

Herefordshire Wildlife Trust's response to the Climate Emergency

The last 18 months has seen a surge in public awareness and expectation for action on climate change and biodiversity declines. Activism and student strikes has brought these issues to the front pages and pushed the UK Government and other public bodies into declaring 'Climate and Ecological Emergencies'. Herefordshire Council declared a climate emergency in March 2019 and made a commitment to attain climate neutrality by 2030. HWT fully support this declaration and are keen to support Herefordshire Council in delivering solutions.

What does this mean for Herefordshire's Wildlife?

As well as impacting humans through extreme weather, increased flooding and limitations on our lifestyle - for example what we eat, climate change is one of the main reasons we are seeing wildlife declines globally and locally.

Wildlife is struggling to adapt to the unnaturally fast pace of climate change in a disconnected and degraded landscape which desperately needs a Nature Recovery Network to allow free movement and for populations to recover from decades of decline.

While we have seen new species such as Ivy bee move in as the climate warms we have seen ancient woodlands put under increased pressure from rising squirrel and deer populations bolstered by mild winters and a lack of natural predators. Summer rains threaten our dwindling butterfly population and the homogenisation and simplification of farmland favours species such as foxes and crows - the main predators of the remaining lapwing and curlew, themselves pushed on to less and less land as silage and cropping increases.

Natural Climate Solutions

Much of our local landscape has become devoid of wildlife. Huge swathes of farmland have lost their soil quality and must be sprayed with fertilisers to keep them productive. Erosion is causing natural stores of carbon to be lost to the atmosphere at an alarming rate. Natural Climate Solutions means allowing natural processes to capture carbon efficiently, at the same time creating a multitude of benefits for people and wildlife.

HWT's policy statement on dealing with the climate and ecological emergency

HWT believe that to secure the future of a Herefordshire where both people and wildlife thrive, we need to see the following action:

- 1) Existing land that has value for wildlife should attract financial support through Public Payment for Public Good schemes such as the new Environmental Land Management Scheme

- 2) Businesses, Government and the public taking action to reduce carbon emissions through conscious consumption and lifestyle changes such as switching to a renewable energy supplier.
- 3) Increased standards for energy efficiency, generation and water management for any new homes built within the County
- 4) New homes and developments should have wildlife friendly green space, with flower rich grasslands, orchard trees and woodlands present. This takes wildlife and the outdoors to people's doorsteps reducing the need to travel for recreation, increases space for wildlife and allows movement of animals through urban areas.
- 5) A well mapped and data lead Nature Recovery Network created for Herefordshire lead by Herefordshire Wildlife Trust working closely with Herefordshire Council
- 6) New land for wildlife created. It's not just planting trees we're talking about – though that absolutely has its place – turning intensive arable fields back into flower-rich grassland locks away a huge amount of carbon; allowing wetlands to be restored will not only stop peat from releasing CO₂ it locks more away
- 7) Investment in green tourism and travel within the county
- 8) Water companies should be given the power to spend money on natural solutions as it has been proven that for every £1 spent on creating healthy soils that retain water and allow floodplains to function properly saves at least £3; a cost that can be passed directly to the consumer.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Senior Management Team and every two years by the Board of Trustees and Conservation Committee.