

Solihull Habitat and Nature Improvements

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

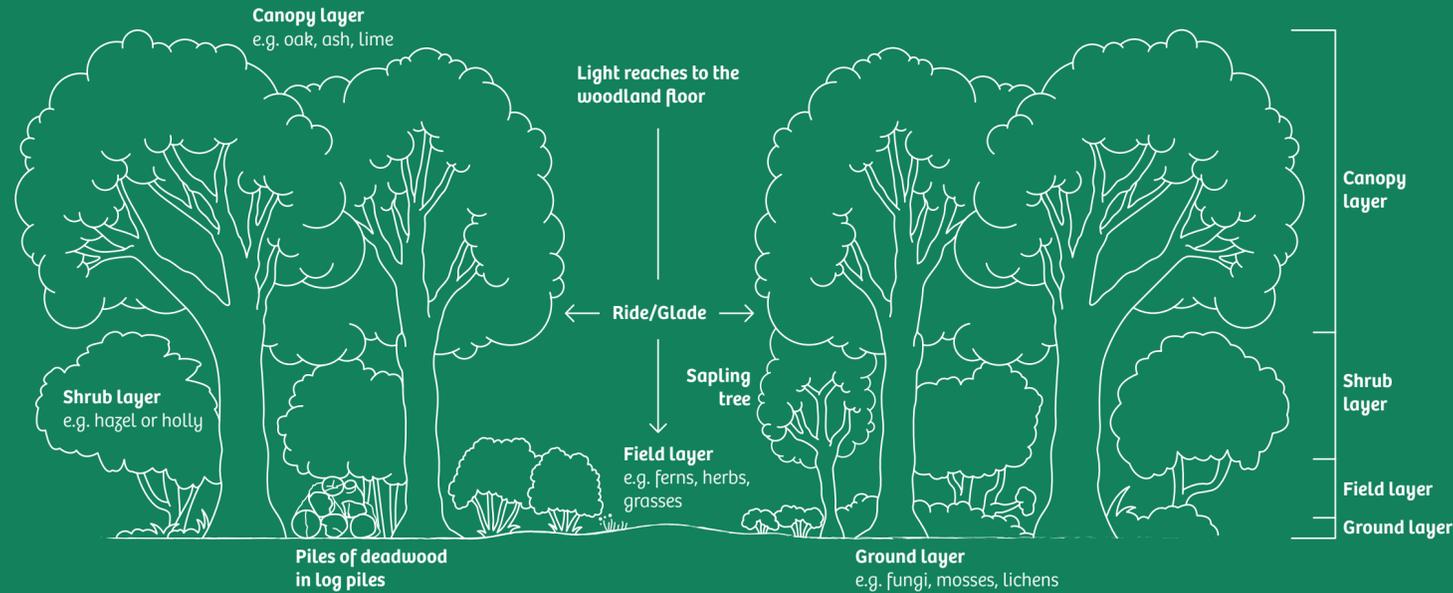
This project has enabled habitat enhancements in twelve of Solihull's woodlands

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.

Yorks Wood

The dominant canopy tree within the wood is oak but there is variation across site with areas of ash, willow, birch, hornbeam, sycamore and pine. Much of the site would traditionally have been managed as coppice with standards and there remains a strong shrub layer with hazel and holly.

The wood's importance as a community recreation area has been recognised in its designation as a Local Nature Reserve.

Some species of animals and plants found in the wood

Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) was introduced to Britain by the 1500s. Although non-native, it provides habitat and food for insects such as aphids, ladybirds, hoverflies and birds which feed on these insects. Its leaves are eaten by caterpillars, including the sycamore moth. It can grow to 35metres and live for 400 years. Seen by some as a weed, it will be managed within the woodland to ensure it does not dominate.



The green-yellow flowers hang in spikes, providing pollen and nectar for bees and other insects. The seeds are eaten by birds and small mammals.

European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) is covered in spines, which are actually modified hairs and the average hedgehog has about 7,000 of them. It is one of the UK's most familiar wild mammals, most commonly spotted in parks and gardens, where shrubs provide daytime shelter. It is known as the 'gardener's friend' due to its diet of slugs, but they also eat all kinds of invertebrates, as well as amphibians and birds' eggs. Hedgehogs hibernate over winter.



Common bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) is identified by the long, narrow, drooping leaf fronds and bending flower stems that are heavy with blue bell-shaped flowers. It is a bulb found in ancient woodland, hedgerows and hedgebanks, emerging to flower and leaf from April onwards. This early flowering allows it to make the most of the sunlight that is still able to make it to the woodland floor, before the canopy becomes too dense.



The bluebell provides nectar for plenty of pollinating insects.



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

This project is part funded
by the European Regional
Development Fund



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METROPOLITAN
BOROUGH COUNCIL