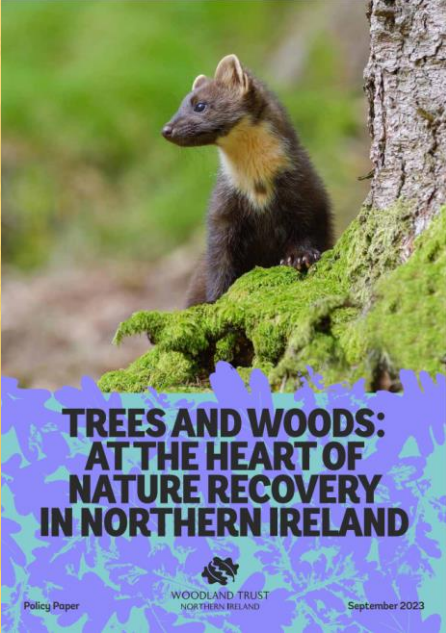
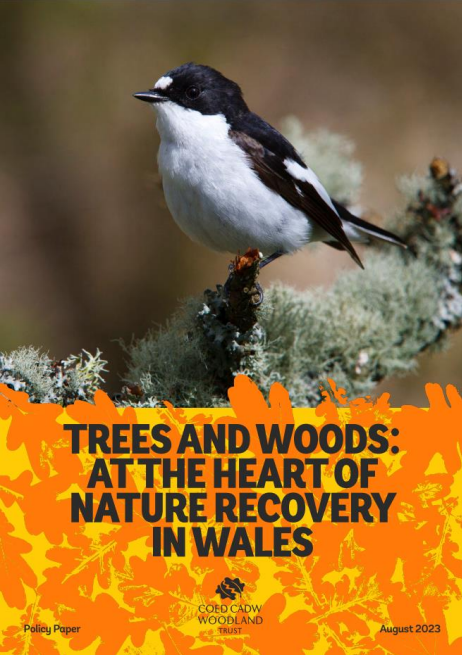


An aerial photograph of a rural landscape featuring rolling green hills. The terrain is a mix of lush green fields, some with patches of brown soil, and dense clusters of trees. The hills recede into the distance under a clear, light blue sky.

# The Role of Trees and Woods in Nature Recovery

**Louise Wilkinson – Lead Policy Advocate for Nature Recovery**  
**Richard O’Callaghan – Lead External Affairs Officer**

# Successful launches of our nature recovery policy reports featuring Youth Council speakers Nell and Tammie



# The Nature Crisis



- England is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world – 228<sup>th</sup> out of 240 Biodiversity Intactness Index, Wales is 224<sup>th</sup>, NI is 227<sup>th</sup>
- Just 7% of the UK's native woodlands are in good ecological condition
- One third of all woodland species are in decline
- 41% decline in woodland butterflies between 1990 - 2019
- 29% decline in woodland bird index between 1970 -2019
- Five woodland specialists declined by 80%
- Barrage of coinciding pressures – direct and indirect

# What is nature recovery with woods and trees?

## Nature-rich, resilient treescapes

**Landscape matrix:**  
A mosaic of habitats that allows safe movement of species between two core areas.

**Restoration areas:**  
Areas where species and habitats can be restored to create new sites for nature.

**Stepping stones:**  
A series of small habitats, such as small copses, not physically linked but close enough to provide wildlife with shelter, food and rest between core areas.

**Core area:**  
Areas of highest wildlife value.

**Buffer Zone:**  
Protect core areas from threats.

**Linear connected habitat:**  
Uninterrupted strips of habitat that link core areas including the 'hedges and edges' network.

**Improving the matrix:**  
We need regenerative farming with trees and shrubs to restore soils and enhance wildlife abundance everywhere.

