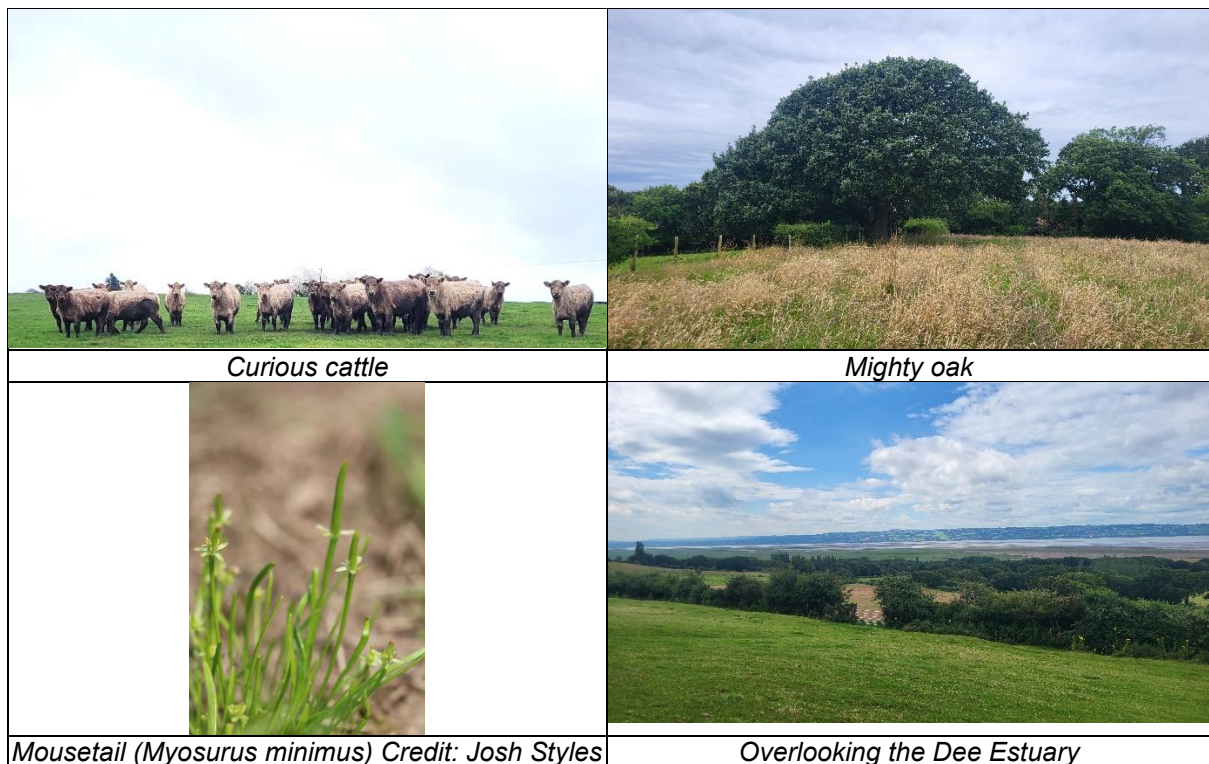




Species Recovery Plan – Oldfield Farm

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.

Document control	Version Final
Date:	23/04/2025
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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

Oldfield Farm is approximately 50 hectares of pastureland, located in west Wirral near Heswall on a sandstone ridge overlooking the Dee Estuary. This area is within the [West Wirral Heathland Nature Improvement Area](#) and soils are seasonally wet deep loam.

The farm is mainly pasture grazed by cattle reared for beef. The northern boundary of the farm (see Figure 1) abuts The Dungeon SSSI - designated for its geological interest, and Heswall Dales SSSI – designated for its lowland heath, lies to the south.

The farm naturally falls away east to west toward the estuary and fields are marked by important hedgerow and notable and veteran trees. The westernmost boundary is adjacent the Wirral Way and National Trust Heswall Fields which provides seasonal grazing for the cattle herd.



Location Plan



Figure 1: Oldfield Farm location

Baseline Conditions

Target and Notable Species

During surveys of target species several other notable species were recorded. This included significant numbers of pink-footed geese feeding, curlew in flight and foraging on fields and several notable plant species including: English bluebell, bloody cranes-bill, harebell, burnet saxifrage, mousetail, black bryony, changing forget-me-not and corn spurrey. 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 Oldfields 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	C	Not recorded on surveys but habitat suitable
Skylark	C	Present and confirmed breeding
corn bunting	P	Not recorded on surveys but habitat suitable



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yellowhammer	P	Present in low numbers
water vole	U	Not recorded on surveys but habitat suitable and recorded in surrounding landscape
Purple ramping fumitory	U	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. The surveys found the majority of the farm is other neutral grassland in use as grazing pasture.

