



The Land Trust  
Biodiversity,  
Environment and  
Ecology Strategy







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# Foreword

Nick Taylor Buck,  
Trustee and Chair of the  
Land Trust's BEE Advisory Group

At the Land Trust we recognise that we have a unique opportunity to use our 80 parks and green spaces to help improve the biodiversity, environment and ecology of our country, for the benefit of everyone.

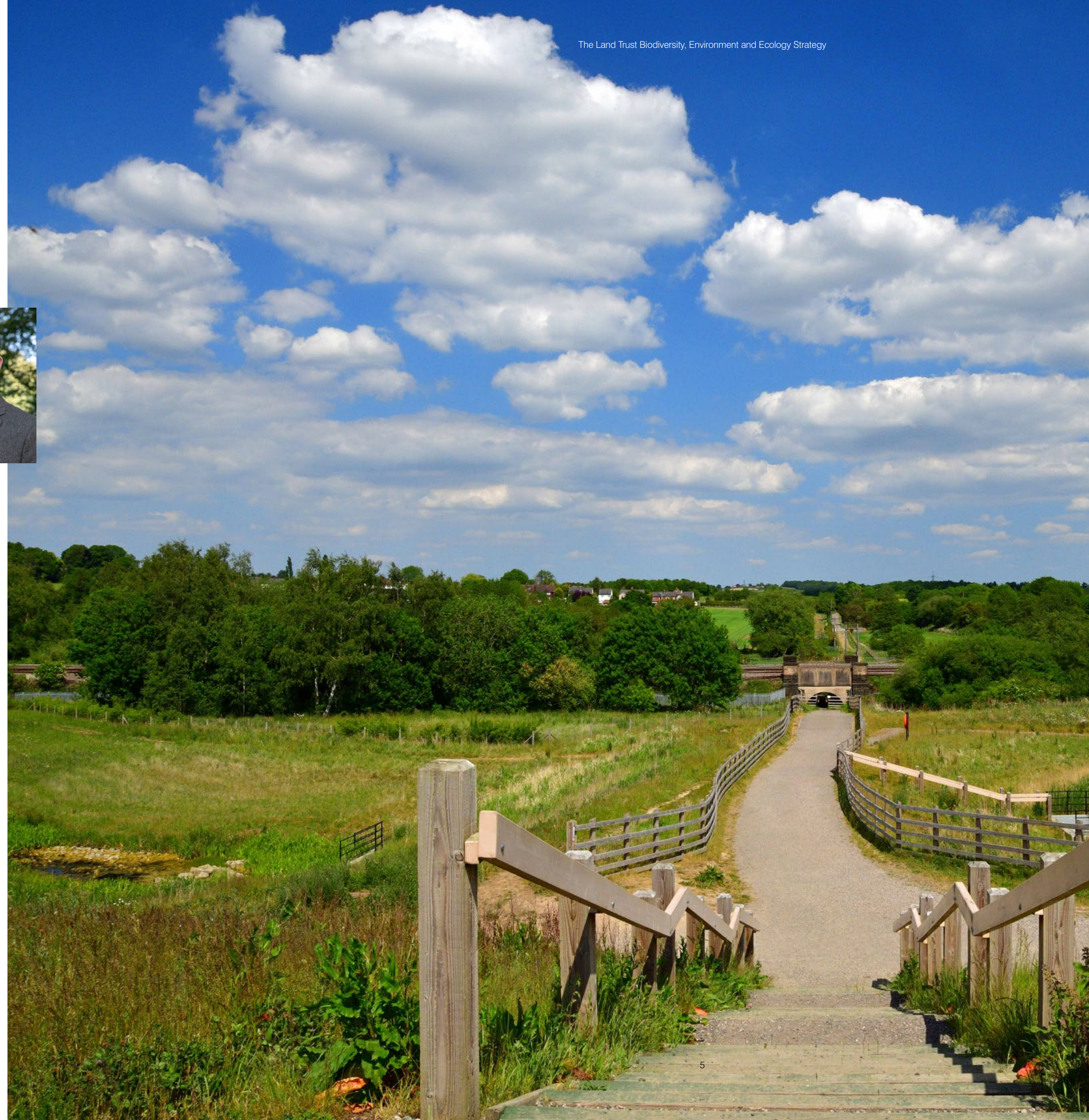
There has never been a better time to do this. Since the outbreak of Covid-19, what has become increasingly clear is just how vital parks and green spaces are for people's physical and mental wellbeing.