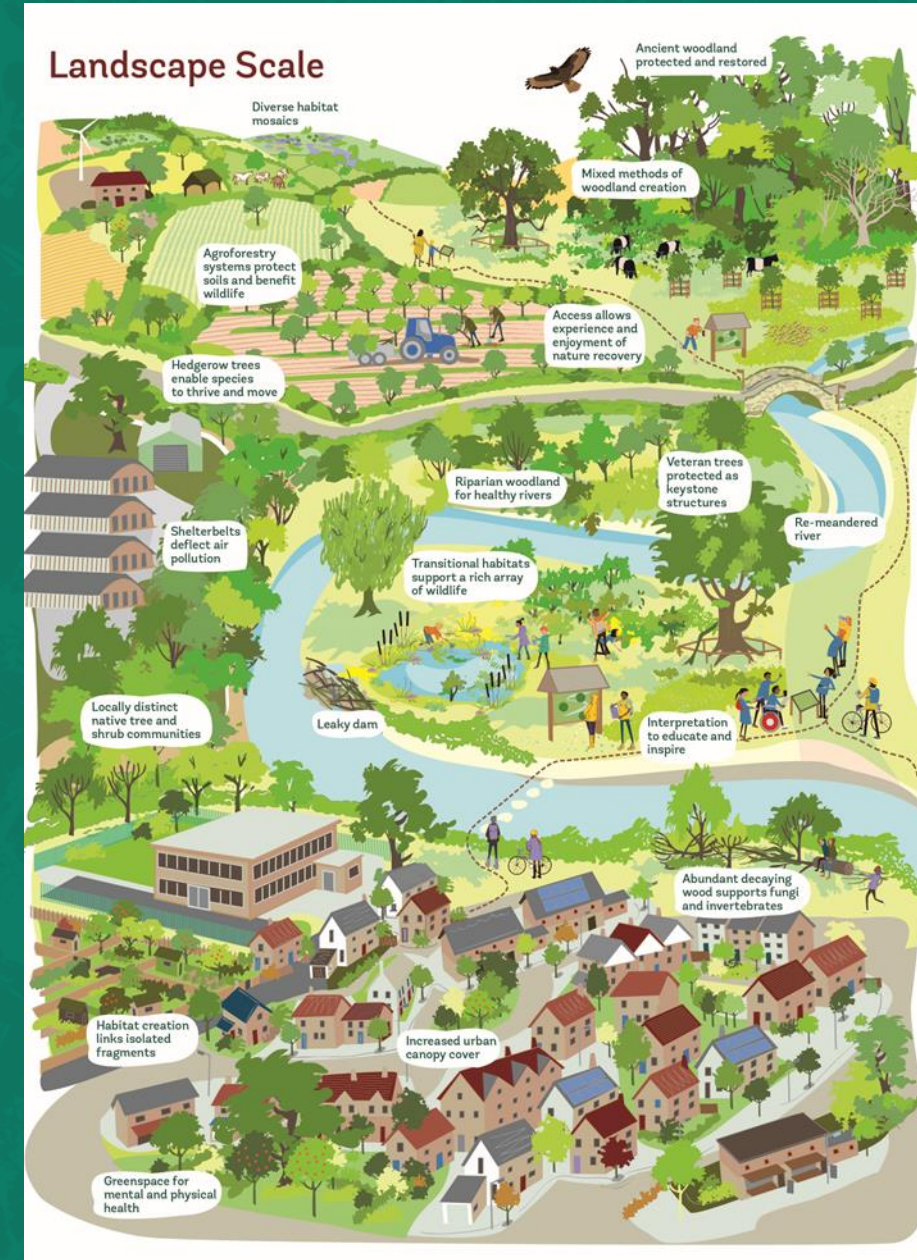
**Based on the Lawton principles**  
(Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network, Lawton et al 2010)

For native woods and trees, we need:

- **more** natural and semi-natural wooded habitats and more trees in the landscape
- **bigger** and more naturally functioning wooded-habitat areas by buffering and extending existing woods and trees
- **better** wooded sites by making them complex and diverse mosaics, free from and resilient to threats
- **joined-up** -reduce distance between habitats to allow species dispersal and colonisation

