



**Leicestershire  
& Rutland**  
Wildlife Trust



# Recognising the Ecological Crisis and how golf courses can support the recovery of nature

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Ben Devine – Head of Nature Recovery

*Greener Golf Group Winter Conference – 8<sup>th</sup> Feb 2024*



# Golf & Nature

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“ No other game combines the wonder of nature with the discipline of sport in such carefully planned ways. A great golf course both frees and challenges a golfer's mind. ”

Tom Watson



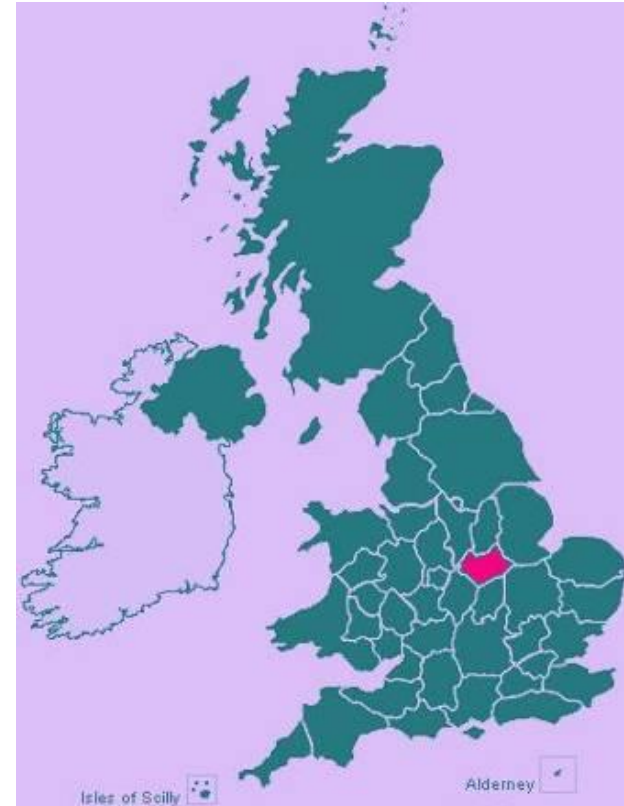
- Established 1956
- Currently 32 staff
- 800+ volunteers
- 20,000 members



# Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts

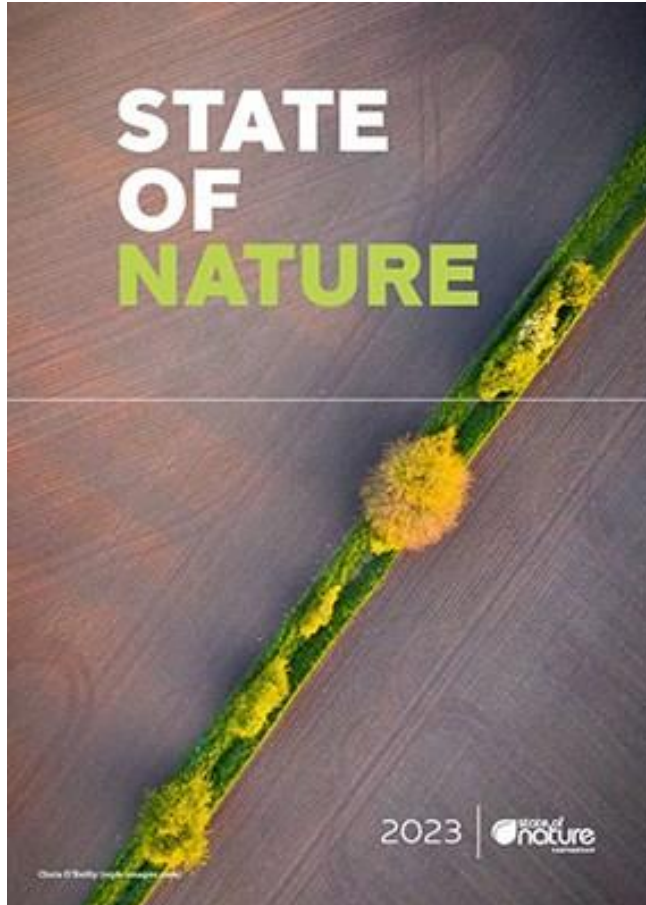
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- Network of 47 local Wildlife Trusts working together to protect wildlife in towns & countryside.
- Together we manage 2,300 nature reserves.
- Combined membership of 800,000.
- Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust – Your local partner in this powerful conservation network