At the time of surveys, the northern end of the farm was cropland in production for cereal and non-cereal crops, most fields contained rare arable plants including corn spurrey (*Spergula arvensis*) and mousetail (*Myosurus minimus*). Hawthorn dominant native hedgerow marks the majority of field boundaries, with some hedgerows consisting mainly of gorse.

Within many of the hedgerows, several plants were found including pignut (*Conopodium majus*) and English bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), that indicate the hedgerows are important being of considerable age and longevity. Occasional field ponds are present, and a stream flows adjacent to the northern boundary of the farm. This watercourse then heads downhill through oak woodland before meeting the Dee Estuary approximately 1km to the west.



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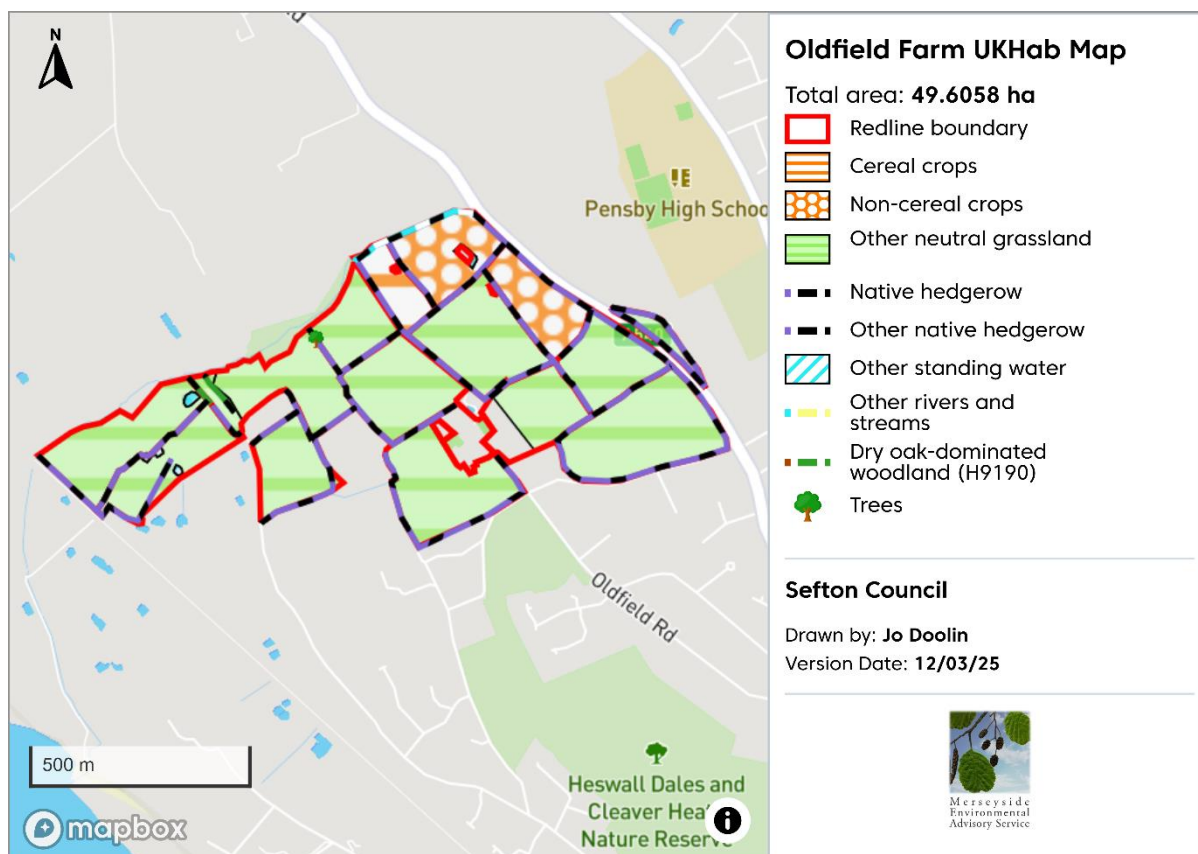


Figure 2: UKHab survey of Oldfield Farm

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 other neutral grassland, native hedgerow and ecologically valuable lines of trees. Veteran trees on site are also of high ecological value.

