



Redgrave Parish Council

Grant Enquiry Form

BMSDC Community Nature Recovery Large Grant

Project Details

Brief description of the project:

The project will secure the purchase of a naturally damp small woodland site into community ownership and deliver a programme of woodland restoration and habitat enhancement. The site will be brought under active management to address existing pressures, improve ecological condition and establish long-term conservation-led stewardship in accordance with the Mid Suffolk District Council Biodiversity Action Plan (2025–2030) and the Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

The woodland comprises wet woodland and mixed deciduous woodland, both identified as priority habitats within the LNRS. The site supports several MSDC priority species, including bumblebees, hedgehogs and toads, all BMSC BAP priority species, alongside bats, birds and diverse invertebrate communities. Survey work by a local professional ecologist has also confirmed the presence of the Serotine bat (*Eptesicus serotinus*), a LNRS priority species.

Management will include selective removal of dead and diseased sycamore trees, as identified by a qualified tree surgeon, with felled timber retained on site as standing or fallen deadwood in line with Biodiversity Action Plan guidance. Habitat restoration will prioritise natural regeneration, targeted planting of native woodland trees, shrubs and ground flora suited to damp conditions, and enhancement of understorey structure.

Specific actions for MSDC BAP priority species include the creation of a small light woodland glade and enhancement of woodland edges, combined with planting of native flowering shrubs and ground flora to increase nectar and pollen availability for bumblebees. A comprehensive wildflower planting programme will establish native woodland, woodland-edge and damp-ground species. Low-intensity, rotational management will allow flowering plants to set seed. Bee hotels, constructed from stacked and drilled logs, will be installed throughout the woodland to provide nesting and overwintering habitat for pollinators, building on successful practice already established on other parish-owned land. Bird and bat boxes will also be installed.

The woodland's naturally damp conditions will be maintained to support toads, which have been recorded on site and in adjoining gardens. Management will retain shaded, moist areas, fallen timber and undisturbed ground in accordance with the Action Plan. Habitat enhancements, including retained deadwood, brash piles, leaf litter and dense understorey vegetation, will also support hedgehogs, maintaining dark, connected corridors that link the woodland with surrounding gardens.

Dark corridors will be protected through the site, with no artificial lighting installed. Managed access will be provided via a simple, informal footpath designed to minimise disturbance. Long-term protection will be secured through the Neighbourhood Plan by seeking to remove the site from the Settlement Boundary, designating it as a Local Green Space and pursuing Local Nature Reserve status. The project will be guided by a Woodland Management and Biodiversity Monitoring Plan, with records shared with the Suffolk Biological Information Service.

Species records will be collected in collaboration with local volunteers and shared with the Suffolk Biological Information Service to inform adaptive management and evidence progress over time.

Who will benefit from the project?

1. Priority wildlife and habitats (primary beneficiaries)

The principal beneficiaries of the project are local wildlife and priority habitats. The woodland already supports, and will increasingly benefit:

- Bumblebees and other pollinators, through flower-rich woodland edge, glade and damp-ground planting providing nectar and pollen from early spring to late summer.
- Hedgehogs, through increased invertebrate abundance, retained leaf litter, brash and log piles, and improved connectivity with surrounding gardens and green spaces.
- Toads and other amphibians, by safeguarding and enhancing shaded, damp terrestrial habitat essential outside the breeding season.
- Bat species (Suffolk Priority and UK BAP species), through protection of dark corridors, improved insect prey availability and retention of deadwood habitat.
- Wider invertebrate, bird and fungal communities, supported by deadwood retention, structural diversity and improved woodland condition.

These measures will result in improved woodland health, increased species diversity and stronger ecological connectivity within the local Nature Recovery Network.

2. Local residents and the wider community

Residents of the parish and surrounding area will benefit from:

- Access to high-quality natural green space, close to home, for quiet recreation such as walking, nature observation and informal exercise.
- Improved physical and mental wellbeing, particularly for those with limited access to the countryside.
- Long-term protection of a valued local landscape, ensuring it remains available for community enjoyment rather than private development.
- The woodland will be managed to balance access with biodiversity protection, ensuring benefits are inclusive and sustainable.

3. Volunteers, schools and community groups

The project will benefit:

- Local volunteers, who will gain opportunities to participate in woodland management, wildlife recording and habitat enhancement, developing skills and environmental awareness.
- Schools and community groups, through opportunities for outdoor learning focused on biodiversity, conservation and climate awareness.

- The wider community, by fostering a sense of shared ownership, pride and stewardship of a local natural asset.

4. Future generations

By securing the woodland in community ownership and embedding long-term protection through planning policy and potential Local Nature Reserve designation, the project ensures:

- Enduring environmental benefits, including biodiversity recovery, climate resilience and habitat connectivity.
- Permanent public benefit, safeguarding the woodland for future residents rather than short-term private gain.

Summary

Overall, the project delivers multi-layered benefits: priority species and habitats recover and thrive; local people gain access to nature and wellbeing benefits; volunteers and young people develop skills and connection to the environment; and future generations inherit a protected, resilient and biodiverse woodland.