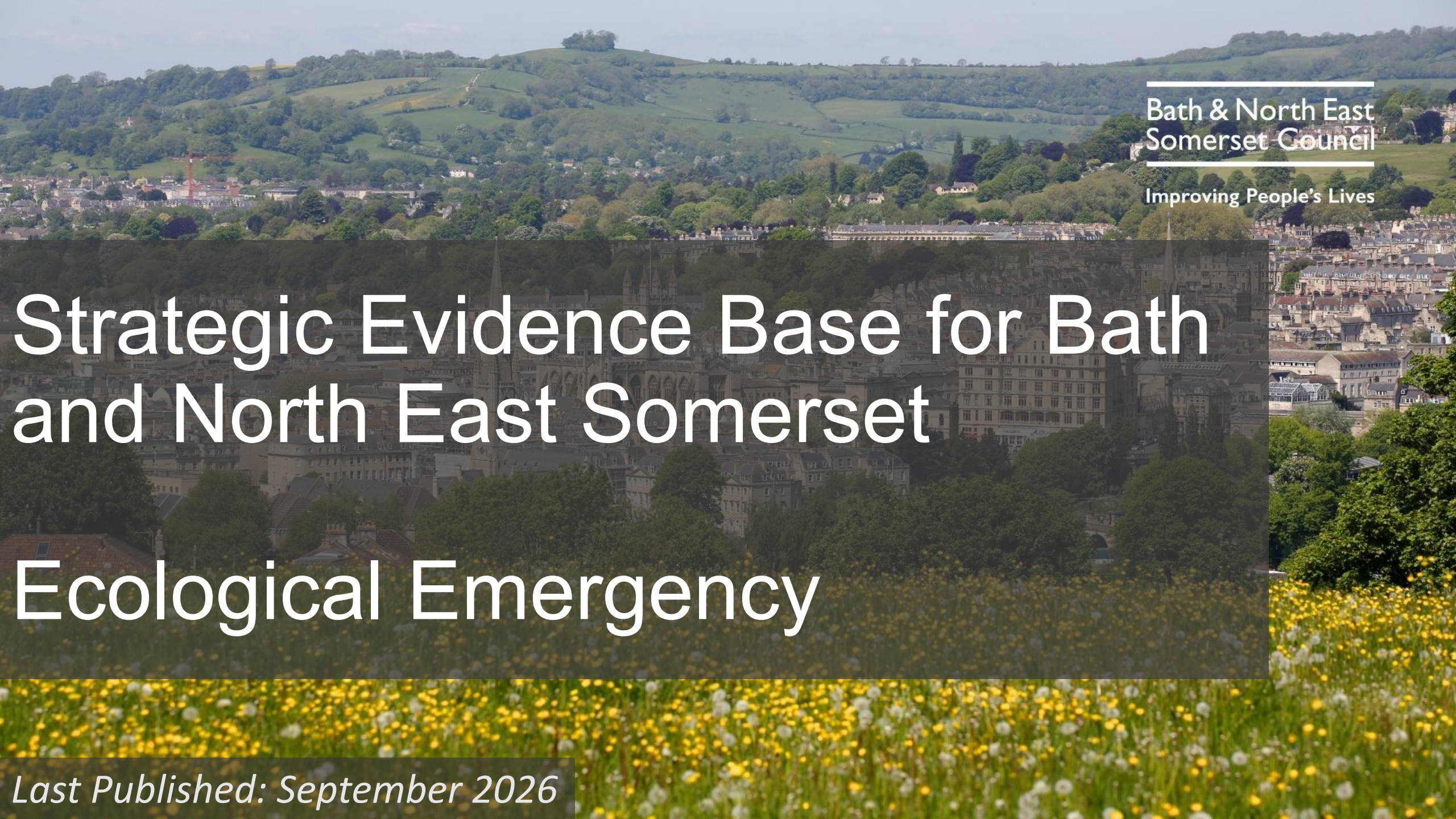




Bath & North East
Somerset Council

Improving People's Lives

Strategic Evidence Base for Bath and North East Somerset

Ecological Emergency

Last Published: September 2026

Ecological Emergency

Nature Recovery
Targets

B&NES Nature
Recovery Targets

State of Nature in
B&NES

State of Species
in B&NES

[Back to Contents](#)

Nature Recovery Targets

Over the past couple of centuries our use of land and resources has placed unsustainable pressure on nature, threatening the stability of ecosystems both globally and locally.

