

Local Nature Action Plan Webinar – Integrated Minutes

Date: 17 November 2025 **Chair:** Rosemary Collier (Warwickshire, Coventry & Solihull Local Nature Partnership) **Attendance:** ~24 organisations

1. Opening & Context

- Purpose: Support communities in developing **Local Nature Action Plans (LNAPs)** aligned with the **Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)**.
- Emphasis on councils and communities co-creating plans, not working in isolation.

2. Hedgerows (Rosemary Collier)

- Hedgerows are vital for **habitat connectivity** and support priority species (hedgehog, dormouse, hairstreak butterflies).
- Historic survey (1995) outdated; condition data lacking.
- **New hedgerow assessment app** (NCAP/Wildlife Trust) launching in 2026 → feeds data directly into WCC's database.
- CPRE initiative: free hedgerow planting/restoration offered to landowners, volunteer-led.
- Reminder: landowner permission and volunteer insurance required for surveys.

3. Mapping Tools (Rosemary Collier)

- **Green Infrastructure Map:** hedgerows, wetlands, woodlands, grasslands, wildlife sites.
- **LNRS Map:** interactive, highlights priority species/habitats.
- Councils encouraged to create **local maps** (e.g., Google My Maps) for tailored planning.
- Example: Tysoe Parish Council developing layered maps.

4. Local Wildlife Sites (Rosemary Collier)

- Non-statutory but ecologically valuable; act as buffers/corridors.
- Identified via LNRS/Green Infrastructure maps.
- Detailed info available from **Warwickshire Biological Records Centre (WBRC)**.
- Communities can propose new sites with justification.

5. Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Sue Hartland Smith, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust)

- LNRS draft completed; final version expected Feb - Mar 2026.
- National target: **30% of land in recovery by 2030**; increase tree cover from 7% → 15%; restore ponds.
- Priorities: water resilience, blue-green placemaking, connecting people to nature, sustainable land management, nature-based solutions, green finance.
- Species priorities: hedgehog, bats, pollinators, farmland birds, dormouse, crayfish, seasonal migrants (swifts, swallows), reintroductions (beaver, osprey, pine marten).
- Communities urged to focus on **common but declining species** (sparrow, starling, swift, toad, pollinators).

6. Community Actions (Sue Hartland Smith)

- Record wildlife sightings (submit to WBRC).
- Respond to planning applications with biodiversity concerns.
- Survey hedgerows using new app.
- Volunteer for projects, restore village ponds.
- Organise events: bio-blitz, wildlife watch, toad action days, bird boxes.
- Raise awareness via local media.

7. Case Studies (Amanda Evans, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust)

- **Attleborough Wildlife Watchers (Nuneaton)**: grew from litter picks → tree planting, water vole monitoring, kick surveys, campaigning with MP.
- **Leamington Hedgehog Community**: started with fence holes on one street → expanded town-wide, carpenter engaged, aiming for “hedgehog-friendly Leamington.”
- **Harbury Swift Project**: began with nest boxes on pub redevelopment → now 50–60 boxes installed, expanding to other villages.

8. WCAVA Contribution (David Simkins)

- WCAVA supports groups with **funding advice, governance, volunteering, and group development**.
- Access to funding databases; can help identify appropriate funders and assist with applications.
- Funding landscape now highly competitive → large bids less likely to succeed.

- Recommended approach: **smaller, phased bids across multiple funders.**
- Example: successful **Green Shoots Fund** collaboration with parish councils and allotments, coordinated by Wildlife Trust.

9. WALC Contribution (Claudine Pearson)

- Parish councils have a **duty to biodiversity**: set policies, objectives, and take practical action.
- Encouraged councils to **publish biodiversity pledges/statements** on websites.
- Practical steps:
 - Make a pledge.
 - Hold a public meeting to gather local knowledge or go to community groups, e.g. garden clubs, WI to find allies
 - Form a working group (templates and terms of reference available).
 - Adopt biodiversity policies (simple one-page or detailed SLCC model).
 - Contact the **Wilder Communities Officer** (Stratford & Warwick Districts).
 - Sign up to the Local Climate Engagement Newsletter
- Neighbourhood Development Plans: embed biodiversity priorities for greater statutory weight (advised by David Lowe, WCC).
- Next steps: WALC to circulate slides/notes; councils asked to share support needs; potential for more regular sessions.

10. Q&A Discussion

Hedgerow Surveys

- **Issue:** Do surveys along roads/footpaths need landowner permission?
- **Response:** Yes - always best to inform or seek permission from adjoining landowners to avoid reputational issues.

Churchyards & Sacred Grounds

- **Issue:** Balancing tidy graveyards with biodiversity.
- **Responses:**
 - Eco Church initiative and Caring for God's Acre provide frameworks.
 - Coventry Diocese developing a project to improve church grounds, with potential lottery funding.

- Wildlife Trust to run **baseline survey training** (bio-blitzes) in spring 2026.

Baseline Surveys & Species Protection

- **Natalie Walker (Solihull MBC):** Baseline surveys are critical to avoid harming existing biodiversity. Must consider invertebrates, fungi, reptiles (e.g., slow worm). Funding pressures often overlook this step.

Farmer Engagement & Data Use

- **Issue:** Farmers submitted mammal records years ago - what happened to the data?
- **Responses:**
 - Data should be accessible via WBRC; likely fed into LNRS.
 - Rosemary to follow up.
 - Farmer-led environmental groups active across Warwickshire.
 - Parish councils can commission **Natural Capital Assessments** for assets.

Resident Engagement Strategies

- **Claudine Pearson:**
 - Public meetings with engaging speakers are effective.
 - Use maps and local memories (e.g., old ponds) to spark interest.
 - Low-cost ideas: small habitat improvements with donated plants, signage.
 - Awards (e.g., Bee Friendly Awards) can unite communities.

Planning & Local Government Reorganisation

- Concerns about planning decisions undermining biodiversity (e.g., lighting impacts, biodiversity offsetting).
- Embedding biodiversity priorities in **Neighbourhood Development Plans** gives more statutory weight.
- Local government reorganisation may affect land ownership and responsibilities.

Landowner Identification

- **Issue:** How to find hedgerow landowners?

- **Response:** Difficult - Land Registry is costly; networking and local knowledge are most practical.

Final Points

- **Christabel Shawcross:** Frustration with planning system and biodiversity offsetting; importance of local action despite national challenges.
- **Rosemary Collier:** Recording wildlife sightings remains vital - submit to WBRC or via apps (iNaturalist, iRecord).
- **Amanda Evans:** Every small action contributes to collective impact.
- **Claudine Pearson:** Awards and recognition schemes can motivate communities.
- **David Simkins (WCAVA):** Funders value **collaborations** - joint bids are more attractive.

Integrated Key Takeaways

- **Hedgerows and mapping** are central to local action planning.
- LNRS provides a framework, but parishes must create their own tailored maps and plans.
- Communities can start small (hedgehog holes, litter picks) and grow into larger initiatives.
- Collaboration with Wildlife Trust, CPRE, WBRC, WCAVA, and WALC is essential.
- Funding is competitive → collective bids and phased applications more effective.
- Councils should **make biodiversity visible** through pledges, policies, and public engagement.
- Embedding biodiversity priorities in **Neighbourhood Development Plans** strengthens their impact.
- Baseline surveys and recording are essential before interventions.
- Final LNRS expected early 2026 will guide next steps.