



**Derbyshire**  
Wildlife Trust

# VISION FOR COMMUNITY REWILDING ALLESTREE PARK

JUNE 2022



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## Executive Summary

We are in the middle of a climate and nature emergency, and the two are inextricably linked. Climate change is driving nature's decline, and the loss of wildlife and wild places leaves us ill-equipped to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to change.

Responding to the climate crisis is not possible without creating more space for nature. Yet, pressures on land are increasing and despite the evidence that time spent in green spaces is essential to our wellbeing, our connection to nature is weaker than ever.

This report proposes a Community Rewilding approach to Allestree Park to help tackle these problems synergistically.

If implemented, the proposal would contribute to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions in Derby as well as restoring precious biodiversity, and helping the region adapt to climate change. Furthermore, by connecting people and nature, the proposals will also improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Derby.

Delivery of this proposal will establish Allestree Park as the biggest Urban Rewilding project in the UK. If approved, the details would be co-created with the people of Derby.

Rewilding Allestree Park will place Derby City as a leader in nature's recovery in an urban setting and also demonstrate the commitment of the Council to taking urgent and direct action to address the Climate Crisis.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## THE GREATEST CHALLENGE OF OUR GENERATION

*"There is no viable pathway to net zero emissions that does not involve protecting and restoring nature on an unprecedented scale." – COP26 President, 2021*

The World is facing two inextricably linked crises - the climate emergency and the decline of nature - and we cannot solve one crisis without tackling the other.

*"Nature is our life support system, our best carbon sink, and our ally in mitigating the impacts of climate breakdown." – Rewilding Britain 2021*

Nature's incredible ability to safely trap carbon is proven. But nature is in decline and so is our natural carbon sink. Further to this, our natural environment faces even greater degradation from the extreme climatic events brought on by our changing climate.

## TAKING ACTION IN DERBY

In 2019 Derby City Council declared a Climate Change Emergency, recognising the magnitude of the climate crisis in Derby and committing to playing its part in preventing the most devastating impacts of climate change.

*"Declaring a climate emergency means we are prepared to play our part alongside other cities around the world." - Derby City Council, 2019*

As the climate changes, it is essential that we improve ecosystem resilience and habitat connectivity across the UK, to ensure that species affected by climate change can survive and move to more suitable climates.

## ALLESTREE PARK

Located within 5km of Derby city centre, Allestree Park is the largest open space in Derby. Previously used as a municipal golf course, it offers the perfect opportunity to kickstart the development of a wilder, more connected Derby that is equipped to tackle the greatest challenges of our generation.

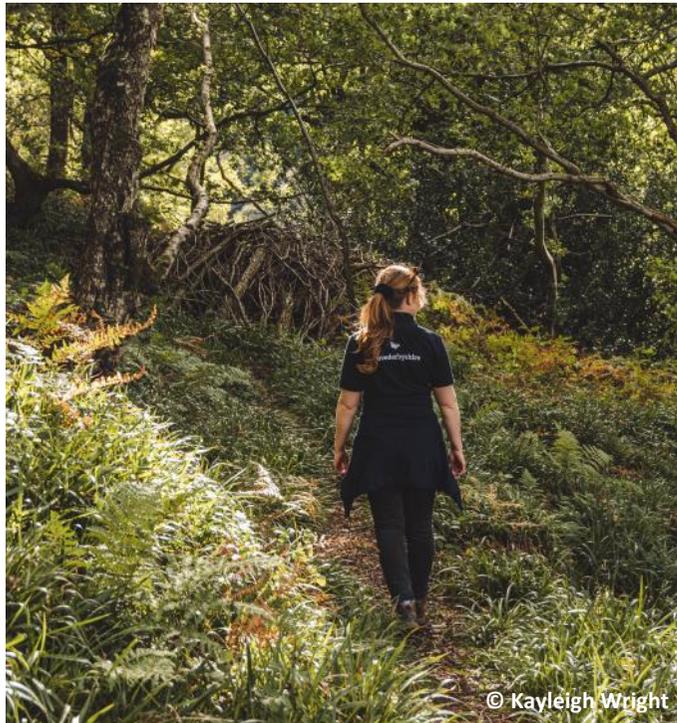
*"It is our aspiration that the rewilding of Allestree Park will not only facilitate Nature's Recovery in Allestree but act as a catalyst to inspire restoration and connection of nature across the city and the region beyond!"- Jo Smith, CEO Derbyshire Wildlife Trust*

Building on the fantastic habitats already present across Allestree Park, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, in partnership with Derby City Council, Rewilding Britain, the University of Derby and a growing number of local stakeholders, are developing plans to rewild Allestree Park for the benefit of Derby's residents.

