



HUMAN NATURE:  
AT ITS BEST

# Wildfell Centre for Environmental Recovery

## Nature Recovery in Practice



C S A R

Cambridge Society for the  
Application of Research

# Ground Control's Evergreen Fund

- Set up in 2020
- 5% of GC's annual net profits to the fund
- Green Equity investments
- Tree planting
- Land for Nature Recovery projects
- Perpetual re-investment of profits



# Wildfell & Devana Centres for Environmental Recovery

- Nature recovery through Ground Control's Evergreen Fund
- Purchase of 298 acres of farmland & woodland in North Essex May 2021
- Purchase of 100 acres of farmland in South Cambridgeshire June 2023
- Maximise the Environmental potential of the sites
- Leave an Environmental Legacy
- Develop and share best practice







Existing site (2022)

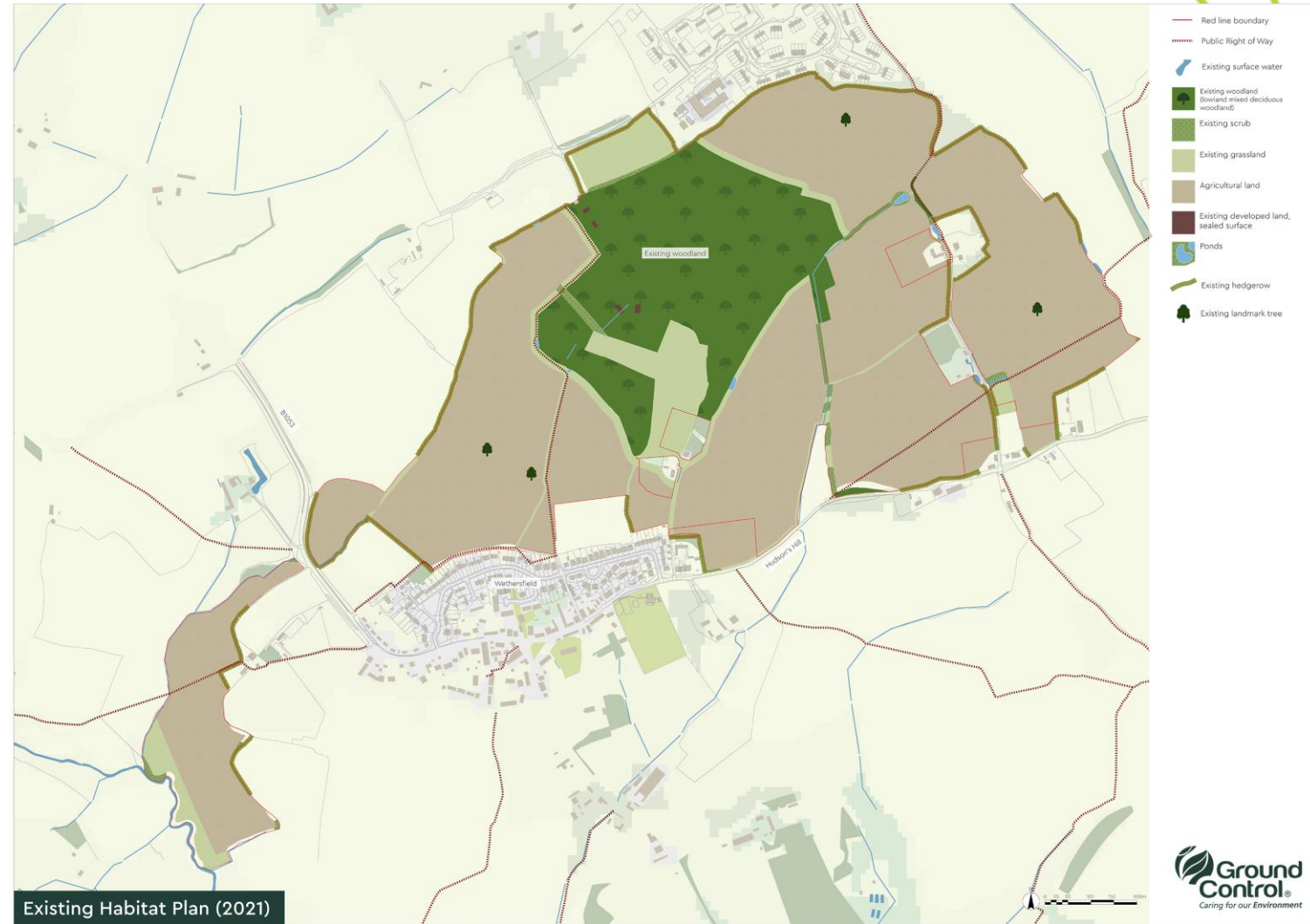
WILDFELL a showcase of sustainable land management and include:

- Woodland Creation and Enhancement
- Creation of Off-site Biodiversity Net Gain Habitat Bank
- Platform for collaboration including Plant Life, RBG Kew, Bumblebee Conservation Trust North Essex Farm Cluster
- Facilities created to provide hub for engagement and learning



# Habitat Baseline

- **Cropland**
  - Cereal cops
  - Horticulture
- **Woodland & Forest**
  - Lowland Mixed Deciduous
  - Other Woodland Broadleaved
- **Heathland & Shrub** Mixed Scrub
- **Grassland** Modified
- **Lakes** Ponds (Non-Priority)
- **Hedgerow** Species Rich
- **Braintree DC** Local Planning Authority
- **South Suffolk & North Essex**  
**Clayland** National Character Area



# Wildfell : Baseline

- Habitat Baseline Survey
- Protected species Surveys
  - Bats
  - Birds
  - Great Crested Newt
  - Reptiles
  - Otter & Water Vole
  - Mammals
- Pollinators & Flora
- Soil Survey
- Above Ground Biomass (Carbon)
- Drone surveys





# Habitat Creation

- **Woodland** Other Broadleaved
- **Heathland & Shrub** Mixed scrub
- **Grassland**
  - Other Neutral
  - Traditional Orchard
- **Lakes Ponds** (Non-Priority)
- **Hedgerow** Species Rich with trees
- Individual Rural Trees
- Watercourse improvements





# Habitat Enhancement

- **Woodland & Forest**
  - Lowland Mixed deciduous Poor – **Good**
  - Other Broadleaved Poor - **Good**
- **Heathland & Shrub** Mixed scrub  
Moderate to **Good**
- **Grassland** Modified – Other Neutral  
**Good** condition
- **Lakes Ponds** (Non-Priority) Poor to  
**Good**
- **Hedgerow** Native & Species Rich  
Moderate to **Good**







The 62 ha Habitat Bank will deliver 383 biodiversity units with the following split:

- Grassland 168 units
  - Heathland & Shrub 107 units
  - Lakes -Ponds 3.5 units
  - Traditional Orchard 3 units
  - Native Hedgerow 19 units
  - Woodland enhancement 57 units
- 
- Project Metric Evolved from 2.0 in 2022 to Statutory in 2024

Projected Scheme – Year 30



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# Wildfell : Progress 2021-2023

- **March 2021 – August 2022**
  - Tennant farmer in place
  - Baselines completed
  - Design developed
  - Woodland Grant Application completed
  - DEFRA Metric 2.0 BNG scheme
- **August 2022 First Phase seeding works**
  - Nutrient Strip crop
  - Woodland Creation ground cover
  - DLL Ponds Created & Restored
- **Planting Season 2022-2023**
  - Phase 1 Woodland Creation
  - Phase 1 Hedgerow planting



# Wildfell : Progress 2023-2024

- **Spring 2023**
  - DEFRA Metric Updated to 4.0
  - Silage Cut taken
- **Summer 2023**
  - BNG Scheme finalised
  - Haylage cut taken
  - BNG ponds created
- **Autumn 2023**
  - ONG preparation and seeding
  - Scheme Setting Out
- **Planting Season 2023-2024**
  - Phase 2 Woodland Creation
  - Phase 2 Hedgerow planting
  - Scrub planting
  - Orchard Planting
  - Barn Constructed





