



Nature Recovery Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin

Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
April 2026

Appendix 4: Land cover data

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This technical appendix sets out land cover data for Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin including:

- Current land use data
- Tree canopy cover
- Priority habitats
- Land use change over time
- Land uses

Land use coverage has been estimated using UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH) Land Cover Map (LCM) data.¹

Table 1 shows land cover in Shropshire by CEH LCM land cover class (%). Percentage land cover for bog (less than 0.05%) and calcareous grassland (less than 0.005%) is not represented in Figure 1 due to their small size.

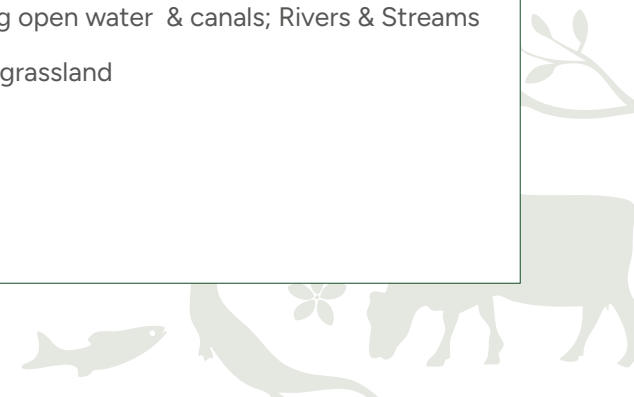
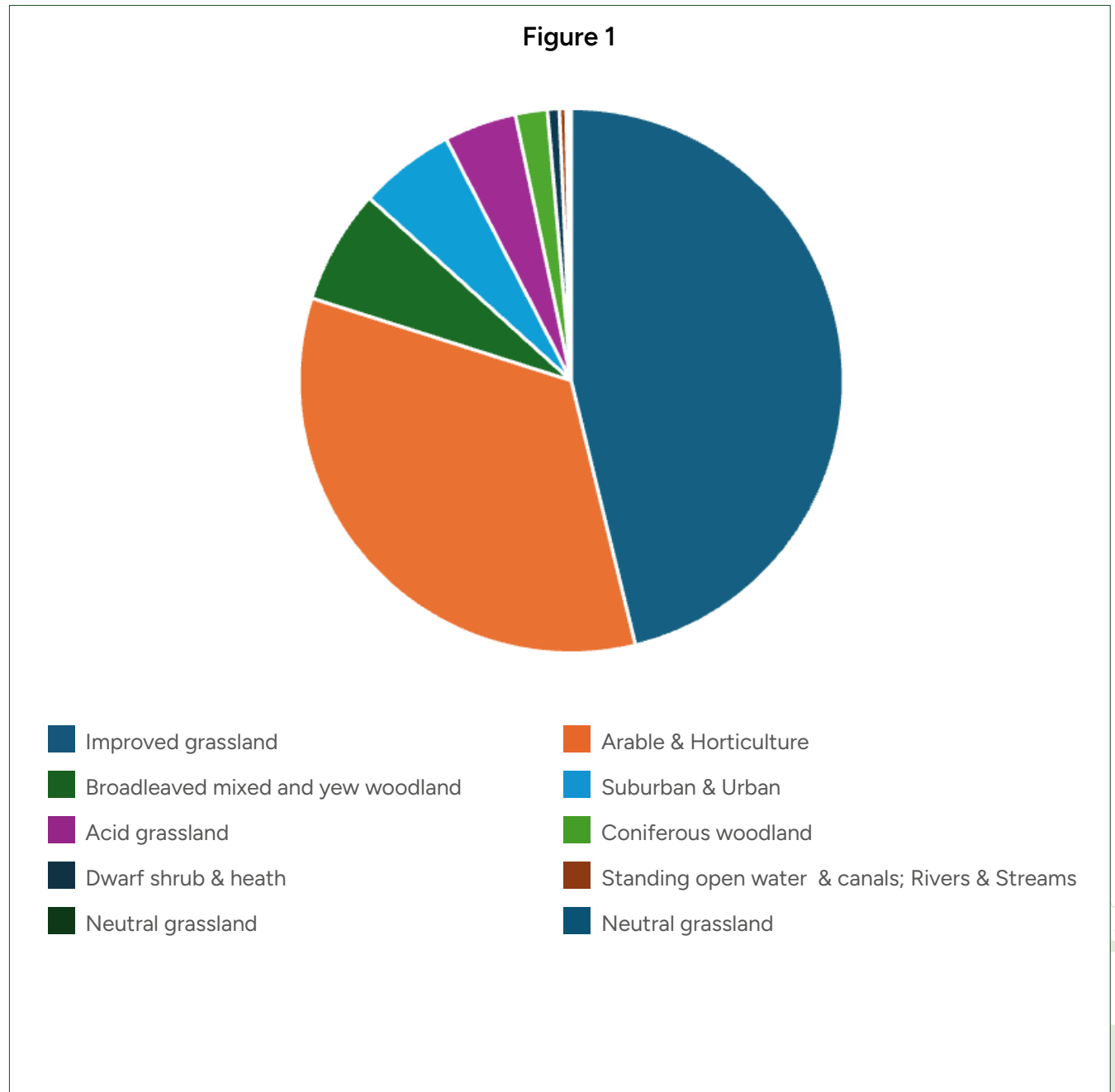
Land cover class (CEH LCM)	Percentage of Shropshire area
Improved grassland	46.2
Arable & Horticulture	33.7
Broadleaved mixed and yew woodland	6.8
Suburban & Urban	5.7
Acid grassland	4.3
Coniferous woodland	1.9
Dwarf shrub & heath	0.7
Standing open water & canals; Rivers & Streams	0.4
Neutral grassland	0.2
Inland rock	0.1
Bog	Less than 0.05% *
Calcareous grassland	Less than 0.005% *
Total	100



