

# Solihull Habitat and Nature Improvements

A programme of woodland, grassland, wetland and water quality improvements

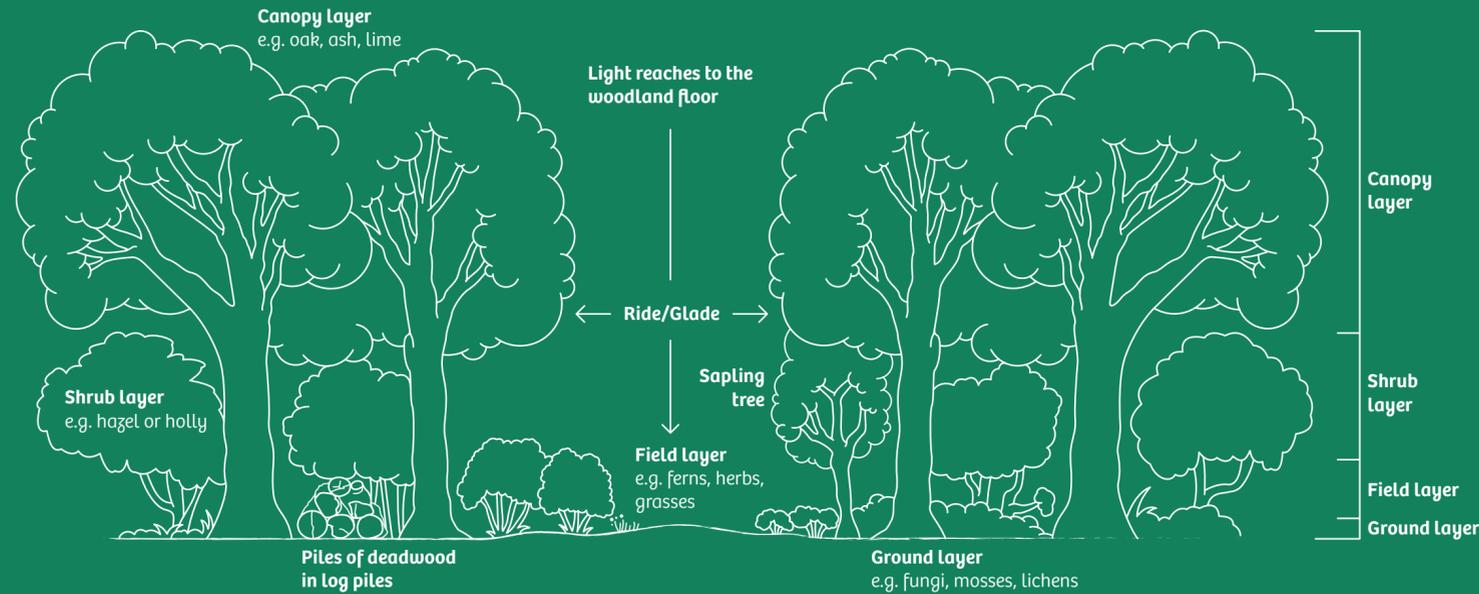
This project has enabled habitat enhancements in twelve of Solihull's woodlands

Solihull Council's woodlands are a key component of the landscape and are important for people and wildlife.

Managing our woodlands ensures that they have more variation in structure, age and species of trees which will increase their biodiversity – attracting and supporting a greater range of wildlife and plants.

Woodlands are composed of a variety of plants of differing heights and shapes. This gives a distinct vertical structure – canopy, shrub, field and ground layers.

Thinning the canopy creates the necessary space and light to enable trees to prosper and allow the next generation of saplings to establish. It also opens glades and rides, creating open areas that attract completely different flowers and wildlife from the rest of the wood.



The woodland structure diagram shows the layers and how rides /glades allow light into the woodland.

Most woodland butterflies are sun-loving insects and the majority only breed in open rides and glades which provide warm and sunny micro-climates. Bats also use rides for hunting attracted by the rich insect life.

## Chelmsley Wood

The woodland is all that remains of the once vast Chelmsley Wood with historic links to the Saxon chief Ceolmund. Chelmsley Wood is a Local Wildlife Site and a remnant of ancient woodland. The wood was reduced in the 1960s as Chelmsley Wood town centre was developed. It still provides habitat for birds including green and great spotted woodpeckers, nuthatch and treecreeper.

Woodland flowers including bluebells, wood anemones and ransoms transform the wood in spring – a reminder of what attracted droves of day trippers from Birmingham in the past.

## Some species of animals and plants found in the wood



**Alder** (*Alnus glutinosa*) is a native tree which thrives in wet areas. The waterlogged wood actually gets stronger and harder when wet and most of the timber piles used to build Venice are alder. The bark is dark and has crevices and is often covered in lichen. Small brown cones are on the plant all-year round and are the female catkins. The male catkins are long and thin, and turn yellow and release the pollen. Alder is an important tree as it fixes nitrogen from the air and improves soil fertility.



**Greater stitchwort** (*Stellaria holostea*) grows in woodland and along roadside verges, hedgerows and grassy banks. Greater stitchwort has five white petals, each deeply notched and almost divided into two. It has pretty, star-shaped, white flowers bloom from April to June. As the seed capsules ripen, they can be heard 'popping' in late spring.

**Downy birch** (*Betula pubescens*) is a small, fast-growing tree with thin branches and papery bark. In spring, male catkins turn yellow releasing their pollen, which is carried by the wind to the short, green, female catkins that appear on the same tree. In winter, the catkins break up into winged seeds, ready to disperse. Its leaves are rounded and grow on hairy stalks, hence the name, 'Downy'. It provides food and habitat for over 300 insect species, and hole-nesting places for birds such as woodpeckers.



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