



“in an increasingly urbanised county, we can manage our green spaces so that people live happier, healthier lives”



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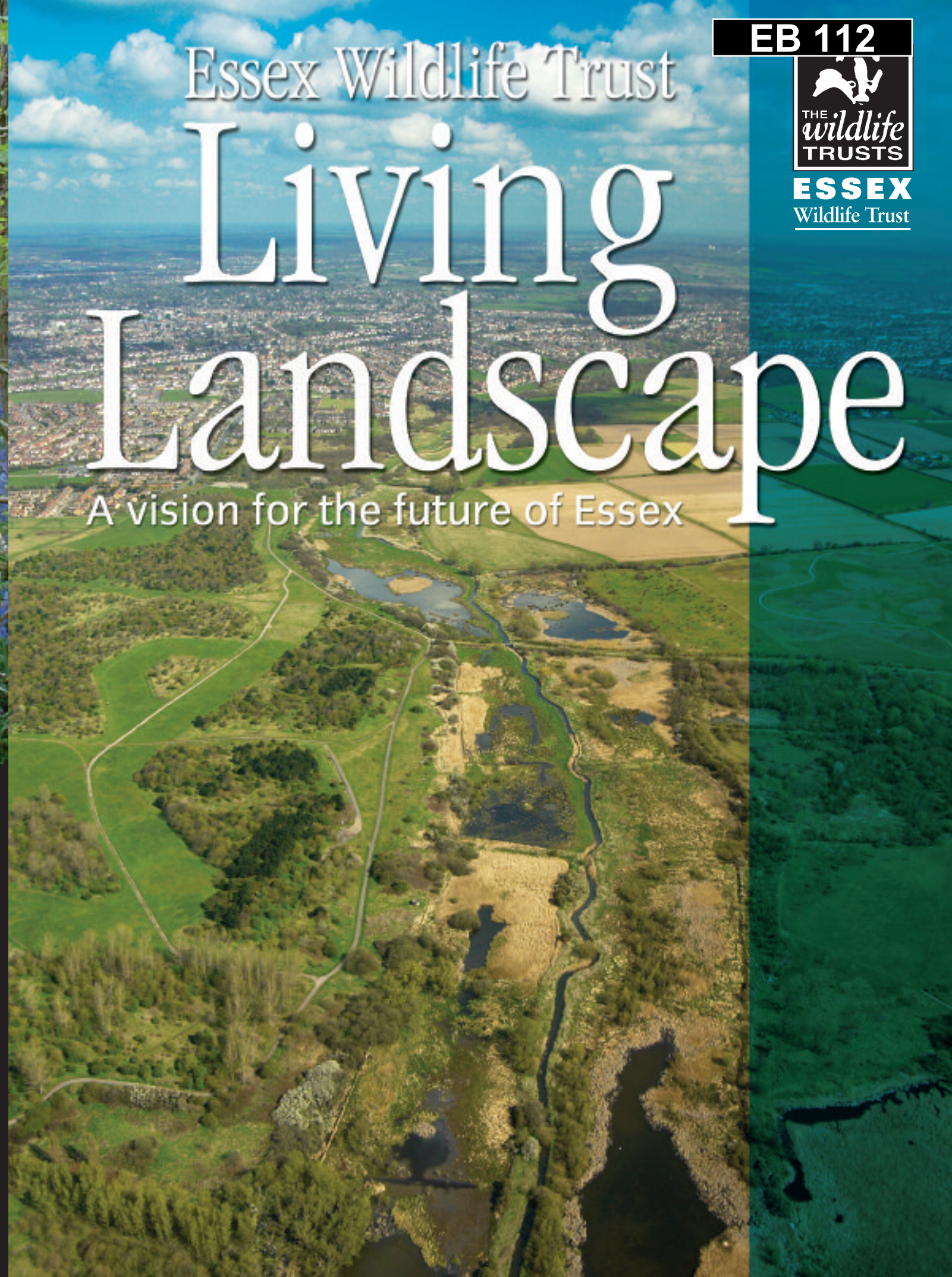
# Essex Wildlife Trust Living Landscape

A vision for the future of Essex

EB 112



**ESSEX**  
Wildlife Trust



Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future



## What are Living Landscapes?

*“Whole landscapes that are being restored for both wildlife and people.”*

Living Landscapes are large areas of the countryside like river valleys, forested ridges, whole estuaries or diverse mosaics of grasslands, hedgerows and heaths.