# State of Nature in the UK

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“the UK is now one of the most nature-depleted countries on Earth.”



# Historic wildlife losses in Britain

Fens 99.7% loss 1637 – 1981

Species-rich grassland 97% loss 1930-1984

Wet grazing marsh 81% loss to 1997

Lowland Heath 80% loss 1800 – 1980

Lowland raised bog 44% loss to 2008

Ancient woodland 7% loss 1930-1985

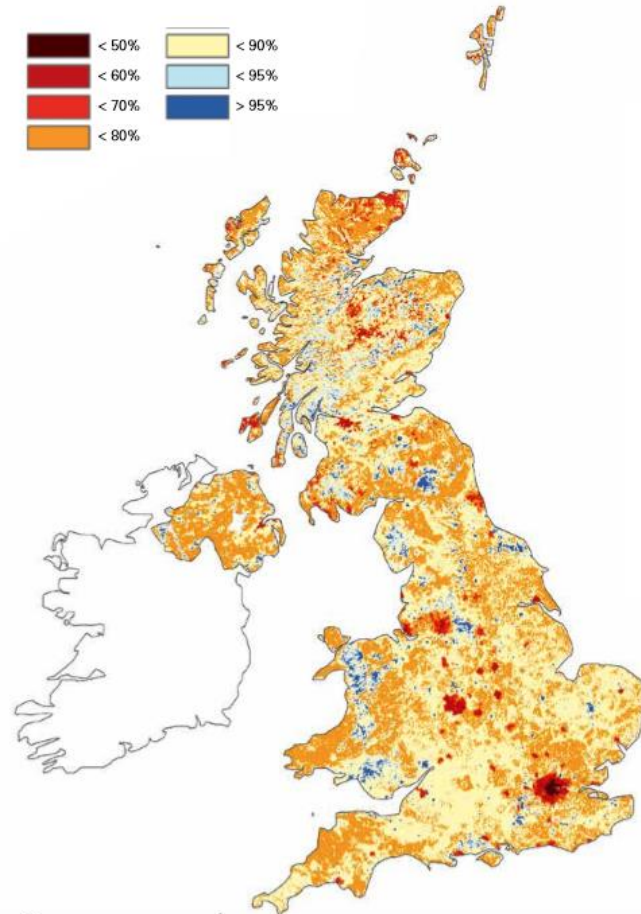


Figure 46



# Leicestershire and Rutland are rich in diversity

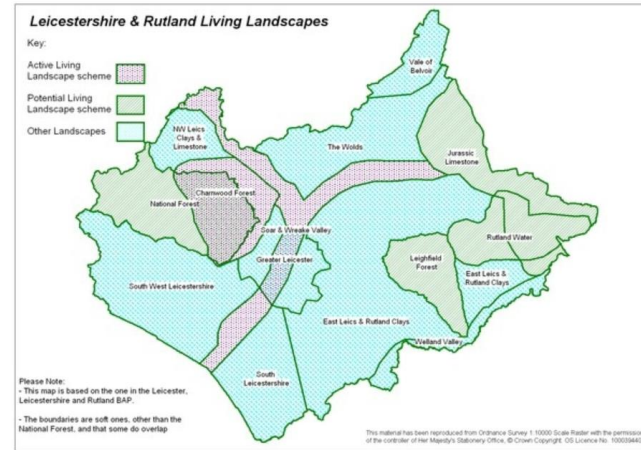


## **Acid** (pH 4-6)

Wavy hair-grass, Matgrass,  
Sheep's fescue. 10spp per sq.m

## **Mesotrophic** (eg hay)

Crested dog's-tail,  
Yorkshire fog,  
Red fescue



## **Calcareous** (pH 7-8.4)

Meadow Oat-grass,  
Thyme. 40+spp per sq.m

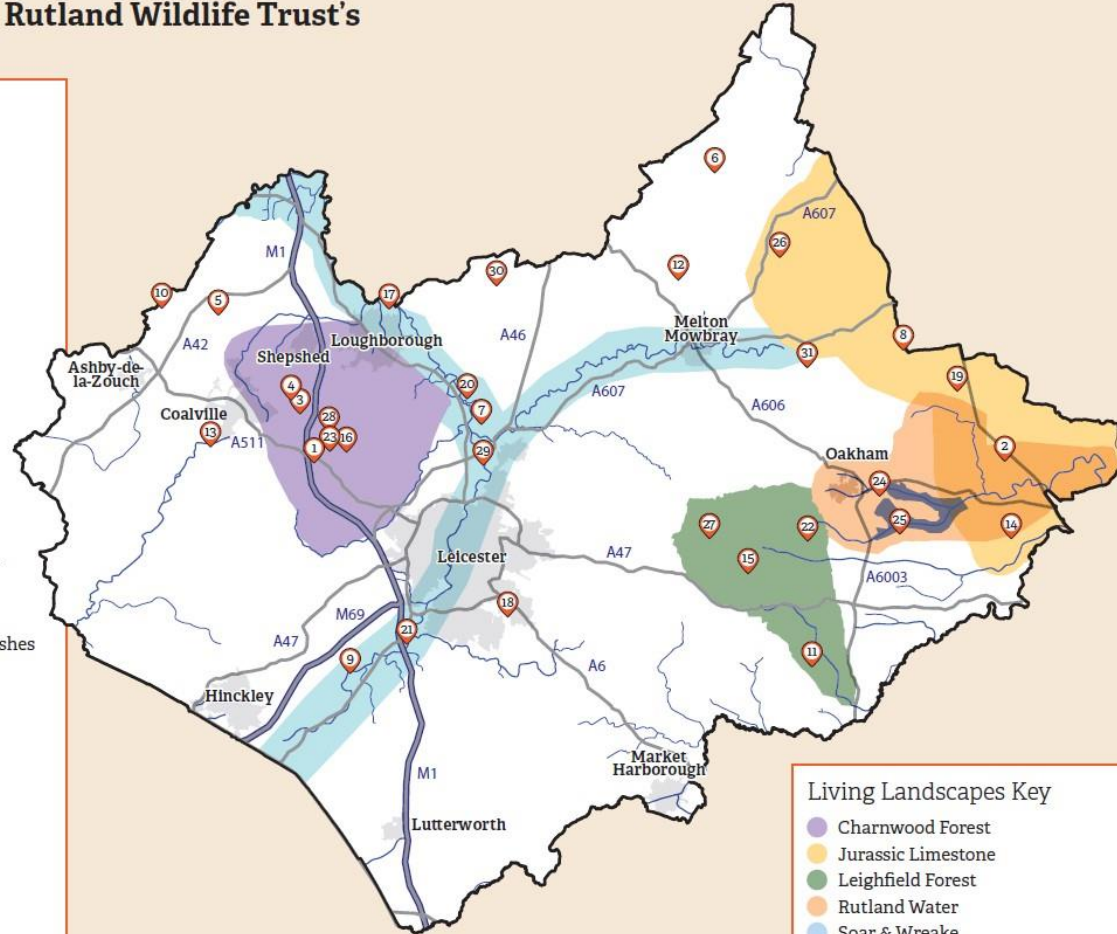


# Living Landscapes

## Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust's Nature Reserves

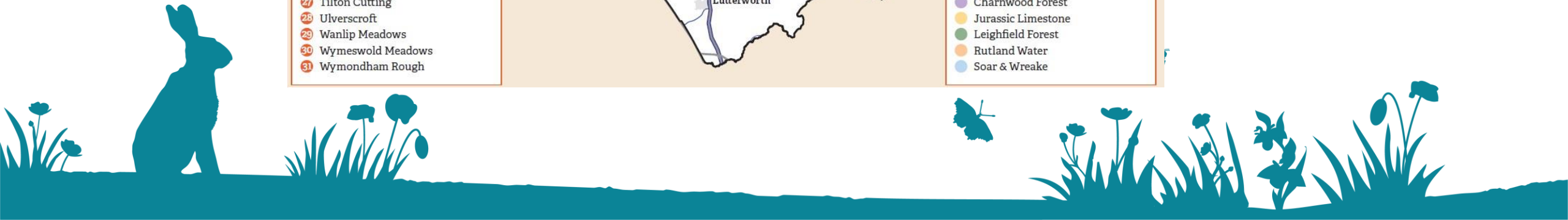
### Reserve Key

- 1 Altar Stones
- 2 Bloody Oaks Quarry