Figure 1 shows the percentage of land cover types in Shropshire. Percentage land cover for bog (less than 0.05%) and calcareous grassland (less than 0.005%) is not represented due to their small size.

Tree canopy cover

Current estimates for tree cover in the strategy area range from 13.2% to 15.1%,^{2,3} which is slightly above the national average of 13%.⁴ Telford & Wrekin has a borough-wide average of 15%, with some wards reaching 22%, positioning it well to exceed the UK Government's aspiration of 19% tree cover by 2050. Woodland is extensive across many parts of Shropshire, representing approximately 1.6% of the total UK woodland cover. Specific natural capital validation data for Shropshire woodlands remains limited; however, pro-rata extrapolation from national estimates equates to a value of £166.4m⁵ for all woodlands in the strategy area.



Priority habitats

Priority habitats cover a wide range of semi-natural habitat types and were originally identified as being the most threatened habitats and requiring conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP). The Natural England Priority Habitat Inventories are a spatial dataset describing the geographic extent and location of these habitats, which are now called Section 41 Habitats of Principal Importance.⁶

These inventories are a best effort at recognising the most distinctive and most threatened habitats in the county but are an amalgamation of datasets and include varying levels of on-the-ground surveying.

Table 2 (next page) shows distribution (percentage cover) of habitat types within the Priority Habitat Inventory for Shropshire.⁷ Lowland calcareous grassland covers less than 0.001% of Priority Habitat in Shropshire.

*These habitats are included in the inventories on the basis of having good potential for restoration.

Figure 2 shows Shropshire woodlands by type (%) based on the National Forest Inventory.⁸

