



Species Recovery Plan – Kiln Farm

Spring 2025



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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



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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

Kiln Farm sits within the River Alt corridor near Ince Blundell, Sefton. The River Alt bounds the eastern most extent of the farm and Ince Blundell Hall estate lies to the west. See the 'Location Plan' below.

The area is a Nature Improvement Area and is characterised by floodplain being naturally wet and clay rich soils in arable production for a mix of cereal and non-cereal crops. Parts of the farm are used by the landowner with low inputs whilst other areas are in tenancy and in arable production.

The landscape is open and low-lying and interspersed by coniferous plantation and older broadleaved woodland. Drainage ditches mark field boundaries which criss-cross the land providing important habitat for water vole.



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Location Plan



Figure 1: Kiln Farm location

Baseline Conditions

Target and Notable Species

The project team undertook pioneering eDNA survey for target species water vole. This confirmed presence within one of the ditches and signs were found elsewhere on the farm. Water shrew were also detected. American mink rafts were deployed but no signs were reported.

During surveys of target species several notable species were recorded including significant numbers of snipe and sightings of marsh harrier, barn owl, short eared owl and red squirrel. Table 1 below indicates the likelihood of the project's target species being present on site.

Table 1: Target species and their likely presence on site		
Target species	Present?	Notes
brown hare	C	Present and notable population
grey partridge	C	Present and notable population
tree sparrow	C	Present in low numbers
Reed bunting	C	Present in low numbers
lapwing	P	Not recorded on surveys but habitat suitable
skylark	C	Present in low numbers



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corn bunting	C	Present in low numbers
yellowhammer	P	Not recorded on surveys but potentially present
water vole	C	Confirmed – habitat highly suitable
Purple ramping fumitory	U	Not recorded on surveys but 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. The surveys identified the majority of the farm as arable land which at the time was in ‘non-cereal’ crop production .

The grassland fields in the west of the farm are more characterised by ‘other neutral grassland’ of moderate species diversity, with a single field of modified grassland. An extensive ditch network exists around the farm. Two woodlands are present – Searchlight Plantation and Keepers Wood. Both of these are mixed broadleaved and coniferous woodlands. Searchlight Plantation consists almost entirely of coniferous trees including Scots pine, and Keepers Wood being a more even mix of deciduous and coniferous species. The embankment of the Alt has been identified as modified grassland.