- 3 Charley Woods
- 4 Charnwood Lodge
- 5 Cloud Wood
- 6 Coombs Meadows
- 7 Cossington Meadows
- 8 Cribb's Meadow
- 9 Croft Pasture
- 10 Dimmisdale
- 11 Great Merrible Wood
- 12 Holwell
- 13 Kelham Bridge
- 14 Ketton Quarry
- 15 Launde Woods
- 16 Lea Meadows
- 17 Loughborough Big Meadow
- 18 Lucas' Marsh
- 19 Merry's Meadows
- 20 Mountsorrel & Rothley Marshes
- 21 Narborough Bog
- 22 Prior's Coppice
- 23 Rocky Plantation
- 24 Rutland Water: Egleton
- 25 Rutland Water: Lyndon
- 26 Stonesby Quarry
- 27 Tilton Cutting
- 28 Ulverscroft
- 29 Wanlip Meadows
- 30 Wymeswold Meadows
- 31 Wymondham Rough



### Living Landscapes Key

- Charnwood Forest
- Jurassic Limestone
- Leighfield Forest
- Rutland Water
- Soar & Wreake





# Diverse Habitats and species - for example

**Leicester is the SPIDER capital of the UK: City is home to more species of arachnids than anywhere else in the UK, study finds**



# Loss of Nature in L&R

Habitat	Date range	% loss	Area left (ha)
Fen	To 1997	99.7	
Wet grazing	1637 - 1981	81	
Lowland bog	To 2008	44	
Spp-rich grass	1930 - 1984	97	2,500
Heath grass	1800 – 1980	80	500
Ancient wood	1930 - 1985	11 (+43 PAWS)	1,790

*Based on figures from the L&R BAP 2016-2026*

*“The very best sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest or SSSIs) represent only about 1.3% of the land area for Leicestershire”.*



“a Global conservation crisis”

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**Target - “conserving at least 30% of land and oceans by 2030”**





Great crested Grebe



Barn Owl



Gadwell



Water Vole



# Cossington Meadows Nature Reserve

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Lapwing



Short Eared Owl



Grey Heron



# 800 volunteers supporting our work



# Education and Engagement



BioBlitz



Bat walks



Family days



Badger watching



Discovery walks



# Community Engagement in Leicester



StreetWild – Thurcaston Rd Area



Leicester's Urban Nature  
Project Celebration



Belgrave Library Gardening Group



Sensational Vibes Youth and Community  
Development – African and Caribbean Centre