As well as tackling the global challenges of climate change and ecological fragmentation, rewilding Allestree Park will connect people with nature and improve health and wellbeing. Our proposal will make nature more accessible, facilitating calm; the individual movements and interactions with nature will enrich the lives of Derby's residents.



## 2. LET NATURE HELP: NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS



© Kayleigh Wright

Lea Wood Nature Reserve, DWT

In our whole history as a species, humans have depended on the natural world. However, since the Industrial Revolution we have become more and more disconnected from nature.

*“We moved from being a part of nature to being apart from nature.”- David Attenborough, 2020*

This disconnection increased significantly during the twentieth century, with the proportion of people living in cities changing from 77% in 1900 to 84% by 2020.

We detail some nature-based solutions in this document (carbon sequestration and storage and the Natural Health Service). But there are many more that the land at Allestree Park could deliver better through developing a nature focused rewilding approach, including:

- flood risk reduction and water quality improvement
- Pollination; increasing insects on site and improving the pollination of crops in gardens, allotments and orchards around the site.

Defra have estimated the annual flows of all of these ecosystem services from urban greenspace to be over £78k per hectare per year to the national economy, most of which is focused on the immediate vicinity of the site. This means that the benefits to Derby of a nature filled open space at Allestree Park is likely to be in the order of £10million per year.



## 3. COMMUNITY CONSULTATION: WE LISTENED

### DERBY CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

Derby City Council delivered a comprehensive public consultation process on the Rewilding of Allestree Park which attracted a significant number of responses. In order of priority, the consultation outcomes suggested people support:

1. **Nature recovery in the Derby region**, providing more space for a range of nature-rich habitats and potential new species reintroduction.
2. **Provision for a Natural Health Service**, giving a home to the city's first Wild Wellbeing Hub and facilitate more opportunities for Derby's residents to connect with nature.
3. **Increasing the city's carbon storage and sequestering capacity** and contributing to Derby City Council's carbon reduction targets.
4. **Contributing to the local economy** with a range of new and exciting nature-based enterprises and making Derby a more vibrant, green and attractive place to live and visit.

We propose that to ensure people remain involved and supportive of the rewilding of Allestree Park, continued, targeted consultation continues throughout the process.

### APPROACHES TO REWILDING

We believe there to be three broad routes to deliver rewilding in Allestree Park based on the level of initial intervention. They would deliver the outcomes at different rates and with different levels of success. These can be described as Passive Rewilding; the simplest approach, leaving Allestree Park to turn into woodland in its own time. Community Rewilding; involving a higher level of intervention, more likely to secure external investment and enable high levels of community involvement. Commercial Rewilding; requiring the highest level of intervention.

### OUR PROPOSAL: COMMUNITY REWILDING

For the rewilding of Allestree Park to be a sustained success, it is vital for stakeholders to be invested in its future. Therefore, the outcomes of the public consultation process, together with the social and ecological science based evidence behind rewilding benefits, have led us to propose that Community Rewilding is the ideal approach for Allestree Park.

Community Rewilding will enable:

1. BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT
2. CARBON STORAGE AND SEQUESTRATION
3. OUR NATURE HEALTH SERVICE
4. NATURE BASED ECONOMIES AND ECOTOURISM



## 4. COMMUNITY REWILDING: OUR SHARED VISION

### OUR SHARED VISION

Our shared vision is for wilder towns and cities abundant with wildlife where nature and people are thriving together. People and wildlife are sharing our towns and cities, and spaces within and surrounding our urban areas are spared for nature to lead and flourish. Together, people and nature are leading nature's recovery, addressing the climate crisis and improving people's health and wellbeing.

### COMMUNITY REWILDING ALLESTREE PARK

Community Rewilding will enable the people of Derby to be involved in this bold initiative to reinstate natural processes on Allestree Park - shaping the landscape and habitats within. Through a collaborative approach, we will work together to rewild Allestree Park, driving balanced, positive change for nature and for the people of Derby and the surrounding areas.

