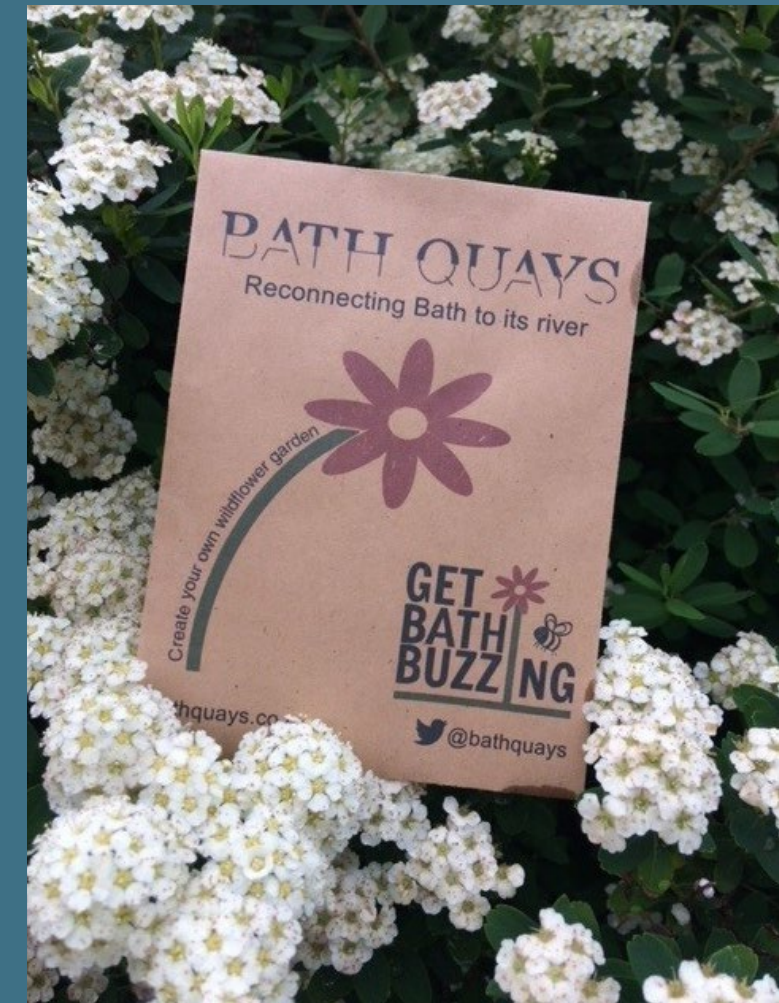


# INVESTING IN GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND NATURE'S RECOVERY



July 2023

Bath & North East  
Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives





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# INTRODUCTION

This prospectus outlines the work of the Green Infrastructure and Nature Recovery Team and key projects being developed and delivered in both the natural and built environment to benefit people, place and nature.

This is a live document that will be updated on a regular basis to keep local communities and residents, as well as existing and potential partners, funders and investors informed.

Whilst the council has been promoting and delivering green infrastructure (GI) projects for over 10 years, based on the council's Green Infrastructure Strategy, the need for well planned, designed, and managed GI has never been greater in responding to the climate and ecological emergencies.

Securing investment in the planning and provision of GI is as important as other infrastructure. It is a key component of providing sustainable places and integral to our health and economic prosperity. As a team our work includes advising relevant national, regional and local strategies, plans and policies, and collaborating with wide range of partners on project delivery with regard to GI, landscape character and biodiversity.

Nationally and locally we are increasingly understanding and recognising the value of our natural capital (natural assets) and the ecosystem services they provide eg soil formation, medicines, food, fresh water, pollination as well as cultural services e.g., recreation, aesthetic experiences and spiritual enrichment.

We are continually scoping and developing new projects that address nature recovery and meet the needs of our communities, working with existing and new partners.

