

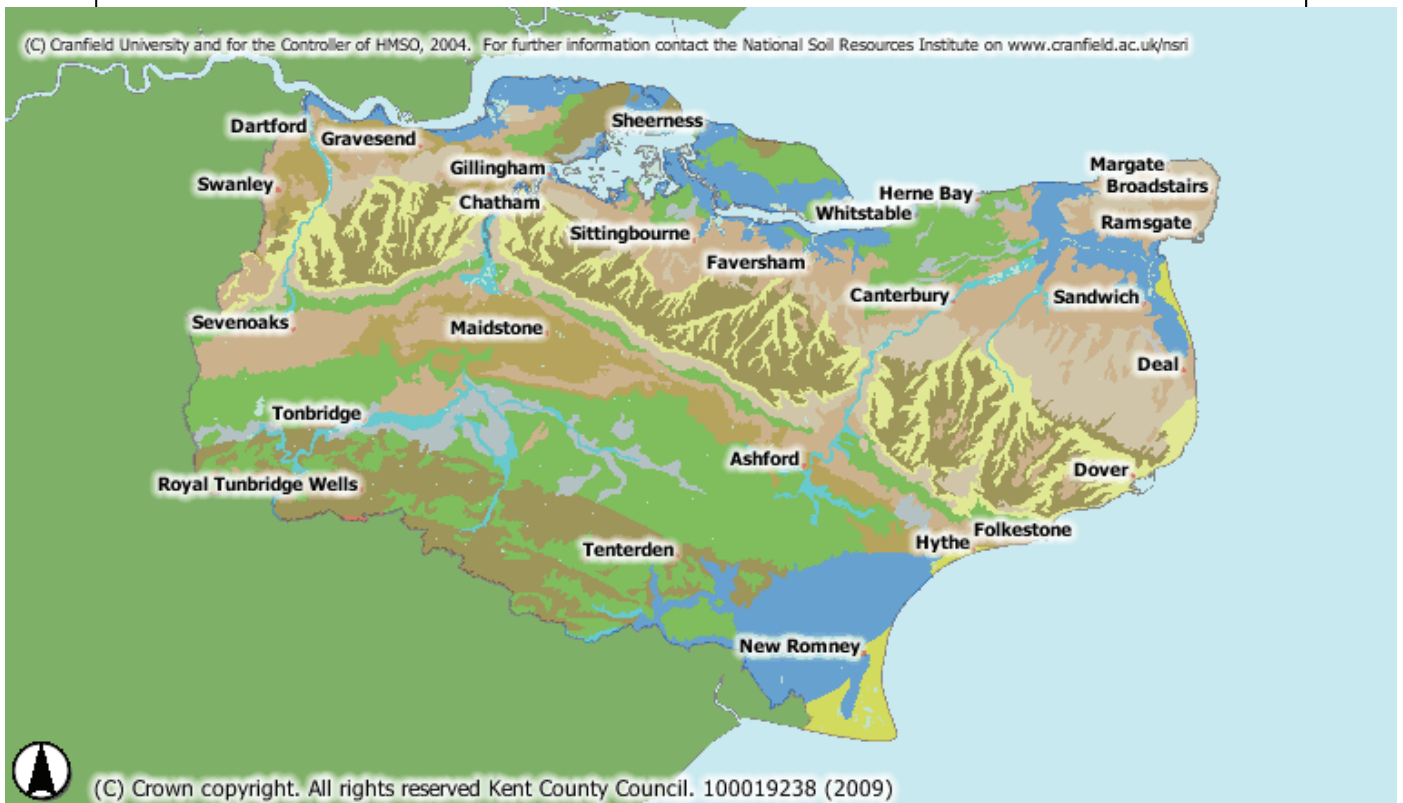
For a successful area for nature, both in terms of wildlife and the people that use it, it is essential to put plenty of planning into your project. Use the following points as a guide.

