



National
Trust



Project

Restoring Priority Habitat at The Weir

The Weir Garden

The Weir Garden is an eighteenth-century riverside and walled garden with Roman origins, gifted to the National Trust in 1959 under the will of Mr. Roger Charlton Parr. The Weir sits within unspoilt Herefordshire countryside and has many historical secrets to uncover.

The Weir estate extends to approximately 100 hectares of land, including the four-hectare gardens that border the River Wye, parkland, arable, and farmland that leads beyond the garden and straddles the A438 Hereford to Hay on Wye road. For centuries, this site has been used as a pleasure ground for fishing, boating and swimming. It is managed in a natural way to create a varied habitat for wildlife.

The Project

The Weir Priority Habitat Restoration project aims to create significant wildlife habitats and capture carbon. This involves restoring woodland and wood pasture, establishing new orchards, and enhancing the ecology of grasslands.

What's happening?

Until 2022, only the gardens were publicly accessible to visitors, and much of the land was let to a tenant. Recently, the countryside adjoining the garden at The Weir Garden Hereford, referred to as Old Weir Farm, has come back into the management of the National Trust due to the tenant retiring in 2022.

In 2023, a **Land Choices** assessment was conducted at The Weir to enhance our understanding of the landscape and identify priorities for land use, conservation, and potential visitor experiences.

This assessment led to the initiation of the Weir Priority Habitat Restoration project with the goal of:

- establishing substantial wildlife habitats
- sequestering carbon

The project involves the restoration of woodland and wood pasture, the creation of new orchards, and ecological enhancements of grasslands.