# Wildfell : Progress 2024-2025

- **Spring 2024**

- DEFRA Metric Updated to Statutory
- Section 106 engagement with LPA
- ONG Cut and collect

- **Summer 2024**

- ONG Cut and collect x 2
- Year 1 Monitoring surveys completed
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Drone Survey Completed

- **Autumn 2024**

- ONG cut and collect
- Woodland Creation Beat Up Surveys

- **Planting Season 2024-2025**

- Phase 3 Hedgerow planting
- Phase 1 Woodland Creation replacement planting
- Phase 1 Woodland management completed





# Woodland Creation

- 125 acres on ex arable land
- 9km deer & rabbit fencing
- 96,380 Native trees & shrubs
- 22 tree species
- 12 shrub species
- Areas of Natural Regeneration
- 18,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e taken up by yr50
- England Woodland Creation Offer Funding

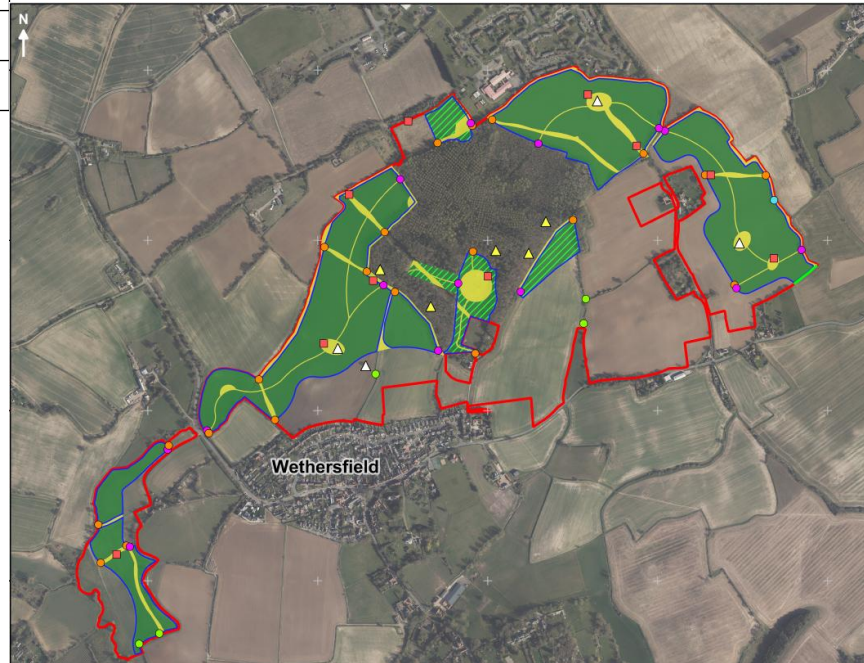


# Woodland Creation

Species	%
Beech	3%
Bird cherry	4%
Common lime	3%
Common walnut	4%
Crab apple	3%
Crack willow	2%
Field maple	4%
Holly	3%
Hornbeam	7%
Midland hawthorn	1%
Native black poplar	1%
Norway maple	2%
Pedunculate oak	9%
Red oak	2%
Rowan	1%
Scots pine	4%
Silver birch	5%
Small leaved lime	4%
Sweet chestnut	3%
Sycamore	4%
Wild cherry	5%
Wild service tree	4%
Wytch elm	3%

Alder buckthorn	1%
Blackthorn	1%
Dog rose	1%
Dogwood	2%
Elder	2%
Guelder Rose	2%
Hawthorn	2%
Hazel	4%
Osier	1%
Spindle	2%
Wayfaring tree	2%
Wild privet	1%

- Ex arable fields fine grass sward established
- Deer Fencing – Sweet chestnut posts, stock & rabbit mesh
- Phase 1 planting – Individual coir mulch mats and vole guards
- Phase 2 Planting – Mulch strips with weed sheet and vole guards
- 3 Areas Natural regeneration