The vision of Living Landscapes is to bring these fragmented landscapes back to life; to work with a wide range of owners and partners so that these important areas can function as a whole so they benefit both wildlife and the people who live there.

Picture Epping Forest as a good example of a Woodland Living Landscape or Dedham Vale as a River Valley Living Landscape or the

### The loss of habitats and species for Essex

<b>Coastal marshes</b>	▼	We have lost 72% of <b>coastal marshes</b> since 1930
<b>Song Thrush</b>	▼	The <b>Song Thrush</b> has declined by 73% since the mid 1970's
<b>Flower meadows</b>	▼	Over 90% of <b>wild flower meadows</b> have been lost
<b>Water Voles</b>	▼	94% of <b>Water Voles</b> had been lost in Essex by 2000, this is our fastest declining mammal
<b>Skylark</b>	▼	<b>Skylark</b> numbers halved between 1969 and 1991
<b>Black Poplar</b>	▼	Only 200 mature <b>Black Poplar</b> trees still remain in our country
<b>Heathland</b>	▼	In 1777 when the first map of Essex was produced you could walk on <b>heathland</b> all the way from Colchester to Maldon, now all that remains is Tiptree Heath, just 25 hectares

Colne Estuary as an Estuary Living Landscape. These Living Landscapes have large areas of high quality habitat, rich in wildlife and they are well connected to the local communities which are immensely proud of the area.

There are many other large landscape areas in Essex, however many of these are now fragmented and becoming disconnected from their local communities. Look at the fragmented woods of the former majestic Writtle Forest or the Crouch Estuary which has lost much of its marshland. Imagine Tiptree Heath as it was 150 years ago – a swathe of purple connecting Colchester to Maldon: whereas today only 25 hectares of heathland remain.

By bringing these fragmented landscapes back to life, both wildlife and people will benefit.

Essex Wildlife Trust has mapped 80 Living Landscape Areas across Essex. All other Wildlife Trusts across the UK are producing similar maps and the big picture is a series of Living Landscapes linked together across the length and breadth of the UK.

The Essex Living Landscapes map is a powerful vision – but the map is only a start. Next we need to reconnect habitats and local people on the ground. We need to restore habitats so that wildlife can flourish; restore the involvement of local people with their countryside so they can work for it, take pride in it and gain better quality of life from it.

This is an exciting challenge because it will involve working with a wide range of landowners in a range of different ways.

It will involve Essex Wildlife Trust working together with local communities and Local Authorities, organisations like the Environment Agency and Natural England, large businesses like

water companies, small businesses and private landowners and of course many funding organisations.

#### The Living Landscapes Vision involves:

- ▶ a multi-disciplinary approach – in some areas buying land, in other areas giving management advice, changing management or engaging local communities, providing information and education;
- ▶ enhancing connections and reconnecting fragmented landscapes;
- ▶ delivering environmental benefits for local people, often through community involvement or improvements to the local economy;
- ▶ enabling permeability across the landscape so that wildlife can move through the landscape and survive such pressures as climate change and land use change;
- ▶ delivering added value such as health benefits for local people as they gain improved opportunities for recreation and relaxation;
- ▶ establishing long term commitments rather than short lived gains.

What is good for wildlife in a Living Landscape will be good for people too. We are dependent on the ecology of our local areas and a good Living Landscape will support what are called good ecosystem services, i.e. good quality of water, air and soils and good quality of life.

