



**Cotswolds  
National  
Landscape**

**A guide to nature-friendly  
business practices in the  
Cotswolds**

# Introduction

**The importance of protecting the natural environment cannot be understated. We rely on its productivity to bring us food, on its beauty to bring us joy, and on its resilience to bring us inspiration. Yet we are facing an ecological emergency as grave as the climate crisis, and England is now one of the world's most nature-depleted countries. It is imperative that every business contributes to maintaining and enhancing nature.**

Although they may seem less tangible than the money saved from reducing energy and emissions, there are financial benefits to adopting a nature-first mindset: customers are increasingly directing their spending to businesses with strong environmental priorities; the quality and transparency of products can be improved through conscious sourcing while reducing the complexity and cost of supply chains; and footfall can be further increased for businesses with nature-based activities on site.

## Notes on this guide

One of the goals for the Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) is "to provide businesses with clear information on sustainable practices." This short guide has been produced to promote the adoption of nature-friendly practices as part of a shared commitment to preserving the environment that so many of our businesses rely upon.

Supported by local case studies, the contents of this guide are intended for a varied audience across businesses of differing sizes, industries, and geographies. The recommendations included here are by no means exhaustive, and readers are encouraged to refer to the signposting section for further information.

## Key definition

**Biodiversity:** the variety of life in the natural world, from the overall number of distinct species and ecosystems to their genetic variances and how they evolve in response to their surroundings. Biological diversity is essential for maintaining a healthy planetary environment, and we are reliant on the complex networks of organisms and how they interact with humans and one another.

This guide, and the accompanying *A guide to saving resources in the Cotswolds*, have been produced by Cotswolds National Landscape to support the work of the Cotswold Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership.



# Habitat Creation

Any amount of space, from window ledges to beer gardens, can be used to create a nature-friendly feature. These activities should be encouraged both at work and at home.

## Planting

- **Create green spaces:** making room for nature doesn't have to involve outdoor space; even a simple window box with flowering plants or herbs can support pollinators, and installing a 'green roof' can intercept rainwater and provide habitat for smaller creatures. Where there is an area available outside, creating small gardens with a variety of plants and water will support birds and insects as well as giving employees a space to enjoy.
- **Grow native plants:** using native species of plants, flowers and trees better supports wildlife and avoids the need for excessive maintenance. Many exotic species require artificial soil nutrients or excessive watering as they are not adapted to the local climate and soil chemistry.
- **Link up with local projects:** green spaces are more effective when they form part of a wider network of nature provision. Connecting gardens to neighbouring woodlands or grassland creates wildlife corridors allowing animals to travel greater distances without crossing open urban areas or roads.

## Building

- **Design for nature:** new buildings, extensions or renovations are the ideal opportunity for incorporating new habitats or animal friendly upgrades. Installing integrated solutions such as bat boxes or 'swift bricks' provides homes for bats and cavity nesting birds such as swifts and house martins whose nesting sites are increasingly under threat. These simple, relatively low-cost options count towards the 10% 'biodiversity net gain' required for new developments. →

### Case study 1

#### Eco Chic Cottages, Cotswolds

*"We operate the 'Small Steps Approach', doing whatever we can, whenever we can. These small steps also help to preserve habitats, eco systems and to promote awareness of sustainability."*

- Bird and bat nesting boxes have been incorporated into the properties during renovations.
- The gardens feature insect hotels and hedgehog houses; the new drystone wall was designed with a 'hedgehog highway' hole, allowing them to roam from garden to garden.
- Bee-friendly flowering plants support biodiversity in the gardens, along with a green roof.



## Habitat Creation continued

- **DIY habitats:** bird boxes, bee or insect hotels and micro ponds are simple to make at home or as a team project in the office with limited materials. Adding appropriately sized holes to fences and walls can allow animals such as hedgehogs to pass through, and creating small log piles or open compost heaps provides them with shelter.

### Wilding

- **Be less tidy:** lawns are generally devoid of biodiversity as they are mown short and 'weeds' are removed. Allowing grass areas to grow longer promotes the growth of flowering plants which in turn attract pollinators such as bees and butterflies. The No Mow May campaign has shown how gardens can be transformed in just a month of no mowing, and many councils across the UK have now adopted the same approach.
- **Return to nature:** businesses with larger areas of land can choose to completely remove human management from certain areas, allowing them to return to a natural state. This radical approach to land management needs appropriate advice but can lead to the reappearance of endangered or threatened species.

## Sustainable Sourcing

Supply chains have ten times the environmental impact of direct business operations, in terms of both emissions and effect on biodiversity, making sourcing the most critical decision-making stage.

### Agriculture

- **Source from farmers and growers that produce crops in partnership with nature:** often referred to as 'agroecology' (agriculture designed around ecological principles) these methods of producing our food and textiles are known to increase biodiversity by up to 50% in chemical-free systems compared to conventionally farmed land, and the same farms host up to 34% more individual species due to the lack of pesticide use.
- **Avoid products linked to deforestation** or biodiversity loss, such as non-certified palm oil.

