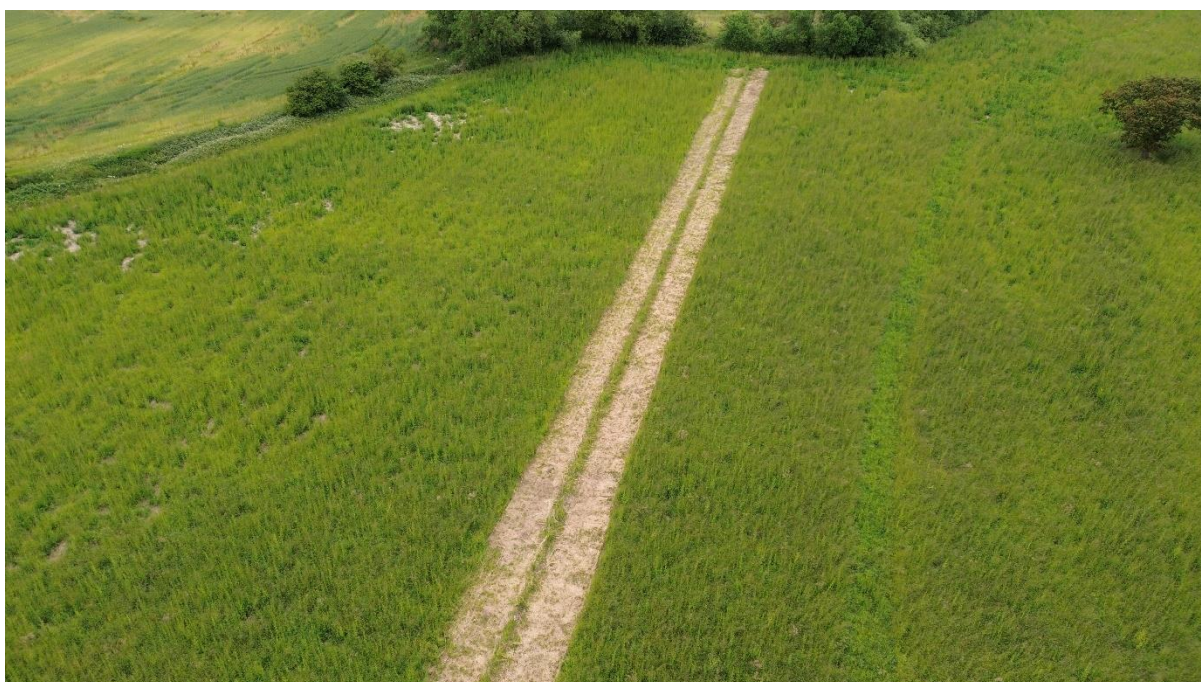




Wet underused field corner before capital works (credit Andrew Wolfenden)

Species Recovery Plan – Kindling Farm

Spring 2025



Merseyside
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Document control

Disclaimer

The landowner reserves the right to manage their land as they see fit. This Plan sets out capital works undertaken and requirements for their monitoring and maintenance. There is no obligation on the farmer to undertake the additional works or access the funding outlined in this Species Recovery Plan. The Plan seeks to signpost the landowner to potential opportunities to recover the target farmland species, fund management of their natural assets, diversify their farm business and support the farms transition towards a more sustainable and regenerative future.

This report has been prepared for SRPCGS reporting purposes and sharing or wider circulation should only be done with the express permissions of MEAS project team and the landowner.

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Acknowledgements and thanks

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Project Intro

The Liverpool City Region Farmland Species Recovery Project began in August 2023 and completed in March 2025. Beyond this period up to 2030, Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) with support of the landowner will carry out monitoring and essential maintenance of the capital habitat works undertaken.

Background

The Project is designed as a farmland demonstrator targeting recovery of 10 farmland species including a range of birds, brown hare, water vole and purple rampion fumitory (a plant of arable margins) which are species of principle importance and in a [state of local and nation decline](#). This Project was funded by Natural England's [Species Recovery Programme Capital Grant Scheme](#) and Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service. Mersey Rivers Trust and National Farmers Union also provided support on baseline surveys, capital works design, farmer liaison and agri-schemes.