Here we give some excellent examples of the work we have begun on Essex Living Landscapes. ▼

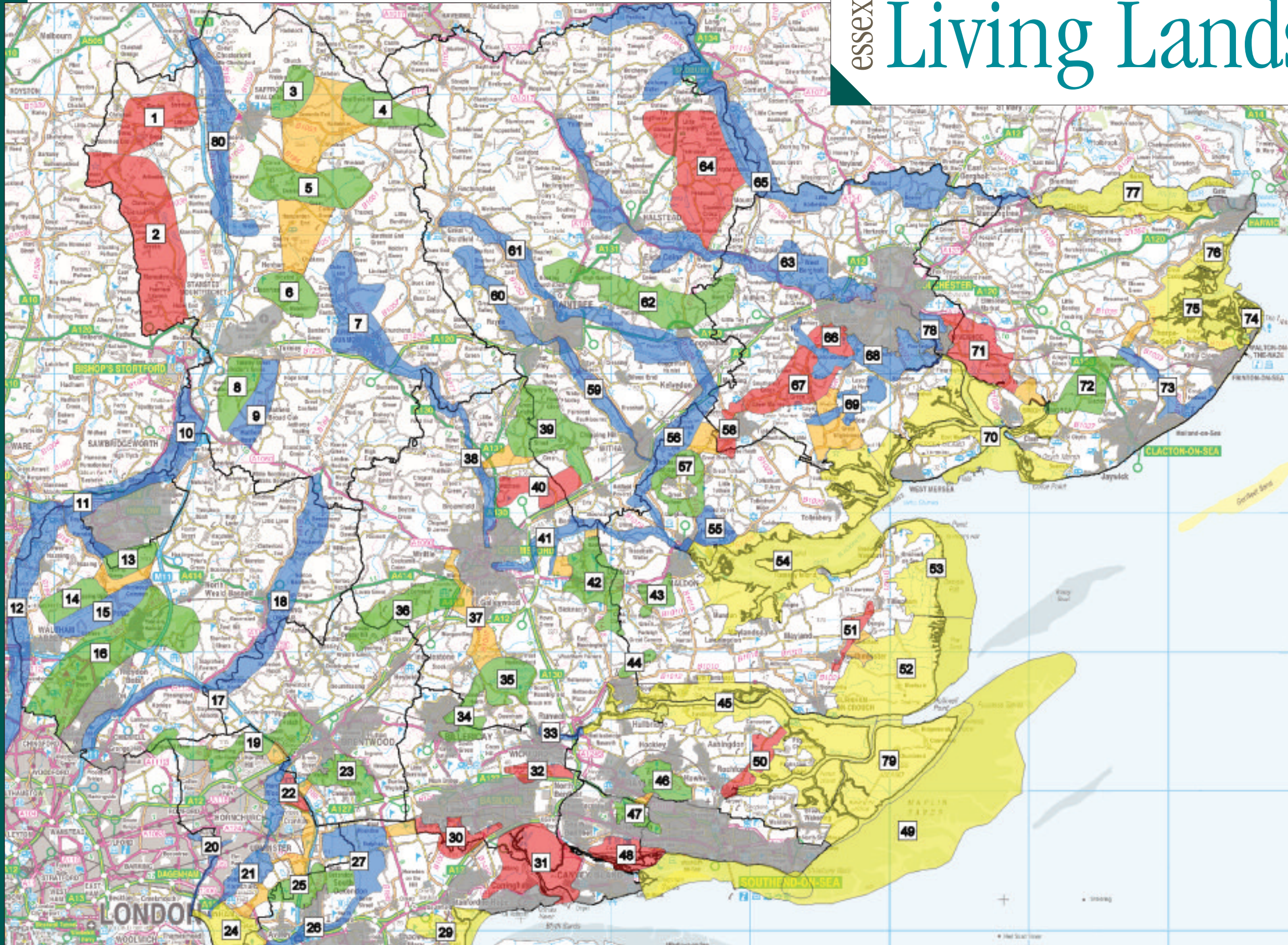
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# essex Living Landscapes



