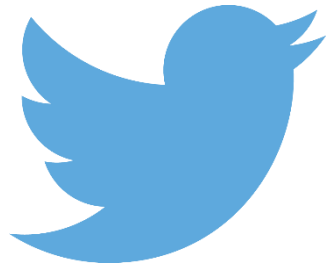




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Re-wilding - Can local authorities deliver?





What is re-wilding?

‘the large-scale restoration of ecosystems to the point where nature is allowed to take care of itself. Rewilding seeks to reinstate natural processes and, where appropriate, missing species – allowing them to shape the landscape and the habitats within’.

Rewilding is comprehensive, often large-scale, conservation effort focused on restoring sustainable biodiversity and ecosystem health by protecting **core wild/wilderness areas**, providing **connectivity** between such areas, and protecting or reintroducing **apex predators** and highly interactive species (keystone species).

The ultimate goal of rewilding efforts is to mitigate the species extinction crisis and restore healthy and sustainable ecosystem function in areas that require little or no human intervention or management

The vision is of dynamic but stable self-regulating and self-sustaining ecosystems with near pre-human levels of species diversity

The shorthand definition of Rewilding is the "3 C's"--conservation of **Cores, Corridors, and Carnivores.**



Core areas – are these the only options for rewilding?



Why re-wild?

By 2050 over two-thirds of the global population will live in urban areas which will need to be resilient to the impacts of climate change, embracing the natural world will be one way to achieve this.

The UK has lost large areas of natural spaces and with it has seen a large decline in biodiversity levels.

Over two-thirds of the UK is now used for agriculture and 8% is built on

Between 1970 and 2013, 56% of species in the UK declined.

Public spending in 2018/19 on improving biodiversity accounted for 0.022% of the UK GDP



Examples of UK rewilding (Northern Region)

- Peat bog restoration in Northumbria, Cumbria, Lancashire, Yorkshire and Greater Manchester – carbon sequestration, purify and store water, alleviate flooding risk and provide unique wildlife habitats.
- Returning Swindale Beck in Cumbria to its original course has led to the return of salmon and trout as well as increasing the quality of aquatic habitats in the river and reducing the potential for flooding downstream.
- Creating Highly Protected Marine Areas by banning fishing and any activities which may damage the sea bed.
- Doncaster, Rotherham, Wirral and Bradford are considering re-wilding targets into their future greenspace management plans.





So where do local authorities stand in relation to re-wilding?

Recent study stated that 21% of councils in the UK said they were re-wilding or had plans to do so in the future.

Not every council has the potential or resources to undertake large scale landscape re-wilding.

Few councils have the same understanding or definition of what re-wilding is.

General views

'Return to a wilder state'

'Re-introduction of native plants and species'

'Natural processes replacing human management of sites'

'Allowing nature to act more freely'

'Protecting nature areas to allow nature to thrive'

Specific examples

Reduced mowing, bee corridors, tree planting and wildflower meadows – **re-wilding?**

If not re-wilding, then what?

Until now rewilding, which is by its very nature a large-scale effort, has been concentrated in the countryside and rural areas. More recently, however, there have been a number of projects and local movements pushing for more urban rewilding and at a smaller scale.

By creating '**microrewilding**' projects there will be an ability to connect such spaces and create nature corridors throughout the landscape.

Microrewilding can offer many benefits such as reducing flood risk, improving air quality, and countering the urban heat island effect.