Community Rewilding of Allestree Park will:

**Drive nature recovery** in Derby, providing more space for nature-rich habitats and potentially reintroducing new species.

**Inspire people** in and around Derby to notice and care about nature and **mobilise people** and communities to deliver pro-environmental actions.

**Increase** Derby city's **carbon storage** and **sequestering capacity**.

We propose to do this by:

**Putting nature in the driving seat** to lead nature's recovery in Allestree Park, with some initial management interventions to kick start natural processes.

**Enabling the creation and enhancement of biodiversity rich habitats** including wildlife meadows, grasslands, wetlands, scrubland and woodland.

**Introducing key species** which may include water voles, red backed shrike, harvest mice, house sparrows, grasshoppers and dung beetles.

**Maintaining and improving current appropriate enjoyment of the park** including dog walking, cycling, walking, jogging, wildlife watching, picnicking, sledging and fishing.

**Improving accessibility** to the park by enabling people to travel by public transport, on foot or by bike, and creating circular multi-user routes.

**Improving diversity and inclusion** by heightening awareness of opportunities, benefits and access to self-led and organised activities within the park.

**Engaging with local communities and visitors** of all ages and with a range of interests through organised activities which could include workshops, green influencers, junior rangers, forest schools and nature tots.

**Inspiring, enabling and empowering local communities and user groups to take responsibility** for the park, be involved in setting the vision for and planning the management of the rewilding project and be involved in its day to day care.



## 5. BIODIVERSITY IN ALLESTREE PARK

### BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT IN ALLESTREE PARK

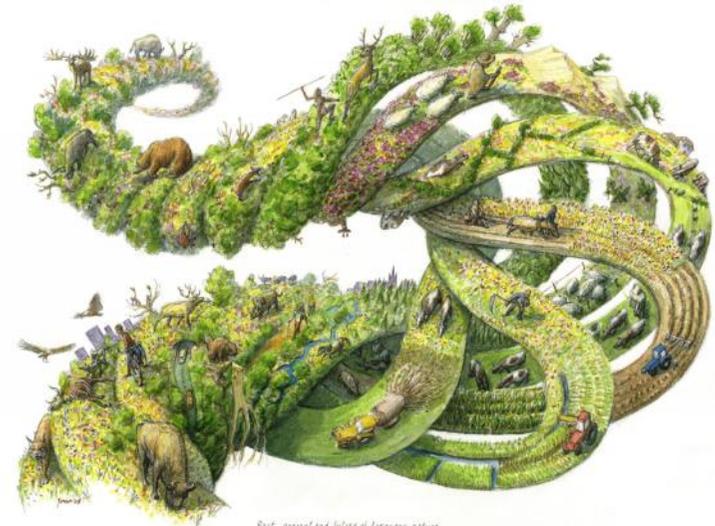
Rewilding is an attempt to reconnect and reset; to reverse species extinction and to help nature flourish on a large scale. It is focused on recreating resilient ecosystems, critical in delivering nature-based solutions effectively, and a chance to mitigate the worst effects of climate change. We will work with local communities to co-create the space:

- **Creating new habitats through minimal intervention** - a mosaic of woodlands, grasslands, wildflower meadows, wetlands and scrubland.
- **Protecting features of historical importance** - such as the strip lynchets near to the Allestree Pond by grazing with livestock, using GPS fences which can focus free ranging cattle into certain areas, reducing the need for physical fencing.
- **Instigating on-site community orchards and community growing** - helping to rebuild the connection between people and their food.
- **Reintroducing key species which should be here** - red backed shrike, water vole, harvest mouse and tree sparrow, for example.

### NEXT STEPS

- **Collation of information** - ecological, environmental, cultural, community groups.
- **Baseline monitoring** - including drone mapping of habitats.
- **Mapping** - of Natural Capital and habitat connectivity.

- **Set up monitoring** - utilising our monitoring rewilding protocol.
- **Develop a management plan** - with key stakeholders, identifying key infrastructure (grey, green and blue), existing habitats, access opportunities and key cultural features.
- **Undertake feasibility studies** - for species reintroductions.