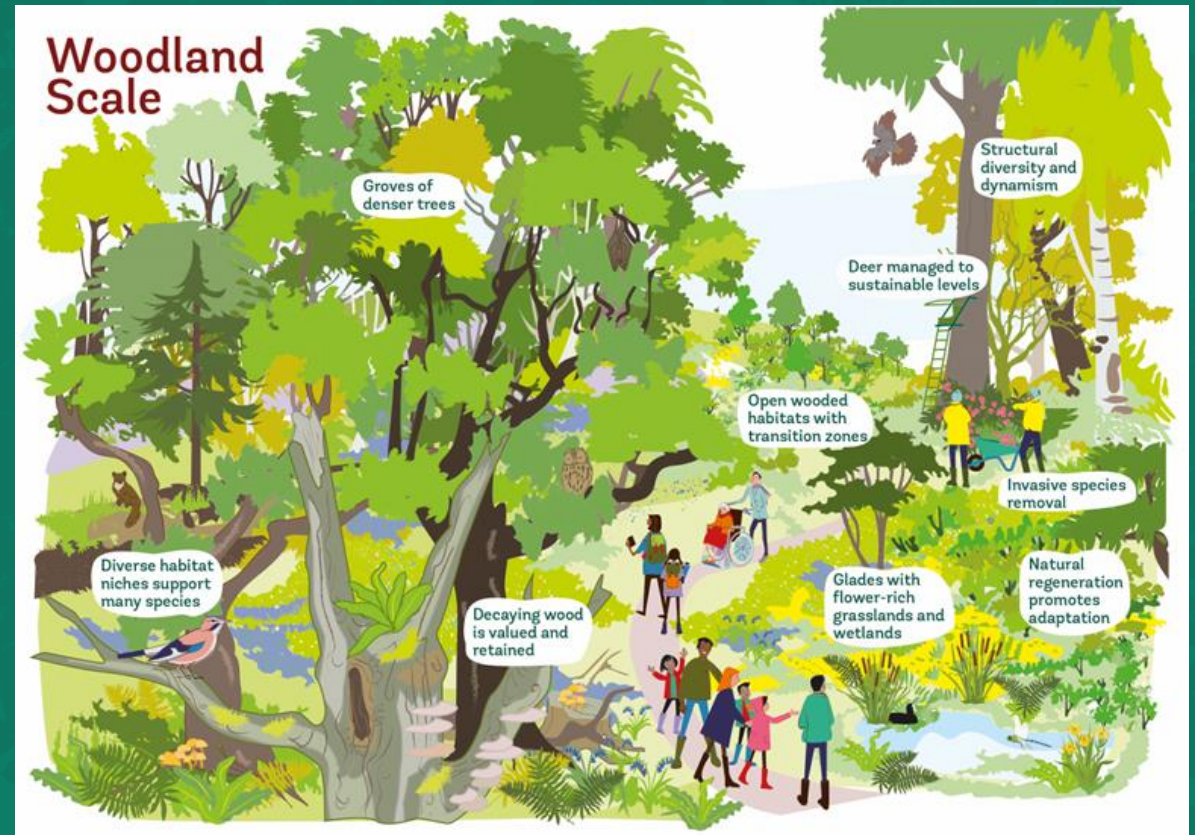
# Principles of Landscape scale nature recovery with woods and trees

- Protect and restore the surviving nature resource
- Bigger and more habitat – through buffering
- Abundant and diverse native trees and shrubs should be prioritised
- A blend of woodland creation methods should be used
- Threats to habitat condition should be addressed
- Mosaics of semi-natural habitat of different types
- More joined up natural habitats
- Reintroductions of keystone species



