



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

Thursday 12 February 2026

Local Nature Reserves Update

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Carolyn Healy – Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning & Sustainability
Lead Director:	James Dunn – Director: Prosperity & Investment
Service Area:	Development Management - Prosperity & Investment
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Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Yes
Report considered by:	SMT – 13 January 2026 Business Briefing – 22 January 2026 Cabinet – 12 February 2026

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1.1 Approve the declaration of new areas of Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and amendments to existing and previously approved LNRs as outlined in the plans at Appendix 1 of this report and the separation of two proposed LNRs into four LNRs in their own right. This will take the total number of LNRs to 27, covering around 748ha will result in approximately 4.03ha of LNR per 1000 of the population, over four times the minimum recommended standard.
- 1.2 Delegate authority to complete the declaration process to the Director of Prosperity and Investment and Director of Policy and Governance in consultation with the Cabinet member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Sustainability.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 This report sets out proposals for Cabinet to approve the declaration of new areas of Local Nature Reserve (LNR) under Sections 19 and 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
- 2.2 The declaration of these new areas of LNR, and amendments to areas of existing proposed LNRs forms part of a wider programme of works being delivered by the Council to protect, care and invest in the boroughs natural green spaces. As of December 2025, this programme has protected over 1000ha of locally important natural spaces, which are highly valued by our communities. This includes over 300 Green Guarantee sites and 20 LNRs. These designations protect these sites from development, ensuring they remain as green space for people and wildlife. In addition to these statutory and non-statutory designations, over 2,500ha of land is recognised in the Telford & Wrekin Council Local Plan as Green Network which illustrates how areas of habitat connect and interact, forming a network for species distribution and other ecosystem services throughout the borough.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 This report proposes the creation of two new LNR sites alongside some changes to the site boundaries (additions) and declaration schedule agreed by Cabinet on 22 September 2022 in the Designation of new Local Nature Reserves item (CAB-173). The Council will continue to identify suitable land across the borough on an ongoing basis.
- 3.2 The declaration of these two new areas of LNRs, over parcels comprising a mix of new LNRs and extensions to existing LNRs, covers 43.7ha and will bring the total number of LNRs in the Borough to 27 covering an area of 748.3.7ha. This is the equivalent of over 1,050 Premier League football pitches.
- 3.3 It is increasingly recognised that we are facing three challenges linked to the natural environment:
 - The impacts of a changing climate,
 - The impacts of current declines in biodiversity, and
 - The increasing need to strengthen the connections between people and the natural world.
- 3.4 The protection of additional areas of LNR, as part of a wider suite of sites across the borough, will help to address these challenges at a local level.
- 3.5 LNR status recognises the role each site plays in increasing local resilience to a changing climate whilst as a core site within the borough's wider green network the designation provides recognition of the site's wider ecological value. The designation ensures residents will have continued access to accessible green space on their doorstep allowing them to create meaningful connections to the natural environment as well as helping people improve their health and wellbeing by engaging in healthy activities locally. The Council is not simply providing these spaces but working actively to ensure they are participatory. Telford's green spaces are cared for by a combination of Council services and just under 30 individual

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'friends of' groups, many of which are affiliated with The Telford Green Space Partnership.

- 3.6 The increasing provision of LNRs in the borough, including designating sites in areas of higher than average deprivation particularly in the south of the borough, will improve both the availability and, through effective promotion and engagement, knowledge of how the sites can be accessed and used. The formation of a 'friends of' group for each site will provide an opportunity for community involvement and a feeling of local ownership as well as opportunities for physical activity and social interaction through volunteering. Educational usage of the sites, by local schools, engages school aged children with the natural environment and with their local green spaces. This work complements the Council's Safer Stronger Communities programme.
- 3.7 Visitor modelling in 2025 identified that the borough's existing 20 Local Nature Reserves receive approximately 4.12 million visits a year. The derived welfare value provided by those visits can be valued at approximately £14.7 million/yr. Of the 4.12 million visits per year approximately 2.5 million visits are made via active travel and 1.1 million visits are made by individuals who have never visited the LNRs before.
- 3.8 The details of the proposed LNRs are as follows:

Table 1: details of proposed LNRs and amended LNRs

Proposed New LNR	Ward(s)	Size (ha)
<i>Central Newport</i>	<i>Newport East & North</i>	<i>17.0</i>
<i>Hurleybrook</i>	<i>Hadley & Leegomery</i>	<i>26.7</i>
Amended pLNR Sites	Ward(s)	Size (ha)
<i>Priorslee Flash</i>	<i>Priorslee</i>	<i>33.9</i>
<i>Redhill Ecology Park</i>	<i>St Georges</i>	<i>11.5</i>
<i>Snedshill & Albion Hill</i>	<i>St Georges</i>	<i>15.3</i>
<i>Kemberton Meadows & Pitmounds</i>	<i>Madeley & Sutton Hill</i>	<i>22.7</i>
<i>Holmer Lake & Madebrook Pools</i>	<i>The Nedge</i>	<i>14.5</i>

- 3.9 A series of maps showing the proposed LNRs and amended boundaries is presented in Appendix 1.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

- 4.1 This report sets out a proposal for the Council to agree to declare a number of new parcels of land as statutory Local Nature Reserve. This is in accordance with the provisions of Sections 19 and 21 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Local Nature Reserves provide opportunities for volunteering in the natural environment which increases physical activity, social interaction, encourages the lifelong learning of new skills and allows individuals to give back to their local community which leads to increases in physical and mental wellbeing.
- 4.2 The sites meet the necessary criteria for declaration and initial engagement with Natural England has been undertaken along with the appropriate level of geotechnical assessment. As part of the declaration process and following Cabinet approval, a series of legal checks will be undertaken including reports on title, coal and drainage searches. Detailed boundary work will also be undertaken with any

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small changes required being made before declaration. Following which a consultation document will be issued to Natural England to seek their formal 'Welcome' prior to completion of the declarations and the associated legal seals.

New Sites

Central Newport

- 4.3 This 17.0ha site is situated across the Newport East and Newport North wards, and comprises compartments of woodland, canal, grassland and grassy banks as well as amenity grassland compartments. The overall LNR site combines several existing protected sites including Newport Canal Site of Scientific Special Interest (SSSI), Strine Brook Park, Victoria Park which was awarded Green Flag status in its own right in 2025, and specific compartments within Norbroom Park.
- 4.4 A large proportion of the proposed site is declared as Site of Special Scientific Interest. Management and maintenance actions relating to the Council's duty to improve the condition of the site relating to its designating features will be covered in a specific management for the SSSI. SSSI designation carries a higher statutory level of protection than Local Nature Reserve status. As such, the Central Newport LNR management plan will be subservient to the SSSI management plan, and will instead focus on holistic management of the entire site for the benefit of nature and people. Actions within the LNR management plan will be assessed against the designation criteria for the SSSI to ensure no adverse impacts.
- 4.5 There is a recently established volunteering community group active on the Newport Canal SSSI, led by local council members. Their advocacy for this site is helping to improve the accessibility to the Canal for the public, and is raising awareness as to its ecological importance in the local community. Species that can be observed on this site include a large assemblage of bats (including two Pipistrelle species, Noctules, Daubenton's Bats, Brown Long Eared bats and several Myotis species) as well as many farmland bird species, waterfowl (including Mute Swan, Moorhens and Coots) and a range of terrestrial mammals.



Brown Long Eared Bat – *Plecotus auritus* (left), Natterer's Bat (centre & right) – *Myotis nattereri*

Hurley Brook

- 4.6 This 26.7ha site is located in the Hadley and Leegomery Ward, and is a long woodland and grassland site which follows the route of the daylight Hurley Brook. There is an existing, very proactive Friends Of group at this site who already advocate for this site in the local community, and carry out a range of monitoring

surveys on water quality within the brook as well as species and habitat surveys, and are already an active member of the Telford Green Spaces Partnership.

- 4.7 The Friends of Hurley Brook on the site and its importance to the local community: *“The Hurley Brook is an important green space in Hadley - Leegomery, with a brook running through a woodland area. Walkers, especially dog owners, love the paths on either side of the brook. Looking at the sparse wildlife, we can see there are patches which can be supported to become more wildlife friendly. A small group of local volunteers, the Friends of Hurley Brook, have spent the last three years doing just that: reporting pollution in the brook to environmental agencies; planting wildlife flowers; mounting bird and bat boxes.”*



- 4.8 Species that can be observed at the site also include a significant assemblage of bat species, a range of bird including raptor species such as Buzzards and three species of Owl (Little Owl, Tawny Owl and Barn Owl) and, a range of small mammals within the woodland sites. The Leegate Pools and Leegomery Pools sites host a range of waterfowl including Mute Swan and Mallard.
- 4.9 This site links together a suite of existing LNRs in North Telford, being connected to both Apley Woods LNR and Dothill & Shawbirch LNR via a range of public rights of way which are walking and wheelchair accessible.