				
Water Vole	Brown Hare	Purple Rampion Fumitory	Skylark	Yellowhammer
Dr John Pinnegar (CC-BY-NC)	Iain Robson	Joshua Styles (CC-BY-NC)	Graeme Baxter (CC-BY-NC)	Nigel Voaden (CC-BY)
				
Corn Bunting	Tree Sparrow	Reed Bunting	Lapwing	Grey Partridge
Graham Clarkson (CC-BY-NC)	Max Carter (CC-BY-NC)	Paul Lewis (CC-BY-NC)	desmodus60 (CC-BY-NC)	Matthew Kwan (CC-BY-NC)

An underlying theme of the project is to **work with nature through regenerative and sustainable farming**. Species recovery can go hand in hand with essential food

production and offers an important income stream to help supplement and diversify farm businesses.

The team has worked tirelessly with local farmers to realise opportunities for biodiversity gains through habitat creation and enhancement whilst also providing wider benefits to farmers such flood storage, soil management and stock-proof hedging.

This Species Recovery Plan aims to help signpost farmers to future funding opportunities through a regenerative farming approach working with nature.

Farm Bio

Kindling Farm is a Community Benefit Society known as Kindling Trust owned by 800 members with the aim of creating a fairer and more sustainable food and farming system for all.

In 2023 Kindling Farm Trust purchased a 32-hectare farm (formerly Barn Hey Farm), just outside of Liverpool in the borough of Knowsley, where they are now establishing a pioneering agroforestry farm for the Northwest. Here the Trust will research, explore, practise and demonstrate the best ways to farm for wildlife, climate change, soil, communities and farmers.

Inspired by pioneering farmers in the South of England, Kindling Farm is dedicated to producing organic fruit, vegetables and pulses within a low carbon and habitat rich agroforestry system. They aim to test what works and doesn't, share what they learn with other farmers and to show that this is an economically viable and more desirable way of farming.



A crucial part of making their vision into a reality is to engage our communities, be that through volunteering opportunities; training courses; working with and learning from other farmers; nature-based activities with schools; wildlife walks and activities; and increasing access to fresh fruit and vegetables for our communities.

Box 1: Why an Agroforestry system?

Rather than having large fields of monoculture crops with hedges around the edge of the field, our agroforestry system means that there are an additional ~100 fruit trees per hectare - and therefore wildlife habitat - in repeated rows every 28 metres. This not only encourages biodiversity in that field and farm, but provides wildlife corridors between farms and wildlife areas. This is particularly important for species that only travel a short distance every year and are therefore becoming increasingly rare.

What's even more exciting about agroforestry is that studies have shown that these habitat improvements can increase the biodiversity levels relatively rapidly, with more insects, leading to more small mammals and birds, leading to more birds of prey, all within a couple of years.

Agroforestry also improves soil health, water retention and management and creates windbreaks, all of which has knock-on effects not only on the health of the wildlife but of the farm business. Creating healthy conditions for production positively impacts on yields and this, combined with increased diversity of produce (through e.g. fruit, nuts and timber along with the added value products that can be made from those crops) basically makes agroforestry a win-win way to farm. This in turn will encourage others to farm in this way, as a demonstration of a viable way of farming with nature rather than against it.

With trees (and soil organic matter) playing a huge role in carbon sequestration, and organic farming removing the chemical inputs, Kindling Farm will explore and demonstrate how we can lower the food systems contribution to climate change.

Location Plan



Figure 1: Kindling Farm location

Baseline Conditions

Target and Notable Species

During surveys of target species several notable species were recorded including hen harrier, grasshopper warbler, golden plover, redwing, common toad, fieldfare, black bryony and locally rare hard shield fern and purple willow. Table 1 below indicates the likelihood of the project's target species being present on site.

Table 1: Target species presence and likely absence at Kindling Farm		
Target species	Present?	Notes
brown hare	C	Present. Recorded during survey and on camera traps
grey partridge	C	Present in low numbers
tree sparrow	P	Not recorded on surveys but habitat suitable
Reed bunting	C	Present in low numbers
lapwing	P	Not recorded on surveys but habitat suitable
skylark	C	Present and confirmed breeding
corn bunting	P	Not recorded on surveys but habitat suitable
yellowhammer	C	Present in low numbers

water vole	P	Not recorded on surveys but habitat suitable and recorded in surrounding landscape
Purple rampion fumitory	P	Not recorded on surveys but habitat suitable and recorded in surrounding landscape
C: confirmed; P: possible; U: unlikely		

Habitats

The project team undertook UKHab survey of habitats within the farm and a botanical walkover was carried out. See Figure 2 UKHab Map below. All farm fields are arable land which at the time was in 'non-cereal' crop production as temporary grass. The fields are bordered by native hawthorn dominant hedgerow which is species rich in places. Veteran trees are present both in-field and in hedgerows, along with areas of willow scrub. A brook marks the western boundary and field ponds (former marl pits) are present.