Bath and North East Somerset has a unique landscape that forms an integral part of its sense of place and character. Protecting and enhancing this character influences the identity and approach of our strategic GI projects. We advise on the Mendip Hills and Cotswolds National Landscapes and World Heritage Site Setting.

In providing natural solutions to address climate change and biodiversity loss we also seek to address inequalities in provision and access to green and blue space.

We are collaborating with health professionals to encourage more people to access our greenspaces and countryside through green social prescribing initiatives.

With the extent of biodiversity loss evidenced at both global and local scale the importance of improving and better connecting B&NES ecological networks to contribute to nature recovery is key. Our Team is leading on the councils Ecological Emergency Action Plan and the West of England Local Nature Recovery Strategy that will drive this work together with the implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain.

As a spa town in the 19th century the surrounding 'therapeutic' landscape of Bath was managed and used for exercise and recreation - today Bathscape has re-established this practice as part of its work to manage and encourage access to the World Heritage Site landscape setting.





# GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Delivering high-quality green and blue infrastructure (GI) across our urban and natural areas provides practical nature-based solutions to address climate and ecological issues, support the region's resilience and deliver outcomes at an international, landscape and neighbourhood scale.

Our current strategic green infrastructure projects have their foundation in **the B&NES GI Strategy** including Bathscape (Green setting of Bath World Heritage Site), Waterspace (River Avon/Kennet and Avon canal).

We work with West of England (WoE) partners including West of England Combined Authority (WECA), the regions unitary authorities and environmental partnerships, as well as national and regional organisations, to scope and develop projects.

Securing investment for projects and their long term maintenance is key to our work. Success to date has enabled our team to expand to commit additional resources to securing further investment and programme management.

**Natural England's GI Framework** was launched this year as part of the government's 25 year Environment Plan commitment. This aims to support better planning for good quality GI and targeting creation or improvement of GI, particularly where existing provision is poorest. The Framework will guide the review of the councils GI Strategy.

The delivery of our strategic green infrastructure projects in B&NES have been further supported by the **West of England Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy 2020-2030**.

This Strategy, setting out key GI outcomes and principles, sits alongside other regional plans and strategies to ensure that GI is integrated into transport and development led schemes as well as delivering multi beneficial schemes whose primary purpose is nature recovery.





# GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMMES

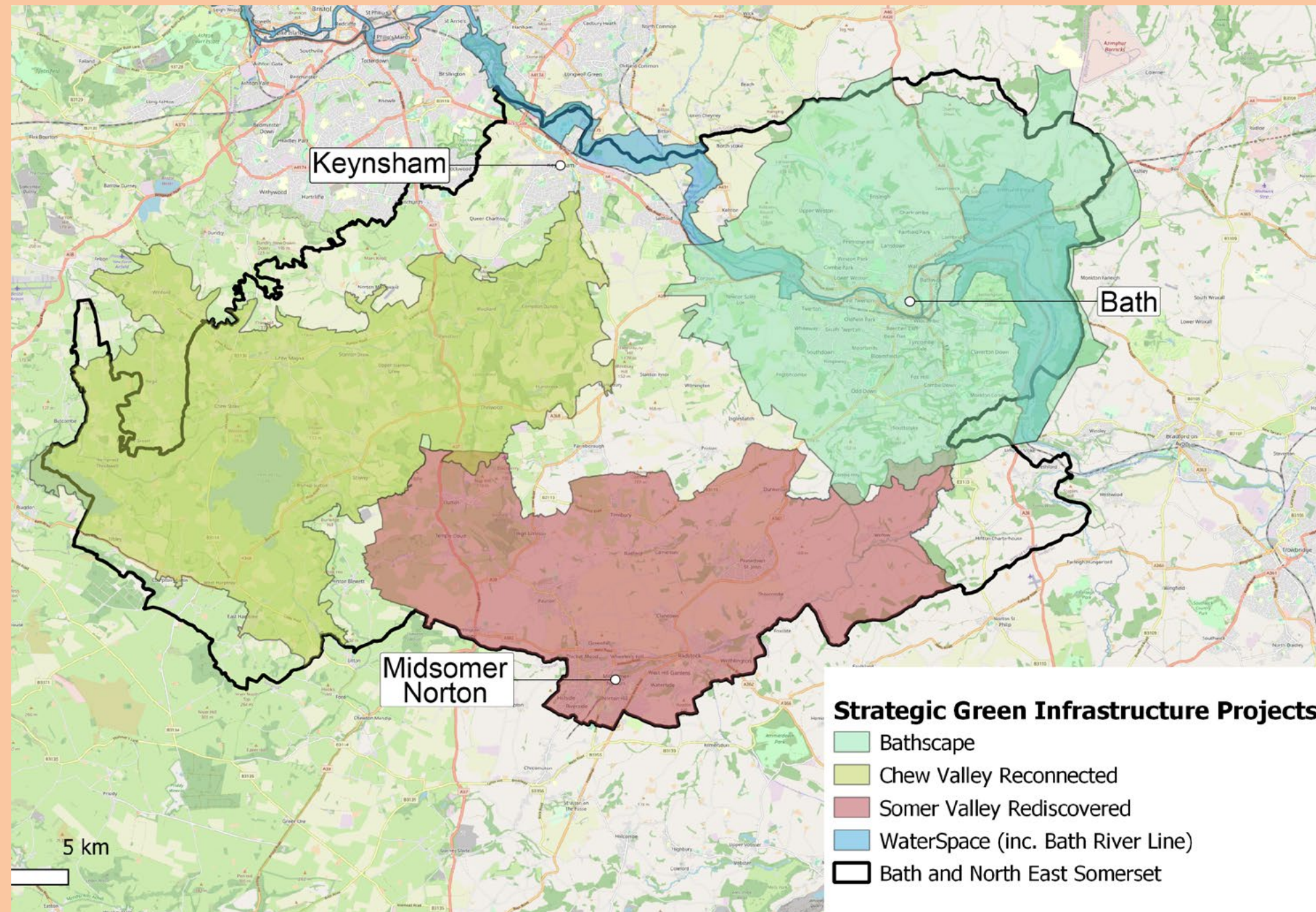
CONNECTING LANDSCAPES

WATERSPACE - AVON CORRIDOR

Whilst GI has no boundaries, we have taken a landscape character approach to scoping and defining programmes of work that are relatable to the communities that we want to engage and benefit, and are at a scale (size and outcomes) that will attract investment,

As green infrastructure physically connects these landscapes, whether that be via water catchment network, recreation access network or ecological network, the work of our Team is to strengthen those connections to enhance them for people, place and nature.

The current GI connecting landscape projects are Bathscape, Chew Valley Reconnected and Somer Valley Rediscovered.



The WaterSpace programme encompasses all of B&NES' work along the River Avon and canal network. The programme was conceived following the publication of the WaterSpace Study in 2017, which provided an evidence-based approach and strategy for how we manage and improve our 'water spaces'.

Included in the programme are our two strategic GI projects Bath River Line and WaterSpace Connected, and a series of smaller projects including canal towpath upgrade, bat guidance, ensuring safety provision, improving flood resilience and creating new mooring facilities.

The WaterSpace Study was produced in partnership with Canal & River Trust, Environment Agency and Wessex Water, who continue to support the delivery of projects through the WaterSpace Partnership.



# BATHSCAPE

Currently delivering a National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) grant programme (2018 -2025) of 25 projects to enhance the heritage, landscape and wildlife value of the setting of the City of Bath World Heritage Site and improve access and understanding of the natural landscape setting.

Supported by the Bathscape Partnership that brings together organisations, community groups, conservation bodies and others with an interest in the Bathscape area, the project team are ensuring the NLHF programme achieves its aims and looks beyond 2025 to continue to engage people in management and enjoyment of the landscape surrounding Bath.