- 1 Chalky Grassland: Strethall to Chrishall
- 2 Commons and verges: Langley to Manuden
- 3 Oxlip Woods: Shadwell to Hales
- 4 Oxlip Woods: Bendish to Hempstead
- 5 Oxlip Woods: Rowney to West
- 6 Oxlip Woods: Stansted
- 7 Upper Chelmer: Dunmow
- 8 Hatfield Forest
- 9 Pincey Valley
- 10 Stort Valley
- 11 Stort Valley: Harlow
- 12 Lea Valley
- 13 Parndon Woods: Harlow
- 14 Cobbins Woods
- 15 Cobbins Brook
- 16 Epping Forest
- 17 Lower Roding: M25 to Chigwell
- 18 Upper Roding: Abbess Roding to M25
- 19 Havering and Brentwood Ridge
- 20 Beam Valley
- 21 Ingrebourne Valley
- 22 Tylers Common
- 23 Thorndon Woods
- 24 Aveley, Wennington and Rainham Marshes
- 25 Belhus Woods
- 26 Mardyke Valley
- 27 Bulphan Fen
- 28 Tilbury Grassland and Marshes
- 29 Mucking Grassland and Marshes
- 30 Langdon Hills
- 31 Wat Tyler Complex
- 32 Nevendon Mosaic
- 33 Upper Crouch
- 34 Ramsden Heath & Woods
- 35 Hanningfield Reservoir & Woods
- 36 Writtle Forest
- 37 Galleywood Common
- 38 Upper Chelmer
- 39 Ter Valley
- 40 Boreham Common
- 41 Lower Chelmer
- 42 Danbury Ridge
- 43 Hazeleigh Woods
- 44 Bushey Hill
- 45 Crouch and Roach Estuary
- 46 Hockley Woods
- 47 Hadleigh and Daws Heath Complex
- 48 Hadleigh Castle and Marshes
- 49 Southend Seafront and Maplin Sands
- 50 Thames Medway Gravels South
- 51 Thames Medway Gravels North
- 52 Dengie South
- 53 Dengie North
- 54 Blackwater Estuary
- 55 Chigborough Lakes
- 56 Blackwater Valley
- 57 Wickham Bishops Woods
- 58 Tiptree Heath Complex
- 59 Brain Valley
- 60 Pods Brook Valley
- 61 Pant Valley
- 62 Bovingdon and Marks Hall and Chalkney Woods
- 63 Colne Valley
- 64 Pebmarsh Spring Woods
- 65 Stour Valley
- 66 Stanway Complex
- 67 Birch Complex
- 68 Roman River Complex
- 69 Abberton Reservoir
- 70 Colne Estuary
- 71 Alresford Mineral Sites Complex
- 72 Tendring Woodlands
- 73 Holland Brook
- 74 The Naze
- 75 Hamford Water
- 76 Little Oakley
- 77 Stour Estuary
- 78 Hythe-Wivenhoe
- 79 Foulness Islands
- 80 Cam Valley

Key biodiversity networks by habitat



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# Rationale and map created

The Living Landscape areas were selected based on ecological concepts and the importance of particular species and habitats.



The mapping process which develops the Living Landscapes map for Essex began with identifying the core areas of high quality habitat. These are often protected by such designations as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Local Wildlife Site (LoWS). Local knowledge was then added which related to the main landscape features such as rivers, coastline and ridges. Local heritage features have also been taken into account as have the proximity to local centres of population and local growth areas.

These have been assembled in different GIS (Geographical Information System) layers on top of the Ordnance Survey maps.