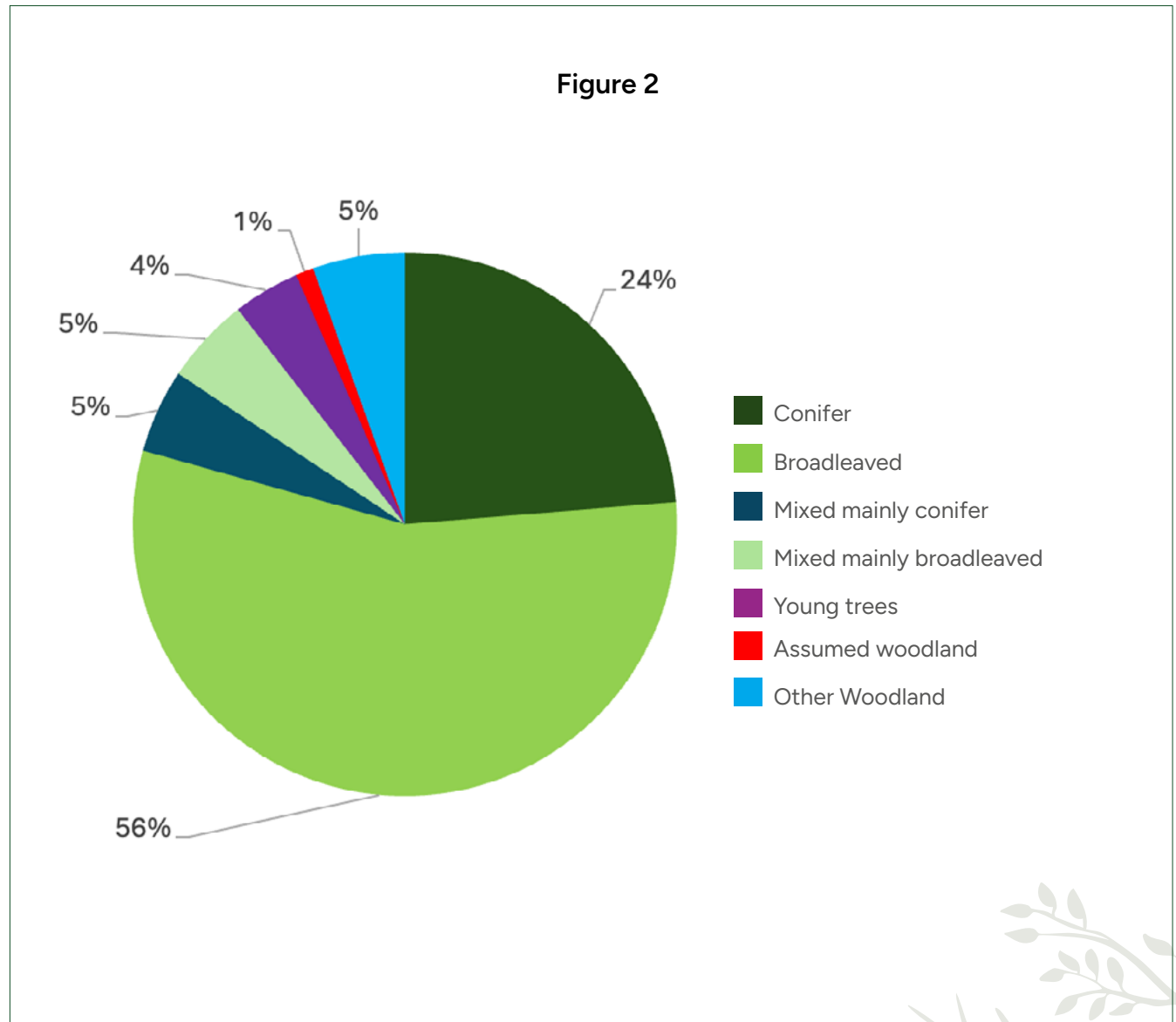


Table 2

Habitat type	Habitat grouping (by UK HAB Level 2)	Percentage cover (%)
Deciduous woodland	Woodland	52.96
No main priority habitat (additional habitats)*	Other	11.99
Good quality semi-improved grassland	Grassland	10.34
Grass moorland	Grassland	3.74
Lowland dry acid grassland	Grassland	2.29
Lowland meadows	Grassland	2.06
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	Grassland	1.34
Traditional orchard	Grassland	1.08
Lowland calcareous grassland	Grassland	0.31
Upland haymeadow	Grassland	0.01
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, Lowland meadows	Grassland	0.01
Upland calcareous grassland	Grassland	0.00
Upland heathland	Heathland	9.62
Lowland heathland	Heathland	0.82
Fragmented heath	Heathland	0.37
Blanket bog	Wetland	0.01
Lowland raised bog	Wetland	0.83
Purple moor grass and rush pastures	Wetland	0.82
Upland flushes fens and swamps	Wetland	0.73
Lowland fens	Wetland	0.52
Reedbeds	Wetland	0.02
Deciduous woodland, Lowland raised bog (wet woodland)	Wetland	0.11
Ponds	Rivers and lakes	0.03



Figure 3 shows percentage cover of habitat type (grouped at UK HAB level 2) within the Priority Habitat Inventory for Shropshire.⁹ Rivers and lakes cover 0.03% and so are not visible.

Land use change over time

Land use change over time can be derived from satellite imagery interpretation using the UKCEH Land Cover Maps.¹⁰ Data from 1990 and 2015 has been compared to estimate land use changes during that 25-year period.

Data shows that grassland and cropland areas have been lost over the period 1990–2015 to a combination of woodlands, wet habitats and built-up areas. Several urban extensions to both Shrewsbury and Telford, along with smaller developments, commercial or employment sites and infill housing, have been constructed over this period and can be seen reflected in the figures. It is likely that these trends have continued beyond 2015 and may even have intensified. The increasing profile of tree planting as a mechanism for addressing climate change and the funding initiatives connected to woodland creation, which emerged in 2019 or so, are likely to result in larger woodland gains over time.