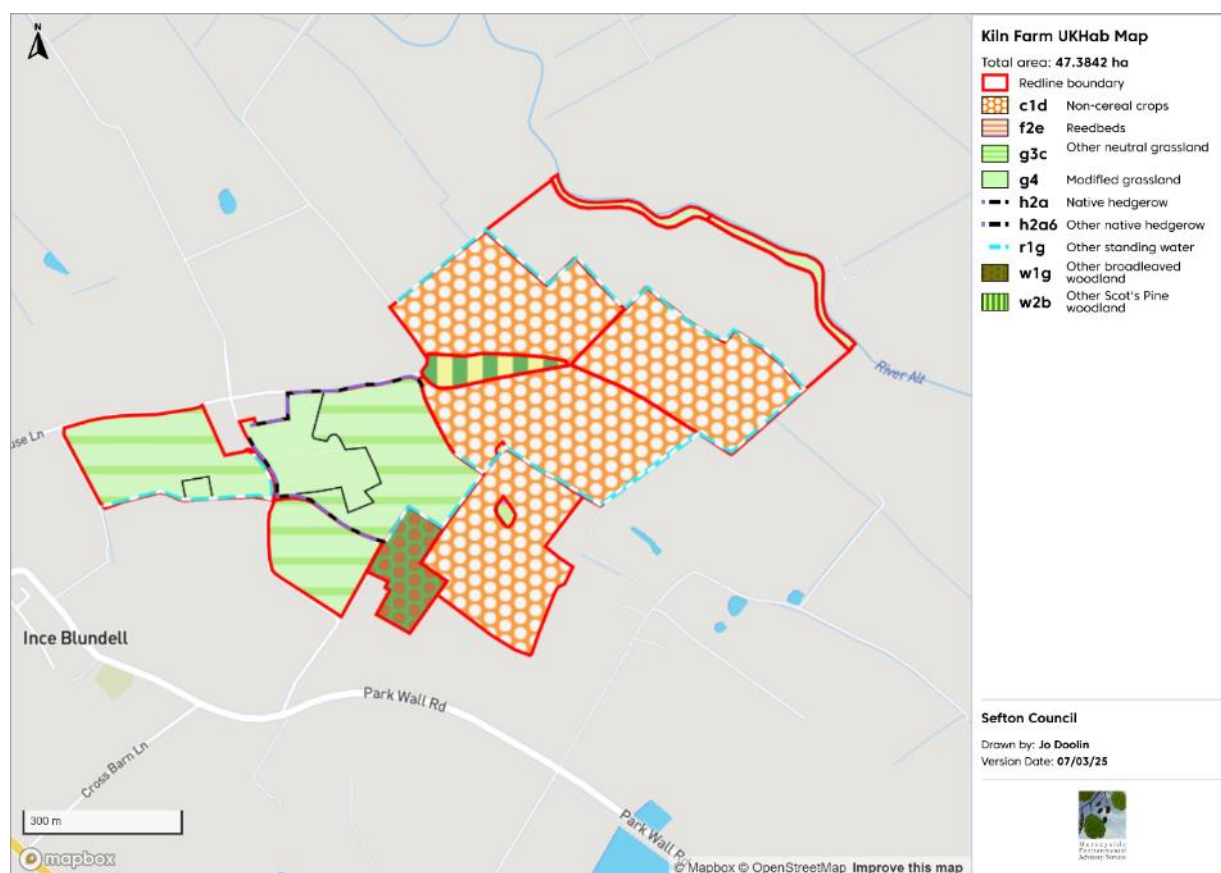


Figure 2: A UKHab survey of habitats on site at Kiln Farm



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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 the floodplain wetland mosaic, other neutral grassland, pond/reedbed and woodlands. The ditch network taken as a whole is also important for water vole. Table 2 and 3 set out the on-site farm baseline units.

Table 2: Baseline BNG habitat units on-site

On-site baseline	
Habitat units	241.46
Hedgerow units	5.61
Watercourse units	21.14

Table 3: Baseline habitat type, area and BNG units

Habitat type	Area (ha) Length (km)	Habitat units
Modified grassland	3.98	22.35
Other neutral grassland	13.08	133.66
Floodplain wetland mosaic (CFGM)	0.20	1.36
Other standing water (non-priority habitat pond)	0.02	0.21
Cropland	26.92	61.92
Other Broadleaved Woodland	1.93	8.86
Other Scot's pine woodland	1.12	10.35
Reedbeds	0.02	0.52
Native hedgerow associated with bank/ditch	0.23	20.7
Native hedgerow	0.5	3.54
Ditches	2.7	21.14

Capital habitat works

Overall, capital works has achieved a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) uplift of 6.76 habitat and 4.21 hedgerow units¹. This equates to a BNG increase of 6.76% in area habitats and 74.95% increase in hedgerow. Watercourses are retained with no works carried out. Native hedgerow, hedgerow with trees and enhancement of grassland pasture through provision of local seed (sourced from WWT Martin Mere) has been undertaken.