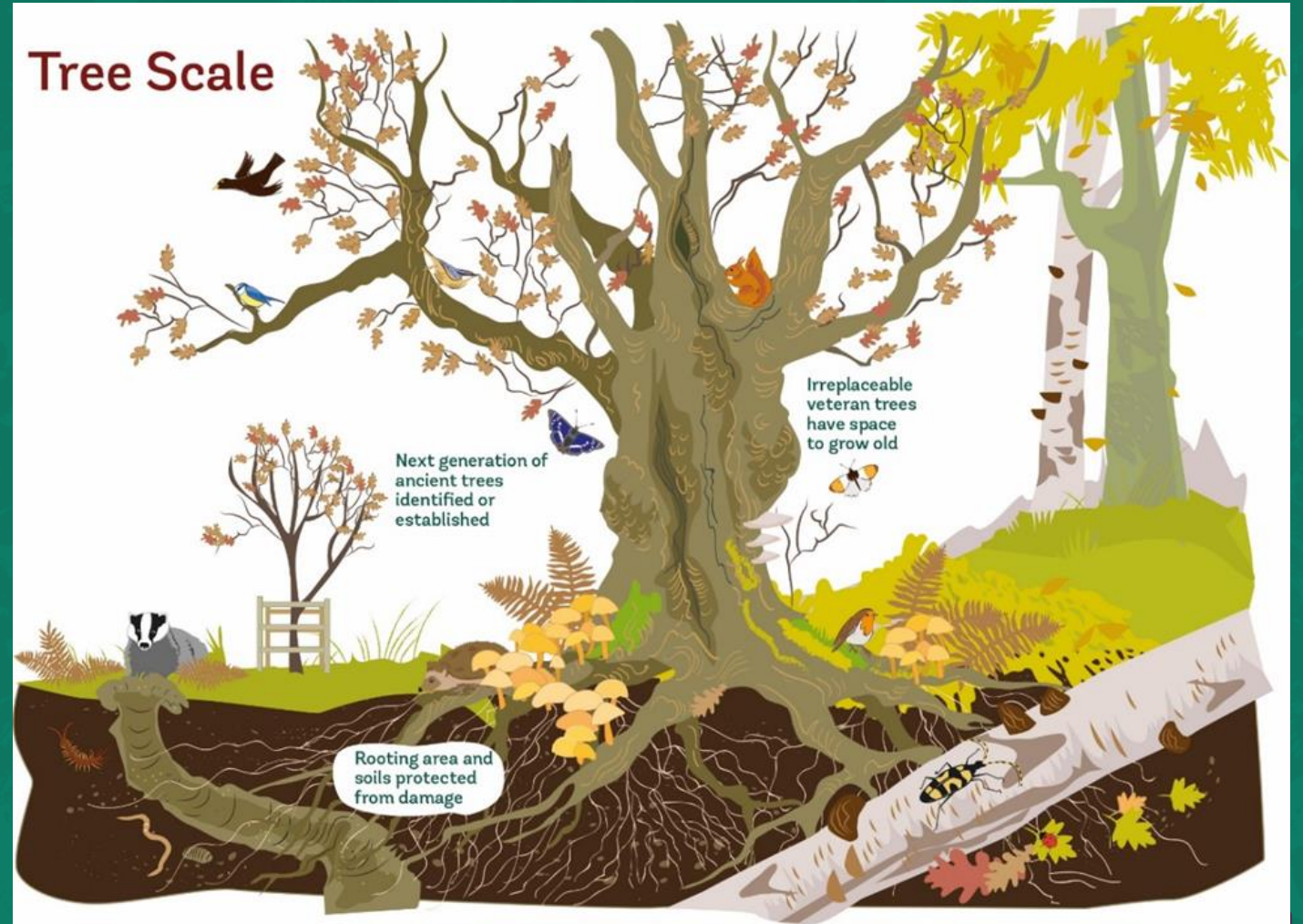
# Principles of woodland-scale nature recovery

- **Protect and restore the surviving nature resource**
- **Improve woodland ecological condition by increasing tree and shrub species diversity and enhancing structural complexity to support a variety of wildlife habitats**
- **Use active conservation management**
- **Restore natural processes and dynamism where feasible**