Leicester College



Belgrave Neighbourhood Housing Assoc



# How golf courses can support nature's recovery

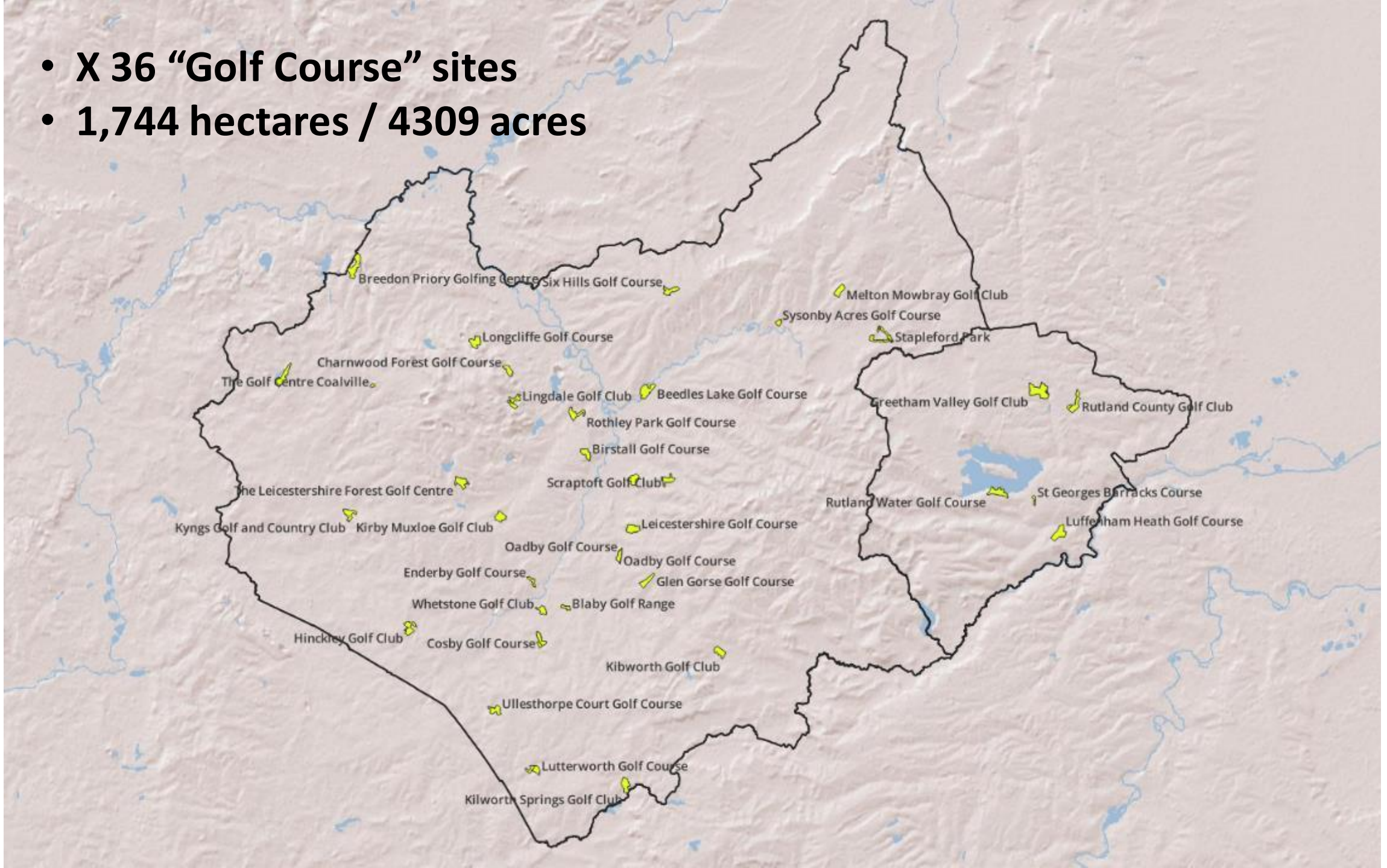
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- There are more than 35 golf courses in Leicestershire and Rutland
- Mainly large areas of the countryside
- Much of which consists of rougher, less intensively managed land – great for supporting nature
- Managed sympathetically - golf courses have an important role to play in supporting nature's recovery