### Resource extraction

- **Remove plastic packaging:** every business should actively remove plastic from outer packaging and deliveries, and it is possible to use up to 100% recycled plastic in most consumer goods. 1.4 billion litres of oil is used per day for global plastic production, with up to 10 million tonnes of plastic finding its way to the oceans each year.
- **Prioritise materials from renewable or recycled sources:** avoiding the extraction of virgin resources reduces environmental pollution by over 40% for plastics and 70% for paper. →

## Sustainable Sourcing continued

### Certification

- **Use third party assurance to avoid greenwashing:** customer awareness of (and demand for) certified low-impact products is rapidly increasing, and self-proclaimed standards are becoming less acceptable.
  - **Organic** is a legally defined label that guarantees high standards of animal welfare and no use of chemicals.
  - **FSC** (Forestry Stewardship Council) certification shows that wood, paper, and other forestry products have come from sustainably managed woodlands focused on biodiversity preservation and zero deforestation.
  - **Rainforest Alliance** products come from protected forests and support farmers to enhance natural habitats.
  - **Fair to Nature** is the RSPB's product assurance label, the only scheme in the UK focused on biodiversity through land management – farmers are required to manage at least 10% of their land for nature.

### Case study 2

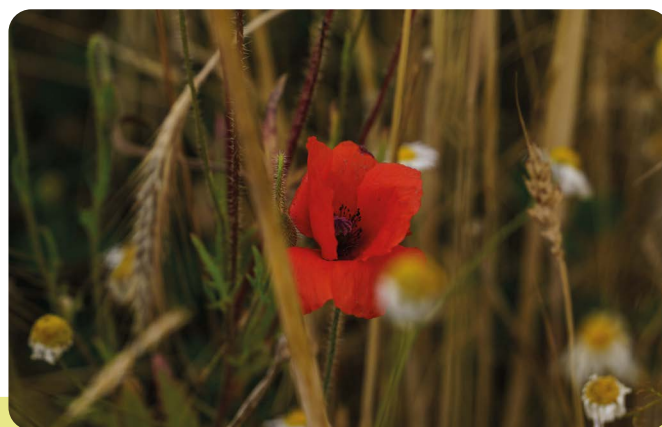
#### Bruern Farms, West Oxfordshire

*"We are passionate about building back our natural habitats through planting trees and wildflowers, managing hedges, and creating a variety of habitats that help everything from the worms and insects in the soil, to sky larks and barn owls in the sky."*

- Using wildflower margins in and around the fields to attract insect predators such as wasps, hover flies and ladybirds, removing the need for chemical pesticides.
- Sowing understories of clover and other crops to create habitats for insects.

### Local priority

- **Bring the supply chain closer to home:** build relationships with local producers on land that can be visited to assess the nature impact, whilst reducing the carbon footprint of transportation and supporting the local economy at the same time. Visitors look out for 'made in the UK' and 'produced in the Cotswolds' labels.
- **Source based on seasonal availability:** ordering fresh produce when it is naturally available supports farming practices that yield geographically appropriate food. Promote this activity with customers and support local producers through menus and product storytelling.



- Maintaining soil structure and carbon through minimal tillage and direct drilling crops.
- Integrating livestock to suppress weeds, provide fertiliser and build soil organic matter.
- Keeping fields covered with stubble and/or clover to retain water, stop soil erosion, increase carbon storage, increase insect life, and connect to field margins and hedges.
- Supporting birds with food and shelter with robust hedgerows.
- Restoring grasslands to wildflower meadows with the help of the Glorious Cotswolds Grasslands team.

# Influencing Change

**Nature must be regarded as a key stakeholder in any business strategy. Nature recovery relies on collaborative action, and businesses have the power to engage and inspire colleagues and customers.**

## Policy

- **Conduct a materiality assessment:** this is the only way to fully understand and measure the impact of business operations on biodiversity. It highlights the risks and opportunities associated with products and processes and enables the setting of focused sustainability goals to mitigate or embrace the reliance on nature.
- **Set targets for nature:** businesses should make measurable, public commitments to reducing negative impacts on biodiversity such as land use or water pollution and taking action to enhance and restore nature. These targets should be based on the results of the materiality assessment and be reported annually.

## Colleagues

- **Engage the team:** establishing a nature-conscious culture at work could be easier than it may seem – a 2024 YouGov survey found that almost 90% of staff believe businesses should include impact on nature as part of the decision-making process, and 70% would encourage their employer to take action for nature. All staff should receive training on the importance of biodiversity, its relevance to their work, and the targets they can support.

- **Reconnect with nature:** the best way to capture the team's imagination is to get them outside and into nature itself. The simplest option is to encourage staff to contribute to the creation and maintenance of on-site green spaces and participate in monitoring biodiversity impact. Internal volunteering schemes (i.e. those in which colleagues are given paid time off to support charitable or community activity) are an opportunity to contribute to local conservation projects, from river clean-ups to planting schemes.