# Grassland Creation

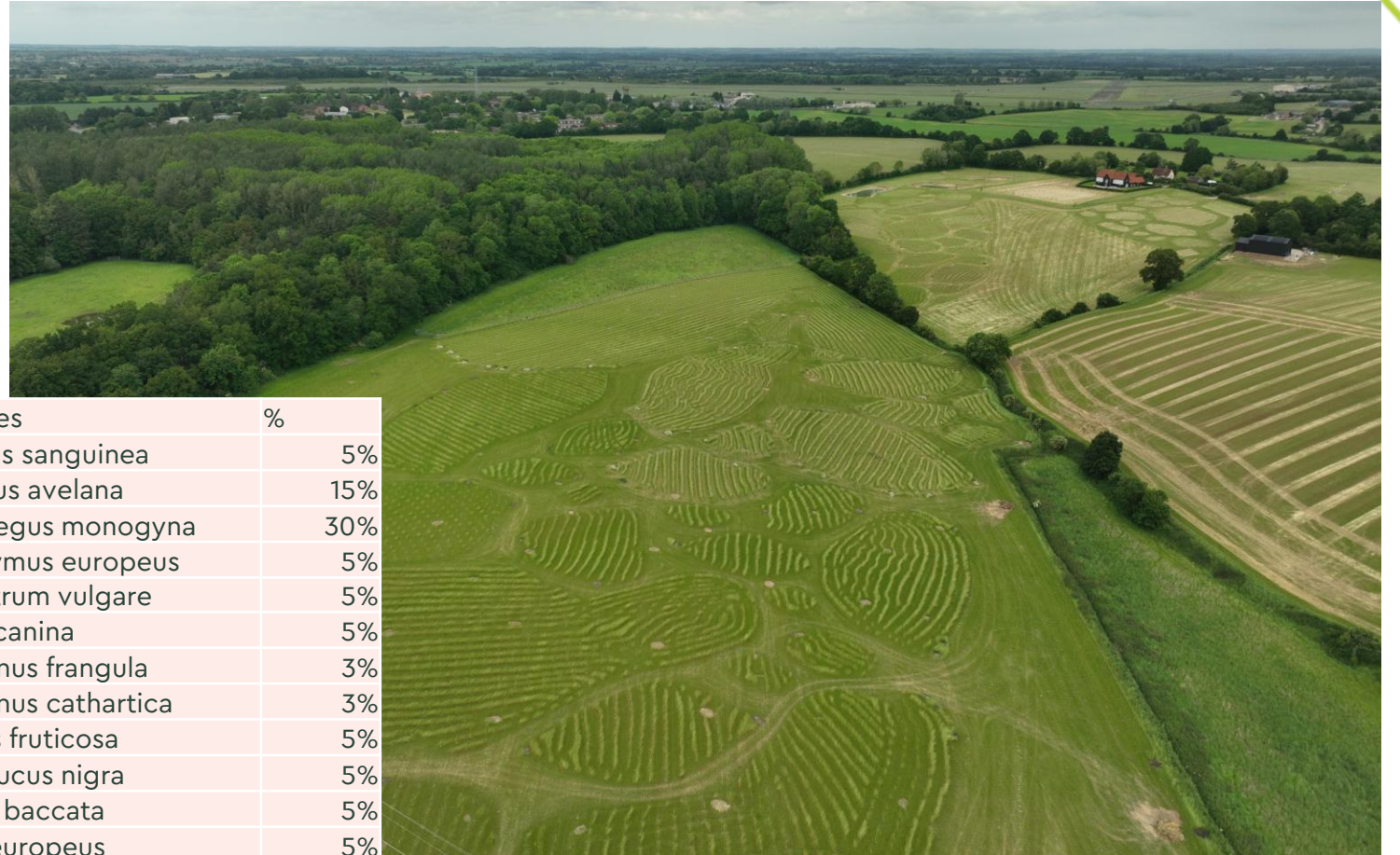
- 1 Season Nutrient strip crop
- Bespoke clay soils seed mix
- Enhanced cultivation and soil prep
- 80/20 Grass / Wildflower mix
- 1<sup>st</sup> season 4x establishment cut and collect
- 1.5 ac Orchard planted
  - Heritage and local fruit cultivars