Lapwing - *Vanellus vanellus*

- X 36 “Golf Course” sites
- 1,744 hectares / 4309 acres

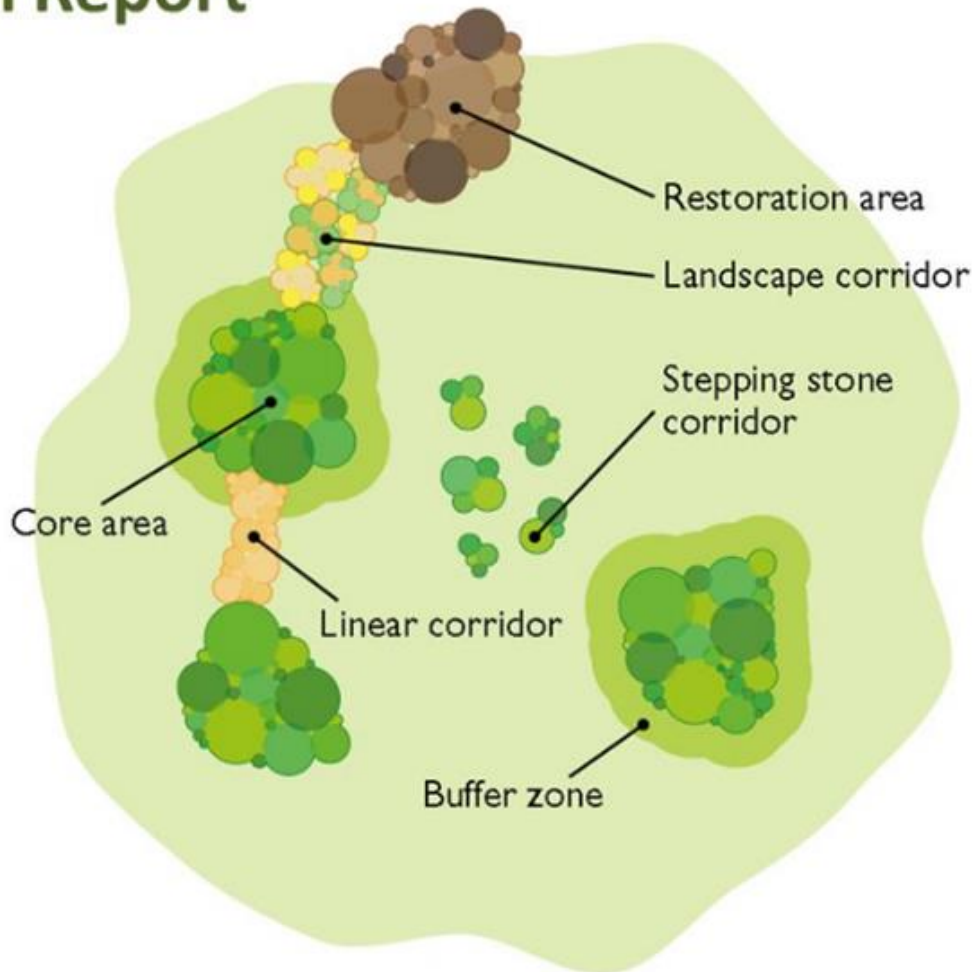


# How golf courses can support nature's recovery cont..

## The Lawton Report

- Bigger
- Better
- Connected

Put the  
Right Habitat  
in the  
Right Place



- Golf courses act as large **stepping stones** and valuable **corridors** for wildlife
- They can be **bigger, better, more joined-up** with improved management



Common Toad - *Bufo bufo*

# How golf courses can support nature's recovery cont..

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Dock Bug - *Coreus marginatus*

**Habitats**: Courses can provide a **mosaic** of interconnected habitats:

- Rough / Species-rich grassland
- Heathland / Scrub
- Woodland / Mature trees
- Ponds / Lakes / Rivers / Streams
- Hedgerows

**Species**: Courses can support significant populations of common and priority species:

- Insects
- Birds
- Mammals
- Amphibians / Reptiles

# How golf courses can support nature's recovery cont..

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## What studies have shown:

- Courses with lots of different types of habitats will attract the most wildlife (Tanner & Gange, 2005)
- When compared to surrounding intensively managed farmland, golf courses support greater numbers (abundance) and types (diversity) of birds and insects (Tanner & Gange, 2005)
- Golf course managers consider courses to be valuable for wildlife, want to do more for nature conservation, including detailed surveys and management plans (Hammond & Hudson, 2007)



Heathland / Woodland Habitat

# How golf courses can support nature's recovery cont..

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## What can be done to improve golf courses for nature?