## Customers

- **Raise awareness:** the latest public survey data shows that 31% of the population are not aware of the threat to biodiversity in the UK. Use customer-facing assets – window displays, social media, websites – to bring attention to biodiversity issues, how the business is tackling them, and how people can get involved. Customer opinion is a valuable resource that can stimulate stakeholder discussions on how to mitigate environmental impact.
- **Promote ecotourism:** visitors should be supported to create a minimal footprint during their stay and leave with a deep appreciation for the area's ecosystems, communities, and culture. These are the core principles of ecotourism. Businesses should actively encourage car-free travel, supporting customers to explore the countryside on foot or by bike, and celebrating the networks of paths that connect local populations. →



## Influencing Change continued

### Case study 3

#### Wylderne Ltd. CBS, Forest of Dean

*"A regenerative approach is about putting yourself on a level with nature and allowing nature to teach you. You're learning all the time about yourself, about change and about how to bring out the potential in people, teams and your business that you know is there."*

- Outdoor learning experiences for schools and corporates.
- Stewards of biodiversity: the team focus on the principle of adding value to nature so that it can add value to us.
- 30 acres of nature make up the 'learning lab' including ancient woodland, wildflower meadows with cattle, ponies, and boar, and allotments and gardens.

- The experience is as much about wilding nature as wilding humans: visitors learn about themselves, each other, about the wider place they are located within, and appreciate that just as in life, if you give yourself up to the messiness of change and progress it can be hugely rewarding.



## Signposting

A handful of helpful resources have been listed below, however further information is plentiful and readily available from your council, local community nature groups, and national ecology organisations.

All information correct as of February 2025.

### Inspiration and advice

- **Business for Nature:** guidance and resources for integrating biodiversity into business models and sustainability strategies <https://www.businessfornature.org/>
- **Nature's Workforce:** launched by RSPB, WWF and National Trust, an online guide to support employees to include nature in business decision making <https://naturesworkforce.org.uk/>
- **The Wildlife Trusts:** bespoke advice and tools for businesses to develop biodiversity action plans and build resilience; support with Biodiversity Net Gain and TCFD <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/>

## Signposting continued

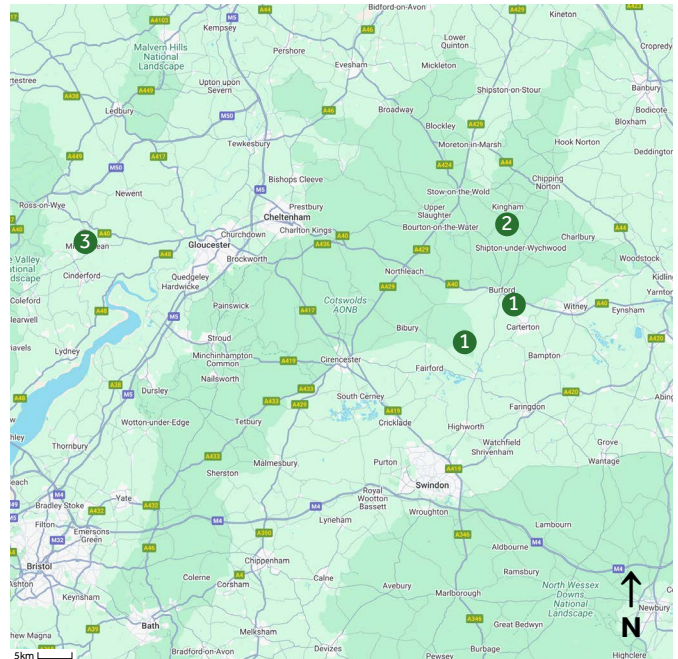
- **Nextdoor Nature Hub:** the companion website to the Wildlife Trusts, offering practical advice, guides and real life case studies to support nature <https://nextdoornaturehub.org.uk/>
- **It's Now for Nature:** a global campaign to create a nature-positive world <https://nowfornature.org/>

## Local projects

- **Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan:** Cotswold National Landscape's targeted plan to stop wildlife loss and mitigate the impacts of climate change <https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk//Cotswolds-Nature-Recovery-Plan-Full-Version-1.pdf>
- **Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership:** putting nature first in local decision making, supporting initiatives including the Natural Capital Mapping Project <https://www.gloucestershirenature.org.uk/>
- **West of England Local Nature Recovery Strategy:** resource toolkit to support the restoration of habitats and wildlife <https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/the-local-nature-recovery-strategy/>

## Funding

- **National Lottery Heritage Fund:** funding available to support nature recovery projects or nature-based solutions to mitigate climate change <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/our-work/landscapes-parks-nature>
- **Grants Online:** a daily updated list of current funding and grants available across the UK, for projects of all shapes and sizes <https://www.grantsonline.org.uk/region-news/uk/>
- **National Education Nature Park:** regularly updated list of biodiversity project funding, including education related opportunities and tree planting <https://www.educationnaturepark.org.uk/finding-funding>



## Case studies featured in this guide:

1. Eco Chic Cottages, Cotswolds. <https://www.ecochiccottages.com/what-makes-useco>
2. Bruern Farms, Bruern, West Oxfordshire. <https://bruernfarms.co.uk/pages/our-ethos>
3. Wylderne Ltd. CBS, Forest of Dean. <https://www.wylderne.com/>

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