

## Heathland Connections Advice - Wonersh and Shamley Green

Surrey Wildlife Trust have recently mapped our Parish at the invitation of our Parish Council, because we fall inside the 5km buffer boundary of their Heathland connections project. This project is about restoring and creating as many different types of habitats in the project area as possible.

The many maps provide a good visual guide to our habitats are and where there are gaps, indicating opportunities for improving connectivity between different habitat types. (These maps provide only a indicative view and are constantly changing)

The Habitat map below shows all broad habitat types and demonstrates that we have a great variety. These include..

Improved Grassland

Heathland, Heather Grassland and Priority Grassland

Ancient Woodland, Deciduous woodland, Coniferous woodland

Secondary Heathland Habitat (Heath/Woodland)

Freshwater

Arable

Having done this mapping Surrey Wildlife Trust's team have provided the Parish with management recommendations for each of our habitats and a whole host of links to websites providing advice and guidance.

It is really great to have all this information in one place...

Surrey Wildlife Trust have commented that the Parish Council and the Environment Groups are aware of most of this guidance, practicing and encouraging it where possible and setting a good example!

Here is a very quick summary of their recommendations.

Grassland – Unsurprisingly, this is the dominant habitat across the parish. Encouraging more wildflower meadow/margin creation would be a great way of enhancing these habitats and creating a network of sites for pollinators. NB most of our parish is on a B-line.

Heathland - there are some obvious candidates for heathland restoration where it has become coniferous woodland, primarily in the Blackheath and Winterfold Hill areas. Recommendations include selective thinning to encourage heather regeneration of the understorey, through to clear-felling to convert the whole area back to heathland (where appropriate).

Woodland – The parish has great coverage of native deciduous woodland, with several areas classed as designated ancient woodland. Managing these woodlands appropriately will significantly enhance their value for wildlife.

Scrub – Not mapped here, but scrub is still a valuable habitat that benefits a wide range of species when managed appropriately.

Hedgerows – Hedgerows are a fantastic way of improving connectivity between different parcels of land. A native mixed hedgerow will support a range of different species, but only if it's in good condition. There are two main recommendations for hedgerows – to plant more, and to manage them well.

Agricultural land – There are lots of ways that agricultural land can be adapted to ensure that nature and food production can co-exist, such as wildflower margins and buffer strips. Farm Wildlife has lots of useful information about nature-friendly farming interventions.

Equine land - Equiculture promotes principles which help horse owners create a healthier pasture by working with natural processes rather than against them. Equiculture focuses on two key areas - healthier soil and healthier pasture

Freshwater (ponds) – Well-managed ponds can support a huge range of freshwater species, as well as providing a water source for birds and other wildlife.

Other designations – In addition to the SSSI and LNR, we also have a few designated Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs) in the parish. This is a non-statutory designation given to sites that have been identified locally for their conservation value.

Current landholder involvement

Several landholders in the Parish have signed up to take part in the project. This includes the WPC owned land. Not only do they benefit from the valuable bespoke advice from SWT's nature based solutions team but many have added an outline of their landholding to the landapp map which helps to build a clearer picture and potentially helps people in the parish to team up and learn from/inspire one another and potentially benefit nature. All local residents can take actions in their own gardens that can help to support wildlife.

Finally, SWT have produced some species management guides as part of this project. These outline different management actions that can benefit their three target species: adders, nightingales and grayling butterflies.

A complete list of all the data sources and management guides, and further maps, can be found within the full 'Wonersh and Shamley Green Parish – Habitat mapping and connectivity /enhancement opportunities' document prepared by Emma Randall from the Nature based Solutions team at Surrey Wildlife Trust. This can be found on the SGE and WEAG and Wonersh Parish Council websites.

