

South Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Help us reverse nature's decline in South Yorkshire

Nature recovery strategies are local plans for restoring and improving wildlife, habitats, and green spaces.

Our strategy covers Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, and Sheffield. It has been developed with input from farmers, landowners, communities, and conservation experts from across the region.

We are now taking the draft strategy out for a final consultation before it is published and put into action later in 2026.

What action are
you going to take
to support nature
recovery?

Share your
views by
Friday 31st July



Self Facilitation
Pack

Take part at southyorkshirenaturerecovery.co.uk



Why is Nature important?



Watch the
introductory
video

South Yorkshire is home to
extraordinary landscapes and wildlife.

https://youtu.be/3wa9UwQ-_w4?si=CGHCrxA1Js8jXZ4j

Why is Nature important?

South Yorkshire's natural habitats are not just beautiful, they are essential. Nature provides the food we eat, the water we drink, the medicines we rely on, and the raw materials that underpin our economy. Healthy ecosystems regulate our climate, recycle nutrients, and keep our environment in balance.

Nature is also fundamental to our health and wellbeing. Access to wildlife-rich green spaces improves physical and mental health, brings communities together, and strengthens our connection to the places we live. Our green spaces are part of what makes South Yorkshire a great place to live.

More than half of South Yorkshire's habitats are in poor condition. Flood risk is rising, extreme heat is becoming more common, and development and land use changes are fragmenting the natural environments that wildlife and people depend on. The cost of doing nothing is high, so the time to act is now.

Importance of nature

Improves health and wellbeing

Bring communities together

Climate regulation

Strengthens connection to place

Supports biodiversity

The challenges we face

A changing climate

Poor habitat condition

Development and land use

Visitor pressure

Disconnection from nature



What is this strategy?

- Nature recovery strategies are local plans for restoring and improving wildlife, habitats, and green spaces – required by law under the 2021 Environment Act.
- South Yorkshire's strategy is 1 of 48 covering the whole of England, developed by local authorities, agencies, and conservation organisations working together.
- Our strategy covers Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, and Sheffield, developed with input from farmers, landowners, communities, and conservation experts across the region.
- Through expert input and public consultation, we've identified where nature recovery will have the greatest impact, whether that's farmland or post-industrial landscapes.
- The mapped areas identify strategic opportunities for nature recovery. They're not a legal designation – this means they don't change what you can do with your land, but they can help guide decisions and unlock funding for nature recovery.
- The strategy also guides planning decisions and helps direct investment giving developers, businesses, and landowners a clear framework for supporting nature recovery.
- Delivering the strategy is a shared responsibility – from landowners and communities to businesses and local authorities.
- This is a living plan, reviewed regularly to reflect the latest evidence and priorities.



“ We are all part of nature whether we realise it or not. Disconnection from nature results in many problems for us and the world. ”

Public engagement participant

Our natural landscape

South Yorkshire covers 1,552km² of varied landscape, from the wild moorlands of the Peak District fringe to the ancient woodlands, rivers, wetlands, and urban green spaces of our towns and cities. Some of our most special places are protected by law, including 40 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, 3 Special Areas of Conservation, 2 Special Protection Areas, and 1 National Nature Reserve.

To the right are the habitats critical for nature recovery in our region.

Habitat	Rarity indicator	Description
Ancient woodland	Rare	Irreplaceable woodland that has existed since at least 1600. Once lost, it cannot be recreated. Covers around 2.9% of South Yorkshire.
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Widespread	Broadleaf woods of oak, ash, and birch, rich in wildlife and a vital refuge for wildlife. Covers over 7% of our region.
Upland heathland and acid grassland	Locally common	Open moorland dominated by heather and grasses, home to ground-nesting birds and rare wildlife. Covers around 4.5% of South Yorkshire.
Blanket bog	Rare	Deep peat moorland that stores vast amounts of carbon and feeds our rivers. Covers around 2.9% of South Yorkshire.
Lowland raised bog	Very rare	One of our most special habitats – a type of peatland found in low-lying areas where layers of partially decomposed mosses and plants have built up over thousands of years. South Yorkshire is home to Britain's largest remaining area at Thorne and Hatfield Moors.
Floodplain grazing marsh	Rare	Wet grassland along our river valleys, vital for wading birds and managing flood risk.
Lowland meadow	Rare	Wildflower-rich grasslands buzzing with insects in summer; once a common sight, now increasingly scarce.
Lowland heathland	Very rare	Open, sandy heathland supporting rare plants, reptiles, and insects. Scarce and fragmented, with the largest areas found in east Doncaster.
Reedbed and fen	Very rare	Wetland habitats found mainly in the Dearne Valley, vital for birds like bittern.
Lowland dry acid grassland	Very rare	Species-rich grassland on free-draining soils, important for butterflies and other invertebrates.
Calcareous grassland	Exceptionally rare	Chalk and limestone grassland which is amongst the most flower-rich habitats in the UK, and extremely scarce in South Yorkshire.