*Past, present and future of European nature*

© Ark Nature. The Wildness Rope - Past, Present and Future of European Nature



## 6. CARBON STORAGE AND SEQUESTRATION IN ALLESTREE PARK

### CARBON STORAGE AND SEQUESTRATION IN ALLESTREE PARK

The Climate Crisis is a dominant factor of life in the 21st Century. Current CO<sub>2</sub> levels (411ppm) are higher than they've been for millions of years, and are still increasing, with global temperatures increasing as well. Different habitats all store vastly different amounts of carbon, however, the biggest store of carbon is always in soil. Rewilding is a focus on improving the health of ecosystems, including soil, protecting and securing the carbon which is stored there. Large scale tree planting takes three or four years to store carbon (due to fuel used in growth and transportation, production of tree guards and loss of soil carbon due to oxidation of exposed soil), whereas natural regeneration starts sequestering carbon immediately.

Community rewilding will promote carbon storage and sequestration through:

- **Utilising natural regeneration** - of existing woodlands through self seeding as well as some additional planting of trees such as lime, whitebeam and wych elm, and blurring the edges between woodland and grassland by way of woodland scrub. Grazing will, however, ensure woodlands do not encroach onto grasslands and meadows and interventions will ensure trees do not encroach into open water wetlands.
- **Protecting and enhancing the existing soil carbon** - by prioritising natural regeneration over tree planting, and the creation and enhancement of grasslands and meadows and their associated soil banks.
- **Introducing natural flood risk mitigation measures** - by working with community groups to put in place natural flood risk management measures as part of the programme of climate change adaptation.
- **Minimising CO<sub>2</sub>e of our operations** - and maximising carbon sequestration potential of the site.

### NEXT STEPS

- **Work with Derby City Council** - to undertake a sustainable connectivity study for the site for local visitors and visitors from further afield.
- **Undertake carbon audit** - using accurate habitat mapping, and putting in place carbon storage monitoring programme with the University of Derby.
- **Identify flood risk reduction opportunities** - across the site.



Thornhill Carr Nature Reserve, DWT Rewilding Reserve



# 7. OUR NATURAL HEALTH SERVICE IN ALLESTREE PARK

## OUR NATURAL HEALTH SERVICE IN ALLESTREE PARK

Community rewilding optimises opportunities for people and nature to share spaces; for people to be actively involved in creating space for nature to lead and thrive, to be involved in the ongoing care for wildlife spaces and to reap the multitude of rewards of being within and caring for nature. We propose, through community rewilding in Allestree Park, to deliver Wild Wellbeing, Community Involvement and Volunteering opportunities and Recreation in Nature.

## WILD WELLBEING

We know the benefits that being within nature brings to people’s holistic wellbeing and that residents in deprived communities are ten times less likely to have access to nature. We also know that regular access to nature can lead to nature connectedness which in turn increases the likelihood of people delivering pro-environmental behaviours. We believe that for the benefit of people and wildlife, everyone should have access to nature, and nature-related activity should be available to all. We aim to address this through Community Rewilding by:

- **Wild Wellbeing Hub** - with good links to the city, we propose Allestree Park to become the home of a Wild Wellbeing Hub for Derby (subject to planning permissions and licensing), providing communities with access to wellbeing activities on their doorstep, and an indoor and outdoor supporting facility.
- **Green Social Prescribing** - significantly reducing the demand on our health service and positively enhancing our holistic wellbeing, we are supporting the delivery of Green Spring, as one of seven national test and learn projects for Green Social Prescribing. We propose to roll out our programme through Allestree Park as a wellbeing hub for Derby communities.

- **Wild Wellbeing programme** - over the past year, through our Wild Wellbeing Derby programme, we have built up relationships with young people aged 11-19, and service users of voluntary and community groups including YMCA, Women’s Work, Derbyshire Mind and Derby Refugee Forum. These groups have now grown their confidence with being in nature and want to explore new outdoor spaces in Derby. Building on the project’s success, we propose to expand our reach into communities across Derby, addressing the issues limiting people’s access to nature; lack of funds to travel across the city, lack of cultural capital, education of how to use outside spaces, and 'the rules' of being in nature.
- **Outdoor learning & play** - working with local communities, families, school children and young people, we propose a programme of learning and play activities to connect people with nature and improve their wellbeing through:

Nature Tots    Forest Schools    Junior Rangers    Green Influences



DWT Junior Rangers, Forest Schools and Volunteering



## 7. OUR NATURAL HEALTH SERVICE IN ALLESTREE PARK

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND VOLUNTEERING

Community Rewilding offers high community involvement and volunteering, with active co-ordination of new, and existing groups including the Friends of Allestree Park. Groups will:

- Develop Citizen Zoo initiatives to reintroduce small species to the site.
- Create, regulate and maintain cycling, walking and wheel routes.
- Undertake environmental and social monitoring.
- Undertake practical management activities.
- Create and maintain a community orchard.
- Deliver community activities and events.

