

# Somerset Wildlife Trust Theory of Change

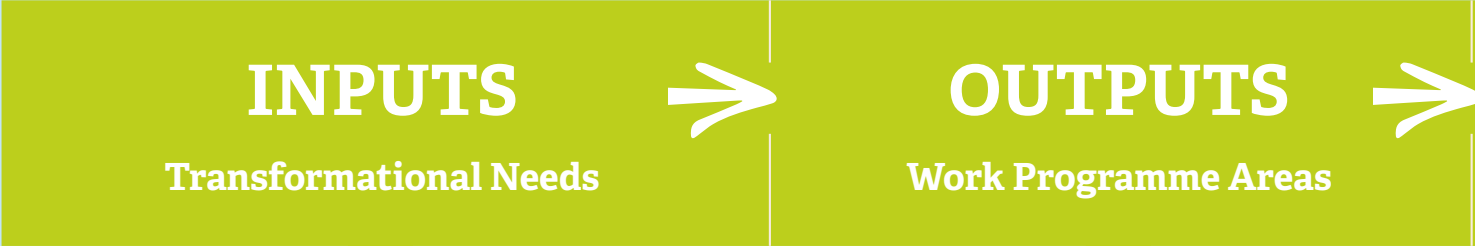
A Theory of Change is a comprehensive illustration and description of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular situation, in this case nature recovery in Somerset.

Like many other organisations, we are using this approach to map out the “missing middle” between our strategic goals and our priority programmes of work.

We have done this by first identifying the desired long-term outcomes and the direct threats that impact them. Then working back from these we are able to identify all the outputs and inputs that must be in place for the goals to be achieved.



# Our Theory of Change



## GOAL 4



## Priority Audiences and Landscapes



# OUTCOMES – IMPACT

Enabling Outcomes

Medium Term

Long Term

## Reduction in Direct Threats

### GOAL 2

A movement for nature

Building connection, confidence and capability in priority audiences, shifting attitudes

### GOAL 3

Telling Somerset's story

Better understanding of the state of species and health of ecosystems

#### TIER 1



Habitat Fragmentation, Loss & Quality

#### TIER 2



Over Exploitation of Natural Resources



Land Management



Urbanisation



Pollution



Climate Change



Invasive Species

### GOAL 1

More space for nature

To restore healthy, functioning, resilient ecosystems with increased species diversity, abundance and distribution



**Somerset**  
Wildlife Trust

# Putting our strategy into practice

The Theory of Change has helped us identify the key direct threat to our nature recovery goals – habitat loss, reduction in habitat quality and fragmentation. All our work needs to be focussed on reducing this threat as a clear and urgent priority. The drivers of this threat are numerous and incorporate many of the other direct threats identified. Understanding the contributing factors in detail, including by location and stakeholder, is vital to our success.

## INPUTS: Transformational Needs

### Inclusive, diverse, learning culture

We invest in our people, staff and volunteers, ensuring we have the skills and experience needed to achieve our goals and create opportunities for people to develop their careers and achieve their goals. We are relevant to and inclusive of all communities, we listen and learn from them and understand their needs and aim to speak with an authentic, credible voice.

### Income step change

We will engage with more supporters who share our values and goals, from corporates to individuals, and diversify our income streams, including through innovation such as green finance, to ensure our core delivery model is funded through our unrestricted income. We will use project funding for time limited or innovative work. We will expand our commercial activities, identifying new opportunities and always setting high standards for environmental integrity and due diligence.

### Being bold, authentic voice

We are bold and confident speaking out for nature, backed by our members and supporters, with a strong brand and clear communications approach. We are not afraid to say we are part of nature and what nature needs to thrive. We invest in science, monitoring and research to be evidence-led in our delivery, advocacy and policy. We hold ourselves and others to account through the Somerset State of Nature. We use our knowledge, expertise and evidence to inform decision making in Somerset that impacts on the environment. We hold ourselves to the highest standards of governance, transparency and accountability.

### Leading & influencing change

Our direct contribution is only part of the solution to tackling the ecological and climate emergencies, to truly be effective we must support, influence and inspire others to take positive action and lead by example in our delivery including our own environmental impact. We manage existing and acquire new land to protect the precious and vulnerable species until the wider landscape improves and demonstrate how nature can recover sharing our learning with others. We test and trial innovative new approaches to land management including financing, to support other landowners. Our visitor strategy recognises the important role our land plans in connecting people with nature balanced with protecting vulnerable species and habitats. We invest in digital technologies to improve our efficiency, effectiveness and connect with people.