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



Capital works map

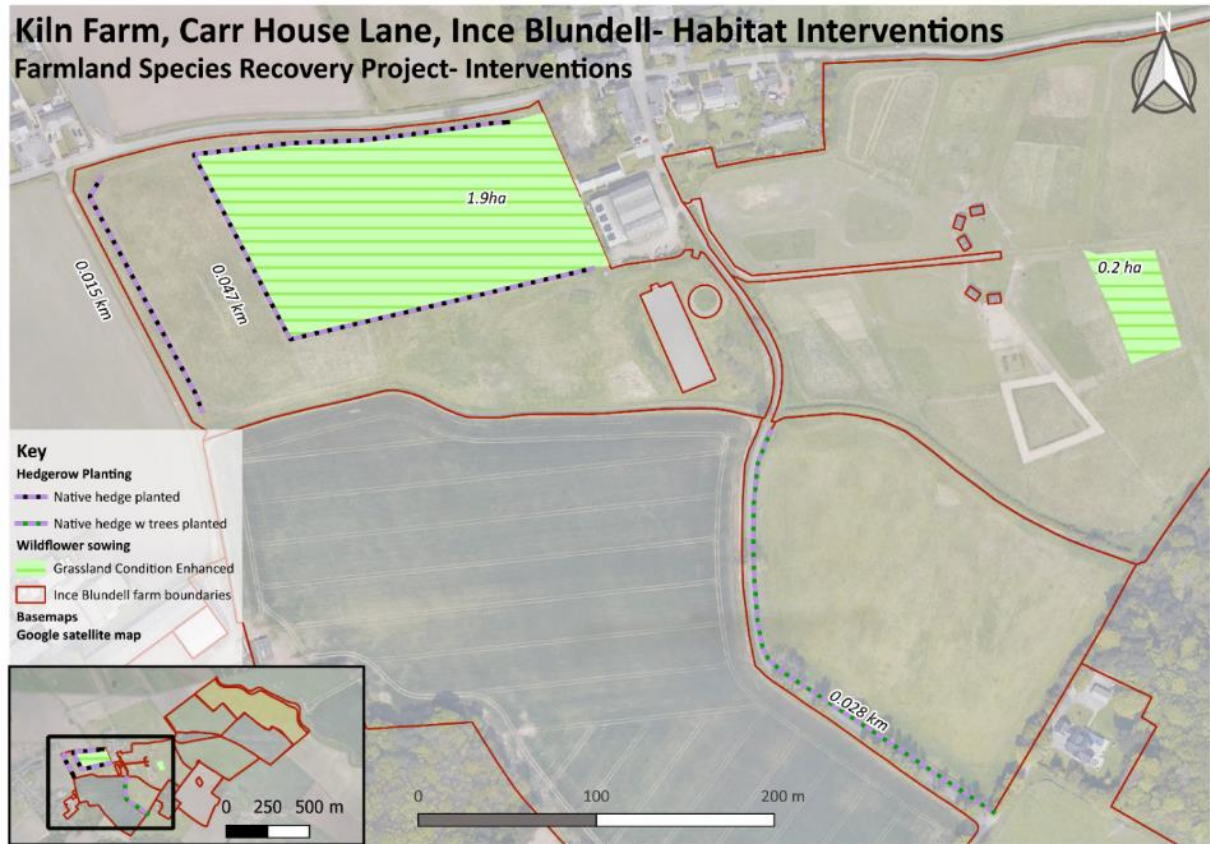


Figure 3: Habitat creation at Kiln Farm

Net change to BNG units

Table 4: Additional units provided from habitat creation work

On-site baseline		Additional units	Net Increase
Habitat units	241.46	6.76	2.80%
Hedgerow units	5.61	4.21	74.95%

Table 5: Habitat types, areas and unit value of created habitat

Habitat type	Area (ha) Length (km)	On-site unit change
Native species-rich hedgerow	0.62	2.83
Native species-rich hedgerow with trees	0.28	1.83
Other neutral grassland (enhancement)	2.1	6.76

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

Management activity Frequency			Links to SFI options
Habitat			
Hedgerow	Remove guards	Year 2-3	
Hedgerow	Formative pruning	Winter of year 1 (2025)	CHRW2: Manage hedgerows - GOV.UK
Hedgerow	Regular cutting	Every 2 -3 years, starting in year 3 (2027)	CHRW2: Manage hedgerows - GOV.UK
Enhanced grassland	Twice annual meadow cuts with clippings removed	Twice annual, once in March – April, once in late summer after flowers have set seed)	GRH6: Manage priority habitat species-rich grassland



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Table 7: Proposed monitoring of habitat interventions

Habitat	Monitoring activity	Frequency	Links to SFI options
All habitats	Breeding and winter bird “snapshots”	Annual	
Hedgerow	Inspection for failures and condition	Annual	CHRW1: Assess and record hedgerow condition - GOV.UK
Enhanced grassland	Botanical walkover	Annually June/July	
Sparrow boxes	Bird box checks	Annual (March to June)	
All habitats	Brown hare survey	Annual (February/March)	

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 wet therefore wetland creation and enhancement such as scrapes, reedbed or ditch enhancement are priorities to support target species and provide flood resilience. There are also potential opportunities to connect up woodlands across the farm to benefit target bird species, provide cover for brown hare and also habitat for red squirrel. Further, additional grassland enhancement would provide breeding habitat for skylark and wider benefits for pollinators.

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.