Additions to existing proposed sites

Priorslee Flash

- 4.10 Priorslee Flash was originally proposed in September 2022 to be one part of a larger LNR site in combination with Redhill Ecology Park and the Snedshill & Albion Hill sites in St Georges. It is recommended that Priorslee Flash be considered as its own individual LNR site, allowing management practices and funding to be channelled specifically into this site. The site comprises areas of woodland, grassland and ephemeral aquatic vegetation around the Hangman’s Pool. Owed to its central location in Priorslee, this site mostly serves the community immediately

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surrounding it, is in a separate Ward to the other sites, and is large enough in area to stand alone as a LNR in its own right, at 33.9ha.

- 4.11 Species present on this site include a large range of bat species (including Noctules, Daubenton's Bats, Leisler's Bats and several Myotis species) as well as an array of waterfowl species, small and large terrestrial mammals.

Redhill Ecology Park

- 4.12 Redhill Ecology Park was also originally proposed in September 2022 as one constituent part of a larger site including Priorslee Flash and Snedshill & Albion Hill. The habitats and species present on this site are unique, being predominantly a series of ponds with strong Great Crested Newt populations surrounded by grasslands. There are also areas of gorse scrub, semi-mature woodland and a series of paths and other visitor infrastructure. The site is approximately 11.5ha.

- 4.13 Following completion of the development immediately adjacent, it is important that this site is recognised within Telford for its value as a stronghold of Great Crested Newts, a protected species. This site also hosts a strong population of common reptiles including the common lizard, grass snake and slow worm.



Great Crested Newt – *Triturus cristatus*

- 4.14 This site, once declared will connect the proposed LNR at Priorslee Flash, through the Red Hill Ecology Park LNR and on into the existing Granville LNR via walkable and accessible public rights of way. Many of the paths leading to and running through these reserves are wheelchair accessible as well as walkable.

Snedshill & Albion Hill

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- 4.15 Snedshill & Albion Hill were also included within the wider site that was proposed in September 2022 with Priorslee Flash and Redhill Ecology Park. This site is split across two distinct areas and is a mix of woodland, grassland and scrub habitats with an extensive range of visitor infrastructure. The site is geographically separated from the other two original areas by the entirety of St Georges, and more closely serves communities in the west of St Georges and in Oakengates. It is large enough to stand alone as an individual LNR at 15.3ha. The boundary of this site will be subject to further work, as parts of Albion Hill are owned by a private landowner, and the Council will seek to enter into a Nature Reserve Agreement with them to bring as much of the site as possible under LNR protection.

Holmer Lake & Madebrook Pools

- 4.16 The Holmer Lake site was proposed in September 2022 to be declared in combination with Kemberton Meadows as one large LNR spanning the A442 Eastern Primary between Holmer Lake and Halesfield. Since this original proposal, a proactive and well attended Friends Of group has established itself at the Holmer Lake site, who also take part in management and monitoring of the existing Stirchley Dingle and Madebrook Pools LNR. It is recommended that the existing Stirchley Dingle and Madebrook Pools LNR site is extended to include the areas of woodland, grassland and scrub at Holmer Lake. This will more closely reflect the communities that use this site and also supports the existing and proactive Friends Of group who are custodians of this site and its surroundings. The site will cover an area of 14.5ha with the extended area.

Kemberton Meadows & Pitmounds

- 4.17 The Kemberton Meadows site was proposed in September 2022 to be declared in combination with the Holmer Lake site. As the Holmer Lake site is now proposed to be an extension to the existing Stirchley Dingle and Madebrook Pools LNR, Kemberton Meadows will now stand alone as an individual site. The habitats on this site are distinct, being areas of wild grassland, areas of successional heathland and gorse scrub as well as semi mature woodland. This site serves a very different community to many other LNRs in the borough, being on the boundary of the Halesfield Industrial Estate and presents a different set of management challenges including anti-social behaviour and habitat damage by site users, as well as species and habitat management. The Kemberton Meadows site is large enough to be a standalone site in its own right at 23.8ha.
- 4.18 Habitats on this site host a range of reptile and amphibian species including common lizard and slow worms, common toad and frogs. This site also hosts a range of small mammals, and predatory raptor species including Buzzards can be observed hunting over this site for prey species.
- 4.19 This site, once declared, will connect to the proposed Holmer Lake and Madebrook LNR site via a walkable footpath under the A442. Paths around these sites are walkable, and in places are wheelchair accessible. It will be possible to walk through accessible public rights of way from the Kemberton Meadows & Pitmounds LNR, through Holmer Lake & Madebrook LNR into the Telford Town Park, where users can pick up the Silkin Way which runs north-south through wider Telford.