There are many pieces of research which demonstrate that a larger connected landscape is better for wildlife than smaller fragmented areas. For example:

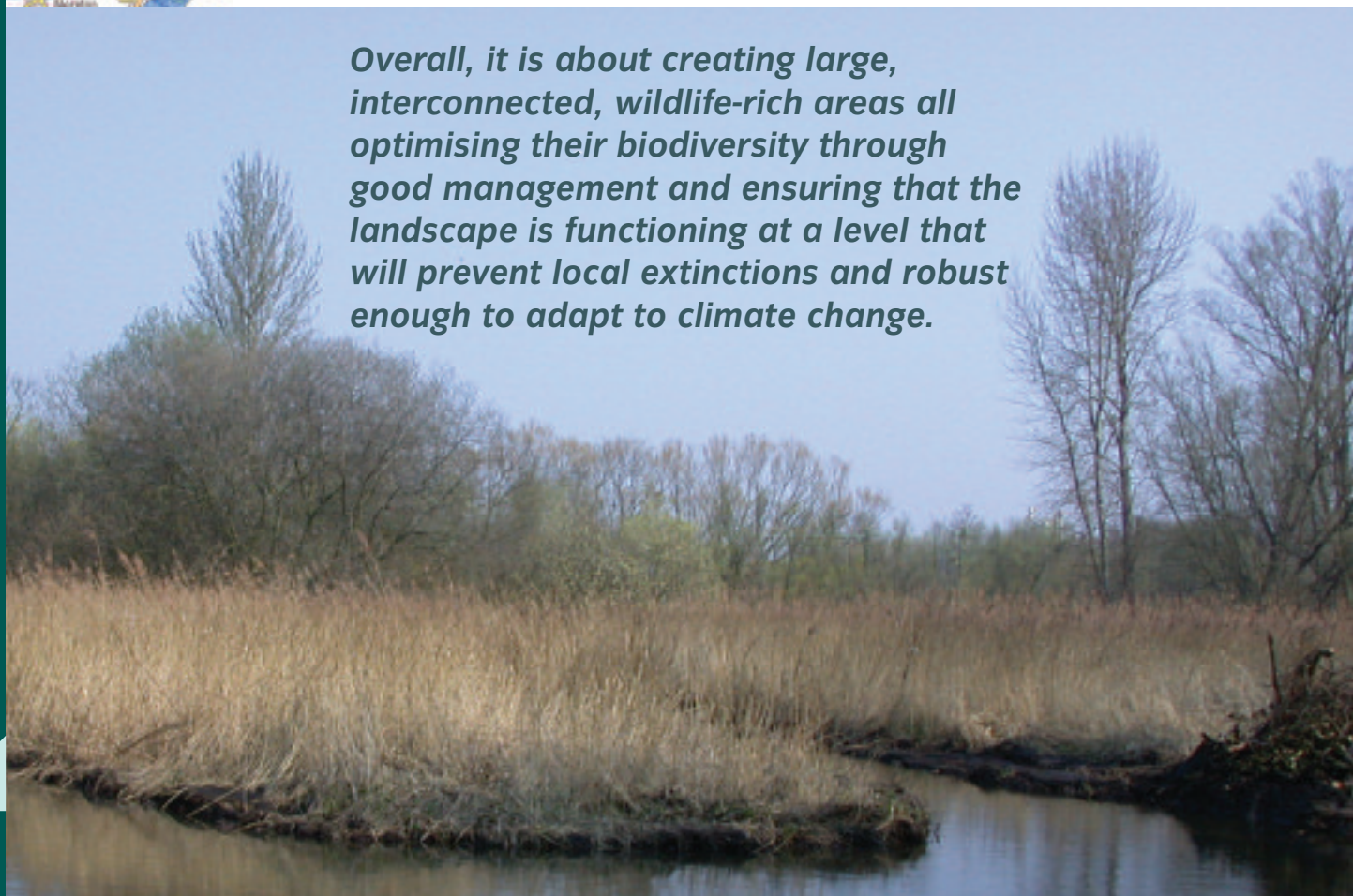
- ▶ A tenfold increase in the area of a piece of British woodland will lead to about double the number of bird species.
- ▶ Smaller sites have been shown to be less resilient than larger sites – isolation means that small

populations of many species are more likely to die out when faced with such pressures as climate change.