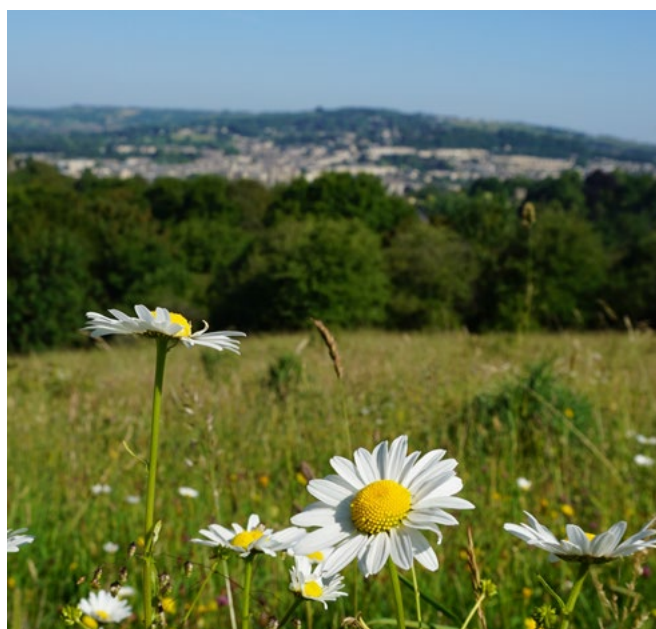
Under 3 key themes the current programme is delivering a wide range of work as well as offering volunteer and training opportunities.

# BATHSCAPE WALKING FESTIVAL

This flagship event takes place each September. Over 5000 walkers have taken part in 6 walking festivals to date.

## RESTORE

Bathscape is improving management of woodland, grasslands and important viewpoints. Creating new flower-rich meadows and surveying archaeological sites.



## EXPLORE

Improving pathways and signage across the area, including a 20 mile circular path around the whole city. Producing high-quality trail guides including photo and video trails.



## LEARN

Providing a broad range of opportunities for people to learn about and appreciate the natural and cultural heritage. From rural skills courses to family nature watch sessions and archaeological surveys.



[www.bathscape.co.uk](http://www.bathscape.co.uk)



# SOMER VALLEY REDISCOVERED

Somer Valley Rediscovered (SVR) project area includes Radstock, Midsomer Norton and Westfield, the large villages of Paulton and Peasedown St John and surrounding countryside and smaller villages. It is an area that has been profoundly influenced by the former coal mining industry.

The SVR Partnership, which includes B&NES Council, the town and parishes councils and other partners, is working to improve biodiversity, increase people's connections to nature to improve health and wellbeing. It aims to inspire people to enjoy and value their local natural spaces and enable communities to rediscover their local walks, natural environment and heritage.

SVR Greenspaces project has been awarded three year funding (2022 - 2025) from WECA's Green Recovery Fund. Greenspaces is a programme of nature recovery projects on 5 key greenspaces in Radstock, Westfield and Midsomer Norton, to restore key habitats and improve access for local people.

The work includes grassland restoration, woodland and watercourse management. The greenspaces are a range of small and medium sized sites located in peri-urban areas linked by the tributary watercourses of the Wellow Brook. A community engagement programme will include volunteering, events and activities and green social prescribing.

## The greenspaces are:

- Haydon Batch, Radstock Town Council
- Waterside Valley, Westfield Parish Council
- Midsomer Norton Town Park, Midsomer Norton Town Council
- Wellow Brook Walk, Midsomer Norton Town Council
- Staddlestones, Bath & North East Somerset Council (located in Midsomer Norton)

Partners are also engaged with the Cam and Wellow Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) bid that proposes projects for 2025- 2035 to improve water quality and management of the wider environment.



[www.somervalleyrediscovered.co.uk](http://www.somervalleyrediscovered.co.uk)



# CHEW VALLEY RECONNECTED

The Chew Valley Reconnected (CVR) project area includes area within Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and extends to Keynsham. The area has important networks of natural and semi-natural areas, including the internationally designated Chew Valley Lake, and a mosaic of important grassland sites and hedgerows in the upper catchment of the Chew. These provide crucial habitat and wildlife corridors for priority species, including swifts, swallows, house martins and greater and lesser Horseshoe Bats.

