Image: Buzzard at Ennerdale Leisure Centre, Matthew Morgan

5.7 Urban

5.7.1 Introduction by #TeamWilder, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

Our settlements of all sizes are already home to a variety of wildlife. These can be found in natural habitats such as wooded areas, semi-natural grasslands, ponds, rivers, and streams, or by making the most of man-made features, such as buildings, gardens, drains, ornamental shrubs, and street trees. To ensure that our urban spaces support as much wildlife as possible, including those species in decline, we must maximise opportunities to create more 'traditional' habitats as part of our urban green and blue spaces, whilst also allowing for more innovative approaches such as green roofs and rainwater gardens to become the norm.

Many products are sold to support nature but can fail to achieve the promoted results. The HEY LNRS will provide guidance for partners on the best ways to create shelters and food sources for species, sharing successes so that we can understand how nature is recovering in our towns as well as the countryside.

The risks to our urban communities from climate change and more frequent extreme weather events, such as flooding, heatwaves, and drought, are increasing. Good urban design and retrofitting can also create more space for water to reduce the impacts of flooding whilst supporting nature. Increasing our tree cover can also help clean our air as well as help cool our settlements during increasingly hot periods. Creating more space for nature can also provide more beautiful places to live and work, make our urban spaces more appealing to spend time in, support physical and mental wellbeing, as well as inspire people to come together.

The improved management of grassland and verges to increase biodiversity is critical in urban environments, as these can provide connectivity and create thriving habitats for insects, birds, and mammals. The aim of the HEY LNRS is to embed large-scale acceptance of urban landscape change over time to make a real and lasting impact.

5.7.2 Priorities

Associated habitats:
deciduous woodland, wet woodland, street trees, hedgerows, scrub, species-rich grasslands, wetlands, ponds, drains, and ditches.

Associated species:
bats, Hedgehog, Otter, Water Vole, Swift, House Martin, Kittiwake, Bullfinch, Redwing, Fieldfare, Starling, House sparrow, Common Frog, Common Toad, Great Crested Newt, bumblebees, and Brimstone Butterfly.

Wider benefits:
climate resilience, health and wellbeing, and natural flood management.

Table 13 HEY LNRS Urban Priorities and Measures

URBAN				
Priorities		**Measures**		
Priority Code	Priority Descriptor	Measure Code	Measure Descriptor	Supporting Activity Descriptor
URB_P01	Increase urban tree canopy cover and hedgerows to improve the structure of existing woodland, increasing climate resilience and connecting areas of semi-natural habitat.	URB_ M0101	Create treescapes (or mosaic of habitats incorporating woodland component) within the built environment that can be used for education about nature, biodiversity, security, and wellbeing.	Identify urban landowners that could provide suitable locations for planting (e.g. public bodies, utilities companies, and educational establishments). Identify planting opportunities on private grounds (car homes, sheltered accommodation and corporate land (partnerships) that is not easily accessible or protected by security and fencing, to reduce vandalism and anti-social behaviour towards tree whips.
				Target areas for planting suitable urban species where shade would be beneficial (e.g. cycleways).
				Promote Tree Equity as a consideration in planning, development, development and place making within the built environment[xxxvi].
				Develop an inclusive education and public engagement strategy/programmes around tree planting to reduce vandalism and anti-social behaviour.
		URB_ M0102*	Utilise a minimum 70% locally appropriate mixed native tree species in planting schemes, considering climate resilient species.	Discourage single species planting areas to mitigate tree disease.
				Raise awareness of the '2 degrees south' concept in urban areas.
		URB_ M0103*	Increase the number of Tree Protection Orders across the region on existing trees.	Raise awareness of Tree Protection Order criteria.
		URB_ M0104	Create ecologically appropriate treescapes within flood alleviation schemes.	Work with organisations (e.g. Living With Water and Environment Agency).