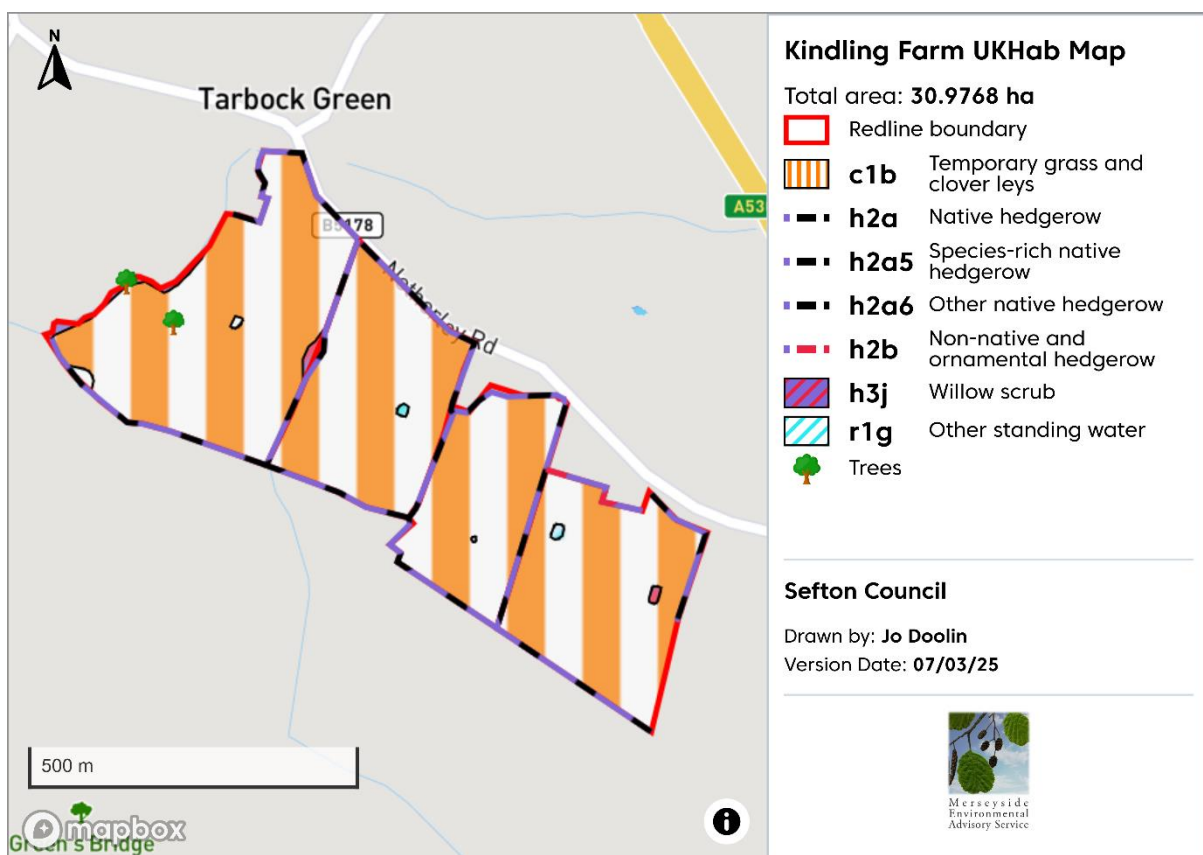


Figure 2: UKHab survey of Kindling Farm

Biodiversity Net Gain units

Based on the UKHab survey the farm comprises the following area and linear habitats and corresponding habitat/hedgerow units which has been calculated using the Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Metric. Habitats of highest value (distinctiveness) include species rich hedgerow and field ponds.



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Table 2: Baseline BNG habitat units on-site

On-site baseline	
Habitat units	67.38
Hedgerow units	23.46
Watercourse units	0.00

Table 3: Habitat type, size and unit value within the BNG metric

Habitat type	Area (ha)/Length (km)	Habitat units
Willow scrub	0.36	2.63
Other standing water (non-priority habitat pond)	0.10	0.54
Cropland	30.34	66.06
Species-rich native hedgerow with trees – associated with bank or ditch	0.60	9.65
Native hedgerow with trees	0.99	3.95
Native hedgerow associated with bank/ditch	0.38	1.77
Native hedgerow	1.26	5.08
Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	0.18	0.18

Capital habitat works

Overall, capital works has achieved a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) uplift of 7.58 habitat and 3.92 hedgerow units¹. This equates to a 11.24% gain in habitat area units and 16.71% in hedgerow units.