The project provides a significant opportunity to strengthen the Nature Recovery Network through connecting existing habitats and filling identified 'gaps' in the network, which will drive nature's recovery and deliver wider social and economic benefits. These benefits include improving human health and providing climate mitigation and resilience measures including through habitat creation and improved water management.

To deliver for communities and the local economy, better connections with places and access to nature, the project aims to enhance existing and create new walking and cycling access. This includes delivery of the southern section of the Chew Valley Lake Recreational Trail (CVLRT) and improving the Two Rivers Way walking route between Keynsham and Chew Valley Lake along the River Chew.

Currently the Project Manager is focused on preparing the CVLRT Full Business Case funded by WECA's Infrastructure Fund with match funding from B&NES Council.

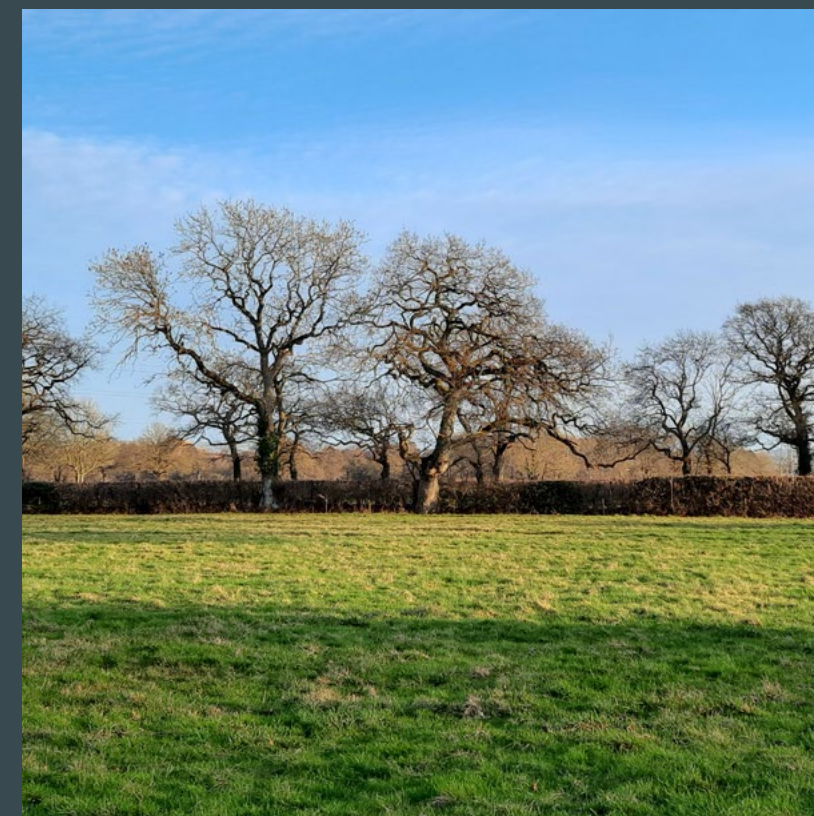
The Chew Valley Partnership has been established to provide coordination of a programme of projects that will better connect and improve wildlife, water and wellbeing, and address impacts of climate change in the Chew Valley. The key objective of the partnership is to

understand the key drivers of pollution in the Chew Valley catchment and to improve water quality by working with land managers and other stakeholders to restore the catchment to good ecological health and connectivity.

Partners are also engaged with the Chew Valley Reconnected Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) bid that proposes projects for 2025- 2035 to improve water quality and management of the wider environment.



Photograph: Lucy Masters



[www.chewvalleyreconnected.co.uk](http://www.chewvalleyreconnected.co.uk)



# BATH RIVER LINE

The Bath River Line is an ambitious green infrastructure project, creating a 10km linear park through the heart of Bath, helping unlock the potential of the River Avon.

