

Purple Horizons

NATURAL
ENGLAND

A Nature Recovery Project between Cannock Chase and Sutton Park

Background

The vision of Purple Horizons is to restore a resilient landscape between two large nature reserves: Cannock Chase in Staffordshire and Sutton Park in Birmingham.

The project

This is a partnership project, receiving funding from Defra. Our partnership includes landowners, businesses, local authorities, environmental charities, research institutions and government agencies.

- Together we have created 42 hectares of habitat so far.
- We are seeking more landowners and farmers who can undertake environmental actions. Funding is available (find out more overleaf).
- Your actions, such as planting hedgerows and improving soil health, can have many benefits for your farming operation as well as for wildlife and the local landscape.

“In Britain we have 270 species of bee and 250 species of wasp. In the West Midlands, eight sites are known to support almost half of Britain’s bee and wasp fauna. Creating more habitat in Walsall and Lichfield is crucial for helping these species survive and creating ecosystem resilience.”

Aaron Bhambra, researcher at the University of Birmingham

Benefits and impacts

Researchers from the University of Birmingham are discovering that this landscape is very important for rare wild bees. In January 2024, our partnership created bare earth nesting habitat by scraping off vegetation on sandy soils. Rare species started using the new habitats within six months, including the nationally threatened Tormentil Mining Bee (pictured). Conserving our native pollinators has huge benefits for the health of ecosystems and for crops such as oilseed rape, field beans, orchard fruit, and soft fruit.



Key Fact:

Cannock Chase is the largest remaining area of heathland in the Midlands and is internationally important for its wildlife.



Key outcomes and benefits of restoring nature here:

- Greater resilience to climate events e.g. floods, heatwaves
- A more beautiful and healthier place to live and work
- A landscape with a distinctive character and unique species



How you can support the project

- Adding more wildflowers to grasslands and field margins helps support a wide range of species. Our partnership can help advise on techniques to introduce local wildflowers, such as green hay spreading.
- Actions to restore soil health, such as minimum tillage, cover crops and green manures can boost crop productivity, reduce the cost of inputs and help farmland birds that feed on soil invertebrates.
- Actions to make bigger, longer, more diverse hedgerows create fantastic wildlife corridors for pollinators, birds and small mammals. They help species move around the landscape and adapt to change.



Find out more

Please contact: west.midlands.enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk. Help and advice on Countryside Stewardship schemes, Biodiversity Net Gain and Catchment Sensitive Farming is available. Please enquire to see if your land can be the future for thriving nature and climate resilience.



External links:

<https://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/purplehorizons>

Natural England is working on this project in partnership with:



www.gov.uk/natural-england