Credit: Andrew Wolfenden

Works included pond/wetland creation, reprofiling of existing ponds (see inset image), hedgerow and wet meadow creation. Works to the brook were also undertaken to remove bramble scrub and thin willow increasing day light to the watercourse. These were not recorded as river condition assessment was not

¹ Biodiversity unit trading prices are currently in the range of £28,000 to £100,000 depending on the habitat type and seller



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undertaken. Additionally, as on all participating farms, tree sparrow boxes have been installed on suitably mature trees.

Capital works map



Figure 3: Habitat creation at Kindling Farm

Net change to BNG units

Table 4: Additional units provided from habitat creation work

On-site baseline		Additional units	Net Increase
Habitat units	67.48	7.58	11.24%
Hedgerow units	23.46	3.92	16.71%

Table 5: Created habitat type, area and BNG habitat units

Habitat type	Area (ha)	Length (km)	On-site unit change
Cropland	-1.48		-3.41
Other neutral grassland creation	1.05		8.05
Pond creation	0.21		1.73
Pond restoration	0.05		0.42
Native hedgerow	0.17		0.64

Native hedgerow with trees	-0.24	-1.10
Species rich native hedgerow	0.18	1.42
Species rich native hedgerow with trees	0.24	2.96
Brook enhancement works	0.30	Not recorded
Arable field margin enhancement	0.17	0.79
Sparrow boxes	n/a	n/a

Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan

The project team and landowner have a 5-year obligation period to monitor and maintain capital works to support the recovery of target species.

During this period to maximise the benefit of these on farm assets for agriculture and nature, the following 5-year management plan is proposed (see Table 6 and 7). This would be delivered by MEAS and the landowner.

Table 6: Proposed maintenance of habitat interventions

Habitat	Management activity	Frequency	Links to SFI options
Hedgerow	Remove guards	Year 2-3	
Hedgerow	Formative pruning	Winter of year 1 (2026)	CHRW2: Manage hedgerows - GOV.UK
Hedgerow	Regular cutting	Every 2 -3 years, starting in year 3 (2027)	CHRW2: Manage hedgerows - GOV.UK
Hedgerow (hazel)	Coppicing	Beyond year 5	CHRW2: Manage hedgerows - GOV.UK
Arable field margins and wetland	Twice annual meadow cuts with clippings removed	Twice annually, once in March – April, once in late summer after flowers have set seed)	CLIG3: Manage grassland with very low nutrient inputs - GOV.UK
Brook	Cutting back bramble and willow	Every 2 years	n/a
Wetland	Cut collect	Twice annually, once in March – April, once in late	CLIG3: Manage grassland with very

		summer after flowers have set seed)	low nutrient inputs - GOV.UK
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Table 7: Proposed monitoring of habitat interventions

Habitat	Management activity	Frequency	Links to SFI options
All habitats	Breeding and winter bird “snapshots”	Annual	n/a
All habitat works	Annual walkover to monitor condition	Annual	n/a
Hedgerow	Inspection for failures and condition	Annual	CHRW1: Assess and record hedgerow condition - GOV.UK
All habitat works	Botanical walkover	Annual (Summer)	n/a
Wetland	Annual (April to September)	Walkover checks for water vole signs	n/a
Sparrow boxes	Bird box checks	Annual (March to June)	n/a
All habitats	Brown hare survey	Annual (February/March)	n/a

Future opportunities

There is no obligation on the farm to undertake the works or access the funding outlined below. This section seeks to signpost the landowner to potential opportunities to recover the target farmland species, manage their assets and support the farm become more sustainable and regenerative in the future.

Habitat opportunities

The farm and surrounding landscape is low-lying and seasonally wet loam and clay soils. Further habitat opportunities could include wetland enhancement of existing ponds, and the brook to support target species and provide flood resilience. The created wetland has been designed specifically for water vole and could therefore function as a translocation site for the fastest declining mammal in the UK.

There is potential to enhance the hedgerows with supplementary planting of species such as honeysuckle, guelder rose, hazel and crab apple within the hedge, along with planting more standard trees at a distance of 20m between each tree.

Field margins have the potential to support several target species including grey partridge and brown hare if areas are left to grow longer and provide shelter. Scrub creation within underused field corners would also provide cover for these species and other farmland birds.

Managing field margins and cropland for arable plants could be carried out on site. Management to create field margins may consist of ploughing and leaving margins or field corners, and avoiding the use of pesticides both on areas ploughed for arable plants, and on crop fields. Rare arable plants such as purple rampion fumitory and corn spurrey should be checked for in newly ploughed areas and will likely persist considering the farm is aiming for organic status. These works may require removal of injurious species such as dock.