### RECREATION IN NATURE

We propose to improve access to and within Allestree Park through:

- **Self led nature trails** - working with local communities, recreation and accessibility groups, we will develop circular nature trail routes suitable for pedestrians, bicycles, wheelchairs and pushchairs.
- **Cycling** - working with Derby City Council, we will explore opportunities for a dedicated cycle route within a suitable area of the park, ensuring it does not impact wildlife or other park users and is designed, regulated and maintained by the mountain bike community.
- **Trim trails & woodland play spaces** - promoting outdoor exercise and play, green gyms and woodland play spaces will provide play, running and exercise within nature.
- **Fishing** - working with the Earl of Harrington's Angling Club, the existing wetlands will continue to be managed for fishing and nature conservation as well as providing opportunities for pond dipping activities.

### NEXT STEPS:

- **Health & wellbeing** - work with our existing partners including YMCA Derbyshire, Derbyshire Mind, Women's Work and Grow Outside to design a programme of wellbeing activities for local communities to access.
- **Education & learning** - consult with local residents, community groups, nurseries and schools to facilitate education and learning activities on site, and encourage community participation.
- **Nature connectedness evaluation** - build upon existing relationships with the University of Derby to evaluate nature connection and pro-environmental behaviours.
- **Social science research opportunities** - explore opportunities for evaluation linking aesthetics and soundscapes, to Pathways to Nature Connectedness and Pathways to Wellbeing.
- **Wild Wellbeing hub** - explore opportunities for a Wild Wellbeing Hub on-site.
- **Green social prescribing** - roll out existing and potential continuation of green social prescribing.
- **Citizen science** - explore opportunities involving communities, groups and education facilities.
- **Cycling** - work with Derby City Council to identify opportunities for a cycling trail and develop a shared management plan for the trail.
- **Accessible nature trail routes** - work with local communities, accessibility, and recreation groups to identify opportunities for self-led trails.
- **Friends of Allestree Park** - continued involvement from the existing group and exploring opportunities to expand members and scope of involvement in the rewilding programme.
- **Earl of Harrington's Angling Club** - work with the Angling Club to develop an ongoing management plan for the current fishing lake.



## 8. NATURE-BASED ECONOMIES AND ECOTOURISM IN ALLESTREE PARK

### NATURE BASED ECONOMIES AND ECOTOURISM IN ALLESTREE PARK

Community rewilding supports the creation of community spaces which improve accessibility and inclusivity to, and promote nature based economies within, Allestree Park. We propose that infrastructure would include sustainable buildings (timber, rammed earth or strawbale), and combine green and blue infrastructure, constructed using large numbers of volunteers from community groups, offering training opportunities, and supported by local professionals and tradespeople. Proposed infrastructure includes (subject to planning permissions and licenses):

- **Wild Wellbeing Hub** - indoor and outdoor spaces to deliver wellbeing programmes and for families and groups to independently enjoy and hire, which may also incorporate:
  - **Visitor Centre** - offering a warm welcome, orientation, access information and interpretation.
  - **Tree top café** - nestled within the park and offering locally sourced refreshments
  - **Toilets** - using green and blue infrastructure opportunities.
- **Conservation grazing** - selling meat and other produce produced on site.
- **Guided nature tours and safaris** – as the site develops and species return, introducing a range of nature hides, guided walks and wildlife safaris to bring people closer to nature.
- **Educational** – wildlife courses, forest schools and hireable event spaces.
- **Cycle through the Trees** - an exciting cycle tourism opportunity similar to that in Limburg, Netherlands - 'Cycle through the Trees' and 'Cycling through Water' bringing visitors closer to nature and giving them unique views over the landscape and encouraging a wide range of wheel based opportunities.

### NEXT STEPS

- **Undertake feasibility studies** for the introduction of new enterprises and any associated infrastructure within Allestree Park.
- **Investigate opportunities for funding a flagship attraction** like Cycle through the Trees.
- **Consult with key stakeholder groups** regarding tourism, active transport and local business opportunities.



Cycle Through the Trees, © Toerisme Limburg





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