

Solihull Habitat and Nature Improvements

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

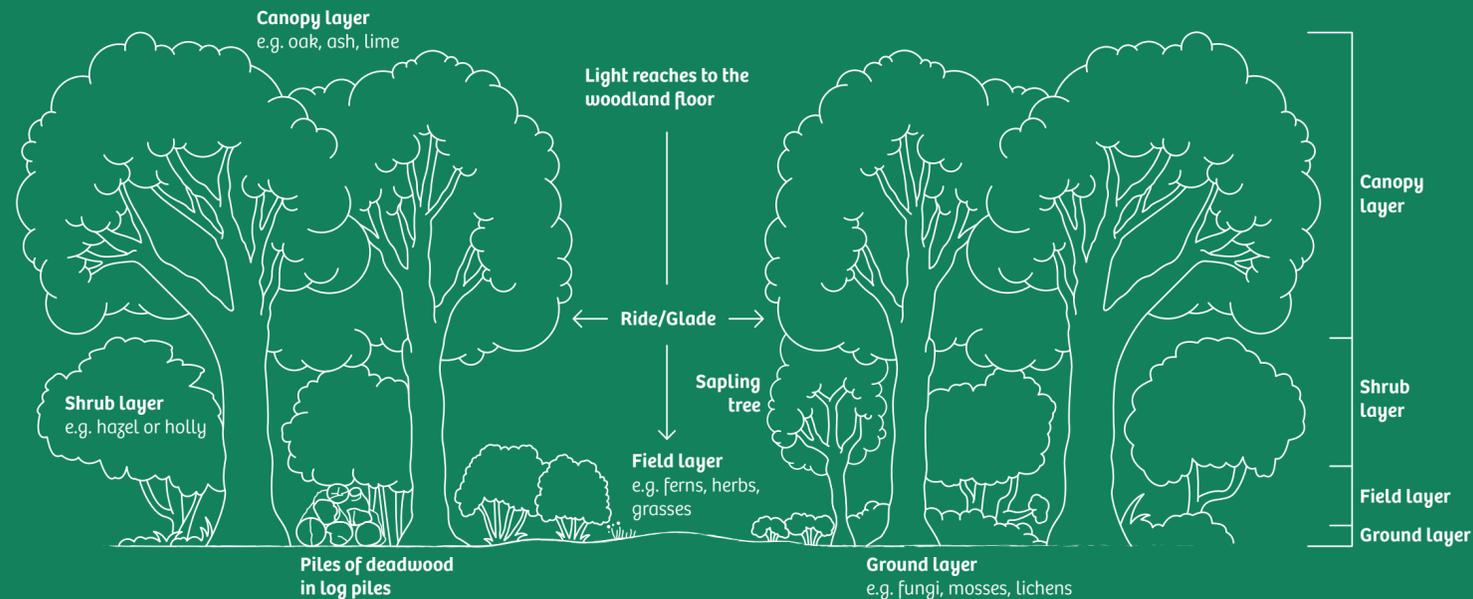
This project has enabled habitat enhancements in twelve of Solihull's woodlands

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.

Wychwood

Wychwood is a narrow area of semi-natural broadleaf woodland bordering the meandering Purnell's Brook. The dominant tree species is alder, with ash, oak and birch. Although not designated as an ancient woodland site, there is a relatively rich ground flora which differs somewhat to the other council woodland sites.

Unfortunately the woodland also has a number of invasive non-native plant species including greater periwinkle, montbretia and variegated yellow archangel which are all likely to have arrived in green waste dumped from nearby gardens. On-going management includes the control and reduction of these non-native species to prevent them from replacing the native plants.

Some species of animals and plants found in the wood



Wrens (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) are found across the UK in woodland, farmland, heathland and regularly visit gardens. The wren is a tiny brown bird, with a fine bill, short round wings and a short, narrow tail which is sometimes cocked up vertically. For such a small bird it has a remarkably loud voice. It is the most common UK breeding bird, although it suffers declines during prolonged, severely cold winters.

The **wood mouse** (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) is common in woodland, rough grassland and gardens. It is mostly nocturnal and an agile climber.



Wood mice will gather food stores of berries and seeds in the autumn, which they keep in underground burrows or sometimes in old birds' nests. Female wood mice have up to six litters a year of between four and eight young, and may even breed over winter if food is abundant. Hunted by foxes and owls, tawny owls may not breed if wood mouse numbers are low as it restricts their diet.

Wild angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*) is a common, 2 metres tall plant of damp meadows, ditches and wet woodlands. As a member of the carrot family (an umbellifer), it displays large, umbrella-like clusters of purple-tinged flowers between July and September which are attractive to a range of insects. Its purple stems are hollow, and young children once used the plant's hollow stems as 'pea shooters'!



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