Should newly planted hedgerows on site, or other existing hedgerow become gappy or 'leggy', they can be laid to re-establish their function. Hedge laying requires around 2-5m of growth, and hedges should not be cut the year before laying to ensure there is enough material.

To improve the biodiversity of the new wetland and arable field margins on site, they should be cut twice a year: Once in March – April, and one in July – September (after flowers have gone to seed). The spring cut should include clipping removal at the time of cutting. The late summer cut should leave the cuttings on the field for a week to drop seed, then be removed.

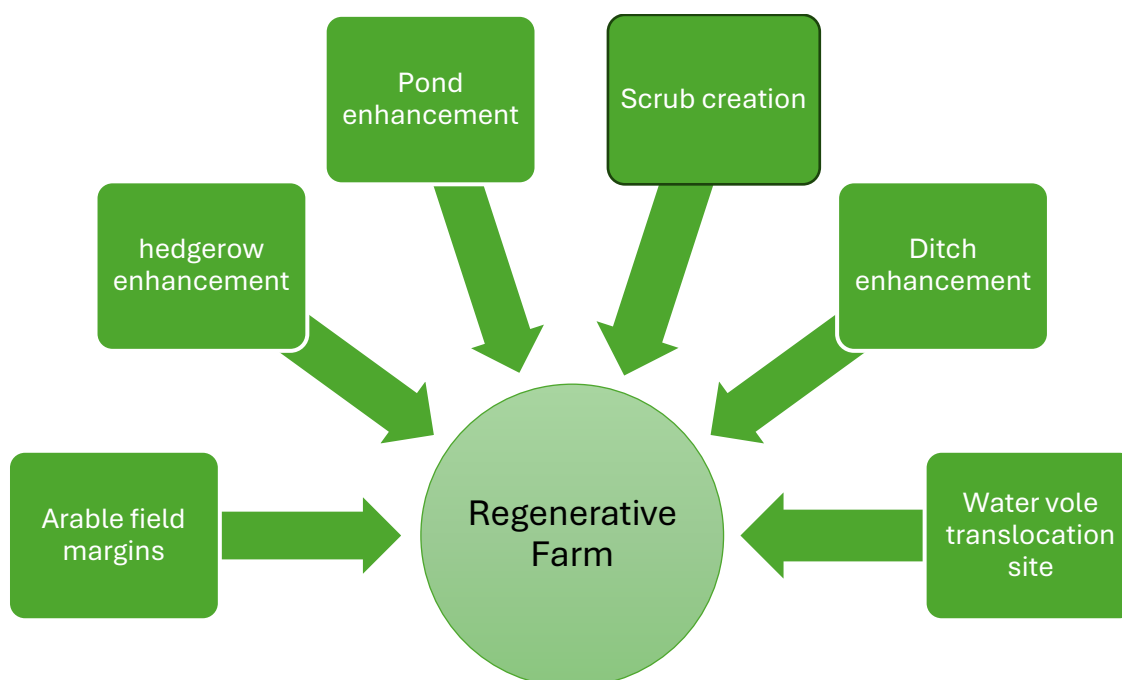


Figure 4: Future opportunities for species recovery

Where possible, 10% of grass should be left un-cut over winter to provide shelter for wildlife. Larger areas can be left uncut, but it is good practice to rotate the areas that are left uncut to prevent nutrient build up, and ensure all areas including areas left long over winter are cut in the spring cut.

Farmland birds such as skylark and lapwing require low, open areas of grassland and crop in which to breed. Considering the farms aims of agroforestry, it may be that the site becomes less suitable for these species, however the farm can still provide habitats for a range of other species. Farmland birds could be supported on

site by adding winter bird seed mixes to field margins and between rows of crops. Another option is to plant small areas of cereal crops such as barley or wheat, and cut them in autumn, but leave the cereal in situ; creating a food source for species such as tree sparrow and corn bunting, and creating more suitable habitat for lapwing.

Funding options

To support medium to long term maintenance of habitat interventions and realise those opportunities shown in Figure 4 the landowner is encouraged to consider the following funding options. The project team at MEAS would be happy to support the landowner should they wish to take up any of the opportunities for regenerative farming.



Figure 5: Summary of funding options

Further information

Project website: [Investing in Nature LCR – Investing in nature recovery in the Liverpool City Region](#)

Contact Us

Liverpool City Region Farmland Species Recovery Project team

[Contact Us – Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service](#)



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Wet underused field corner after capital works – wetland and meadow creation (credit Andrew Wolfenden)



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