Transforming a neglected corridor into a model for sustainable development, community connectivity and active travel, the Bath River Line is being developed in partnership with the Canal & Rivers Trust, the Environment Agency, Wessex Water, the National Trust and Bath Spa University.

Phase I is an initial package of interventions in the western section of the Bath River Line between Green Park and Newbridge, to be delivered by 2024.

## Project themes:

### 1. Create Connections

Enhance and expand the active travel network in Bath by creating a level, accessible route from Newbridge to Batheaston.

### 2. Restore and Reveal

Improve biodiversity and climate change resilience through the enhancement of existing, and the creation of new, natural habitats.

### 3. Reimagine

Provide a safe, social, inclusive space for residents and visitors and enhance the setting of the World Heritage Site through the creation of a unified, high quality linear park which is well designed and easy to navigate.

### 4. Create Opportunities

Create new economic opportunities and enhance the tourism offer in Bath by providing improved access to the water for recreational businesses, providing an additional destination for tourists and signposting and bringing additional footfall to businesses outside the city centre.





# WATERSPACE CONNECTED

WaterSpace Connected is an ambitious large-scale green and blue infrastructure project following the River Avon corridor from Bath to Bristol. The project aims to improve the river and its surroundings for nature and people. The first phase of WaterSpace Connected is currently being developed in partnership by B&NES Council and South Gloucestershire Council and includes plans to:

- Design and deliver an accessible bridge across the River Avon, enabling people to walk, wheel and cycle on off-road route between Keynsham and Bristol.
- Enhance the surrounding area and infrastructure, providing a destination for residents to enjoy nature on their doorstep.

Deliver ecological enhancements along the river corridor through partnerships and landowner advice. This stretch of the river and the associated footpaths along it provide an opportunity for residents of Bristol and Bath to easily access valuable blue and green spaces, and acts as a nature corridor stretching into both cities. The River Avon is a crucial habitat for species such as salmon, kingfishers, bats and otters, alongside many others. By taking a joined-up and partnership led approach we can work to improve the river corridor for all the people and nature that rely on it.



WaterSpace Connected Youtube video:  
<http://bitly.ws/Pb8d>



# NATURE RECOVERY

While the landscape of our area is internationally, nationally and regionally recognised for its natural beauty and wildlife, the state of nature as with rest of the country, has been declining dramatically over the past century or so.

Globally, nationally and locally, nature is collapsing at an alarming rate. The world has lost 60% of its wild vertebrates, 83% of freshwater species and up to 76% of insects since 1970. In our region, populations of once common birds such as swifts and cuckoos have plummeted in the past 25 years alone.

This matters to all of us because of the vital role that wildlife and nature play in supporting our wellbeing, society and economy. Nature provides the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, and many of the resources we need to survive and maintain our quality of life. In total, more than half of the world's economy is moderately or highly dependent on nature.

The changing landform generates concentrations of habitat mosaics – interwoven grasslands, woodlands and waterways, which are unique to the region. Mosaic habitats are of high conservation value, and particularly under threat. It is imperative that we restore and reconnect these habitats through good stewardship and investment, and the opportunities are significant.

In July 2020, B&NES Council declared an ecological emergency, recognising the severity of the degradation of the natural environment and loss of wildlife, and the urgency of action to restore nature.

The Ecological Emergency Action Plan, sets out how B&NES Council intends to address the ecological emergency and become nature positive by 2030.



