

Botanical Group Activities 2022

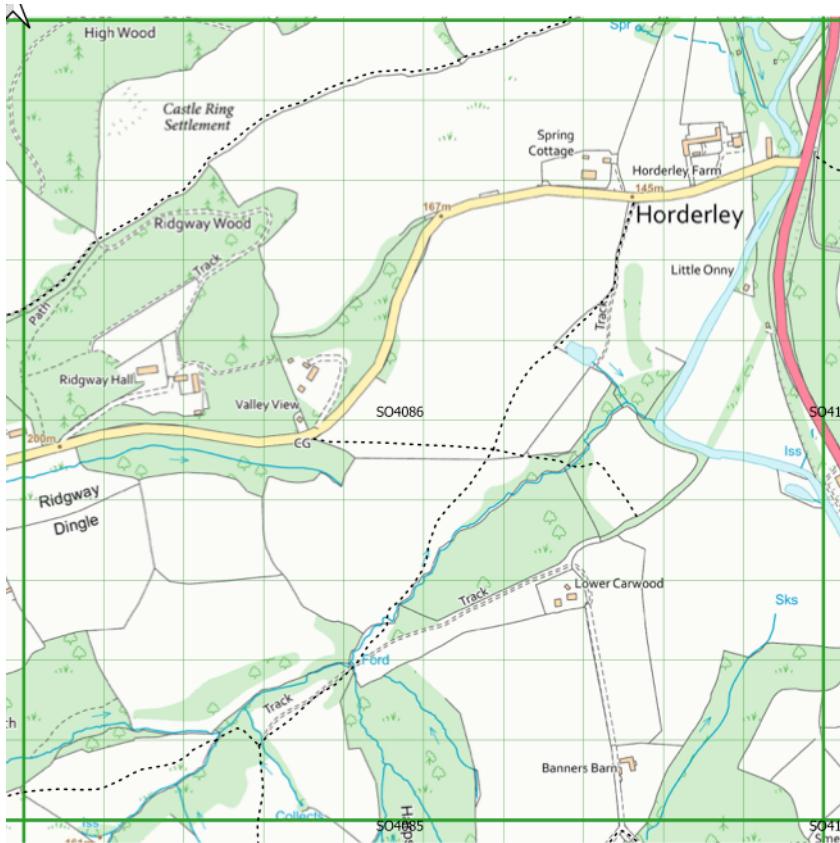
Nature Recovery Network Habitat Mapping

The Botanical Group is coordinated by the Shropshire Wildlife Trust (SWT). In 2022 the group continued habitat mapping as part of SWT's Nature Recovery Network programme that aims, in partnership with other agencies, to collect habitat data for the whole of the county. Why?

Long awaited details are emerging of ELMS, environmental land management schemes to pay landowners and farmers for environmental work and sustainable ways of food production; likewise of the government's intention to roll out Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) to identify areas to create and restore habitat. A key government commitment is 'to protect 30% of our land by 2030'. In time Local Plans should reflect LNRSs so that opportunities for nature recovery can be integrated in the land use planning system. The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) condition (forthcoming in Nov 2023) for planning permissions should make funds available for nature and the environment.

UK conservation partners including the Wildlife Trusts are together seeking in each county to gather the necessary data to prioritise nature recovery actions for when BNG and other funds come on-stream. Some 50 HoPIs (Habitats of Principal Importance) are recognised; many are coastal or marine. About 20 different HoPI types are found in Shropshire (listed in the SACWG 2021 Report).

The Strettons area covers about 400sq km, 400 monads (squares of 1kmx1km). Data for many monads is already available and strong; data held by groups like the National Trust, AONB, Stepping Stones, Natural England and many others. Shropshire Wildlife Trust, in discussion with partners, has listed priority monads in our area for which the data is weak or non-existent.



Some members of the Botanical Group have been trained in NRN surveying, how to identify HoPI types and to record them using an agreed coding system called UKHabs. Working singly or in pairs, members choose a priority monad that hasn't yet been surveyed. They receive a blank .pdf map of the monad, a 1 km sq, with 100 metre grid lines, showing roads, paths, field boundaries etc. Surveyors walk all the public rights of way recording habitats visible. If the landowner is known and access permission obtained, good, but this is often not possible or practical.

Figure 1: Blank map of monad SO4086

Volunteers don't map everything. We are specifically looking for HoPIs, or potential HoPIs, habitats which, with a small change in management, could be restored, and become more species rich. We are looking for connections; where perhaps two HoPIs could be joined together with habitat restoration in between. We make notes of important features; a species-rich, mature hedgerow; an area of grassland where bracken encroachment is shading out ground flora; a woodland with a particularly rich ground flora, etc.



Figure 2: Completed map for monad SO4086

Some areas of the monad are inaccessible by public right of way. These are marked on the map as such.

In 2022, 30 monads were surveyed in the Strettons area. Completed maps are uploaded onto a portal on the SWT website. They are then digitized.

The intention is then to analyse completed maps so that opportunities can be prioritised, ready to commence as and when funding streams such as ELMS and BNG become available.

If you are interested in further details, please get in touch.

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