We have witnessed this first hand with thousands of people flocking to our sites during the periods of lockdown for respite and recreation. Although we haven't been able to run our normal community events and activities, our green spaces have never been more popular or well-used, which has been wonderful to see.

We aim to increase these benefits even more with our new Biodiversity, Environment and Ecology (BEE) strategy, which aims to help tackle climate change, and ease pressures on vulnerable wildlife. This new plan builds on the great work we are already doing with the ambition of developing that substantially over the next five years.

The Land Trust has always been ambitious in the goals that we set for ourselves, and for this work it will be no different. However we also recognise that we can't do this alone, and as well as drawing on our own internal expertise, we'll also be working with a variety of partners to help us achieve our goals. That means everything from international organisations to people who love their local wildlife patch.

So please read our plan and see what we've got to say. If you think you can help us with our mission we would love to hear from you.





# Foreword

Alan Carter,  
Director of Operations



At the Land Trust we have long understood the important role our parks and green spaces can play in helping the environment, biodiversity and ecology of an area, and we have always managed our sites in such a way to allow them to thrive.

As Director of Operations for the Land Trust it is my responsibility to maximise the charitable output we deliver across our portfolio. Working in collaboration with our managing partners and others, we deliver a huge amount of activity that benefits the environment.

However the challenge of delivering charitable outcomes is ensuring that we can organise events and activities that benefit our communities while ensuring that it doesn't negatively affect the wildlife and biodiversity that call our sites home. What we try and do is the opposite. We engage with the local community so that they understand and value the natural environment around them, and by doing so

we encourage them to undertake activities and tasks which improve the environment and biodiversity.

With some amazing green spaces in our management portfolio we are already doing a huge amount. However we also know there is potential to do so much more.

One of the key objectives in the Land Trust's five year business plan is the acquisition of public open space within new housing developments. While the building of new houses inevitably has an initial impact on an area there are a multitude of new challenges for the Land Trust with biodiversity net gain likely to present a huge opportunity for us in the future. You will read more about this throughout the strategy document.

We are incredibly proud of the work we do already and are excited about the challenges we face in the future.



# The Land Trust Charitable Objectives – Environment and Biodiversity

The Land Trust has five key charitable objectives which are the driving force behind everything we do. One of these objectives focuses on environment and biodiversity.

Our ambition is for our parks and green spaces to be as rich in biodiversity as possible and we manage our sites in such a way that trees, flowers, bugs, birds and people can thrive alongside each other.



Promote the conservation, protection and improvement of the natural environment



Promote sustainable development for the benefit of the public by prudent use of natural resources and the promotion of biological diversity



Improve public education in subjects relating to sustainable development and the protection, rehabilitation and enhancement of the environment



Promote urban and rural regeneration in areas of economic and social deprivation by the protection or conservation of the environment



# Why are we doing this and why is it important?

The social and ecological emergency the world is now facing is becoming increasingly clear and the UK has some of the most ambitious targets across the world. However we need action now to deliver this ambition.

At the Land Trust we recognise that with over 80 parks and green spaces across England, we are in a unique position to be able to make a vital difference. We are already doing a huge amount of work in this area but recognise that we can always do more.

We understand that all species are connected. The air we breathe depends on plants producing oxygen, and without bees and other insects to pollinate crops our supply of food would be drastically reduced.