**Bath & North East Somerset  
Ecological Emergency Action Plan**

**2023-2030**

16 March 2023

TACKLING THE CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY

Bath & North East Somerset Council  
Improving People's Lives



Photograph: Bristol Avon River Trust



# NATURE RECOVERY (2)

We will be leading on key actions, working with partners. Priority areas are:

## EMBEDDING NATURE RECOVERY ACROSS ALL THE COUNCIL'S SERVICES AND DELIVERY

- **Biodiversity Net Gain** (BNG) a requirement of the Environment Act 2021 introduces a 10% mandatory requirement for BNG for certain development types together with long term habitat management plans. Our work involves supporting Local Plan Policy and Development Management officers in the implementation of BNG and advising on opportunities in our current and potential projects to benefit from BNG to deliver and fund nature recovery and management.
- BNG Pathfinder Sites - we will lead on the delivery of nature recovery on two council greenfield sites and develop a programme of BNG on Council land.
- **Call for Nature Sites** - we are managing this new council initiative that invites landowners and leaseholders interested in making a positive contribution to nature recovery to submit their sites. Our team will collaborate with the site owners and leaseholders to introduce them to nature recovery opportunities.

## INCREASING THE EXTENT OF LAND AND WATER MANAGED POSITIVELY FOR NATURE IS ONE OF OUR KEY PRIORITIES, BOTH ON LAND OWNED BY THE COUNCIL AND OTHERS.

We are working across our services to identify the best opportunities for improving the management of land we own and lease for nature. Particularly important is ensuring that sites designated for nature i.e Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Sites of Nature Conservation Interest and Local Nature Reserves, are managed and are in good condition. We aim to survey the condition of council owned designated sites this year, and work with partners to ascertain the condition of sites outside of our estate.

The Strategic GI projects outlined in this prospectus and future projects will be crucial to bringing more land and water into good management for nature. A focus will be increasing investment into nature-based solutions and wildlife-friendly interventions. Our Nature Recovery Manager is leading on the region's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Funded by West of England Combined Authority, the work is supported by a regional working group.

## IMPROVING ACCESS TO AND ENGAGEMENT WITH NATURE IS A WELL-EVIDENCED WAY OF IMPROVING PEOPLE'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING, AND ENCOURAGING ACTION FOR NATURE.

We support communities in managing local spaces for nature through the Neighbourhood Nature Areas scheme, and supporting parish and town councils in developing Local Nature Action Plans.

We are working with the Public Health team to better integrate nature into public health delivery and demonstrate public health benefits in our GI and Nature Recovery work. Green and Active Social Prescribing, Citizen Science, walks programmes and greening as part of new development and retrofitting all contribute to preventative health care.



**B&NES Ecological Emergency Action Plan**  
<https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/ecological-emergency-action-plan>



# LANDSCAPE

Landscape character gives an area its distinctive identity and sense of place that contributes to quality of life, economy and attractiveness as a place in which to live and invest.

As well as having areas of B&NES within the nationally designated National Landscapes (previously known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) - Mendip Hills and the Cotswolds, we have City of Bath World Heritage Site and landscape setting that is part of the UNESCO designation. An additional UNESCO designation given in 2021 'Great Spa of Europe', recognises the therapeutic landscape.

Our GI projects seek to enhance landscape character and consider it in scoping and developing projects and addressing issues.