Nature has been collapsing at an alarming rate. Globally, we have lost 60% of wild vertebrates, 83% of freshwater populations¹ and up to 76% of insects since 1970². And in the West of England region, numbers of once common birds like swifts and cuckoos have plummeted in the past 25 years alone.

The West of England Nature Partnership (WENP), which bring together key partners (including B&NES Council) across the West of England to deliver more for nature, has published a set of Ambitions for Nature Recovery as part of its Strategy. The ambitions were provided to give a steer to the delivery of the West of England Nature Recovery Network (NRN).

We are using these ambitions, alongside the Nature Recovery Network, to help inform our work to restore nature and address the Ecological Emergency.

The WENP Nature Recovery Ambitions adjusted for B&NES can be found on the next page.

WENP Nature Recovery Ambitions for the region ³

By 2030 we want to: By 2050 we want to:



Increase the abundance of wildlife from 2020 levels by 30%



Double the abundance of wildlife from 2020 levels



Increase our semi-natural broadleaved woodland cover by 2500ha (from 8,000 to 10,500 ha)



Double our semi-natural broadleaved woodland cover (from 6% to 12%, or 8,000 to 16,000 ha)



In addition to woodland, create 2000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat outside the protected site network



In addition to woodland, create 6000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat outside the protected site network



Close at least 40% of the NRN connectivity gaps through the creation of new habitat



Close all the NRN connectivity gaps through the creation of new habitat



Ensure all water catchments are in at least moderate ecological status, with half in good ecological status



Ensure all water catchments are in good ecological status



Ensure 70% of designated sites are in favourable condition



Ensure all designated sites are in favourable condition

Data sources:

¹ World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), (2022) Living Planet Report, <https://www.wwf.org.uk/our-reports/living-planet-report-2022>

² Hallmann CA, Sorg M, Jongejans E, Siepel H, Hoffland N, Schwan H, et al. (2017), More than 75 percent decline over 27 years in total flying insect biomass in protected areas, <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0185809>

³ West of England Nature Partnership (WENP), (2021) WENP Strategy 2021 – 2030, <https://wenp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/WENP-Strategy-Final-Version.pdf>

B&NES Nature Recovery Targets

WENP Nature Recovery Ambitions adjusted for B&NES

B&NES covers 26% of the West of England area

Current situation:	By 2030 we want to:	By 2050 we want to:
 Requires further investigation	 increase the abundance of priority species from 2020 levels by 30%	 Double the abundance of priority species from 2020 levels
 Tree Canopy cover of 5,440 ha (woodland cover of 2,892 ha) ¹	 increase our semi-natural broadleaved tree and woodland cover by 650 ha	 increase our semi-natural broadleaved tree and woodland cover by 2,080 ha
 2,556 ha of Priority Habitats ²	 In addition to woodland, create 520 ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside of the protected site network	 In addition to woodland, create 1,560 ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside of the protected site network
 19 'gaps' (or connectivity opportunities) in the Ecological Network within B&NES ³	 Close at least 40% of the NRN connectivity gaps through the creation of new habitat	 Close all the NRN connectivity gaps through the creation of new habitat
 2 water bodies in good status; 12 in moderate status; 4 in poor status ⁴	 Ensure all water catchments are in at least moderate ecological status, with half in good ecological status	 Ensure all water catchments are in good ecological status
 54% of SSSI-sites in favourable condition ⁵	 Ensure 70% of designated sites are in favourable condition	 Ensure all designated sites are in favourable condition

Data sources: 1 Calculated using the Forest Research's Urban Canopy Cover Tool - Forest Research (2022) UK Urban Canopy Cover, <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/i-tree-eco/uk-urban-canopy-cover/>

2 Calculated from Bristol Environmental Record Centre (BRERC) data – Bristol Environmental Record Centre (BRERC) (2021), Priority habitat mapping for the West of England, <https://www.brerc.org.uk/index.htm>