- **Audit**
What's already there? There may be valuable features that you can enhance, without having to start from scratch. A damp section of grounds, for example, could easily be turned into a bog. Think how you could adapt existing features to suit your needs. Draw a map of the area and involve as many people in the consultation as you can.
- **Site assessment**
To get the best from your area, you need to establish your soil type and take stock of factors such as its aspect, drainage, and any particularly shady areas that might determine what you plant there. The following pages deal with soil type.
- **Too big a job?**
If you're in any doubt as to whether you can manage the project on your own, you should seek help. Health and safety must be a priority, and risk assessments must be carried out before work takes place. A sample risk assessment follows. Your local Countryside Management Partnership could give you advice and, if necessary, volunteer power.
- **Materials and manpower**
We strongly recommend that you use local materials and manpower whenever possible. Timber can be sourced using sites such as Woodnet, which puts timber suppliers in the south east in touch with those who need it. Make sure that any wood you use is FSC certified. Plants of local provenance can be recommended by your Countryside Management Partnership, as can local contractors. Try to use recycled materials wherever possible.
- **Your needs**
How exactly do you intend to utilise the space? Take account of how many people will be using it at one time and thus how many benches will be required, or how much space will be needed within the fenced-off pond area, for example. If the area is to be used as an education resource, it will of course have different needs from an area for nature in a private garden.
- **Maintenance**
There's no point investing valuable time and money in creating a wonderful area for nature if it is then left to degenerate. Factor in the time and money that will be needed to keep your space in good condition, and make sure that sufficient manpower will be available on an ongoing basis.
- **Funding**
Make sure that you will be able to complete the project by gathering accurate costs and quotes beforehand. Information on funding can be found at **Kent 4 Communities** (see Section 7.2 Mapping and Planning Links) or from your local Countryside Management Partnership.
- **Case studies**
We are currently developing a separate website, dedicated to case studies on successful areas for nature. Until then, please contact your Countryside Management Partnership for examples in your locality. In addition, visit the **Kent Eco Schools Gallery** (please see Section 7.2 Mapping and Planning Links).

2.2 Soil and plant types

No species lists are provided here: the plants that you choose for your space should depend largely on the type of soil you are planting in and what is native to your particular area. Many species, if planted in the wrong type of soil, will simply perish, so you need to make sure you know what to look for.

First, establish your soil type by using the map and key below.



The map plus further information can be on the Kent Landscape Information System website (see *Section 7.2 Mapping and Planning Links*). You can zoom to your own particular area there, and overlay soil and Ordnance Survey Maps for further detail.

- Soils**
- Fen peat soils
 - Freely draining lime-rich loamy soils
 - Freely draining slightly acid but base-rich soils
 - Freely draining slightly acid loamy soils
 - Loamy and clayey floodplain soils with naturally high groundwater
 - Loamy and clayey soils of coastal flats with naturally high groundwater
 - Loamy soils with naturally high groundwater
 - Naturally wet very acid sandy and loamy soils
 - Saltmarsh soils
 - Sand dune soils
 - Shallow lime-rich soils over chalk or limestone
 - Slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage
 - Slowly permeable seasonally wet acid loamy and clayey soils
 - Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils
 - water

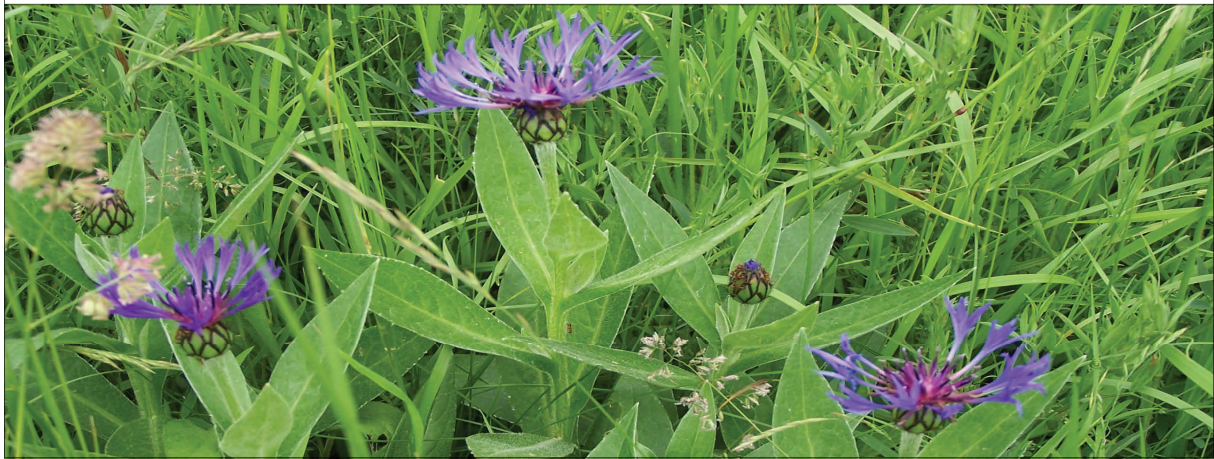
Now that you know what kind of soil you will be planting in, you can choose your plant species.

To benefit wildlife as far as possible it is a good idea to plant only native species. As well as enhancing Kent's eco-system, this will prevent any invasive species taking over the nature area and killing off less vigorous species of plant. To check whether a particular plant occurs naturally in Kent you can consult various plant and flower books, or simply ask your Countryside Management Partnership.