## OUTPUTS: Work Programme Areas

### Collaboration & Partnership

We cannot do everything everywhere and neither should we try. We develop, support and commit to partnerships to achieve shared goals, which allow us to play to our strengths and focus on our efforts where we can have the greatest impact. Where an organisation is already delivering, we support, signpost and cheerlead.

### Advocacy & Policy

More space for nature needs to be front and centre of the national and local agenda. We need to be activists and, using the best available data and evidence, boldly stand up for nature with local and national politicians, businesses, planners and all key decision makers. Our voice needs to be heard and we need well evidenced, solutions-focused policies to inform and advance our goals for nature.

### Supporter Development

Many wonderful people support us in our work across Somerset. These include those donating their money and their time – our members, major donors, patrons and our volunteers. We strive to tailor our offer to our supporters through high quality experiences.

### Supporting Communities

We need to support communities of identity (e.g. farmers), interest (e.g. wildlife gardening) and location (e.g. Somerset coast) to feel that they are motivated to take positive action for nature by building confidence, capability and capacity. We will work with and through communities at each stage of the engagement funnel to ensure a sustainable approach.

### Land Management & Advice

We manage land to protect the special, the vulnerable and to demonstrate new approaches to nature's recovery that others can learn from. We share our knowledge, skills and expertise with others through our land advisory services both funded and commercial. We know that to achieve our goals we must support landowners to manage their land for nature while achieving their own goals.

### Data & Evidence

We use the best available evidence to inform our policies and approach, focusing our efforts where we achieve the greatest impact. Where evidence is not available, we partner with scientists and academics to research and develop the evidence needed. We monitor our activities, from land management to people engagement, and adapt our approach according to what is most successful. We report regularly on our progress and hold ourselves accountable.

# Outcomes

## Reduction of Direct Threats

Tier 1



### Habitat Fragmentation, Loss and Quality

This direct threat is defined as human activities that reduce the amount of habitat, impact on the quality of habitat and/or cause habitat to become disconnected, thus preventing the natural environment from functioning as a dynamic, healthy, coherent ecosystem resulting in the loss of species abundance, presence and diversity and vulnerable to a changing climate.

In Somerset this can be seen through (*SOURCE Somerset State of Nature*)

- **Land use change** with increased land areas used for arable crops and urbanisation (housing, transport, major infrastructure including energy generation, education, health and social care facilities)
- **Intensive farming practices** with high inputs resulting in nutrient rich soils, pollution and silt in waterways, poor soil management, hedge flailing and draining of peat
- **Peat extraction** on the Somerset Levels degrading precious peatland
- **Sewage discharge and storm overflow** issues, farming practices and diffuse pollution causing poor water quality especially on the Somerset Levels with a phosphate load three times higher than expected – causing eutrophication
- **Disease;** with ash die back causing loss and fragmentation of woodland
- **Invasive species**
- **Climate change** affecting habitat quality

This is the main threat to healthy functioning ecosystems in Somerset with many other threats contributing. By focusing on and reducing this threat, it will result in more space for nature, leading to connected, healthy, climate resilient ecosystems with thriving habitats and self-sustaining populations of native species, reducing the need for human intervention and management.

## Glossary

**Goals:** our strategic goals as outlined in the Wilder Somerset 2030 strategy

**Direct Threats:** factors that IMMEDIATELY affect biodiversity or physically cause its destruction or degradation. Direct Threats can be historical, ongoing, and/or likely to occur in the future. Indirect threats may include contributing factors that underlie or lead to direct threats. Due to the large number of these, they are not shown in the theory of change.

**Outcomes:** are the changes we expect to see as a result of our work.

**Outputs:** our deliverables, the things we will physically produce, these can be measured and monitored through key performance indicators (KPIs).