3 West of England Nature Partnership (2022) Nature Recovery Network, <https://wenp.org.uk/nature-recovery-network/>

4 A number of these sub-catchments are only partly in B&NES - Environment Agency (2023), WFD Classification Status Cycle 2 Ecological Status, <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/73ed24b6d30441648f24f043e75ebd2/page/Classification/>

5 Natural England (2022), Designated Sites View, Condition of SSSI Units in County AVON, <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SearchCounty.aspx>

State of Nature in B&NES

One of the actions in the Council's Ecological Emergency Action Plan is to create a 'State of Nature' report for B&NES, setting out the current state of the natural environment across the region and thereby providing a baseline from which we can measure progress.

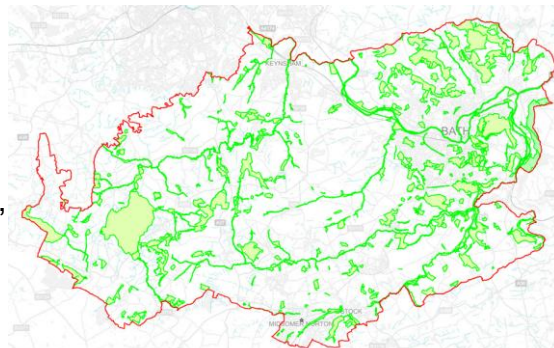
In the meantime, some of the key figures that we do know about our natural environment are set out on the next 2 pages.

Protected Areas



14.3% of B&NES covered by **Sites of Nature Conservation Interest** (**5,020** hectares) ¹

- **26 SSSIs**, totalling **1,120** hectares
- **14 SSSIs** in **favourable condition**, totalling **851** hectares
- **1 biological SSSI** in **unfavourable, declining condition** ²



Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNIs) in B&NES ²

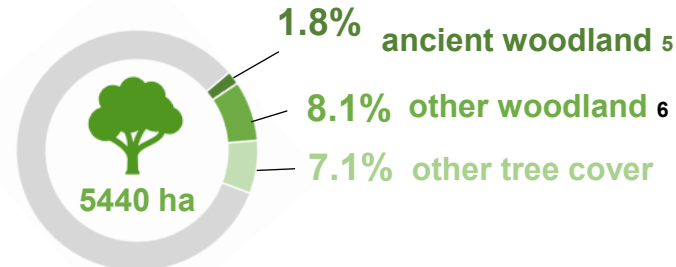
Water Health



2 **Water bodies out of 18** in B&NES are in a 'good' ecological status ³

Trees and Woodland

17% of B&NES is covered by **tree canopy**: ⁴



Green Space



1,982 hectares of **accessible green space** in B&NES ⁷

The equivalent of over **4 Chew Valley Lakes**



There are **24 allotment sites** with **1,209 plots** in B&NES ⁸

This equates to **162 people per plot**, with an **average wait time of 2.4 years** ⁸

Data sources: ¹ Bristol Environmental Record Centre (BRERC) (2022) Sites of Nature Conservation Interest

² Natural England (2022), Designated Sites View, Condition of SSSI Units in County AVON, <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SearchCounty.aspx>

³ Environment Agency (2023), River Basin Management Plan Maps, <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/73ed24b6d30441648f24f043e75ebd2/page/Classification/>

⁴ Calculated using the Forest Research's Urban Canopy Cover Tool - Forest Research (2022) UK Urban Canopy Cover, <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/i-tree-eco/uk-urban-canopy-cover/>

