

Developing policies to support nature in the borough

Background

In 2023 Tewkesbury Borough Council declared a nature and ecological emergency in addition to an expanded climate emergency.

Tewkesbury Borough is one of the fastest growing areas in the country, and the demand for new housing puts undeveloped land at risk of being lost. Since the 1970s, the UK has lost almost half of its biodiversity through loss of habitat and intensification of farming, as well as construction. Currently 72% of UK land is managed for agriculture, and 8% is built on.

Challenge

It's thought that only 7% of Britain's native woods and trees are in good condition. The council wants to increase the canopy cover across the borough from 13.2% to the Government's target of 17%.

Solution

The council needed to reinforce its commitment to protecting and enhancing the natural environment, and to do this it required policy to direct and steer its actions. This required the purchase of datasets which provided visual and statistical information for the borough.

The council can also utilise some of the other policies and strategies that are being created across the county. Using this extra information will aid the council in increasing its tree canopy along with hedgerow cover.

Results

In December 2024, the council voted to adopt a new Tree and Woodland Management Policy, and a Hedgerow Management Policy. Both of these policies will help the council manage existing trees, woods and hedgerows in a way that is more beneficial to nature and wildlife.

A dataset from Bluesky, who specialise in aerial radar photography, shows the borough has 13.2% canopy cover. We now have detailed canopy cover data for each ward, allowing us to identify areas most in need of help whilst increasing habitat connectivity.

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which is being written by the Local Nature Partnership, will help locate the most suitable areas to target tree and hedgerow planting.