**KPIs:** are focused on tracking our progress – think of them like the signals that we’re heading the right way.

**Inputs:** the resource and/or areas of activity we need as an organisation in order to deliver our Outputs.

**Transformational Needs:** core areas of work that are needed to shift the scale and impact of our delivery.



## Over Exploitation of Natural Resources

This direct threat is defined as the removal of natural resources, often viewed as renewable e.g. wood, from the ecosystem unsustainably so they cannot be renewed at all, or at the scale required to meet the demand. This term applies to natural resources such as water, wood, fish and animals, medicinal plants, geological resources, peat and other biological materials used for compost or burning. Over exploitation can lead to resource and habitat loss, fragmentation, destruction and extinction of species, reducing habitat connectivity and quality, and causing ecosystem failure.

In Somerset this can be seen through:

- Peat extraction destroying lowland peatland
- Overfishing of rivers and the Severn Estuary
- Aggregate extraction
- Wildlife crimes, shooting and hunting



## Land Management

This direct threat, recognised by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) as the biggest driver of biodiversity loss globally, is defined as the way we choose to use and manage land, with increasing land in use for intensive food production and biofuels, along with more land in use for housing, infrastructure, roads, and energy production.

In Somerset this can be seen through:

- Maize growing for animal feed and anaerobic digesters
- 74% of Somerset is farmed with an increased focus on 'food security', intensification and extension of farming practices
- Farming the Somerset Levels all year round by removing water, which damages the lowland peatland habitat
- Hinkley Point C
- Agratas at Gravety
- Widening of A roads
- Housing developments
- Solar farms



## Urbanisation

This direct threat is defined globally as people moving from rural areas to urban areas to access infrastructure, employment and socialising. It's expected that by 2050 86% of the developed world will live in urban areas. At the same time our towns and cities are growing to accommodate more people (urban growth) building on remaining green spaces or spreading out our urban areas removing green buffers between towns and villages (urban sprawl).

Somerset is a predominantly rural county (48% of the population live in rural areas – 2011 census) relying on market towns for employment and services but urbanisation is occurring in the following ways:

- Towns and villages are growing to meet housing demand mostly coming from inward migration, people moving to Somerset from elsewhere in the UK (16,930 people moved to Somerset from elsewhere in the UK between 2015 and 2020 with an additional 4,230 people coming to Somerset due to international migration – SOURCE Somerset Trends)
- Infrastructure projects are approved in Somerset in part to provide skilled employment, such as HPC and Agratas, which will result in thousands of people moving to the county



## Pollution

This direct threat is defined as the introduction of harmful materials into the environment causing adverse effects to habitats and species that can result in the loss of species and/or habitats, and disease.

In Somerset this can be seen through:

- Intensive food production using chemical fertilisers and pesticides polluting soil and water ways, and being a key cause of the high Phosphate load in the Somerset Levels and Moors causing all SSSIs to be in unfavourable condition
- Diffuse pollution from our towns and roads ending up in our soils and waterways
- Water company storm overflow sewage releases and leaks
- Poor plumbing in older houses with sewage and washing pollutants entering watercourses
- Microplastics from our clothes entering our rivers and the Severn Estuary
- Air pollution from traffic, chimneys, energy production



## Climate Change

This direct threat is defined as human activity that causes the release of greenhouse gases that build up in the atmosphere thereby causing global temperature increases and adverse effects on weather patterns (increased flooding, higher temperatures, warmer winters, extreme weather events). This impacts the natural environment directly as some species are dying out, while others have to move due to changes in temperature, weather patterns, sea and river levels. Climate change also exacerbates other direct threats such as reducing land availability, water resources, or enabling quicker spread of invasive species.

In Somerset this can be seen through:

- Increased winter flooding on the Somerset Levels and along river corridors, with water occupying land for longer
- Increased drought in the summer on the Levels
- Increased coastal flooding, coastal incursions and loss of land to the sea
- Adders becoming scarcer, affected by changes and moving to adapt
- Increased dormouse decline due to fluctuating temperatures and increased winter rainfall
- Increased risk of disease spreading faster in warmer climate



## Invasive Species

This direct threat is defined as species occurring in an ecosystem they don't historically belong to, where they out-compete other species for resources such as sunlight and water, causing other species to die out and disrupting a natural ecosystem. These invasive species can carry diseases that infect other species in an ecosystem.

In Somerset this can be seen through:

- Himalayan balsam
- Japanese knotweed
- Mink
- Historically grey squirrels