The Royal Horticultural Society has produced a useful list of invasive species to avoid (see *Section 7.2 Mapping and Planning Links*).

To help you choose plant species, use the Natural History Museum's "postcode plant finder" (see *Section 7.2 Mapping and Planning Links*). The service simply asks you to enter your postcode and will then display a list of plants native to the area.

Then, take your pick! Your plant supplier will be able to questions on the species that you choose, however if you feel unsure about what would suit your landscape area or need any help with choosing plant species, contact your local Countryside Management Partnership for advice.



2.3 Annual wildlife chart







Month	Birds	Small mammals	Butterflies & bees	Amphibians	Reptiles	Invertebrates
January	Birds will be spending their time looking for enough food to keep going. To attract more birds to the nature area, put out extra seeds and nuts. Why not join in the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch in January.	Most small mammals will be hibernating. Voles will be visible during the day as they forage for food.	Hibernation in cracks and crevices.	Hibernation.	Hibernation under logs and rocks, or in deep piles of leaves.	Many invertebrates will be hibernating in leaf litter and tussocks, or woody crevices. Log piles are perfect for this.
February	Look out for birds collecting material for their nests. Eggs are starting to be laid towards end of the month. Summer visitors start to return from wintering in warmer countries.		On particularly sunny days, look out for the first bees emerging from their hive where they have over-wintered in a large huddle.	First signs of waking from hibernation and reappearing in undergrowth around pond.		
March	Parent birds will be busily collecting food for their young and flying in and out of the nests.	Breeding takes place—females will be nesting with their babies out of sight.	Look out for bright yellow Brimstone butterflies emerging from hibernation—they are the first of all butterflies to appear.	Amphibians starting to spawn—look out for eggs in your pond.	Adults emerging for mating.	Invertebrates that have been hibernating will emerge once again—look out for busy skies and lots of activity on the new leaves.
April	Parent birds will be busily collecting food for their young and flying in and out of the nests.	Small babies will emerge from the nests when they are old enough—keep an eye out for them in the undergrowth.	Bees and other butterflies start to emerge.	Eggs hatching—look out for tiny tadpoles swimming around the pond.	Look out for adults basking in sunlight on rocks, pathways or on wood piles.	
May	Parent birds will be busily collecting food for their young and flying in and out of the nests. Fledgling birds also appearing.		Bees and butterflies easily visible as they enjoy the pollen in the flowers. Wildflower meadows are particularly good for this.	Tadpoles developing legs. Adults can sometimes be seen in the undergrowth around the pond. This is a great time of year to go pond dipping.	Look out for adults basking. Many reptiles like moist areas, so you'll find them in long grass when it's warm.	Invertebrates will also be breeding this month. You'll find all kinds of miniature eggs on the undersides of leaves.
June	Parent birds will be busily collecting food for their young and flying in and out of the nests. Fledgling birds also appearing.	Many small mammals will still be breeding, producing several litters per year.	Bees and butterflies easily visible. Look out for caterpillars and chrysalises.	Tadpoles starting to look like miniature adult frogs, toads and newts. This is a great time of year to go pond dipping.	Look out for adults basking in sunlight. Reptiles are cold blooded and need the sun for warmth. They can only start moving when their body temperature reaches a certain level.	