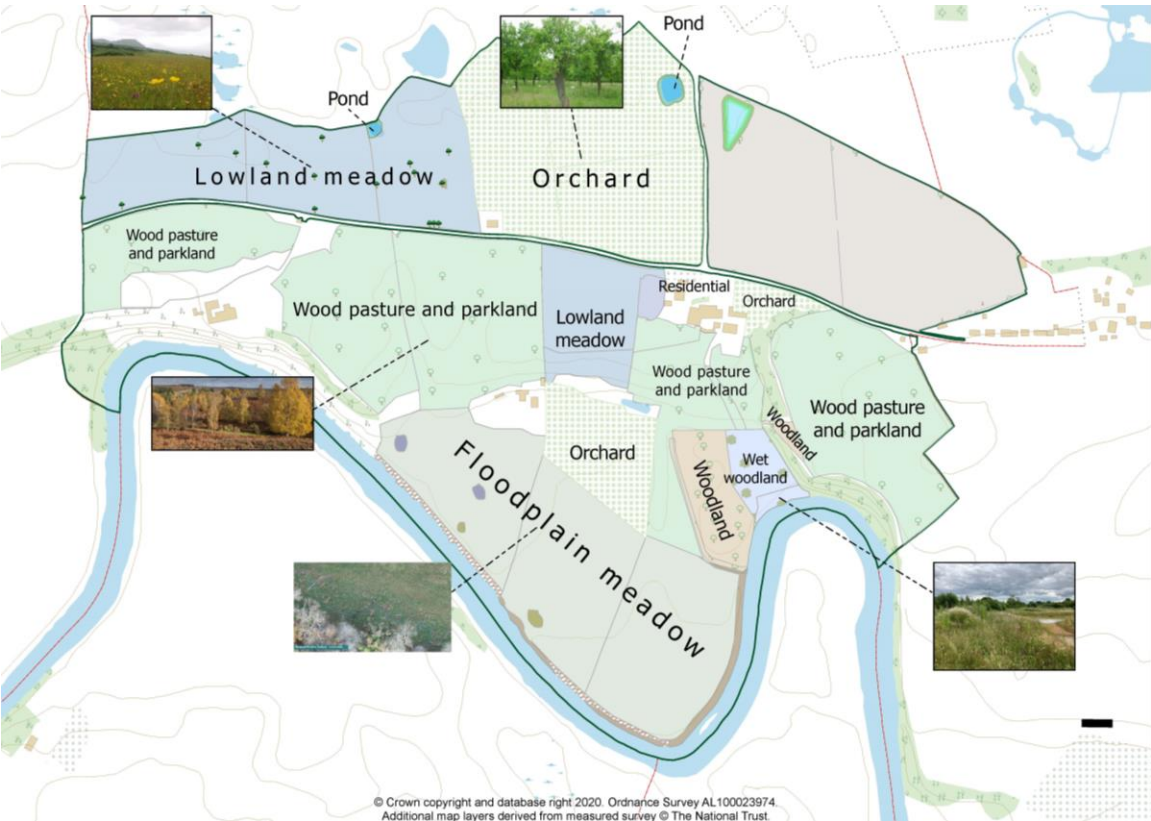


During the summer of 2023, a funding application for this project was submitted to **National Highways**, resulting in a positive funding outcome received in November 2023. This has allowed us to plan for the creation of changes that will create or restore 65 hectares of priority habitat.

Designing a home for wildlife

Meadows will be sown with species such as common knapweed, ox-eye daisy, bird's-foot trefoil and meadow buttercup. Some areas will be planted with individual parkland trees to create **wood pasture** and others will be planted with a blend of **native broadleaved trees** to restore **woodland**. 75% of these will be oak and the remaining trees will be a mixture of lime, sweet chestnut, beech and field maple. This will improve the biodiversity of the woodland and make it more resistant to disease and climate change.

We'll also be restoring **traditional orchards** with local varieties of apple, pear, damson, plum and cherry trees. **Hedgerows** will be established with a blend of traditional and native species, providing a much-needed habitat for insect pollinators. Ongoing restoration and management of these priority habitats will include a mixture of **livestock grazing** with a complimentary **hay cutting regime** to achieve the best outcomes for biodiversity, thus ensuring a **climate resilient landscape**.



What are the benefits for landscape and nature?

We hope that, by restoring habitats and improving the health of the soil, The Weir estate will attract a more varied array of **wildlife**, including birds such as redstart, lesser-spotted woodpecker and barn owl, along with insect pollinators and wetland species associated with the SSSI River Wye.

Better **water quality** will be achieved by managing the land naturally, with no pesticides or fertilisers, and **carbon capture and storage** potential of the land will be enhanced through the creation of species-rich permanent grassland, orchards, parkland, woodland and hedgerow.

We hope to improve the landscape through the restoration and reinstatement of **historic landscape features**. The condition and knowledge of an important heritage asset will also be improved, with **historic environment and cultural heritage** at the centre of the decision-making process.

When is the project happening?

The project will start in spring 2024 and will be completed in early 2025.

Timeline for delivery:

- **February** – new hedgerow planted
- **March** – parkland and orchard tree guards created using timber from National Trust Pengethley.
- **June – August** – tree guards will be built and installed in readiness for autumn tree planting.
- **August** – ground prepared for new floodplain meadows and species-rich grassland so they are ready for seeding and plug planting.
- **September – October** – meadow seeding and plug planting will be completed.
- **November – February 2025** – new orchard and parkland trees will be planted.
- **November – February 2025** – new native woodland below Old Weir Farm will be created.



Q&A

1. How is the project funded?

The total cost of the project to create and establish the habitat and maintain it for the next 10 years is £607K. The project is fully funded with thanks to a grant awarded from National Highways Environment and Wellbeing fund.

2. How are you protecting important archaeological and geological features within the landscape?

The project has been planned very carefully, following advice from historical and landscape specialists and archaeologists. Habitat design has included additional survey of areas of particular significance. The archaeological features within the landscape of the Weir will be protected and enhanced as part of the project.



3. What is happening to the farm? Are you taking land out of production?

Land will still be productive. It will be managed by low intensity grazing and cutting to protect and enhance the new and restored habitats. We will also be producing fruit from the orchards. A land only tenancy for the farm will be advertised on the open market.

4. How disruptive will it be for local residents?

The project should not be disruptive for local residents. In the areas near to local houses and residences, work will predominantly involve the establishment of trees, shrubs and species rich grasslands.

Getting in touch

If you have any questions about the project or would like this document in an alternative format, please email:

theweir@nationaltrust.org.uk

©National Trust 2024. National Trust Images. The National Trust is a registered charity no. 205846

