

PART 1: STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

The **Monmouthshire Local Nature Recovery Action Plan** (Local NRAP) is a guide to help protect and restore nature in Monmouthshire. It was created by the **Monmouthshire Local Nature Partnership (LNP)** and works alongside other plans at both regional and national levels.

This **easy-read version** is designed to help everyone understand what the Local NRAP is and how you can get involved in supporting nature.

WHAT IS BIODIVERSITY?

Biodiversity means the variety of all living things on Earth. This includes:

- Different species of animals, plants, fungi, and microorganisms
- The differences between individuals of the same species (caused by genes)

WHAT IS NATURE?

Nature is more than just biodiversity. It also includes **natural processes** like:

- Weather
- Water cycles
- Soil formation

These processes help support life and keep ecosystems healthy.

An **ecosystem** is a community of living things and the natural processes that support them in a specific area.

WHAT IS NATURE RECOVERY?

Nature Recovery is about helping nature heal. This means:

- Restoring habitats (such as woodlands, rivers, and meadows)
- Protecting species
- Supporting natural processes

The goal is to create a healthier planet for everyone.

WHAT ARE ECOSYSTEM SERVICES?

Ecosystem services are the benefits we get from nature — for free! These include:

- **Photosynthesis** (plants making oxygen)
- **Pollination** (insects helping plants grow)
- **Recreation** (places like forests and parks for us to enjoy)

WHAT IS ECOSYSTEM RESILIENCE?

Ecosystem resilience is nature's ability to cope with change and recover from problems like pollution or climate change.

Things that help ecosystems stay strong include:

- **High biodiversity** (lots of different species)
- **Large size** (bigger areas of nature)
- **Good health** (clean air, water, and soil)
- **Strong connections** (wildlife and habitats linked together)

BIODIVERSITY IN MONMOUTHSHIRE

Monmouthshire is a big county with lots of different plants, animals, and habitats. It's also an important place for farming.

- The **Gwent Levels** are flat farmland with special ditches called **reens**, which help drain the land.
- There are large **woodlands** in the **Wye Valley** and **Wentwood**.
- Two big rivers flow through Monmouthshire - the **River Usk** and the **River Wye**, along with many smaller streams.

PROTECTED NATURE SITES IN MONMOUTHSHIRE

Some places in Monmouthshire are protected because they are very important for nature. These include:

- **Ramsar Sites** – These are important **wetlands**.
The **Severn Estuary** is a Ramsar site because it's home to special fish and birds.
- **Special Protection Areas (SPAs)** – These protect places that are important for **birds**.
The **Severn Estuary SPA** helps birds that spend the winter there.

- **Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)** – These protect rare **habitats and species**. There are **5 SACs** in the Monmouthshire area.
- **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)** – These are areas with **important wildlife or geology**. There are **54 SSSIs** in Monmouthshire.
- **Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)** and **Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)** – These are **locally important** places for nature. They don't have legal protection, but they are still very valuable. There are **783** of these sites in Monmouthshire!

NATURE EMERGENCY

The planet is changing because of the way people live and use natural resources. This is causing:

- **Climate change** (the Earth getting warmer and weather becoming more extreme)
- **Loss of biodiversity** (fewer animals, plants, and healthy habitats)

In **June 2021**, the **Senedd (Welsh Parliament)** said that we are in a **Nature Emergency**. This means nature is in serious trouble and we must act now.

A report called the **Wales State of Nature 2023** says that: **Wales is now one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world.**

This is a clear warning that we need to protect and restore nature urgently.

WHAT IS CAUSING NATURE LOSS?

Here are the biggest causes:

- **Farming** – Some ways of managing farmland can harm wildlife and habitats.
- **Climate change** – Changes in temperature and weather affect plants and animals.
- **Water management** – Changing how rivers and wetlands work can damage freshwater habitats.
- **Invasive species** – These are animals or plants that don't belong here and can harm native species. This includes pests and diseases.
- **Fishing** – Some fishing methods can damage marine life and habitats.
- **Woodland management** – Not looking after forests properly can lead to poor health of trees and wildlife.
- **Pollution** – Chemicals and waste can harm land, water, and air.
- **Urbanisation** – Building towns, roads, and houses can destroy natural spaces.