Common Lizard – *Zootoca vivipara*

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The alternative is to not declare additional land as Local Nature Reserve and to retain the existing sites.
- 5.2 The Council has already declared 617.2ha of Local Nature Reserve meaning that the borough has close to 3.3ha of LNR for every 1,000 population. This is over 3 times the recommended level of provision and will rise further if these new proposals are taken forward. Telford & Wrekin was within the top 20 local authorities nationally for provision of LNRs based on available data from 2021 and was the leading West Midlands authority at that time.

6.0 Key Risks

- 6.1 Internal and external consultation with relevant stakeholders has taken place. A summary of the findings is set out below:
 - A need for geotechnical risk assessments on the sites which have mining legacy.
 - Where existing play, youth provision or ball game facilities exist within the proposed boundaries, the inclusion of these facilities within proposed LNRs is consistent with previous declarations. These facilities are part of the sites and are part of the balance between conservation and recreational usage of the sites. These facilities will be maintained and managed for their specific use.
 - Some sites where additional play or other facilities are desirable have also been identified and management planning will take these needs into account and if necessary small boundary amendments can be made prior to declaration to ensure that these additional or enhanced facilities can be delivered without being constrained by the LNR declaration process.

7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 Following approval by Cabinet, and then following the legal declaration process the land shown in Appendix 1 will be managed as Local Nature Reserves.

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7.2 The selection and declaration of Local Nature Reserves play an important role in maintaining a healthy balance in spatial planning between the built environment and green infrastructure.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 The Council will continue to manage and maintain the sites at its current budget levels. Any recommendations arising from the geotechnical risk assessments and implementation of recommendations arising will be funded from within the Development Management budgets. S106 funding will be used to support the maintenance of play equipment at the sites referred to in section 4.

8.2 The Council will work in partnership with Parish & Town Councils and 'Friends' groups and seek to establish groups across these new sites.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

9.1 The Council has power under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to establish nature reserves by way of a declaration. The declaration will stand as evidence that the land is a LNR and will be managed as such. LNR status is a statutory designation which reflects an owner's commitment to managing the site for conservation purposes or for a combination of conservation and recreational purposes.

9.2 There is a making and publication procedure that needs to be followed regarding the declaration which includes prior consultation with Natural England. Legal Services will assist the Director of Prosperity and Investment as required regarding the process. Declaring a site as a LNR provides opportunity for the Council to make byelaws for the protection of the reserve.

9.3 There are no direct HR implications arising from this report.

10.0 Ward Implications

10.1 The designation of the areas as LNRs will deliver borough wide benefits and specific impacts in multiple wards listed in 4.3 to 4.9 above.

10.2 The designation of the LNRs contribute to several priorities, including:

- ensuring that neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well maintained
- improving the health and wellbeing of our communities and addressing health inequalities.

10.3 The provision of accessible green spaces contributes to supporting the delivery of the Borough's public health priorities encouraging people of all ages to remain active.

10.4 LNR status for these sites will assist in the application for external funding.

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- 10.5 LNR's provide opportunities for volunteering which increases physical and social interaction and encourages lifelong learning of new skills as well as supporting mental wellbeing.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

Outdoor Recreational Value (ORVal Assessment)

- 11.1 ORVal is an online tool that spatially models the number of visits made to sites and calculates the welfare value of these visits. Calculations are based on findings from the 'Monitor of Engagement in Natural Environment' (MENE) surveys and a variety of economic valuation literature. In 2020 Telford and Wrekin Council modelled the outdoor recreational value of the council's LNR series. This has been updated in 2025 to reflect the additional value of sites declared since then. This high level assessment based on broad habitat types and the presence of outdoor facilities indicated that:

- Telford's 20 Local Nature Reserves receive approximately 4.12 million visits a year;
- Those visits to Telford's 20 Local Nature Reserves can be valued at approximately £14.7 million/yr
- Of the 4.12 million visits per year to our Local Nature Reserves approximately 2.92 million visits are made via active travel, and
- Of the 4.12 million visits per year 1.28 million visits are made by individuals who have never visited the LNRs before.

