Nature Recovery Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin

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

Appendix 3: Habitat condition data

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This technical appendix includes habitat condition data for:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Woodlands
- Water bodies
- SSSI condition data

SSSI condition data

SSSI's are largely in private ownership, and management of the designated features varies over time according to surrounding land uses and changes in funding. SSSI's represent a considerable biodiversity asset, including what were, at the time of their designation, some of the best examples of particular habitats found in the UK.

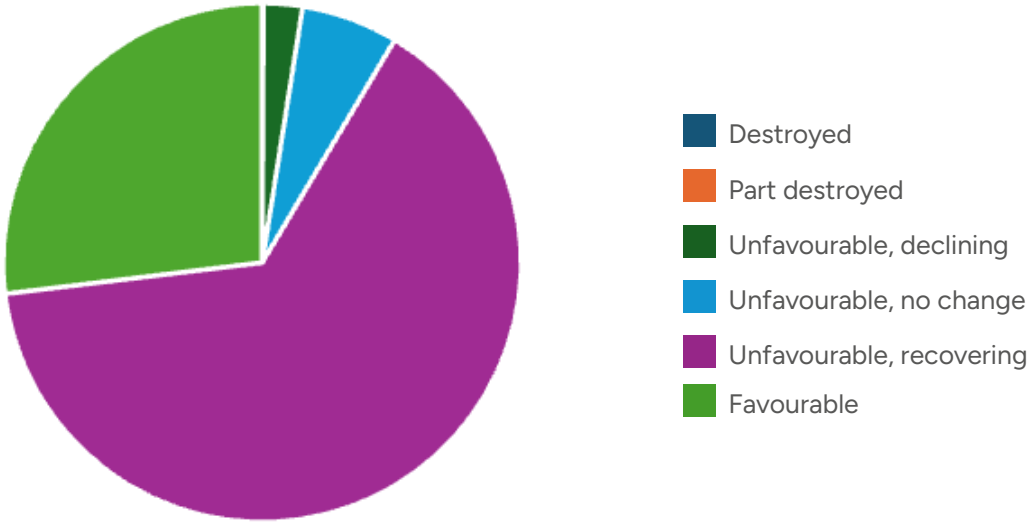

Figure 1 shows SSSI condition in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. 'Percentages destroyed' (0.08%) and 'Part destroyed' (less than 0.001%) are not displayed to their small size.

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Condition of woodland

In 2020, a national report estimated that just 7% of native woodlands were in good ecological condition.[1] Approximately 42% of Woodland SSSI units in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin are currently in "favourable" condition, which is above the 34% "favourable" condition woodland units recorded across England as a whole. The county is home to large tracts of broadleaf woodland listed within the priority habitat inventory – a spatial dataset that maps priority habitats of principal importance for biodiversity[2] under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). There is limited information about the ecological condition of broadleaf woodland.

Conifer woodlands make up around 30% of Shropshire's total woodland area. National data from 2020 indicates that many conifer plantations are ecologically poor due to stands of uniform age, the lack of native tree species, open space and deadwood.[3] Where conifer woodland is managed with objectives for both timber production and biodiversity, as by Forest England in recent decades, more spacious and mixed woodlands are the result.

Trees outside of woodlands include small tree clusters (of less than 0.5 hectares in size) in addition to individual trees present in scrub, ffridd, agricultural fields, hedgerows and in transport verges.[4] Despite wide variations in species and condition across the strategy area, woodlands and trees remain vital for sequestering large amounts of carbon, providing habitat for a wide variety of native species, supporting connectivity of other habitats and reducing urban heat. They are a vital component of wider nature recovery plans within each landscape area of the LNRS.

Condition of water bodies

The Water Framework Directive

The main legislation for water protection in the UK is the Water Framework Directive (WFD).[5] The WFD sets legally binding targets and requires the UK to implement River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) and the measures to protect and restore waterbodies (rivers, lakes and artificial). RBMPs play a key role in delivering goals set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan.

The three RBMP areas that overlap with Shropshire comprise:

- 138 waterbody sub-catchments
- 2 artificial waterbodies (canals)

Due to the WFD, waterbodies probably represent the most consistently monitored habitat reflecting growing public awareness of the state of freshwater habitats in the UK.