A shared plan for nature

Working with farmers, landowners, communities, and conservation experts, we have identified priorities for nature recovery, shaped by people across the region through events, activities and an online survey.

Overarching priorities for nature recovery



1	Bring nature closer to people – especially in communities where access to green spaces is limited
2	Build partnerships – working together across organisations, farms, and communities to drive nature recovery
3	Get people involved – creating opportunities for communities to take part in nature recovery activities
4	Tackle invasive species – managing non-native plants and animals that threaten our native wildlife
5	Improve our green spaces – better managing existing public spaces and creating new ones for nature
6	Help people understand nature – reducing damage to habitats caused by visitors to important nature sites
7	Build climate resilience – future-proofing our natural habitats against the effects of climate change
8	Protect and connect habitats – safeguarding, expanding, and joining up the places where nature can thrive



Habitat-based priorities for nature recovery

Grassland and heathland

South Yorkshire's grasslands and heathlands support a range of rare plants and animals, help manage flood risk, and store carbon. This must happen hand in hand with food production - nature can thrive in farmed landscapes, which cover over 40% of the region.



Woodland and Trees

South Yorkshire's woodlands and trees provide rich habitats for birds, mammals, insects, and plants. Well-managed woodlands help reduce flood risk, improve water quality, and store carbon.



Urban Nature

South Yorkshire's towns and cities are home to a rich network of parks, waterways, and green spaces. Expanding and connecting these spaces helps wildlife mobility, reduces flooding, improves air quality, and increases direct access to nature.



Watercourses, waterbodies and wetlands

South Yorkshire's rivers, streams, canals, ponds, and wetlands are vital for wildlife and connect habitats across the landscape. These environments face growing pressure from climate change, water quality issues, invasive species, and development, but there is strong public appetite for restoring them.



Supporting the wildlife we love

South Yorkshire is home to an extraordinary range of wildlife, but many of our best-loved species are struggling.

Working with experts, we have identified a list of priority species: the birds, plants, insects, mammals, and reptiles that most need our support.

4

Reptiles – including adder, grass snake, and common lizard

15

Mammals – including Eurasian otter, red squirrel, and whiskered bat

55

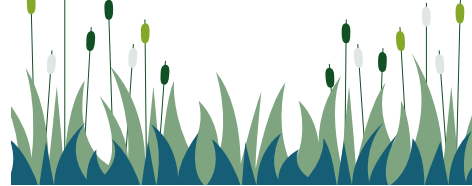
Insects – including white-letter hairstreak, goat moth, and dingy skipper

56

Flowering plants – including cornflower, meadow saffron, and marsh pea

70

Birds – including nightjar, hen harrier, bittern, and osprey



These species are rare, declining, or under pressure in our region. By focusing conservation action on the species that need it most, we can make sure every effort counts.

Species we hope to bring back

Some species have been lost from South Yorkshire entirely, but could return. We have identified 11 species as candidates for reintroduction, including:



3 mammals

Eurasian beaver, pine marten, and hazel dormouse



3 flowering plants

Oblong leaved sundew, coral-necklace, and pennyroyal



1 mollusc

Freshwater pearl mussel

What action are you going to take to support nature recovery?

Share your views by Friday 31st July



Have your say

This strategy has already been shaped by over 1,800 contributions from people and organisations across South Yorkshire – and we want to hear from you too.

There are several ways to get involved:

Complete our public survey

Visit southyorkshirenaturerecovery.co.uk to share your views on the strategy.

Read the full strategy

The complete South Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy is available at southyorkshirenaturerecovery.co.uk

Explore our interactive map

See opportunities for nature recovery in your area, and use it to share your ideas, highlight local opportunities, and suggest where action is needed most at southyorkshirenaturerecovery.co.uk

Get in touch

Email us at lnrs@southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk with any questions.

What action are you going to take to support nature recovery?

Share your views by
Friday 31st July



Delivering this strategy is a shared responsibility. It will take farmers, landowners, communities, businesses, and organisations across South Yorkshire working together to ensure success. We all have a part to play.

Thank you for taking the time to read this overview and for caring about the future of nature in South Yorkshire.