- ▶ Smaller sites are also less likely to be recolonised when they are separated from large areas of habitat.
- ▶ Large sites are much more useful for a wide range of human activities such as walking, jogging, cycling, horse riding, educational field studies, recreational pursuits. The economics of countryside businesses such as tourism, countryside sports, visitor facilities and agriculture are much more resilient when sited within a large landscape area.

Living Landscapes... overall it is about creating large, well connected, wildlife rich areas which are highly valued by the local communities which live and work in them and by visitors which come to enjoy them. It is about ensuring the landscape and its ecosystem services are functioning well so they are robust enough to deal with climate change and land use change so they can provide long term benefits for both wildlife and local communities.

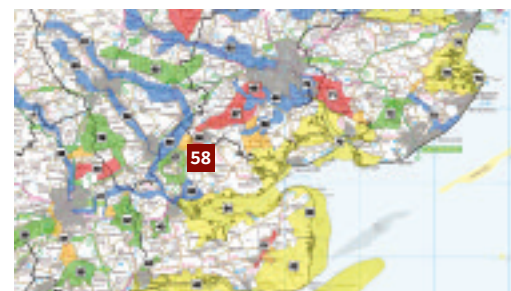
**Overall, it is about creating large, interconnected, wildlife-rich areas all optimising their biodiversity through good management and ensuring that the landscape is functioning at a level that will prevent local extinctions and robust enough to adapt to climate change.**



# Tiptree Heath complex

Living Landscape project 58

case study



Tiptree Heath lies between Colchester and Maldon on a ridge of glacial sand and gravel. It is the largest surviving fragment of lowland heath 60 acres (25 ha) in the county and shows the complete succession from acidic grassland and dwarf shrub heath (three species of heather) through gorse and birch scrub to secondary woodland.

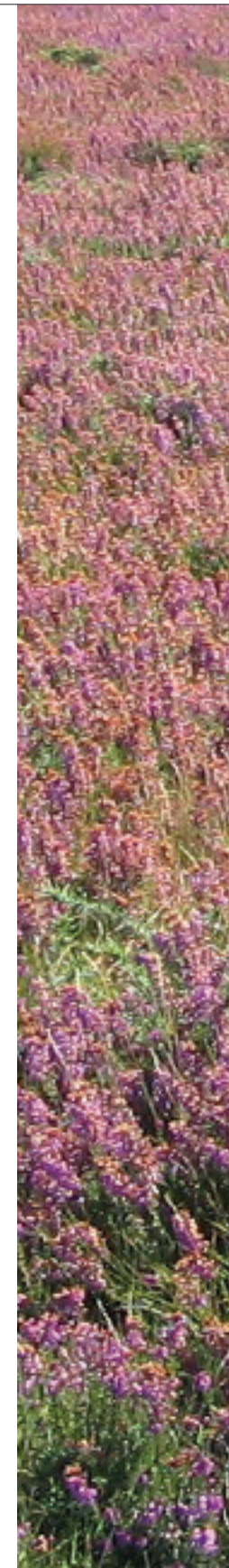
**Tiptree Heath complex is:**

- ▶ An Essex Biodiversity Action Plan habitat.
- ▶ A Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- ▶ Supporting a number of rare plants in Essex.



**Delivering a range of benefits for wildlife, people and the local economy.**

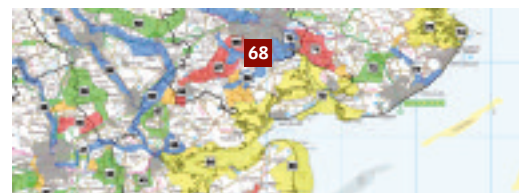
- ▶ Tiptree Heath is the largest remaining lowland heathland in Essex and offers local people the opportunity to enjoy some fantastic green space and the wildlife around them.
- ▶ Tiptree Heath has been accepted into the Higher Level Scheme (HLS) of Defra. This funding will support capital costs associated with the grazing project and ongoing habitat management over the next ten years.
- ▶ A part-time warden has been employed by Essex Wildlife Trust and organises a number of health walks, educational visits, walks, talks and practical work parties on the Heath for a variety of ages and abilities.
- ▶ A local artist was awarded a grant to undertake a number of public art and community activities on the Heath.
- ▶ Essex Wildlife Trust, Essex Field Club and Colchester Natural History Society undertake biological recording on the site.
- ▶ Local schools have supported various work parties.
- ▶ The vision is to extend this to a much larger area of heathland to benefit a much larger population. ▼





