plus associated commercial enterprises, as well as raising vital funds for global nature conservation programmes.

During the period 2010 – 2015 our key aims will be to:

- Support the future development of the Birdfair and ensure it continues to integrate appropriately into the ongoing activities and plans at Rutland Water Nature Reserve

## Local action

Standing up for wildlife and the natural environment

### Space for Wildlife - Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan (LLRBAP)

The LLRBAP provides an important focus for promoting the restoration, management and creation of UK BAP priority habitats, encouraging the creation of other new wildlife habitat in the wider countryside, gathering high quality biological data to inform decision making and policy plus supporting the Local Wildlife Sites system.

During the period 2010 – 2015 our key aims will be to:

- Continue to lead the implementation of the LLRBAP working in partnership with a wide range of organisations, focussing on a new 'Space for Wildlife' approach that promotes managing land for wildlife in the wider countryside
- Use the LLRBAP to highlight the continuing decline of wildlife in the wider countryside through much of Leicestershire and Rutland
- *Promote the Living Landscape vision with a particular focus on the priority areas of Charnwood Forest, The National Forest, Leighfield Forest, Rutland Water, Soar and Wreake Floodplain and Rutland & North East Leicestershire Limestone area*
- Work with key partners including Anglian Water, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, local authorities, National Forest Company and Natural England, to secure landscape-scale environmental enhancement in Leicestershire and Rutland
- *Make full use of modern computer mapping tools to develop key information resources including interactive search and extraction of important environmental data*

### Advocacy and influence

A whole range of policies and decisions can affect our wildlife and wild places. With ever increasing agricultural, housing and other development pressures in Leicestershire and Rutland, the Trust recognises the need to strengthen and increase our capacity to be an effective voice for wildlife at a local, county and regional level.

During the period 2010 – 2015 our key aims will be to:

- Identify all owners and managers of land adjacent to Trust nature reserves and seek to influence their land management practices to benefit wildlife
- *Develop and implement an advocacy plan detailing strategic actions to promote the Living Landscape vision with a particular focus on the Living Landscape priority areas of Charnwood Forest, The National Forest, Leighfield Forest, Rutland Water, Soar and Wreake Floodplain and Rutland & North East Leicestershire Limestone area*
- Comment as appropriate on significant consultations and planning applications that could adversely affect wildlife
- Seek to engage its members and other partners in lobbying for wildlife protection and enhancement where this can help achieve a successful outcome
- *Encourage local authorities in Leicestershire and Rutland to include biodiversity and nature conservation in their processes, plans and strategies*
- Participate in regional and national Wildlife Trust campaigns
- Continue to work in partnership with the other East Midlands Wildlife Trusts to fund and direct the work of a regional post aimed at influencing regional conservation policy

### Rutland Osprey Project

- The Rutland Osprey Project has successfully established a breeding colony of ospreys in Rutland. Ospreys are an iconic species and have generated a huge amount of public interest and

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visitors, allowing the project to engage with a significant range of people and offering valuable opportunities to broaden knowledge and understanding of ospreys and the natural world and foster care and respect for our environment.

During the period 2010 – 2015 our key aims will be to:

- Support and monitor osprey activity and breeding in Rutland
- Further develop how the project engages with people and their interest in ospreys to provide key information on local wildlife and actions everyone can take to safeguard it.

## **Supporting Objectives**

To achieve success in each of its 3 key broad work areas the Trust will need to be well managed and effective, widely recognised and respected whilst being adequately resourced and supported.

### **Well managed and effective**

During the period 2010 – 2015 our key aims will be to:

- Recruit, develop and retain suitably qualified and experienced staff and volunteers to carry out all aspects of the Trust's work and activities
- Maintain good governance through adherence to recommended best practice
- Ensure Trust plans, policies and procedures are relevant and up to date
- Integrate safe working practices into all areas of the Trust's activities
- Encourage good communications at all levels
- Properly maintain the Trust's assets

### **Widely recognised and respected**

During the period 2010 – 2015 our key aims will be to:

- Upgrade and redevelop our websites ensuring they have comprehensive and up to date information on our nature reserves, work and activities, projects and campaigns plus key wildlife data and educational resources
- *Develop new ways of communicating with members and supporters such as with e-newsletters*
- *Increase media coverage and profile of the Trust's work by developing better and more active links with local press and media*
- *Rework the Trust's Nature Reserves Guide to provide more background information on habitats and Living Landscape priority areas*

### **Adequately resourced and supported**

During the period 2010 – 2015 our key aims will be to:

- *Develop new central premises facilities incorporating adequate office space, meeting/classroom/training area, workshop and tool store, equipment/archive/general storage*
- Maintain and further develop a diverse funding approach to avoid over reliance on individual funders
- Further invest in membership recruitment to ensure continuing membership growth
- Improve membership retention rates

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