



Nature Recovery Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin

Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
Consultation draft, July 2025

Appendix 5: Existing Nature Network (areas of particular importance for biodiversity)

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Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin provides high quality examples of a range of habitats which are recognised through international, national, and local designations. Along with ancient woodland, peat bogs and veteran trees, these designated sites form an important part of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) baseline, representing areas which are known to be of particular importance for biodiversity. Many of these sites are already considered in the planning system through existing legislation and policies.

Internationally designated sites

Within or partially within Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin there are six Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and two phases of Ramsar sites (internationally important wetlands). These sites represent some of the best examples nationally of these globally valuable habitats or support internationally important populations of particular species. SACs and Ramsar designations are also designated as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

The six SACs are:

- River Clun SAC
- The Stiperstones & the Hollies SAC
- Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield, Cadney and Wem Mosses SAC
- Brown Moss SAC
- River Dee and Bala Lake SAC (partially within the Shropshire LNRS area)
- West Midlands Mosses SAC

The two Ramsar phases – known as Midlands Meres and Mosses Phase 1 and Phase 2 – cover 34 component sites spread across Shropshire, Staffordshire and Cheshire.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

There are 111 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in the county, designated to recognise and protect a range of habitats, species interests and geological features. SSSIs include river stretches, disused canals, meadows and grasslands, heathlands, woodlands and former quarries. Each SSSI is divided into units and is assessed by Natural England to establish condition. Information on SSSI condition can be found in [Appendix 3](#).



National Nature Reserves

National Nature Reserves (NNRs) represent examples of the best habitats, geological features, landscapes and resources for species nationally. They are managed by Natural England, either alone or in partnership with other bodies.

There are four NNRs in Shropshire, which are:

- The Wyre Forest NNR (partially in the Shropshire LNRS area)
- Stiperstones NNR
- Fenn's, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses NNR
- Wem Moss NNR

Local Nature Reserves

Local Nature Reserves are declared by local authorities or by other bodies (usually town or parish councils) appointed to that duty by the local authority. Natural England is engaged in the selection process and must support the declaration. These sites represent locally important sites for nature, access to nature and education.

There are currently 33 Local Nature Reserves in Shropshire, protected and managed for wildlife and people.

Local Wildlife Sites and Local Geological Sites

In Shropshire there is a single register of Local Sites, which includes Local Wildlife Sites and Local Geological Sites. There are 692 Local Sites in the county, recognising high-quality examples of locally important habitats and geological features. Sites have been selected by a partnership of local organisations based on a set of adopted local criteria. The majority of local sites are in private ownership and knowledge regarding current condition is challenging to maintain.

Ancient and semi-natural woodland, plantation on ancient woodland sites and veteran trees

Ancient woodland is also included in Zone 1, the Existing Nature Network as this habitat is considered of particular importance for biodiversity. Ancient woodland is defined as an area that has been wooded continuously since at least the year 1600. Shropshire's iconic woodland landscapes include the Wenlock Edge escarpment – the longest stretch of unbroken woodland in England. In the south-east is Wyre Forest, currently the largest woodland NNR in the country.

Despite their landscape and ecological significance, in response to uncertainty brought on by the World Wars, the need for timber and food security meant that the 20th century saw areas of ancient semi-natural woodlands (ASNW) cleared to increase the land available for agriculture and to provide land for conifer timber plantations.



Conifer timber plantations on land that used to be ASNW are now classed as plantation on ancient woodland sites (PAWS). Just 2.6% of Shropshire is now covered by ASNW, slightly less than the rest of England which stands at 2.8%. The clearance of ASNW impacted Shropshire more than other parts of England, with significantly more PAWS (58%) created compared to the national average (39%).

PAWS still retains some of its ancient character and is a priority for restoration back to predominantly native woodland. The actual area of ASNW may be underrepresented due to the exclusion of smaller woodlands from previous inventories. Natural England is currently undertaking a revision of the ancient woodland inventory, to include smaller sites between 0.25 hectares and 2 hectares.

There are 2246 veteran and ancient trees recorded across the strategy area, and these have been included in Zone 1, the Existing Nature Network. These trees are irreplaceable in their own right but are also irreplaceable habitat for a wide range of often highly specialised organisms including lichens, mosses fungi and invertebrates.

References

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