Health and Mental Wellbeing

- 11.2 Health inequalities are often linked to individuals' access to nature. It has been shown that living close to accessible green spaces can promote public health and reduce levels of obesity, heart disease, reduce stress and levels of depression.

- 11.3 Access to high quality green space is important to health and wellbeing at all stages in life. Learning through natural play is a key part of developing imagination, physical fine motor skills and improves a child's ability to deal with stress and adversity in life. Activities in nature can have a significant impact on reducing social isolation and symptoms anxiety and depression in adults.

Access to Greenspace Close to Home

- 11.4 In 2023, Natural England published the National Green Infrastructure Framework (NGIF) which provided an update to the Accessible Greenspace Standards. These are now:

"Within 15 minutes walk:

EITHER a Doorstep OR Local Accessible Greenspace

- *A doorstep greenspace of at least 0.5ha within 200 metres, or*
- *A local natural greenspace of at least 2ha within 300 metres walk from home.*

AND

- *A medium sized neighbourhood natural greenspace (10ha) within 1km.*

AND, beyond 15 minutes walk:

- *A medium/large wider neighbourhood natural greenspace (20ha) within 2km. and*
- *A large district natural greenspace (100ha) within 5-km. and*
- *A very large subregional greenspace within (500 ha) within 10 km.”*

- 11.5 In 2016 the Marches Ecosystem Assessment revealed that 89% of households within Telford and Wrekin are within 300m of accessible natural greenspace of at least 2ha in size.
- 11.6 The borough of Telford and Wrekin has an estimated population of 185,600 people (Office of National Statistics, 2021). The Cabinet approval of the two new areas of Local Nature Reserve will increase the spatial coverage of Cabinet approved and formally declared LNR's in the borough by 41.4 hectares to 748.3 hectares. The declaration of all the cabinet approved Local Nature Reserves will result in approximately 4.03ha of LNR per 1000 of the population, over four times the minimum recommended standard.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 12.1 The Council, working with parish and town councils, friends groups and local environmental organisations has made a commitment to address the inequalities in physical, cultural and social access to the natural environment and this reflects even more positively given the changes seen through the pandemic.
- 12.2 Volunteering through Friends of Groups is an established and effective way of engaging a wide range of people and provides opportunities for maintaining and improving physical health as well as providing social opportunities. These groups also offer opportunities for local people to be involved in site management and decision making processes through the steering groups on which Telford & Wrekin Council, town and parish councils and local people work together for the good of the site.
- 12.3 Telford & Wrekin Council is also delivering Live Well Telford, an online community directory which signposts local people to a range of services across the borough. Volunteering opportunities at Local Nature Reserves are made available on this directory.

13.0 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

Natural Capital

- 13.1 In 2020 a government review collated and assessed our current understanding of the economics of biodiversity. The study sets out how we rely on the natural environment to provide us with food, water and shelter and how the natural systems we are part of regulate our climate, maintain nutrient cycles and oxygen production. The review sets out how, as individuals or as communities, the natural environment can enhance our physical health and mental wellbeing providing us with opportunities for spiritual fulfilment, recreation and recuperation. The study highlighted how the natural systems we are part of also absorb the waste products

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we produce including carbon dioxide, plastics and other forms of waste that, in some instances, can be polluting or disruptive to the way the natural systems we are part of work.

- 13.2 The natural environment has an intrinsic worth. However, our natural environment can also be viewed as an asset in the same way that roads, buildings and factories or health, knowledge and skills are assets. The natural environment has 'value' and delivers 'economic good'.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 13.3 The Council's existing and proposed LNRs hold a considerable resource of biodiversity which the Council has assessed for baseline biodiversity value between 2023 – 2025. The Council will identify potential for increasing biodiversity value across these sites, and is investigating the viability and legal options of being able to secure parts of this land holding for use as biodiversity habitat banks. This work is ongoing and will continue further into 2026.

14.0 Background Papers

- 1 CAB-173 Designation of new Local Nature Reserves – 22 September 2022

15.0 Appendices

- 1 New & Amended Local Nature Reserve Site Boundaries – February 2026

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Finance	19/12/2025	06/01/2026	AEM
Legal	19/12/2025	04/02/2026	RP
Director	19/12/2025	19/12/2025	JD