POSITIVE CHANGE FOR NATURE

There is hope! Good things are already happening to help nature recover in Wales.

- The **Future Wales National Plan** includes nature recovery as a key goal.
- The **Welsh Government** has said that the **nature crisis** is just as important as the **climate emergency**.

Here are some **positive actions** being taken:

- **Regenerative farming** – Farming in a way that helps the soil, wildlife, and climate.
- **Natural flood management** – Using nature (like trees and wetlands) to help control flooding.
- **Ecological network mapping** – Finding and connecting important places for wildlife so animals and plants can move and thrive.

WHAT'S IN THE LOCAL NRAP?

The Local NRAP has **four main parts**:

1. **Part 1: Strategy**
 - This is the overall plan for nature recovery in Monmouthshire.
 - It includes a **General Action Plan** with actions to support nature which aren't linked to a specific habitat or species.
2. **Part 2: Habitats**
 - Plans to protect and improve **important habitats** in Monmouthshire.
3. **Part 3: Species**
 - Plans to help **priority species** that need extra care and protection.
4. **Part 4: Action**
 - A community action plan
 - Real-life **examples of projects** done by LNP members.
 - Reports on what has been achieved through the Local NRAP.

WHAT IS THE GENERAL ACTION PLAN?

The **General Action Plan** includes actions that:

- Are **important for Monmouthshire**
- Help **nature recovery**
- Are **not linked** to a specific habitat or species

These are grouped into four main areas:

1. Policies, Plans and Procedures

- **G1.1** – Make sure decisions are based on good evidence and help nature.
- **G1.2** – Include nature recovery in all partner plans and policies.
- **G1.3** – Keep the Local Nature Partnership strong so it can link local and national work.
- **G1.4** – Keep track of progress and update actions when new information is available.

2. Education and Awareness

- **G2.1** – Create a website to share nature recovery news and actions people can take.
- **G2.2** – Work with schools, communities, businesses, and councils to raise awareness and take action.
- **G2.3** – Offer training to help people learn green skills and support nature.

3. Evidence and Understanding

- **G3.1** – Keep a list of all nature recovery projects to avoid overlap and find ways to work together.
- **G3.2** – Make sure all nature data is shared with SEWBReC (the local environmental records centre).
- **G3.3** – Create a list of important local species and habitats and track how they're doing.
- **G3.4** – Support surveys and mapping of wildlife, invasive species, and ecosystem health — including citizen science.
- **G3.5** – Help create maps that show where nature is strong and where it needs help.

4. Promoting Ecosystem Resilience

- **G4.1** – Encourage teamwork between LNP members and nearby areas to work on big projects together.
- **G4.2** – Support nature-based solutions (like planting trees to reduce flooding) and find the best places to use them.

OTHER IMPORTANT NATURE PLANS

There are other plans and projects that also help protect nature in and around Monmouthshire. Here are some key ones:

Bannau Brycheiniog National Park (BBNP)

- The **National Park** has its own **Local Nature Partnership**.

- It created a **Local NRAP** in **2019** and is now reviewing it to update the actions.
- If you work in the park, you should also know about the **Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site (BILWHS)** and its **Management Plan**.

Gwent Wildlife Trust's Ten Vulnerable Species

- These are **10 species** that are at risk in **Gwent**.
- They were chosen because:
 - They are **threatened**.
 - Helping them will also help **other species** across the region.

Wye Valley National Landscape

- This area is protected as an **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**.
- The **AONB Management Plan** explains the vision and priorities for looking after the area.
- A new **Nature Recovery Plan** is coming soon. It will:
 - Focus on **important habitats** in the Wye Valley.
 - Look at their **current condition**.
 - Set goals for **restoring nature** in each habitat.