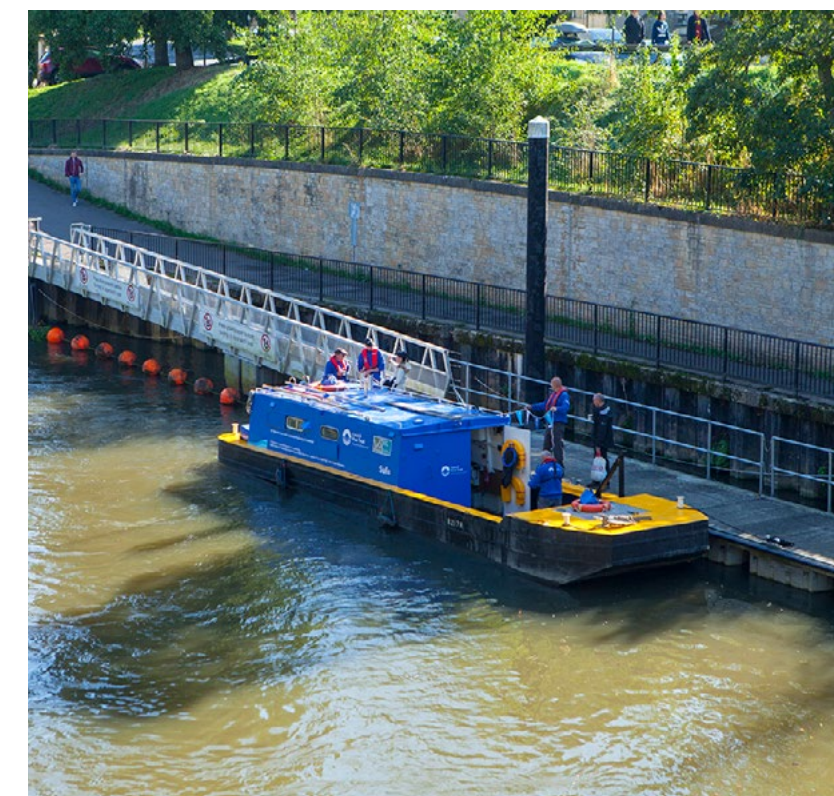
Responsibility for reviews of the B&NES Landscape Character Assessment and advising on policy and developments that may impact on landscape is a key role provided by our team.





# WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Our Team works with colleagues across the council and with wide range of external partners including organisations, community groups, neighbouring authorities, and individual landowners.



## JOINT COUNCIL SERVICE PROJECTS

We are working with Public Health and Active Travel to deliver green social prescribing schemes and provide activities. Internally and externally we play an influencing and supportive role as we develop projects. This includes working with Parks to increase space for nature and improved access in our parks and green spaces including Keynsham Memorial Park with a view to creating a wetland nature park, Entry Hill green space and Staddlestones in Somer Valley.

## JOINT RESEARCH AND DATA

We are working with the University of Bath and Wessex Water on reducing the concentration of pharmaceuticals in water and understanding the effectiveness of green social prescribing. We also work closely with the council's Climate and Engagement team, developing environmental outcomes and providing data for the economic doughnut and better understanding natural capital and ecosystem services to inform decision making.

## JOINT STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS

We actively develop and help deliver regional strategies and plans including: West of England (WoE) Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy, WoE Nature Partnership Nature Recovery Prospectus, WoE Tree and Woodland Strategy (Forest of Avon Plan), Bristol Avon Catchment Plan, Bristol Avon Fish Recovery Strategy, WECA Climate & Ecological Action Plan.

## JOINT PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Our team is directly involved in the region's key environmental partnerships including **Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership**, **West of England Nature Partnership**, **Natural History Consortium**, WoE Green Infrastructure Working Group, and Avon Frome Partnership.

## JOINT EVENTS

Our projects promote and actively engage in local and national events in Bath and North East Somerset including Forest of Imagination, Festival of Nature and City Nature Challenge to encourage local residents and visitors to engage with nature and their local environment.



# INFOGRAPHICS



**52**  
grassland owners supported - Bathscape



**5** major projects delivering new and improved green infrastructure



**15** new GI and NR jobs created in the Team 2022-23



**Over £5m**  
grant funding secured by the projects listed



**5km** of riverside improvements being delivered as part of the Bath River Line



**4 years** City of Nature Challenge



**34** hectares of green space being enhanced for wildlife - Somer Valley



**Over 5000** walkers taken part in 6 Bathscape Walking Festivals



**Over 3600** volunteer hours delivered for Waterspace



**7 years** participating in the annual Festival of Nature



**Bathscape Bath Life Awards**  
- Finalist 2019 Highly Commended 2023



**Bathscape Podcast**  
**ARIAS Award**  
nomination 2023



Key role in 4 regional strategies- Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy, Local Nature Recovery Strategy/Tree and Woodland Strategy/Fish Recovery Strategy



Key partner in Great Avon Wood new woodland creation project