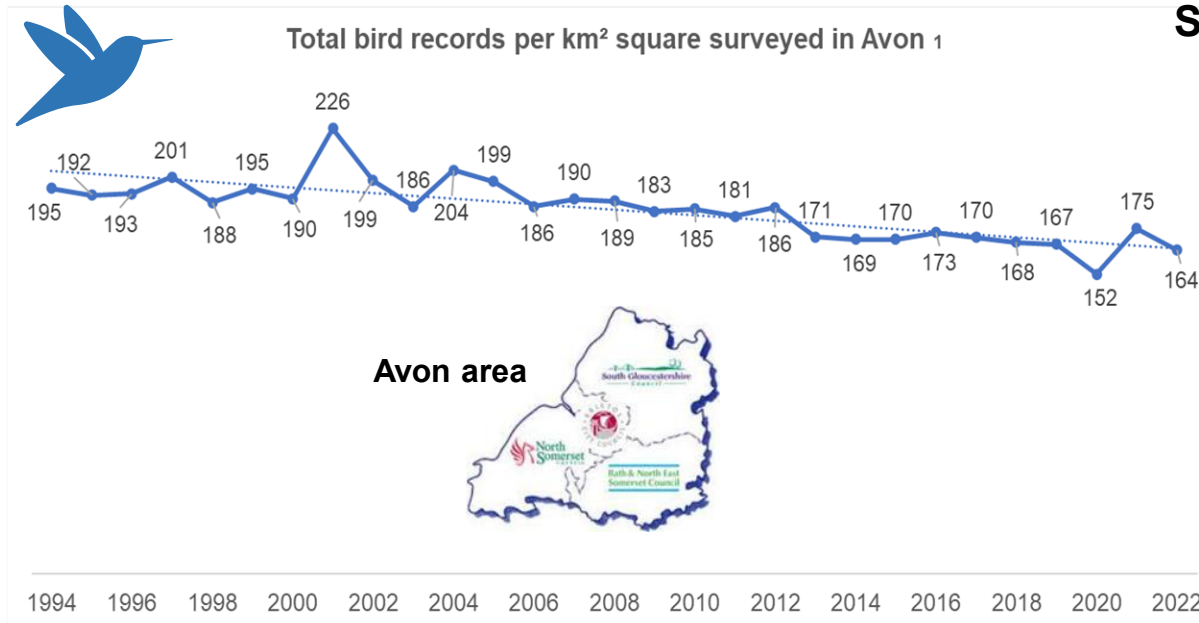
⁵ Calculated from the Ancient Woodland Inventory - Natural England (2022) Ancient Woodland (England), <https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/Defra::ancient-woodland-england/about>

⁶ Calculated from the National Forest Inventory 2020 - Forestry Commission (2022) National Forest Inventory England 2020, <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/national-forest-inventory/>

⁷ Calculated based on figures from B&NES Green Space Strategy 2015-2019 with the area of Chew Valley Lake subtracted from the figure quoted - B&NES Council (2015), Bath & North East Somerset Green Space Strategy 2015-2019

⁸ Bath and North East Somerset Council (2022) Find an allotment, <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/find-allotment>

State of Species in B&NES



91% estimated decrease in the **swift count**

and



98% estimated decrease in the **cuckoo count** across the West of England.* 2

Species



15 of the 18

UK species of bats can be found in B&NES 3

Two **key bat species** found in B&NES and SW England are the:



13-34g



4-9g

Greater and Lesser Horseshoe bats 4

In **2018** there were thought to be **7,280 - 14,600 Greater Horseshoe Bats** in **SW England**. An **increase** compared to **1999** figures.

In **2018** there were thought to be **13,900 - 27,700 Lesser Horseshoe Bats** (mostly found) in **SW England**. An **increase** compared to **1999** figures. 5

Data sources:

1 British Trust for Ornithology (2022) Breeding Bird Survey, Totals of individuals counted in Avon (1994-2022), https://app.bto.org/bbs-results/results/county_lists/bbscountydens-GBAV.html

2 British Trust for Ornithology (2022) Breeding Bird Survey, Totals of individuals counted in Avon (1994-2022), https://app.bto.org/bbs-results/results/county_lists/bbscountydens-GBAV.html

* There were no cuckoos recorded in 2022. Taking a smoothed average of the past 3 years versus '95, the decline is now 98%, but they are on the cusp of going regionally extinct.

3 BRERC Species Data Portal (2022) BRERC Interactive Maps, <https://brerc.org.uk/imaps/map-index.htm>

4 The Vincent Wildlife Trust (2014) Horseshoe Bats, <https://www.vwt.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/horseshoe-bat-leaflet.pdf>

5 Bat Conservation Trust (2021) National Bat Monitoring Programme, Annual Report 2021, <https://cdn.bats.org.uk/uploads/pdf/Our%20Work/NBMP/National-Bat-Monitoring-Programme-Annual-Report-2021.pdf?v=1655151480>