

# Solihull Habitat and Nature Improvements

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

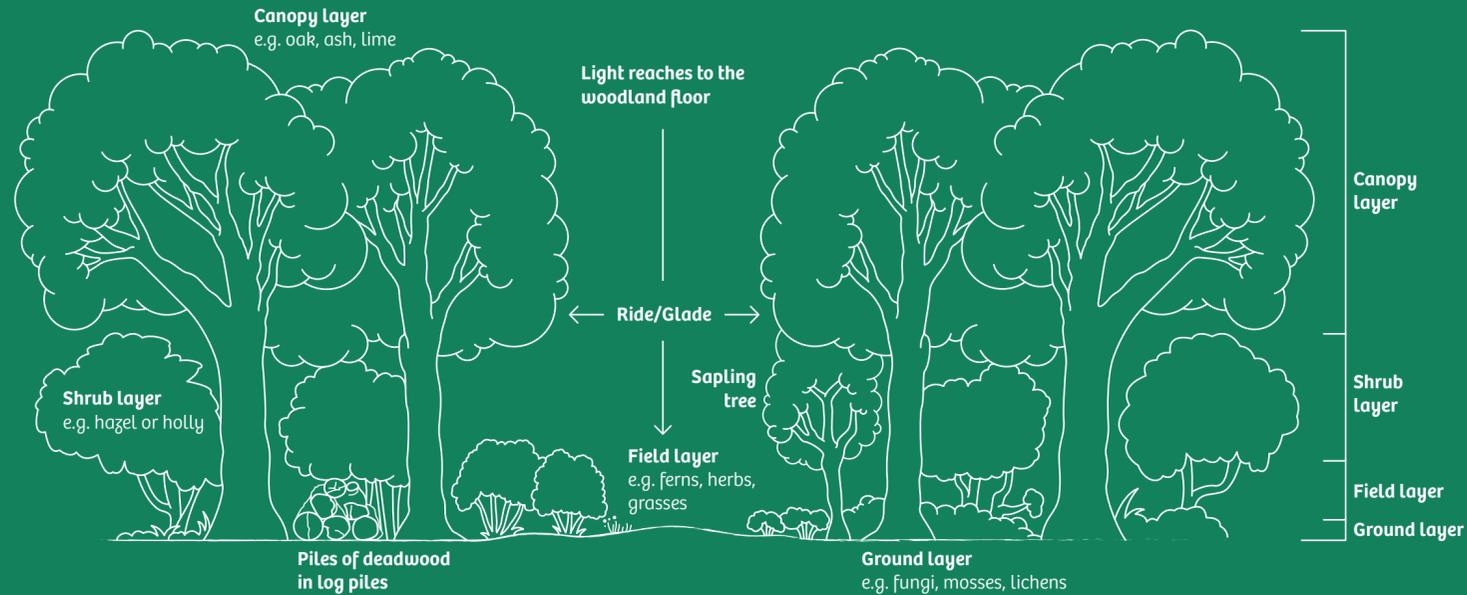
This project has enabled habitat enhancements in twelve of Solihull's woodlands

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.

## Lea Wood

Lea Wood in Brueton Park is on the site of the Council's former tree nursery, which closed in the 1990s, and comprises a plantation with trees of the same age. The wood is planted with a wide range of native and non-native broad-leaved trees, typically in single species blocks.

The plantation has never been thinned and the trees are fairly densely spaced, forming a continuous canopy. Among the many tree species planted are silver birch, sycamore, ash, English oak, red oak, lime, aspen, London plane and wild cherry.

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

**Small-leaved lime** (*Tilia cordata*) is a large native tree common in the Midlands. Its presence is an indicator of ancient woodland. The leaves provide food for the caterpillars of many moth species, including the lime hawk and vapourer moths. They are very attractive to aphids, providing a source of food for their predators, including hoverflies, ladybirds and many species of bird. The flowers provide nectar and pollen for insects, particularly bees, which also drink aphid honeydew from lime leaves.



Heart-shaped leaves, yellow-green, five-petalled flowers and small, oval fruits.



**Chiffchaff** (*Phylloscopus collybita*) lives in woodland, scrub, parks and gardens. The chiffchaff is a small olive-brown warbler which actively flits through trees and shrubs. Chiffchaffs often have dark legs and a short pale eye stripe. It is recognised by its song – a simple 'chiff chaff chiff chaff' from where it gets its name. It picks insects from trees and also flies out to snap them up in flight. Some chiffchaffs stay all year-round, but most migrate here from Africa, arriving early in spring.



**Primrose** (*Primula vulgaris*) grows in woodland clearings, hedgerows and grassland. It can be seen flowering from December in mild winters and throughout spring. Its name derives from the Latin *prima rosa* meaning 'first rose' of the year, despite not being a member of the rose family. Their flowers are large and creamy, with deep yellow centres, and often appear clustered together.



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