# Roman River valley

Living Landscape project 68



The Roman River is one of the best preserved river valleys in Essex. This Living Landscape area covers about 5,000 acres (2060 hectares). The river valley has long been recognised as an important area for wildlife, representing one of the densest concentrations of wildlife sites in the county. The majority of the valley is in the ownership of a small number of farms and estates. The Defence Estates own around 32% of the project area mainly used for military training purposes.

## Roman River Valley:

- Supports a variety of nationally threatened habitats including fen, lowland meadows, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, lowland heathland, lowland dry acid grassland and lowland mixed deciduous woodland.

- Includes a number of Essex Biodiversity Action Plan habitats.
- Includes a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Encompasses a number of Local Wildlife Sites.

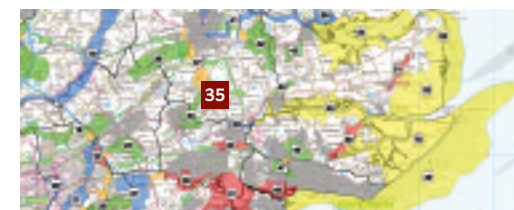
## Delivering a range of benefits for wildlife, people and the local economy.

- A true Living Landscape, that over time with the support and commitment of all of those involved can be managed to offer wildlife and people a really large area of green space in which many species can thrive and people enjoy.
- The creation of the wetland habitat and bird hides at Colchester Zoo will encourage visitors to appreciate the natural environment.
- The vision is to coordinate biological information on the area to support land managers for inclusion into the Higher Level Scheme. ▽



# Hanningfield reservoir and woods

Living Landscape project 35



Hanningfield visitor centre and nature reserve is at the core of a Living Landscape. The reservoir itself is 870 acres of standing water (reservoir) and 100 acres of mixed woodland with at least 30 acres comprising of ancient woodland. The total size of Hanningfield reservoir and woods is 2,500 acres (about 1060 hectares). The land and reservoir managed by Essex Wildlife Trust and Essex & Suffolk Water account for 1170 acres (480 hectares) i.e. about 46% of this area. Essex Wildlife Trust would like to bring more private landowners, local businesses, schools and community groups to this vision to work together on a good future for the area.

## Hanningfield reservoir and woods include:

- A large Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- A nationally important site for breeding and wintering wildfowl.
- A large number of uncommon Essex plants and animals.
- An important area for bats e.g. a maternity roost of over 350 Soprano Pipistrelle bats in the visitor centre roof.

## Delivering a range of benefits for wildlife, people and the local economy.

- The visitor centre and nature reserves allow the less able to access the site.
- 50,000 visitors are attracted to the site annually.
- Educational activities are provided for over 3,500 children and young people.
- Essex Wildlife Trust run courses, activities and events throughout the year for over 8,000 children and adults.
- Forest School programme for young people, youth services, secondary special and provisional schools across Essex.

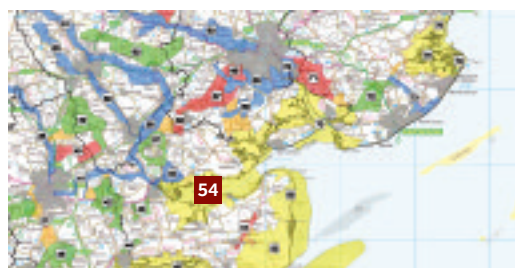


- Work with local suppliers, contractors and service providers.
- An accreditation scheme for young people working towards a young conservationist qualification has been funded by HLF Young Roots Grant Scheme.
- Over 100 volunteers freely give their time and skills to support every aspect of our work for nature conservation on the site.
- A variety of community partners are involved in the management of the site, such as Essex and Suffolk Water, local parish councils, fishing groups.
- The vision is to extend these benefits to a much larger area. ▽