# Mixed Scrub Creation

- 14 Native shrub species
- Individual Rabbit/ hare protection
- Planting stations mulched
- 70% area planted
- Other Neutral grassland glades and rides

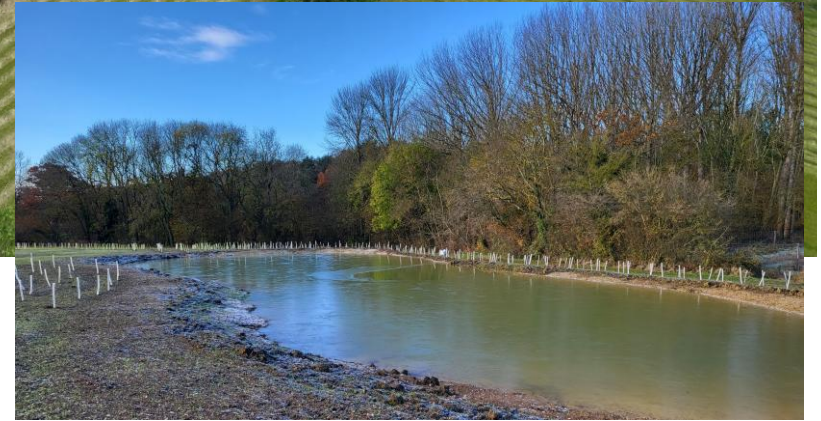


Species	%
Cornus sanguinea	5%
Corylus avelana	15%
Crataegus monogyna	30%
Euonymus europaeus	5%
Ligustrum vulgare	5%
Rosa canina	5%
Rhamnus frangula	3%
Rhamnus cathartica	3%
Rubus fruticosus	5%
Sambucus nigra	5%
Taxus baccata	5%
Ulex europaeus	5%
Viburnum lantana	5%
Viburnum opulus	5%
	100%



# Pond Creation

- Puddled clay
- Land drain capping
- 11 Ponds Created
- 3 Ponds restored
- Create a regionally significant GCN stronghold





# Hedge Creation

- Species-rich Native Hedgerow with trees
- 13 shrub species @ 5/m double staggered row
- 6 tree species @ 10m centres
- Mulch strips

## Hedge

Acer campestre  
Carpinus betulus  
Corylus avellana  
Cornus sanguines  
Crataegus monogyna  
Euonymus europaeus  
Ilex aquifolium  
Prunus spinosa  
Rosa canina  
Sambucus nigra  
Ulnus glabra  
Viburnum lantana  
Viburnum opulus

## Trees

Quercus robur  
Carpinus betulus  
Prunus avium  
Malus Sylvestris  
Pinus sylvestris  
Tilia cordata





# Wildfell : Next Steps

- Habitat Establishment & management
- Monitoring and reporting habitat & species
- Registration on Biodiversity Gain Site
- BNG Unit sales
- Ongoing Community engagement
- Ongoing Volunteer opportunities





# Wildfell Co-Benefits

- Permanent land use change
- Generate High Integrity Biodiversity Units
- Carbon Sequestration
- Improve Water Quality
- Natural flood management
- Community Engagement
- Increased Public Access
- Local spend; Contractors and suppliers
- Species monitoring
- Engagement with North Essex Farm Cluster & Essex LNRS



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# Wildfell – Financial sustainability

- Demonstrate Nature Recovery Projects can be financially sustainable
  - Biodiversity Unit Sales
  - Forestry Commission Grant Funding
  - Woodland Carbon
  - Environment Agency Funding
  - Essex & Suffolk Water Funding
  - Natural England pond Funding (FWAG East)



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# Any Questions?