# Principles of tree scale nature recovery

- Ancient and veteran trees should be identified, valued, protected and properly managed
- Future veteran trees should be identified or established
- Time is needed to develop old growth characteristics



## Examples of once common species which would benefit from improved protection, restoration and creation of semi-natural wooded habitats:

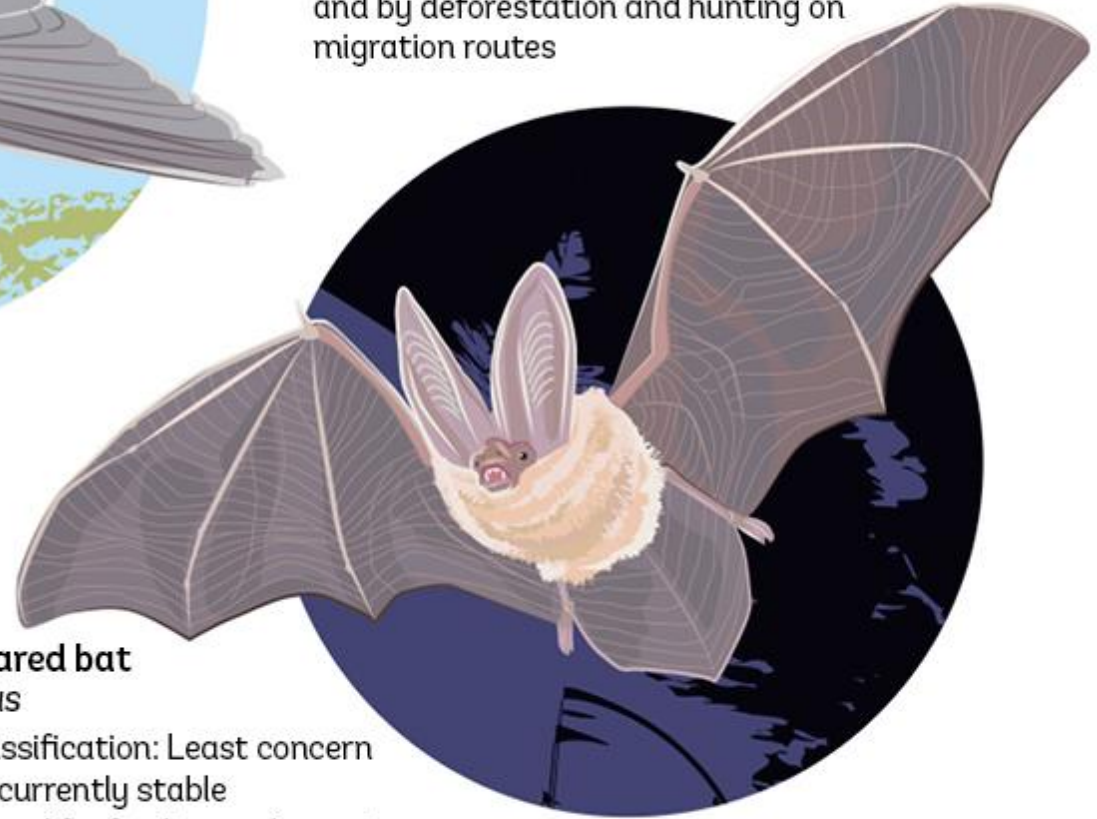
### Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*

- Red List classification: Vulnerable
- Uses woods, trees and hedgerows for hibernation and feeding
- Population declined by approximately 70% since 2000
- Threatened by loss and damage of hedgerows and woodland, use of pesticides in farms and gardens, and increased built development



### Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

- Red List classification: Vulnerable
- Population declined by 27% between 1980 and 2015
- Uses woods and trees for nesting where host species nest (e.g. dunnock)
- Threatened by loss of habitat and the knock-on effects to their host species, and by deforestation and hunting on migration routes



### Brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*

- Red List classification: Least concern
- Population currently stable
- Uses woodland for feeding and roosting, and hedgerows for navigation
- Threatened by loss of their woodland habitats, depriving bats of roost sites and hunting grounds

# NATIONAL GOVERNMENT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Launch a new £1 billion woodland nature recovery fund
- a £100 million Woods for People Fund for creation of a new generation of accessible wildlife-rich woodland
- Set a new legally binding target to increase native tree canopy cover in England to 16%, to deliver semi-natural woodland habitat and wildlife corridors.
- Protect and manage more ancient woodland as SSSI



# 10 LOCAL AUTHORITY RECOMMENDATIONS - 1

- Declare a nature emergency and set out a clear response to address it
- Increase access to nature while supporting its recovery by
  - Ensuring everyone has access to nature-rich green space within 10 minutes of home
  - Ensuring a minimum of 30% canopy cover in all new housing developments



# 10 LOCAL AUTHORITY RECOMMENDATIONS - 2

- Ensure LNRSs are based on the best available data and include ambitious targets and robust monitoring
- Embed LNRSs in local plans and other policies
- Ensure that LNRS creation includes the active participation of local communities
- Presumption to retain trees on development sites
- Prioritise the use of council land holdings for well-targeted habitat creation and restoration as exemplars for nature recovery and climate mitigation



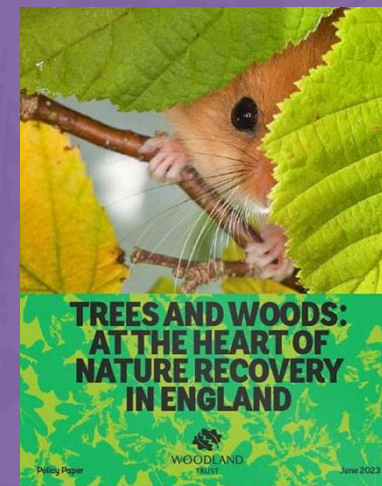
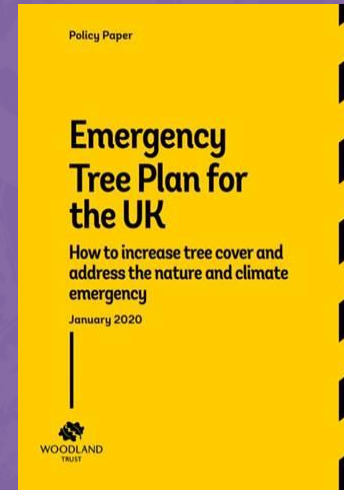
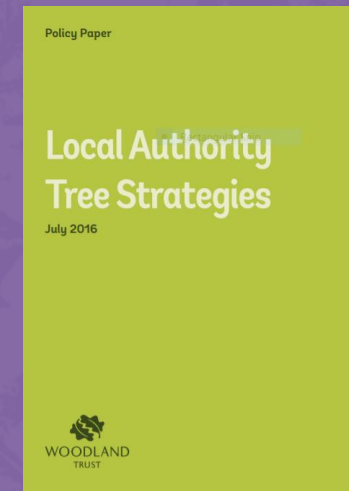
## 10 LOCAL AUTHORITY RECOMMENDATIONS - 3

- Employ a specialist ecologist or tree officer
- Better protection for ancient woods and trees
- Use planning powers to support nature recovery, through developer contributions and ambitious Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) policies



# WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

- Policy recommendations
- Advice on implementing your policy priorities
- Positive input to local plans & strategies, including model wording
- Template Tree Strategy
- Evidence and data – Tree Equity, AWI, ATI
- Access to funding and expertise
- Free trees for community groups, town and parish councils, and schools
- Our participation in council events
- Advice on specific projects or problems



Thank you  
for listening  
Not heard enough?  
We can tell you more

Thank you  
for listening  
Not heard enough?  
We can tell you more

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