# Blackwater estuary

Living Landscape project 54



In 2000, with the support of several organisations and a large legacy, Essex Wildlife Trust purchased Abbotts Hall Farm situated on the Blackwater Estuary. It was here they managed a coastal defence and realignment project, the largest of its kind, which resulted in five breaches cut into the sea-wall in 2002. This allowed salt-water irrigation to create new saltmarshes, coastal grazing, reedbeds and saline lagoons. The remainder of the farm is now devoted to sustainable agriculture methods and habitat improvement, including the reinstatement of hedgerows, ditches, copses and field margins.

#### This area of the Blackwater is:

- ▶ Of international importance for nature conservation with extensive areas covered by statutory designations – Ramsar site, Special Protected Area (SPA) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- ▶ The largest estuary in Essex, north of the Thames and one of the largest estuarine complexes in East Anglia covering over 10,000 acres (4100 hectares).

- ▶ Home to hundreds of thousands of wetland birds, including Brent Geese, Dunlin, Knot, Shelduck and Redshank.
- ▶ An important fishery containing important stocks of oysters, Cockles, Sole, Herring, Bass, Mullet and Eels.

#### Delivering a range of benefits for wildlife, people and the local economy.

- ▶ The large realignment project demonstrates what can be done to tackle the problems of rising sea level and coastal squeeze.
- ▶ Improved water quality of the estuary results from using new reedbeds for cleaning sewerage water.
- ▶ Provided 50 hectares of restored high tide navigable water for small craft.
- ▶ Over 5km of new public footpaths have already been provided.
- ▶ The opportunity for ecotourism is being explored not only directly at this site, but by joining up with the adjacent landowners.
- ▶ The site is an important provider of habitat for fish fry, in particular commercial fish such as herring and bass. Research and Development is now in place to develop an EU wide estuary fish monitoring.
- ▶ The vision is to extend these demonstration ideas to a wider area in this Living Landscape. ▽

# Roding Valley meadows

Lower Roding: Living Landscape project 17



The Roding Valley meadows comprise the largest surviving areas of traditionally managed grassland in Essex, 120 acres (approx. 50 hectares). The site comprises of hay meadows, flood meadows and marsh. The Living Landscape area covers the length of the valley, which extends to about 6500 acres (2780 hectares).

The area has been recognised as an important site for wildlife as the meadow and marsh communities consist of a diverse assemblage of plant species, many of which are uncommon in Essex. The nature reserve is adjacent to the urban fringe and provides an opportunity for people to safely access the countryside and enjoy the rich tapestry of wildlife within the reserve.

Community involvement and partnership approaches ensure the site is working for wildlife and people. The Management Group, which includes three Epping Forest District Councils, Essex Wildlife Trust, Grange Farm Trust and local interest groups, have to take account of the many different legitimate users of the nature reserve.

#### Roding Valley is:

- ▶ One of the most important areas of riverside grassland in Essex.
- ▶ An Essex Biodiversity Action Plan habitat.
- ▶ A Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and also supports a number of plants rare in Essex.

#### Delivering a range of benefits for wildlife, people and the local economy.

- ▶ A warden is employed by Essex Wildlife Trust with the support of Epping Forest District Council to achieve benefits for both people and wildlife which use and value Roding Valley.
- ▶ A number of health walks, educational visits, walks and talks and practical work parties are run for a variety of ages and abilities.



- ▶ Local businesses are involved with the site through producing interpretation, undertaking some of the habitat management and capital improvements.
- ▶ Essex Wildlife Trust and Essex Field Club undertake biological recording in the area.
- ▶ Local schools support various work parties.
- ▶ Students participate in field work and publish articles.
- ▶ The vision is to extend this work to a wider area along Roding Valley.