Losing one species within this web of life weakens the connections that benefit us all. If we don't enable biodiversity to thrive then human beings won't be able to thrive either.

"For our country to be the healthiest, most beautiful place in the world to live, work and bring up a family"

Defra vision

"To create a healthy natural environment on land and at sea that supports people's wellbeing and sustainable growth"

Natural England Vision





# Our strategy

Following a review of the work we currently do the Land Trust has developed a new Biodiversity, Environment and Ecology (BEE) strategy, which focuses on three key themes. These are:

## Developing what we have

Conserve and enhance what we have and involve those who live, learn and work close to our sites

## Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain

Work with developers to ensure sustainable local development and long term solutions that significantly enhance the local environment

## Climate Change adaptation / Natural Capital Investment

Use our existing and pipeline sites to protect and enhance the local area from climate change threats. Gain a greater understanding of the positive effects our sites have and could have





Strategy in detail

# Developing what we have



- In the Land Trust's current management portfolio we have a number of sites with conservation designations including:
- Four SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest)
  - One proposed SSSI
  - One Geological SSSI
  - 10 Local Wildlife Sites
  - One Site of Borough Importance – Grade 1
  - One Metropolitan Greenspace
  - One 'EA Sensitive Area'
  - Two SAMs (Scheduled Ancient Monuments)

- Within these sites and in our wider portfolio this includes:
- 345ha of conservation grassland
  - Over 10km of hedgerows, 123ha of woodland and almost 10km of rivers and streams
  - Approximately 37ha of specialist habitat, including lowland heathland and reedbeds

Sites like Canvey Wick and Carr Lodge are regionally significant hotspots for invertebrates, with 1,600 and almost 400 species respectively.

We know that many of our sites support Red Listed birds and Near Threatened Invertebrate species, so we are working with our partners to find out more about the species on our sites to enable us to prioritise our work to conserve and enhance their populations.

However, we would like to know a lot more about the species on all our sites, and this work is ongoing.



Over the next five years the Land Trust will complete the following actions to build on the excellent work already happening on our sites and grow our work further. We will:

Establish an internal Portfolio Biodiversity Review group to ensure that Biodiversity remains at the forefront of everything we do

Undertake a national biodiversity baseline of our sites

Prioritise targeted habitat and species management work

Work with our managing partners to more consistently report on progress against our biodiversity targets



## Strategy in detail

# Mandatory biodiversity net gain

Over the last few years the Land Trust has moved into the residential service charge market, with the charity now having responsibility for managing over 200 hectares of public open space on behalf of 4,500 homeowners at nine sites across the country. This figure is expected to rise significantly over the next 10 years.

As environment and biodiversity is one of our five key charitable objectives we have always put management plans in place that ensure that people and wildlife can thrive side by side.

It has been very encouraging to see this becoming an increasing priority at the highest levels of Government with the publication of their 25 year Environment Plan.

## What is biodiversity net gain?

Biodiversity net gain is a mandatory approach to development that ensures biodiversity is left in a better state than it was before development. Where a development has a negative impact on biodiversity it requires developers to provide an increase in appropriate natural habitat and ecological features over and above that being affected. It is intended that the current loss of biodiversity through development will be halted and ecological networks can be restored.

Biodiversity net gain can be delivered either on the development site or off site. The Land Trust is able to undertake both delivery approaches using several proven funding models. This makes us the ideal delivery body for biodiversity net gain as we can work to nature's timescales rather than those of political cycles or commercial markets.

Achieving net gain in biodiversity is more than simply outweighing losses with gains, it requires doing everything possible to avoid losing biodiversity in the first place. It requires the gains in biodiversity to be valuable locally, and to make important contributions towards regional and national priorities for nature conservation.

## Delivering biodiversity net gain – the Land Trust model

The Land Trust has been delivering biodiversity enhancements on our sites for 15 years and we know that for net gain to be successful the designated areas must be appropriately funded and managed by a competent body with suitable safeguards and experience.

