



2025-2026 Project highlights - Environment

Warm Homes local grant

- The Warm Homes Local Grant scheme is designed to fully fund energy saving improvements to Herefordshire homes.
- The scheme targets this funding to homes that are the least efficient, and households that are the most vulnerable to rising energy costs and the health implications of living in a home that is hard to heat.
- The original delivery plan was 34 homes were going to be upgraded in year one, but due to the success of the scheme extra funding has been secured from the Government and now 52 homes will have been upgraded by the end of year one, with an additional 60 homes being upgraded in both years two and three.
- Spend of around £2.4 million funded by the Government Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ). For more information www.herefordshire.gov.uk/warmhomes

Local Nature Recovery Strategy(LNRS) Public Consultation

- The Local Nature Recovery Strategy is a new, county-wide plan required by national legislation to help restore and protect nature, setting priorities and practical actions to reverse biodiversity decline across Herefordshire.
- The draft LNRS identifies 15 habitat priorities and nearly 100 voluntary actions, focusing on rivers and wetlands, woodlands, grasslands, hedgerows, orchards and wildlife corridors to improve connectivity and resilience
- The strategy is not compulsory – it provides a menu of opportunities that landowners and communities can choose to take forward, with support from the Council and partner organisations
- The public consultation ran from Thursday 5 February and closed on Sunday 29 March 2026. Approx 150 comments were submitted through the website, as well as approx. 250 comments received through emails, telephone calls and consultation events.
- The documents and mapping are now being updated with the feedback where possible, which will make the final strategy more robust.
- Once the LNRS is finalised, it will be formally adopted by Herefordshire Council and registered with DEFRA. Herefordshire Council will then be responsible for leading and convening delivery partnerships, embedding the LNRS into local decision making, identifying strategic projects and facilitating delivery, and finally, monitoring and reporting. The strategy will be reviewed every 3 to 10 years, in accordance with the LNRS regulations and Secretary of State instruction.

Herefordshire Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy (HTHAWS) endorsement

- The HTHAWS has been published, detailing a shared vision for a greener Herefordshire. The Strategy sets out a long-term plan to protect, care for and grow Herefordshire's trees, hedgerows, woodlands and orchards, creating a connected treescape that benefits people, wildlife and the local landscape now and in the future.
- The goal is to increase average tree canopy cover across the county to 20% by 2041, with a higher ambition of 30% in towns and built-up areas, focusing especially on neighbourhoods with low tree cover.

- Focus on appropriate species selection, local character, biodiversity, heritage and future climate resilience, while protecting existing trees, ancient woodland, hedgerows and traditional orchards.
- Effective management and aftercare: Emphasise long-term establishment, maintenance, monitoring and best practice standards, ensuring trees and woodlands thrive and losses (e.g. from disease or development) are managed responsibly.
- The aim is for the Nature Recovery Officers, to coordinate funding, community involvement, planning policy, and monitoring, as many of the goals overlap with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy priorities and measures.

S106 Public open space improvements across communities

Herefordshire Council uses Section 106 (S106) planning agreements to secure developer contributions that support off-site open space, recreation and biodiversity enhancement projects across the county.

- In 2025, Section 106 funding supported a range of projects:
 - **Public open space** (POS), including new and refurbished play areas, footpaths, information signs and access improvements delivering safer, more accessible and better-quality local spaces. Locations include Tupsley, Wellington, Kingstone, Fromes Hill, Kington and Madley,
 - **Nature-focused enhancements** alongside play and access - Several projects combined recreation with biodiversity benefits, including tree and hedgerow planting, wildflowers and wildlife homes, delivered with strong community and volunteer involvement. Notable projects were Fromes Hill New Community Open Space and the Kington Pollinators project.
 - Investment in **local sports facilities** - Sports S106 contributions funded significant upgrades across the county, including new cricket nets (Fownhope), tennis court refurbishments (Ross-on-Wye), football facilities and changing rooms (Orleton, Hereford Rugby Club), and a 3G small-sided pitch at Bromyard QE High School, often supported by match funding from clubs and sports bodies.
- Projects were delivered through collaboration between the Natural Environment Team, S106 Delivery Team, community organisations, parish councils, schools and sports clubs, with local ward members kept informed and communities consulted throughout.
- The programme will continue into 2026, with planned schemes including new play areas, pump tracks, skate and multi-use games areas, sports pavilions and ancillary facilities, ensuring S106 funding continues to deliver tangible local benefits.

The Herefordshire Council Biodiversity Report

- The Herefordshire Council Biodiversity Report outlines how the Authority is meeting its legal “biodiversity duty” by assessing the state of local wildlife and setting out actions to protect and enhance it.
- It highlights that while Herefordshire has a rich natural environment with important habitats (such as orchards, rivers, hedgerows and woodlands), biodiversity is under pressure from factors including agricultural intensification, pollution, habitat fragmentation, and climate change.
- In response, the Council focuses on integrating biodiversity into planning and land management, supporting habitat restoration schemes, overseeing Biodiversity Net Gain in development, and working with partners to monitor species and improve ecological networks.
- Overall, the report emphasises coordinated, long-term action to halt biodiversity decline and restore ecosystems across the County.

Charter for the River Wye

On 6 March Herefordshire Council agreed that:

- Herefordshire Council will consider the principles of the Charter for the River Wye wherever relevant, integrating them into policy, strategy and decision-making where possible.
- The intrinsic value of the River Wye and its tributaries will be recognised in the new Local Plan, using the Charter to help shape ambitions for Herefordshire's rivers.
- The Council will continue to prioritise freshwater recovery, including tackling pollution, restoring wetlands, reconnecting habitats and improving river systems at a catchment scale, in line with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Council Plan.
- The Council will support neighbouring authorities in championing the Charter, promoting a cross-border, catchment wide approach to protecting the River Wye and its tributaries and publicising this shared commitment.

Wye Valley National Landscape Projects update

£1.6–£1.8 million of funding supports the annual programme delivery, combining DEFRA, Welsh Government, National Grid and other grants, which allow multiple landscape-scale projects to run alongside community and farming initiatives including:

- **Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) – 2025/26 delivery**
The FiPL programme supported 43 projects with 40 farmers, delivering 27.5 hectares of wildflower meadow, 1,863 trees, 772 metres of hedgerow, 8 ponds, and 5 leaky dams, alongside livestock management improvements, fencing and farmer advice days
- **National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI)**
Three major LEI projects (2025–2028, total £792k) are improving landscape and biodiversity following electric cable undergrounding with new and restored hedgerows, species-rich grassland, orchard and parkland trees, and wetland and natural flood management features including ponds and leaky dams delivered during 2025.
- **Lower Wye Nature recovery and climate adaptation projects**
Practical measures are being delivered across the Lower Wye, including habitat creation, woodland and orchard planting, and natural flood management, linking biodiversity recovery with climate resilience and water management.

FCC Biodiversity Community Grant Scheme

- The grant aims to protect and enhance biodiversity through allocating funding to projects which will deliver environmental improvements and initiatives that create green spaces, improve biodiversity or help ecosystems in Herefordshire.
- Example projects include tree and hedge planting or management, creation of wildlife corridors, bird, bat or bug boxes and hedgehog homes, planting wildflower areas, wetland / pond creation. Projects should include community / public benefit and engagement.
- During 2025 a total of almost £62,000 funding was awarded to 12 successful applicants in the county including citizen science bat survey, Southside Farm community nature areas, biological heritage at Snodhill Castle and Oatleys Meadow destination park.
- The grant scheme will re-open to applications from 1 June 2026.