Priorities		Measures		
Priority Code	Priority Descriptor	Measure Code	Measure Descriptor	Supporting Activity Descriptor
URB_P01	Increase urban tree canopy cover and hedgerows to improve the structure of existing woodland, increasing climate resilience and connecting areas of semi-natural habitat.	URB_ M0105*	Better manage urban tree canopy, following principles of good woodland management (e.g. coppicing ride and glade management, and promotion of understorey).	Identify skills gaps and provide training opportunities for urban land managers, community groups, and volunteers (e.g. HCC T-Level in Green Skills), and promote collaborative co-design of urban greenspaces.
		URB_ M0106*	Create hedgerows and gap up existing hedgerows. Use diverse species selection and include tree standards as per Natural England's guidance for important hedgerows.	Identify areas where urban hedgerows could be planted.
				Promote the value of native hedgerows in green infrastructure design.
				Highlight priority areas for planting/gapping up based on linking habitats and/or improving connectivity for key species (e.g. bats). Source 'Mapping the Gaps' (Hull University) research outputs to identify suitable locations for hedgerow planting.
				Raise awareness to urban planners and developers of the opportunities and benefits of species-rich hedgerow.
		URB_ M0107	Widen hedgerows through planting and management including double planting, understorey seeding and standard trees.	Encourage the creation of wider (up to 5m) hedgerows, including double-hedgerows, standard trees, and species-rich understorey.
		URB_ M0108	Improve hedgerow management through hedgelaying, coppicing, and rotational cutting to allow flowering and fruiting, and create taller and thicker hedges without causing disturbance to nesting birds or other wildlife.	Utilise funding opportunities where possible.
URB_P01	Increase urban tree canopy cover and hedgerows to improve the structure of existing woodland, increasing climate resilience and connecting areas of semi-natural habitat.	URB_ M0109	Create species-rich native hedgerow as perimeter and privacy within the built environment (e.g. retail sites, schools, hospitals, and recreation sites).	
URB_P02	Make space for water in urban environments through both creating new sites and adapting/retrofitting existing sites to maximise opportunities for nature and people, and increase climate resilience.	URB_ M0201	Create aquagreens and SuDS which deliver for nature.	Map priority sites where aquagreens and SuDS could be delivered through BNG. Promote nature opportunities in all planned SuDS (e.g. grasscrete, swales, rain water gardens). Work with local authority's SuDS approval boards to clarify scope of biodversity aspects within SuDS design and long-term management needs of these schemes.
		URB_ M0202	Increase tree cover and wet woodland creation as part of SuDS where appropriate.	Identify and map suitable areas for ecological interventions as dictated by hydrological mapping.
				Support the Living With Water Partnership to change public perceptions of aquagreens/SuDS in urban spaces.
				Develop Local Wildlife Site (LWS) aquagreen criteria to support SuDS functions.
		URB_ M0203	Manage drains to increase their ecological function.	Support the continuation of HCC's 'Dynamic Drains' initiative in Hull and beyond to increase space for water and species such as Water Vole.
		URB_ M0204*	Use supplementary planning guidance to encourage the use of natural SuDs over underground water storage tanks in development proposals.	
		URB_ M0205	Daylight covered drains and ditches where appropriate.	Identify covered drains and ditches where there is scope for daylighting and meandering to open opportunities for nature and people. Liaise with local flood teams to identify potential locations and funding opportunities.