Table 2: Baseline BNG habitat units on-site

On-site baseline	
Habitat units	301.03
Hedgerow units	44.26
Watercourse units	0.00

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

Habitat type	Area (ha) /Length (km)	Habitat units
Other standing water (non-priority habitat pond)	0.36	2.20
Cropland	7.57	17.41



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Other neutral grassland	41.60	281.42
Native hedgerow with trees	0.46	6.39
Ecologically valuable line of trees	0.19	2.61
Native hedgerow associated with bank/ditch	0.75	7.27
Native hedgerow	5.73	27.98

Capital habitat works

Overall, capital works has achieved a BNG uplift of 1.16 hedgerow units which this equates to a 2.62% net gain in hedgerow units¹. Habitat enhancement carried out includes mixed native hedgerow with trees and gapping up of existing boundary hedgerow. Additionally, as on all participating farms, tree sparrow boxes have been installed on suitably mature trees.

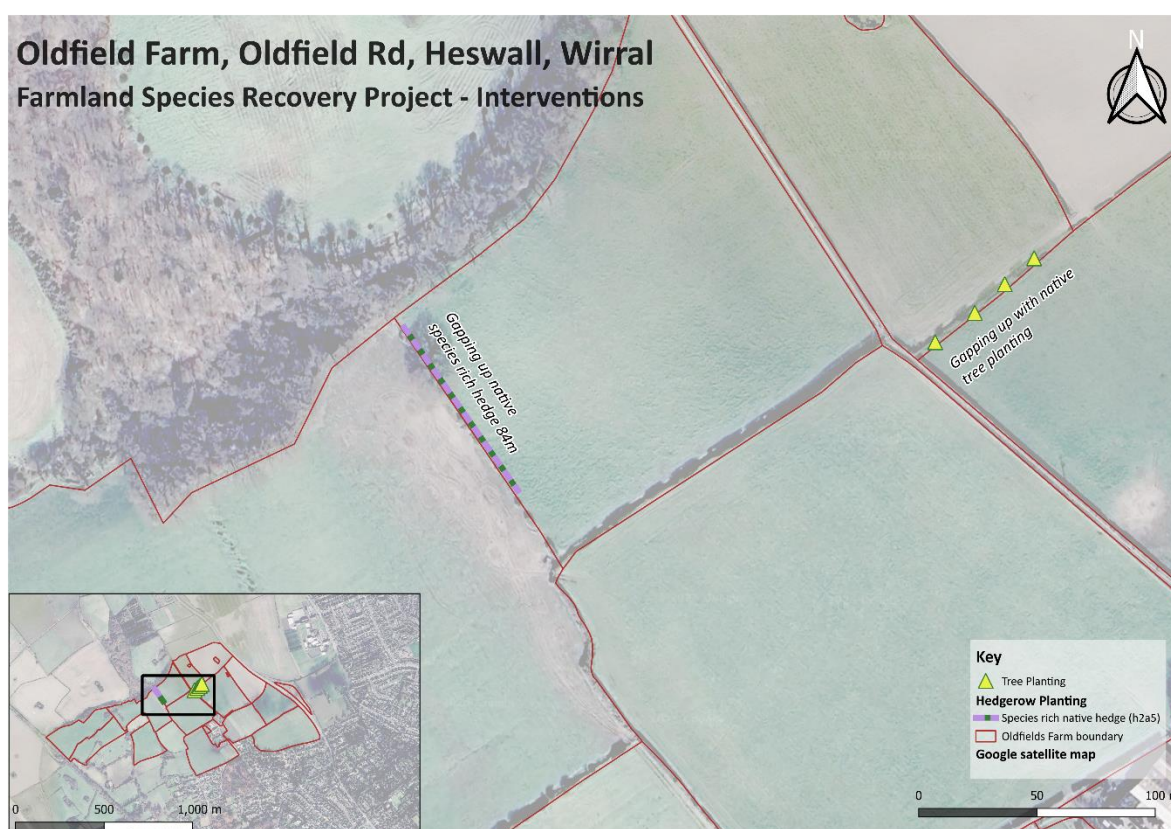


Figure 3: Habitat Interventions at Oldfield Farm

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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Table 4: Created habitat type, area and BNG habitat units		
Habitat type	Length (km)	Habitat units (+/-)
Native species-rich hedgerow with trees – associated with bank or ditch (enhancement)	0.09	+0.94
Native species-rich hedgerow (enhancement)	0.11	+0.86
Native hedgerow associated with bank or ditch	-0.09	-0.39
Native hedgerow	-0.11	-0.24
Sparrow terraces	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 5 and 6). This would be delivered by MEAS and the landowner.