- **Baseline/monitoring surveys** *e.g habitat surveys UKHabs/Phase1 protocols*
- **Habitat enhancement** *e.g changes to rough cutting management*
- **Habitat creation** *e.g. woodland/wetland creation or reconnecting habitats*
- **Species re-introductions** *e.g. scarce butterflies or host plants*
- **Land acquisition** *e.g expanding sites*

## What Potential Sources of Funding are available?

- **Green Finance** *e.g. BNG, Carbon Credits etc.*
- Specific funding for **SSSI's** in unfavourable Condition if applicable
- Grant Funding from NHLF and many others
- Agri-environment schemed *e.g. ELMS* if applicable



Common Pipistrelle - *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

# How can LRWT support GGG members?

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**Affiliation proposal**  
(Individual)



**Funding bid proposal**  
(Group)

## Affiliation Proposal (*Individual*)

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1. Golf clubs would decide to “affiliate” with LRWT, making an annual payment in return for use of our affiliation logo, associated comms, annual visits etc.
2. The Trust would then negotiate a separate fee with each club dependant on its size/complexity to:
  - Undertake **full ecological surveys** of the course
  - Outline **recommendations for ecological enhancements**, including habitat creation
  - Associated detailed **management planning advice**
  - Any **ongoing habitat/species monitoring** required, including annual visits

*(This work would complement any BNG assessments undertaken or in the future)*





## Funding Bid Proposal *(Group of courses)*

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A more strategic/unified approach where a group of courses come together with LRWT to seek funding for the following shared aims/objectives/outcomes:

- **Aims:** to seek funding to **identify opportunities** on golf courses throughout L&R, to **deliver capital works that will restore/create key habitats/species** and secure their **long-term maintenance for a minimum of 10 years**. Engage members and local communities with wildlife on golf courses.
- **Objectives:**
  1. **Desk-based assessments** to determine site value before survey work
  2. **Full ecological surveys of x20 golf courses**, identifying/mapping habitats on site
  3. **Identifying individual opportunities** to restore/enhance/create habitats on site
  4. **A Biodiversity Audit report** for each site, identifying habitats/opportunities
  5. **Costed Habitat Management Plans** for each site
  6. **Community events** connecting communities with wildlife on golf courses

## Funding Bid Proposal (*Group of courses*) cont..

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- **Outcomes:**
- **X20 Ecological Surveys and Biodiversity Audits**, with costed **Habitat Management Plans** for each site
- Delivery of biodiversity enhancements across the sites could include:
  - **10ha Species-rich grassland** restored/created
  - **20 Ponds** created/restored
  - **1km of water courses** enhanced/restored
  - **2ha of woodland** enhanced
  - **500 trees** planted
  - **1km of hedgerows** created/enhanced
  - Plus Insect hotels/Bee Banks/Hibernacula/Bird/Bat Boxes etc.
  - **X5 large community wildlife events** on selected courses

## Funding Bid Proposal (*Group of courses*) cont..

- **Further information:**
- Project duration likely 12-18 months
- LRWT would employ a new member of staff to oversee and undertake proposed work, in close partnership with each course involved
- Any opportunities identified would need to complement with course playability and business models to be sustainable
- Estimated costs, between £250,000 - £350,000
- Funding could be secured from a range of sources including the National Heritage Lottery Fund



# Thank You for listening

## Any Questions?



Snow drops – Dimminsdale Nature Reserve