The Land Trust is ideally placed to help developers manage the challenges of biodiversity net gain across the country, whilst providing local delivery which aims to keep costs to a minimum and protects the investment they have made in their development.

By working with communities to deliver biodiversity net gain, the Land Trust can also enhance community engagement, health and well-being, the local economy and education. This provides a sustainable approach to net gain that delivers social value and environment, social and governance (ESG) credentials.

## Creating a net gain legacy

The Land Trust will work with developers to ensure that biodiversity net gain generates long term benefits.

## Key principles for delivering biodiversity net gain

Engage with key stakeholders early in the process

Secure dedicated funding for long-term management

Design biodiversity net gain measures to be resilient to external factors, especially climate change

Mitigate risk from other land uses

Avoid displacing harmful activities from one location to another

Support local level management of biodiversity net gain activities.



Strategy in detail

# Climate change adaptation / Natural capital investment

We will use our existing and pipeline sites to protect and enhance the local area from climate change threats, understand the social value of what we can deliver and work to deliver natural capital investment.

Climate change adaptation

The green space we currently own and manage can, with intelligent management, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the effects of climate change. Such natural interventions are increasingly being recognised as a desirable approach to combating climate change as they also help to deliver other social, economic and environmental benefits.

These natural interventions include things such as:

- Managing surface water
- Managing riverline flooding
- Managing water resources
- Managing coastal flooding
- Managing high temperatures
- Carbon storage and sequestration
- Food production/pollination
- Helping species adapt
- Reducing soil erosion
- Reducing the need to travel by car

Through the work we carry out on our parks and green spaces we already estimate that we are delivering the following:

- £100,000 of energy cost savings per year for households and businesses in close proximity to our sites
- Reduction of 480 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions each year
- 735 tonnes of carbon sequestered each year

With an increased focus on delivering these benefits in the future we expect these numbers to rise significantly over the next few years.



Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS)

SuDS are one example of a Climate Change adaptation intervention. They are designed to be functional, fully integrated elements of green infrastructure, and are now increasingly important parts of new developments. They were introduced to address concerns regarding surface water flooding resulting from increased urban development.

However they also deliver a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits. In addition to managing flows, volumes, and diffuse pollution some components (particularly vegetated or landscaped features) can positively impact air quality, carbon reduction, recreation, education and other elements of community health and wellbeing providing monetary and social value.

Natural Capital Investment

There is a growing understanding and recognition that investment in natural capital enhances the long-term social, environmental, and economic health and wellbeing of people and businesses. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought a new found appreciation for our green spaces and natural world, and the general public will want to see the UK's biggest companies taking their responsibilities seriously. There is a belief that this investment will not only provide a positive impact on natural capital, but also provide a return to the investor.



Case study - Biodiversity Net Gain

# Wellesley Woodlands



The objectives of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and the Land Trust's approach to their management share many parallels with the principles of Biodiversity Net Gain. Both initiatives focus on ensuring that residential developments do not negatively effect the local biodiversity. Our experience with SANGs across the country, makes us an ideal body to deal with the challenges of biodiversity net gain.

The Land Trust's site at Wellesley Woodlands, is the largest SANG in the Country and forms part of the 3,850 residential unit Wellesley development in Hampshire.

A key challenge was the pre-commencement planning conditions which stipulated a requirement for an area of SANG being secured in perpetuity. This was in order to offset any recreational impact the development may have on the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area.

By transferring the SANG to Land Trust, a long-term management body approved by Natural England, The developer was able to discharge these conditions and commence the development.





# Upton



A great example of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) working successfully was on our residential service charge site at Upton in May 2018, when heavy rainfall in Northampton caused flash flooding in the area.




Our customer's properties at Upton, and the wider community, could have been seriously affected had it not been for the effective management of the SuDS, which held the water back and protected their homes until the worst of the rainfall was over and the water had subsided.





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