Ecological status of waterbodies

The target set out in 25 Year Environment Plan[6] is to restore 75% of our water bodies to good ecological status. In Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin currently 6.42% of rivers and canals are in good ecological condition.[7]

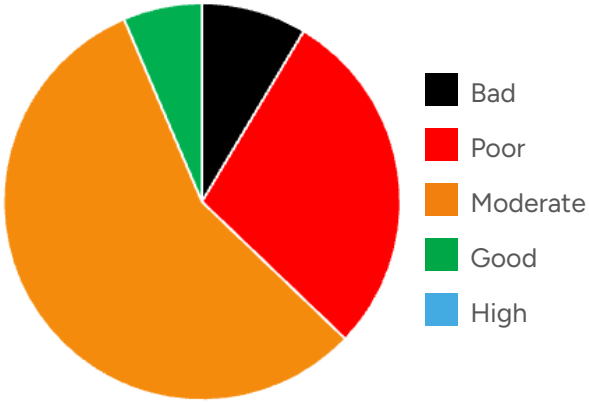
Table 1 shows the ecological status of rivers and canals in Shropshire and in England.[8]

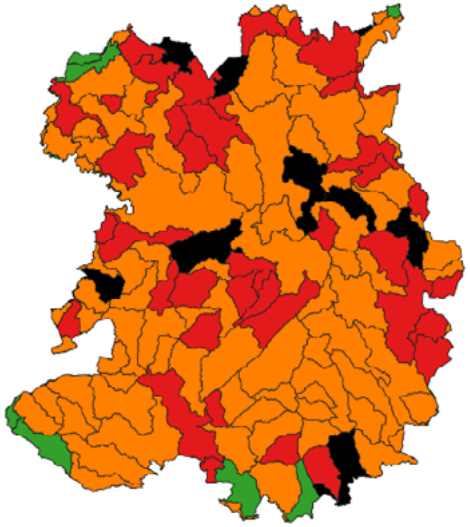
Figure 2 (top) shows the percentage of WFD rivers and canals in Shropshire by ecological status. Figure 3 (bottom) maps the ecological status of WFD rivers and canals in Shropshire by area.

Waterways fail to achieve good ecological status for a range of reasons including pollution from agriculture, outputs from waste water treatment, the use of chemicals in both domestic and industry settings, climate change (including flood events and drought events) and artificial barriers to fish migration (which are an indicator of biological and habitat condition under the WFD). Watercourses remain challenging to restore, with recovery at the catchment scale requiring not only physical restoration of modified riverbanks, but also appropriate waste management facilities, changes to waste water management infrastructure and additional financial incentives to helpland managers to reduce pollution from agriculture.

Lakes across the county also require appropriate interventions to improve condition. Of the 13 WFD lake waterbodies in the strategy area, none achieve high ecological status, with only 15% currently in good condition.[9]

While these figures appear low, they are comparable to the national picture, confirming that Shropshire faces similar challenges to other areas in England.





Ecological Status	Shropshire Rivers and Canals WFD Cycle 3		England Rivers and Canals Total 3,900
	Number of WFD waterbodies	% of WFD waterbodies	% of WFD waterbodies
Bad	12	8.57	3.2
Poor	40	28.57	18.6
Moderate	79	56.42	62.3
Good	9	6.42	15.8
High	0	0	0.1

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1. Forestry Commission (2020) National Forest Inventory (NFI) woodland ecological condition in Great Britain: Classification Results Woodland ecological condition in Britain.
2. As defined within the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006).
3. Forestry Commission (2020) National Forest Inventory (NFI) woodland ecological condition in Great Britain: Classification Results Woodland ecological condition in Britain.
4. Christine Reid, Karen Hornigold, Ewan McHenry, and others (2021) State of the UK's Woods and Trees 2021. Woodland Trust.
5. As defined by The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017. Accessed October 2024.
6. UK Government (2018) A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (PDF).
7. UK Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (2024) Accredited official statistics: 21. Surface water status [Dataset]. Accessed October 2024.
8. UK Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (2024) Accredited official statistics: 21. Surface water status [Dataset]. Accessed October 2024.
9. UK Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (2024) Accredited official statistics: 21. Surface water status [Dataset]. Accessed October 2024.