Month	Birds	Small mammals	Butterflies and bees	Amphibians	Reptiles	Invertebrates
July	Fledgling birds growing fast and visible flying around and feeding.	Many small mammals continue breeding throughout the summer. They will also be making the most of the abundance of food available and may well be visible during the day as they forage. Listen for them rustling in the undergrowth.	The sky is filled with bees and butterflies and you will often hear humming in the air. Look out for caterpillars munching on leaves and chrysalises tucked away amongst the foliage. Meanwhile bees are harvesting nectar to feed to their developing young in the hives.	Tiny frogs and toads starting to appear—they have developed lungs and now need air to breathe. This is a great time of year to go pond dipping. Tiny frogs, toads and newts as well as adults will be visible in undergrowth around the pond. This is a great time of year to go pond dipping.	Look out for adults basking in sunlight as well as baby reptiles. They are active for longer periods during the day because of the abundance of sunlight and the heat that they need to warm their bodies.	A very busy time for invertebrates, as there is an abundance of food and many of them continue to breed throughout the summer. This is the perfect time of year to go bug hunting in wildflower meadows with sweep nets. Look under log piles for invertebrates that prefer a damp, cool and shady spot.
August	The birds will be busily enjoying the summer abundance of food.					
September	Summer visitors start to gather in large numbers to prepare for migration. Look for large flocks of birds perching together on telephone wires.	Small mammals will be fattening up for the winter by spending most of their time eating.	Bees and butterflies start to die off or find spots to spend the winter in.	Amphibians start looking for a spot to hibernate in. Log piles and rockeries are ideal for them.	Reptiles will still be visible on sunny days, but will start to disappear as it gets colder and they find sheltered spots to over-winter in.	As leaves start to fall from the trees, certain invertebrates that feed on them as they decay will be very busy. These kinds of invertebrates often thrive in damp, dark places—look for them under stones and fallen wood.
October	Winter migration of visitor species. Look for large flocks passing overhead, while resident species continue to feed in your area for wildlife.	Most small mammals going into hibernation in their sheltered nests. They will look rather fat when you last see them, as they will have been stocking up on food reserves.	Hibernation. Butterflies that live throughout the winter will have found spots in garden sheds or other sheltered places. Bees will remain in their hive until the spring.	Hibernation under rocks or in the crevices in wood piles. Be careful not to disturb them, as this could be very harmful.	Hibernation in rocky crevices or under wood piles. Be careful not to disturb them, as this could be very harmful.	
November	Food is scarce. Because your nature area is insect-friendly, birds will be attracted to the food sources there.	Most small mammals hibernating out of view.				Many invertebrates finding a quiet, protected spot to hibernate. You might start finding spiders in shadowy corners!
December	As you do gardening, birds will often follow you round to benefit from any worms or insects that you may have disturbed.	Most small mammals hibernating out of view.	Hibernation.	Hibernation.	Hibernation.	Many invertebrates hibernating in crevices of fences, vegetation or garden sheds. Sometimes you will spot clusters of them together.

2.4 Surveys and recording data

Recording wildlife not only allows you to see how successful your efforts have been in terms of encouraging biodiversity within your nature space, but it enhances the area as an educational resource. In the context of a school or community group, for example, surveying encourages a high level of engagement with wildlife and the outdoors. Surveying can be as simple or as thorough as you like. Here are some suggestions:

Identification resources (please see Section 7.2 *Mapping and Planning Links* for web links)

Type of wildlife	Organisations and resources available
<p>General</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field Studies Council identification sheets • Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre
 <p>Birds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RSPB website identification guide • British Garden Birds website species lists • Birds of Britain species lists
 <p>Butterflies and bees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK Butterflies website identification sheets • British Butterflies website photo gallery • Butterfly Conservation website identification guide • British Beekeepers Association website • Bees, Wasps and Ants Recording Society website
 <p>Amphibians</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent Amphibian and Reptile Group website identification sheets • Reptiles and Amphibians of the UK website identification charts
 <p>Invertebrates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buglife website fact sheets • Natural History Museum website - "Nature Online" section. • The Amateur Entomologists' Society website "What bug is this?" section
 <p>Reptiles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent Amphibian and Reptile Group website identification sheets • Reptiles and Amphibians of the UK website identification charts
 <p>Mammals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent Mammal Group website recording forms and photo gallery

Survey activities—a few examples

Day-to-day notes

Put a small black board close to the area so that the people using it can write up the wildlife they see each day. This information could then be used to compile a database of your wildlife allowing further study, and research into how often you see each species.

Bug Hunts

A very good way of learning about the wildlife in an area is by doing a bug hunt. You will need several nets, the larger the better. You will also need magnifying transparent pots, at least one for each person and a few plastic trays.

Sweep the nets from side to side through the grass, nettles and other vegetation, turning the net after each stroke so that the opening is always at the front. Once you have done this three or four times tip the contents into a plastic tray. You should have caught several insects, which you should carefully put into the transparent pots and pass them around. Use worksheets and identification books to discover what you have caught. Once everyone has had a good look at them, put the insects back where you found them. This activity can be done during spring and summer.

Pond dipping

To find out how much wildlife is living within your pond, you will need several small nets, plastic trays and transparent magnifying pots, at least one for each student. Sweep the nets gently through the water near the surface, being careful not to go too deep and disturb anything living at the bottom. Tip the contents into a plastic tray and carefully put whatever you have found into the pots, passing them around the students to have a look. Use worksheets and identification books to discover what you have caught. Once everyone has had a good look at them, put the contents carefully back into the pond. Remember health and safety!

Spike the Spotter

Spike is a Great Crested Newt! He encourages children to become Young Recorders and gives tips on wildlife identification, surveying and recording.

Produced by Kent County Council's Natural Environment and Coast Team in conjunction with partners (see right), Spike's pack will shortly be available on the internet and can currently be sourced by contacting:

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C/O Natural Environment and Coast Team,
Invicta House,
Maidstone,
Kent,
ME14 1XX
Email: helen.forster@kent.gov.uk

