

Solihull Habitat and Nature Improvements

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

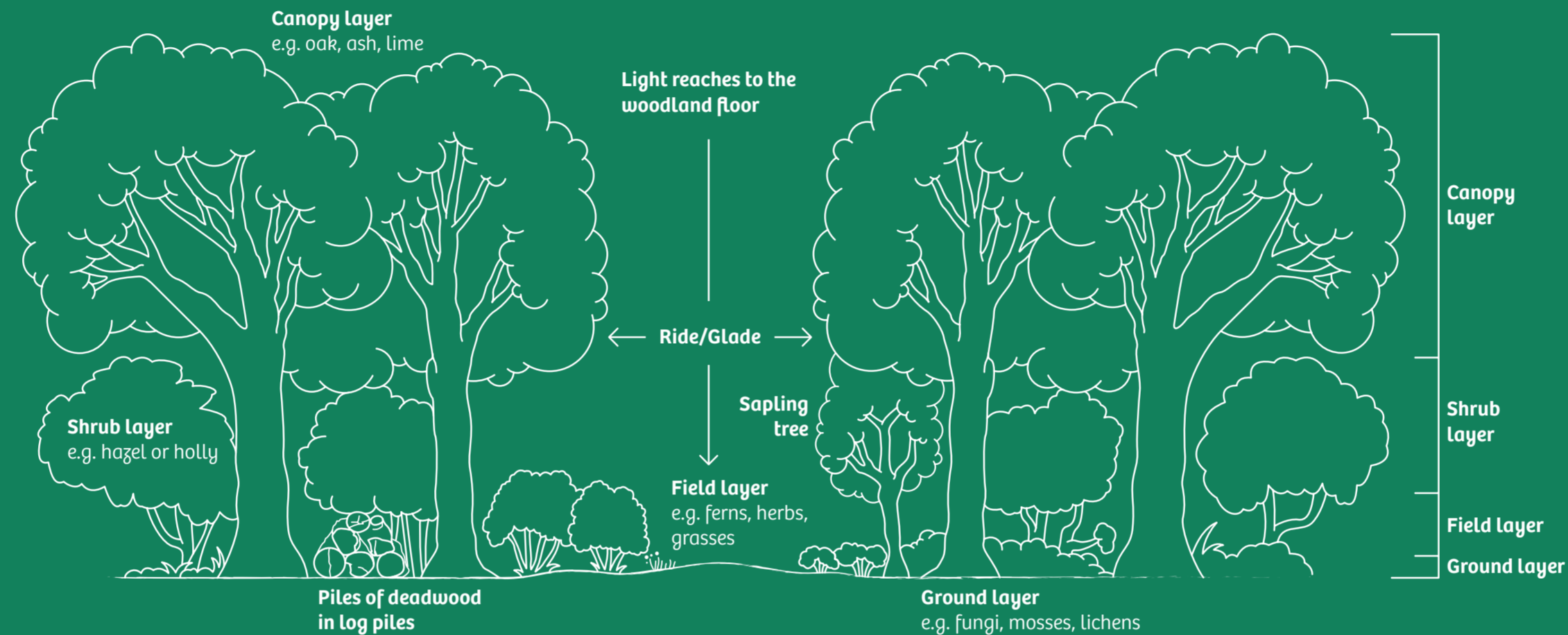
This project has enabled habitat enhancements in twelve of Solihull's woodlands

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.

Smith's Wood

Smith's Wood is ancient semi-natural deciduous woodland. The wood itself is divided by Windward Way, resulting in two distinct parcels of land.

Smith's Wood is broadleaved with mature English oak and birch, with ash and aspen in the northern section of the wood. The shrub layer contains hazel, hawthorn, elder and holly, with a field layer dominated by bramble and bracken with bluebells abundant in spring.

Some species of animals and plants found in the wood

Great spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*) is black and white, with white shoulder patches and red underneath the tail. Males have a red patch at the back of the head. It nests in holes that it excavates in trees in broadleaved woodlands, large parks and gardens. They eat insects and larvae, probing tree trunks with their sticky tongues to extract them. The 'drumming' of a great spotted woodpecker is a familiar sound, used for communication and to mark territories and to display in spring.



Pipe club fungus (*Macrotypophula fistulosa*) grows in damp leaf litter on the woodland floor. It can grow to 15cm high. It is known as a 'recycler' fungus as it breaks down dead plant material. Fungi are the only organisms which break down the cell walls of woody plants. Fungi are a separate kingdom of living things, different from plants and animals.



Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) is a native tree – the third most common in Britain and it can grow to 35metres. The tree is identified in winter by its smooth, black leaf buds and the winged fruits ('keys') which fall in winter to early spring. The tree's airy canopy allows light through to the woodland floor enabling wild flowers such as wild garlic to grow.



Ash can live for 400 years, although ash dieback (*Chalara*) has been predicted to kill up to 95% of trees in the UK, having a significant effect on the landscape and the species that rely on it.



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