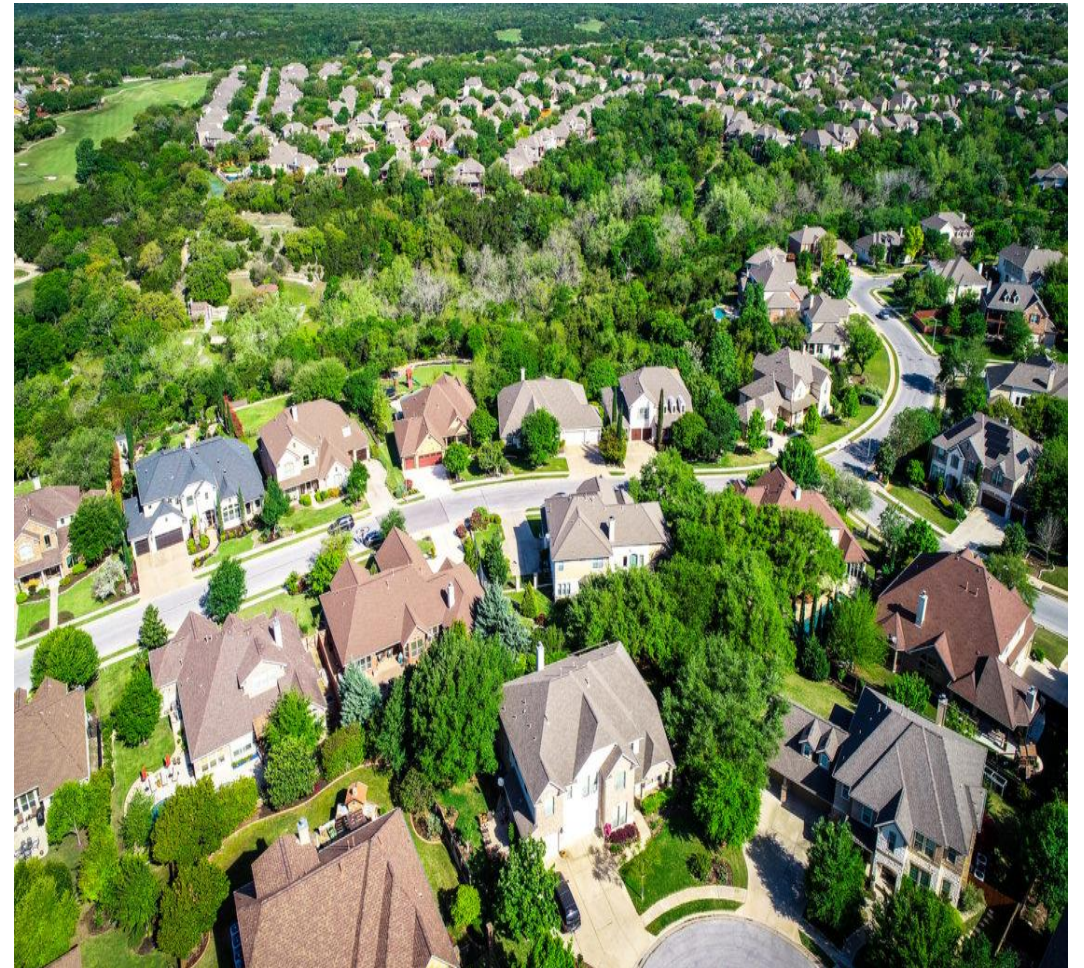


The Desire to reconnect with nature

Gardens cover about a quarter of many cities, and rows of gardens can form a habitat corridor, potentially linking up wider green spaces like parks, as well as allotments, school playing fields, cemeteries, and other places that can be of value to wildlife.

In urban environments, largely due to a lack of access, many people have forgotten how to co-exist with wildlife. Through smaller and more local microrewilding efforts, these relationship can be restored

COVID saw a desire to reconnect with nature, and visitor numbers to greenspaces have not fallen post- COVID.





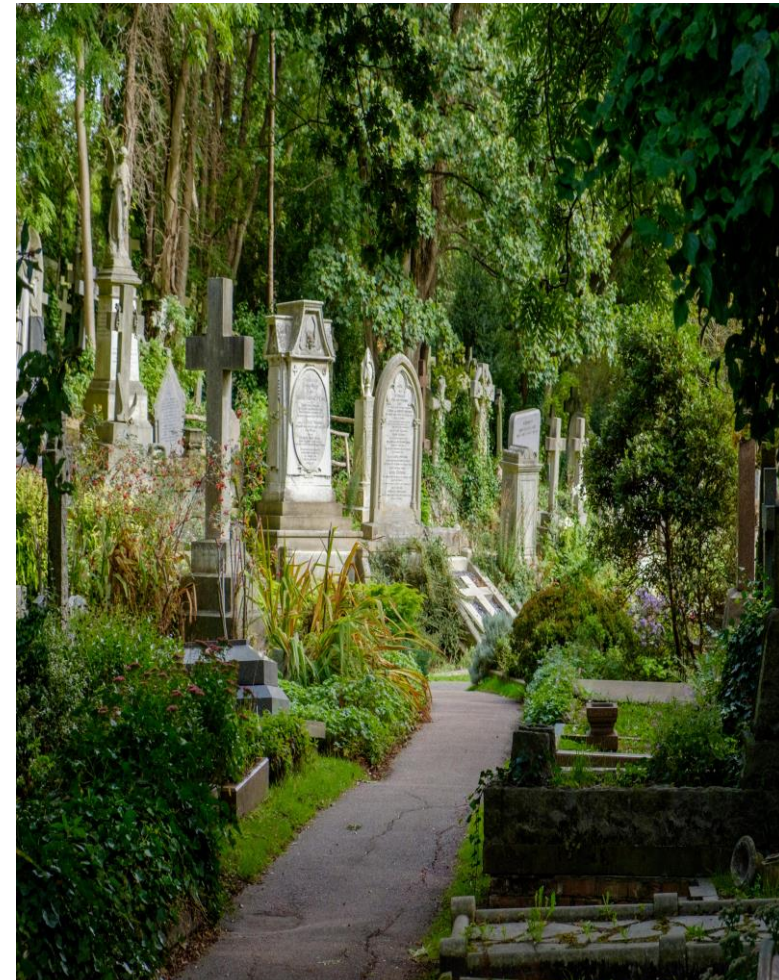
10 steps to urban rewilding

Urban spaces are entirely human construct but with some innovative thinking, these could be altered to create novel but functioning ecosystems.

- 1. Established green spaces must be managed, at least in part, with wildlife in mind.**
- 2. We must understand what biodiversity we already have.**
- 3. Management of our largest green spaces should be altered to help them reach their ecological potential.**
- 4. Our urban areas must be considered as a microcosm of what we want to achieve in the wider landscape.**
- 5. Within the confines of urban areas, we must be practical about what is feasible.**
- 6. Raise awareness and the benefits of rewilding.**
- 7. Rewilding people must be at the heart of Urban Rewilding.**
- 8. No space is too small to be valuable.**
- 9. Talk to neighbours and partners about connectivity.**
- 10. Promote success.**



Making the connections



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