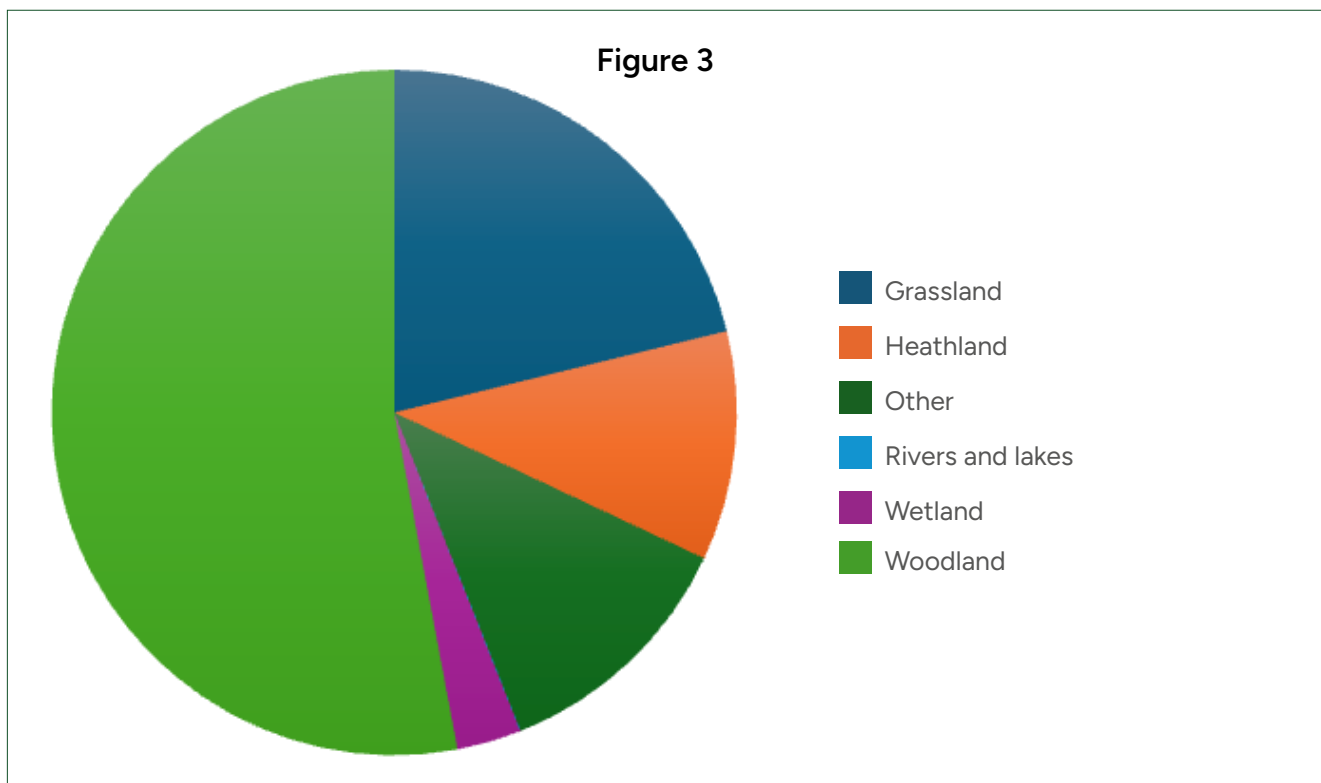


Table 3 shows land use cover change in Shropshire, 1990–2015.

Land cover type	Percentage change
Woodland (Forests)	+ 1.3
Arable (Cropland)	- 0.2
Grassland	- 2.7
Water (Wetlands)	+ 0.1
Built up areas	+ 1.7
Other	- 0.1



1. Christopher Marston, Daniel R. Morton, Aneurin W. O'Neil and Clare S. Rowland (2024) [Land Cover Map 2023 \(10m classified pixels, GB\)](#) [Dataset]. NERC EDS Environmental Information Data Centre. Accessed 3 October 2024.
2. Forestry Commission (2023) [Tree canopy cover by Wards in the UK](#) [Dataset]. Accessed 30 September 2024.
3. Friends of the Earth (2023) [Tree canopy cover by Local authority](#) [Dataset]. Accessed 30 September 2024.
4. Different methods for estimating tree cover likely account for the difference between these figures and those shown in Table 1 and Figure 1; some methodologies look only at tree cover in woodland, while some include other aspects of tree cover, such as hedges, field trees, urban trees and scrub.
5. Based on data from Office for National Statistics (2024) [Woodland natural capital accounts, UK: 2024](#) [Dataset]. Accessed 31 October 2024.
6. Forestry Commission (2024) [National Forest Inventory GB 2021](#) [Dataset]. Accessed October 2024.
7. As defined within the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006).
8. Natural England (2024) [Priority Habitat Inventory \(England\)](#) [Dataset]. Accessed 9 October 2024.
9. Natural England (2024) [Priority Habitat Inventory \(England\)](#) [Dataset]. Accessed 9 October 2024.
10. Clare S. Rowland, Christopher Marston, Daniel R. Morton and Aneurin W. O'Neil (2020) [Land Cover Change 1990-2015 \(25m raster, GB\)](#) [Dataset]. NERC Environmental Information Data Centre. Accessed June 2024.