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Table 5: 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 (2025)	CHRW2: Manage hedgerows - GOV.UK
Hedgerow	Regular cutting	Every 2 -3 years, starting in year 3 (2027)	CHRW2: Manage hedgerows - GOV.UK

Table 6: Proposed monitoring of habitat interventions

Habitat	Management 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
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 has seasonally wet loam soils and comprises moderately species-rich grazing pasture. Further habitat opportunities could include hedgerow enhancement and works to enhance and buffer existing ponds. Creation of new ponds in wetter areas of the farm could also provide natural flood management, increase available grazing and provide a water source for livestock.



The arable fields on site host a wide variety of important arable plants, some of which are nationally rare. Managing field margins and cropland for arable plants could 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.

The grassland to the north of Telegraph Road was identified in the botanical survey as higher quality grassland. Implementation of a single annual cut, and removing of the arisings from the field, will help maintain a good grassland structure and improve the biodiversity of the grassland.

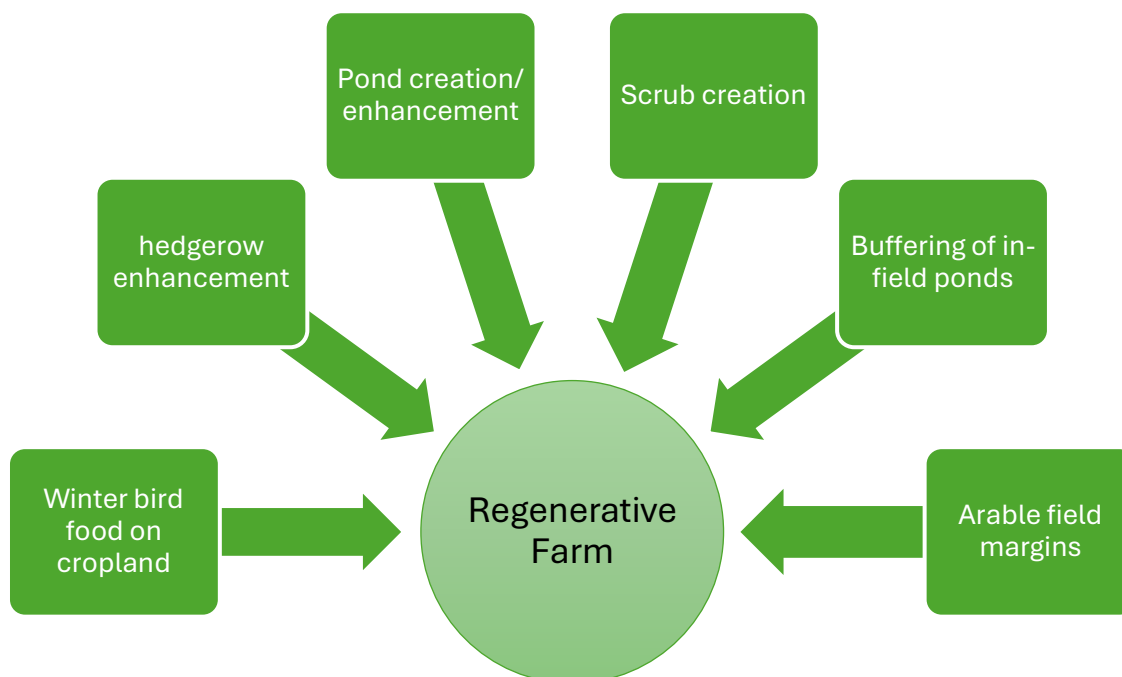


Figure 4: Future opportunities for species recovery

Other grasslands on site may benefit from the addition of green hay from good quality local grasslands such as Heswall Fields or Wirral Country Park. The grasslands could be cut, scarified and then freshly cut green hay spread on the fields in late summer to early autumn, then the cuttings collected a week later after the seed has dropped. This will supplement the existing seed bank and increase the diversity of the grasslands.

The site already provides large areas of overwinter habitat for farmland birds, but addition of winter bird seed mixes into arable areas may provide extra food for these species.

Care should be taken when carrying out any management works in the pond in the northernmost field. Whilst this pond would benefit from some level of management, New Zealand pygmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*) is present across almost the entire pond. This species is listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and can grow back from minute fragments of plant and quickly swamp entire ponds. Should pond works be carried out, strict biosecurity protocols should be put in place including wheel washing and careful disposal of waste.

Much of the habitat on site is already of good quality. As such, maintenance and enhancement will continue to provide a wide range of habitats for target species.

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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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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