The enhanced grassland on site should continue to be mown as a meadow, with two cuts a year, one 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.



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The late summer cut should leave the cuttings on the field for a week to drop seed, then be removed.

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.

Subject to ground conditions and landowner discretion, we recommend the following habitat creation options – see Figure 4.

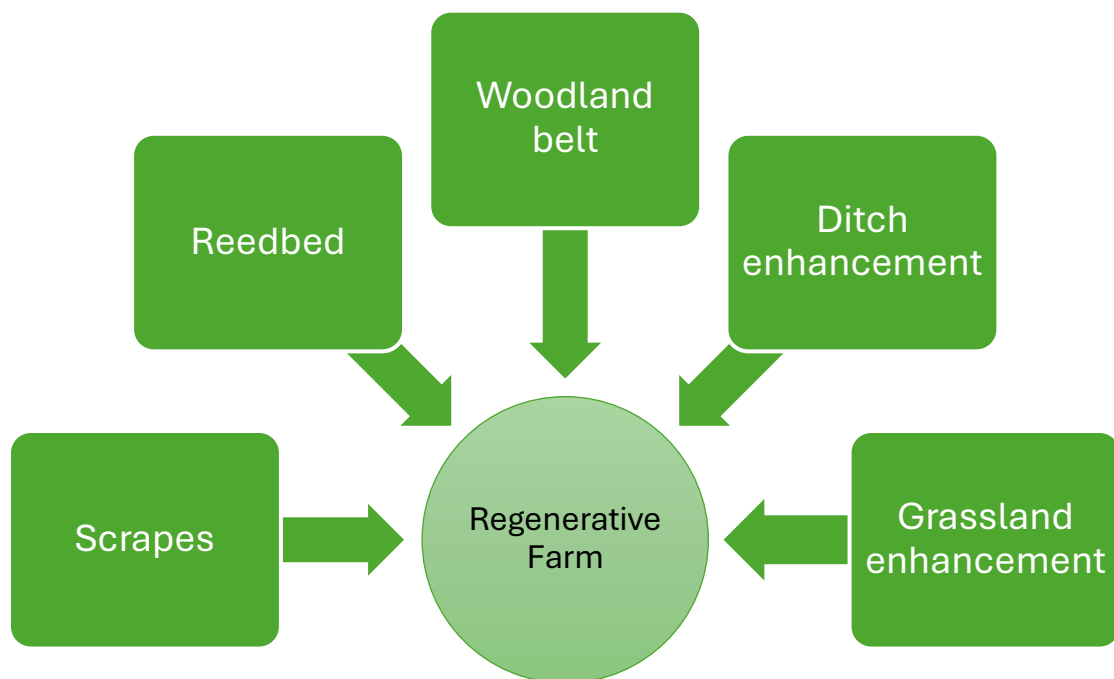


Figure 4: Future opportunities for species recovery

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.



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Biodiversity Net Gain

Register as a Biodiversity Gain Site to receive payments towards habitat creation, enhancement and 30-year management

Link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-a-biodiversity-gain-site>

Apply for Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) to create, enhance and manage habitats

Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-farming-incentive-scheme-expanded-offer-for-2024/sfi-scheme-information-expanded-offer-for-2024>

Sustainable Farming Incentive

Capital Grants

Grants for 3-year agreements offering capital works for specific environmental benefits such as natural flood management

Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/capital-grants-2024/applicants-guide-capital-grants-2024--2>

Scheme pays farmers to manage land in a way that enhances the environment and mitigates climate changes effects

Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/countryside-stewardship-higher-tier-get-ready-to-apply/countryside-stewardship-higher-tier-preview-guidance>

Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier

Wood Grants and Incentives

Various grants and incentives available for woodland creation and management

Link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/woodland-grants-and-incentives-overview-table/woodland-grants-and-incentives-overview-table>

Through the planning system developers have to compensate for impact to farmland habitats and species which are a key priority of the Liverpool City Region Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The farm could receive payments from the developer via the Local Authority or other restoration fund to provide strategic ecological compensate packages

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

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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A selection of wildlife captured by various cameras across Kiln Farm



A curious barn owl inspects the camera in the rafters.



A baby robin screams at its mother for food.



A pair of hares explore the wet field.



Starling fledglings



A deer wanders past the deadwood stump.



A coal tit flits across the vegetation.



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