

## Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin

### Nature Recovery and a collaboration between

#### Middle Marches Community Land Trust (MMCLT), Restoring Shropshire's Verges Project (RSVP), Marches Meadow Group (MMG) Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC)

It is important to say here that there are many important local initiatives not mentioned in this case study but never the less VERY important in providing the bedrock upon which the Local Nature Recovery Strategy across the county is being currently built.

This case study is only a snippet of the activity underway.

#### Ambition

Ongoing partnership working since 2023 between MMCLT, RSVP, MMG, SALC and the LNRS lead for Shropshire Telford and Wrekin have resulted in a three -pronged approach to the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy with the main focus on:

1. Farmers and landowners
2. Community groups, biological recording groups and environmental professionals
3. Town and parish councils facilitated by MMCLT and SALC helped by MMG & RSVP.

The ambition is to encourage all 184 town and parish councils across Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin to develop **bespoke nature recovery plans** alongside any initiatives in farming and with landholders.

MMCLT believe that the potential for jobs, incomes, business and community well-being and the rural economy will be greatly enhanced by the full engagement of the established SALC town and parish network and through this network we are already able to demonstrate community engagement, capacity and resilience building and an increase of funding into the rural economy via nature recovery initiatives.

*See supporting case study examples:*

1. Minsterley Parish - Minsterley Meadows Case Study.
2. Edgton Parish – development of bespoke nature recovery plan
3. Welshampton and Lyneal – summary of initiatives

#### Background

Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy

<https://next.shropshire.gov.uk/environment/ecology-and-biodiversity/shropshire-and-telford-wrekin-local-nature-recovery-strategy/>

MMCLT laid the groundwork for engagement work on nature recovery with town and parish councils by conferences and talks given to Town and Parish Councils via:

- Middle Marches Community Land Trust (MMCLT) <https://middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk/>
- Restoring Shropshire's Verges Project (RSVP) <https://middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk/restoring-shropshire-road-verges/> and
- Marches Meadow Group <https://www.marchesmeadowgroup.com/>

Political engagement with Shropshire Council has ensured activities have gained support and recognition at a high level within the responsible LNRS local authority with both the current leader Cllr Lezley Picton and Cllr Ian Nellins, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Environment and Transport lending support at conferences in 2023.

Additional support from Baroness Natalie Bennet, vice chair National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and Chris Borg, policy lead NALC was secured to support this work in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin and both attended conferences in 2023 and 2024.

MMCLT has been a catalyst in Shropshire, promoting community ownership of land for nature and so far, has acquired four sites mostly purchased with public donations with one site, Minsterley Meadows a SSSI site attracting National Heritage Lottery funding. *See land link on MMCLT website.*

Importantly MMCLT is independent, nimble, has actively built community engagement and participation through conferences and field trips. To date MMCLT, SALC & LNRS have worked in partnership to organise three conferences in 2023 and 2024 all intended to engage town & parish Councils in nature recovery initiatives.

A precursor to Nature Recovery work in Parishes is work on Restoring Shropshire's Verges Project (RSVP) since 2018 see link <https://middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk/restoring-shropshire-road-verges/>  
Case Studies <https://middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk/verges-case-studies-resources/>

RSVP featured as one of two national case studies here: Higginson Strategy 2030: Restoring a Green Britain  
<https://higginsonstrategy.com/nature-2030-releases-new-restoring-a-green-britain-report/>

RSVP work laid the foundations for work with parish councils with the help of small grants from the Shropshire Hills National Landscape Trust and board members giving talks to many town and parish councils across Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, the outcome being 40+ community managed verge restoration projects opening the door to wider conversations on nature recovery with communities.

## **Conferences aimed at town and parish council engagement with nature recovery work**

### **October 2023**

Verges, Hedges & Watercourses and the importance of these features in the Shropshire Landscape  
<https://middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk/verges-hedges-watercourses-conference-13-10-23/>

### **November 2023**

The importance of Town & Parish Councils to help deliver Nature Recovery across Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin  
<https://middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk/town-pc-nature-recovery-conf-17-11-23/>  
these events were followed up with individual talks, site visits and information to parish councils throughout 2024 culminating in another conference in December 2024.

### **December 2024**

Conference aimed at Town and Parish Councils to promote the development of bespoke Nature Recovery Plans in every parish. Speakers included Baroness Natalie Bennett and Chris Borg from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC)  
Representatives from 60 Town and Parish Councils attended.

See link to presentations here <https://www.alcshropshire.co.uk/local-nature-recovery>

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### **Dr Richard Keymer, Chair Middle Marches Community Land Trust:**

The work across Shropshire by a range of local Groups such as RSVP, MMG and MMCLT has been a great step forwards in involving local people in Nature Recovery but the involvement of SALC, together with the support of the lead authorities for nature recovery, offers the possibility of driving action right across the counties because of the involvement of the Parish Council network. All that is needed now is a clear lead from Defra as to how LNRS will be supported and actioned nationally.

### **Peter Carty, Chair Marches Meadow Group:**

*“Shropshire has achieved extraordinary levels of community activity for nature recovery. It feels like parish councils are waking up to the power of community action for nature recovery and MMCLT through their excellent conferences is fuelling that process – inspiring activity across Shropshire.”*

### **Tom Chance, CEO National Community Land Trust network:**

*“MMCLT is one example of the potential of Community Land Trusts to be catalysts for change in relation to nature recovery initiatives and to link this work to the core ambition of CLTs to bring back land and asset ownership to local communities.*

*The potential of CLTs to initiate change presents a huge opportunity to people and politicians”*

### **Chris Mellings , Chief Officer, Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC):**

*“Following our successful December conference, we heard of some of the great work taking place across our county to support local nature recovery. Shropshire Association of Local Councils is supporting the development of bespoke Town and Parish council nature recovery initiatives supported by the work of Middle Marches Community Land Trust and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Working together across our local communities we can contribute towards international and national targets and support Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin to lead the way nationally. This is a great example of making a difference locally in working towards local nature recovery and sharing good practice.”*

SALC / LNRS/ MMCLT conference photograph.