Priorities		Measures		
Priority Code	Priority Descriptor	Measure Code	Measure Descriptor	Supporting Activity Descriptor
URB_P03	Create a holistic approach to nature in urban design and management.	URB_ M0301*	Encourage local authorities to better incorporate nature and ecosystem services into the local plans and strategies, including guidance on urban design. This will better connect urban green and blue infrastructure, make urban areas more resilient to climate change and flooding, and provide access to nature with associated wellbeing and mental health benefits.	Use supplementary planning guidance to include nature features in new development as standard (e.g. SuDS, green infrastructure, native planting and wildlife shelters). Encourage new developments to include integrated bat boxes in accordance with best-practice guidance. New developments, including extensions, over 5m in height to include swift bricks in accordance with best-practice guidance such as BS 42021 or CIEEM, with the general aim across a development of a minimum of one swift brick per unit, or artificial nest cups for house martins instead of swift bricks where recommended by an ecologist.
				Influence local policies and strategies (e.g. Local Plans), by promoting the natural capital benefits and ecosystem services that LNRS implementation will provide.
		URB_ M0302*	Improve landscape and estate management from policy/strategy level through to implementation and monitoring (e.g. nature positive approaches and reduction of negative impacts such as minimising use of non-targeted chemicals by local authorities and contractors).	Promote best practice uptake through organisations and for the public.
		URB_ M0303	Increase the provision of nature-friendly interventions in gardens, green spaces, and the built environment.	Raise public awareness of the value of nature conservation and potential use of habitat features on houses and buildings. Promote pride in protected species which could be encouraged in urban areas or which are currently excluded (e.g. Swift, Kittiwake, bats).
URB_P03	Create a holistic approach to nature in urban design and management.	URB_ M0303	Increase the provision of nature-friendly interventions in gardens, green spaces, and the built environment.	Broaden recreational disturbance monitoring and management to incorporate key locations and activities of protected species in the urban environment (e.g. Kittiwake).
				Conduct regular population and productivity monitoring of seabirds nesting in urban spaces.
			Increase the provision of nature-friendly interventions in gardens, green spaces, and the built environment.	Provide advice and support to communities in coastal urban spaces to encourage connectivity with nesting seabirds, utilise legal deterrents safely, and reduce access to litter and human food products.
				Work with local authorities and businesses to identify suitable nesting locations (or creation of artificial habitat such as towers) for key bird species (e.g. Kittiwake).
		URB_ M0304	Minimise the use of lighting where safe to do so, including on the road network, or implement wildlife friendly lighting regimes to reduce impacts on crepuscular and nocturnal wildlife.	
URB_P04	Incorporate a range of habitats within urban spaces to increase biodiversity, support wider environmental benefits, and improve health and wellbeing.	URB_ M0401	Increase urban trees and canopy extent (e.g. on school sites), prioritising locally appropriate native species, and implementing management to benefit wildlife.	Follow principles of 'right tree, right place' and ensure appropriate aftercare. Retain mature trees and standing deadwood where possible (e.g. turning trees into monoliths). Promote deadwood, stumperies, and habitat piles on the ground.
		URB_ M0402	Bring nature into existing and new greenspace in urban/peri-urban spaces and other built environments (e.g. create species-rich urban grasslands and wetlands, implement suitable planting, and nature friendly management regimes) incorporating access and rights of way.	i) Undertake an assessment of existing green and blue rural, peri-urban and urban spaces across the region and grade these sites (e.g. 'very poor' to 'very effective') based on the diversity of species they support; ii) map these sites; iii) identify potential 'corridors' and 'stepping stones' between these sites; iv) work with landowners to improve management of these new sites.

Priorities		Measures		
Priority Code	Priority Descriptor	Measure Code	Measure Descriptor	Supporting Activity Descriptor
URB_P04	Incorporate a range of habitats within urban spaces to increase biodiversity, support wider environmental benefits, and improve health and wellbeing.	URB_ M0402	Bring nature into existing and new greenspace in urban/peri-urban spaces and other built environments (e.g. create species-rich urban grasslands and wetlands, implement suitable planting, and nature friendly management regimes) incorporating access and rights of way.	Promote case studies and best practice where nature has been incorporated into existing urban spaces. Potential to progress to a toolkit/criteria to clarify what the end goal is. Promote innovative practices to maximise success of nature conservation projects (e.g. soil transplants, hedgerow translocation).
		URB_ M0403*	Increase nature awareness and green skills.	Identify skills gaps and provide training opportunities for urban land managers, community groups, and volunteers (e.g. HCC T-Level in Green Skills), and promote collaborative co-design of urban greenspaces.
		URB_ M0404*	Design and implement measures to support key species (e.g. Redshank, Sea Aster Mining Bee) on the Humber, where appropriate.	

Measures marked with (*) have not been mapped.

5.7.3 Case Study - West Hull ARLFC Community Hub, #TeamWilder (Yorkshire Wildlife Trust)

West Hull has been an amateur rugby club in the city for 50 years. The West Hull ARLFC Community Hub contacted Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to enquire about putting up some bird nest boxes around the site. This led to considering how the area is maintained and scope to use spaces differently, and how to create opportunities for other groups, beyond those playing rugby.

Hedgerows are now cut on a rotational basis, rather than every year, so they can fill out and flower and fruit properly. By having more natural wavy edges to the borders rather than straight edges and mowing the areas just beyond the pitches less often, wildflowers are able to come through. A woodland walk has been developed in one of the thicker perimeter hedges, so that people can wander through and experience the wildlife present. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust helped create a new meadow area, where the grasses grow all through the summer to provide a food source and habitat for insects and small mammals. Tree planting around the edges of the site is increasing habitat for birds, including Common Whitethroat, sparrows, and finches.

Mown pathways and seating allow people to explore. The Community Hub's original plans focused on ensuring 30% of the site was functioning well for nature by 2030, which they achieved in the first year of the project. They now want to improve the quality and variety of delivery for nature. Going forward, this 'Nature Plan' is embedded into the organization, both as a Community Hub and a rugby club. This helps inform all levels of activity and governance, from decisions around site management and resource purchasing to the nature-themed activity days that are organised with community members.