Local Wildlife Sites

Annual Monitoring Report 2025

North Merseyside Local Sites Partnership

An Assessment of Local Wildlife Sites in Merseyside

2025

Report by
Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service on behalf of
North Merseyside Local Sites Partnership

North Merseyside LSP

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Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service

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Executive Summary

Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) are non-statutory designated sites which aim to protect species and habitats of local conservation importance. They are important assets at a local, regional, and national level for their nature conservation value and are selected for being the most valuable areas for wildlife within each Local Authority area. Almost a quarter of North Merseyside's land area is protected through Local Wildlife Site (LWS) designation and local planning policy.

The North Merseyside Local Wildlife Sites system is administered by the North Merseyside Local Sites Partnership (LSP). The Partnership comprises of representatives from Local Authorities (Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens and Sefton), Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS), nature conservation charities, statutory agencies, consultant ecologists and local nature experts.

This Annual Monitoring Report gives an overview of monitoring of Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) in North Merseyside for the survey period 1 April 2025 to 31 December 2025. This report presents results and discussion on any trends observed.

Surveying occurred across the whole season, for St Helens, Knowsley, Liverpool and Sefton. This year survey effort focused on a mix of publicly owned and privately owned LWS, aiming to survey sites that had not been surveyed for over five years.

The team collectively surveyed a total of 29 sites (10.6%) and met the 10% survey target, with at least 10% of sites in each district surveyed.

The results of 2025 survey season continue to reflect long term trends reported in previous monitoring reports:

- Many LWSs in North Merseyside continue to be in suboptimal condition with only 7% in good condition in relation to the status of their designation features
- 62% of sites surveyed were in moderate condition, 24% were in poor condition and 7% of the sites were not surveyed,
- A general lack of conservation management was observed across the surveyed sites. Only 10% of the LWSs in North Merseyside surveyed were found to be in positive conservation management in 2025.
- Invasive species continue to pose a major threat to LWS across the region; particularly within woodland, coastal and riparian habitats.
- Invasive species have been recorded at between 70-85% of sites visited between 2020-2025. Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) was the most common species (37% of surveyed sites), followed by Rhododendron (23% of sites) and Japanese Knotweed (20% of sites).

- Many sites continue to suffer from recreational pressure in the form of ground compaction from walking, bikes and dogs; excessive dog fouling and littering and other anti-social behaviour.

Whilst some sites have management plans in place, management largely continues to be largely limited to amenity purposes. Sites typically lack tailored management specific for the designation features of a site. It is evident that the majority of Local Wildlife Sites require targeted management to maintain, recover and improve the condition of the designation features.

The main management practices that would help improve the condition of Local Wildlife Sites across the region are:

- Woodland management
- Grassland management
- Scrub removal
- Control and removal of invasive species
- Initiatives to tackle fly tipping

Continued Local Wildlife Site monitoring improves our understanding around the state of our natural environment, ensures Local Plan evidence bases are up to date and informs strategic decisions around recovery and habitat improvement across the Liverpool City Region.

As part of the wider Local Wildlife Site partnership, MEAS are reviewing the guidelines for site selection, engaging with land managers, and scoping potential new sites for possible designation, or where boundary extensions could be achieved. We plan to prioritise this important work with the Local Sites Partnership in 2026 and explore opportunities to improve management across all districts.

1. Introduction

1.1. Local Wildlife Sites

Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) are non-statutory designated sites which aim to protect the conservation of species and habitats. Local Wildlife Sites contain valuable natural assets that contribute to biodiversity through their exceptional diversity, by supporting rare or priority habitats and species and by providing a network of sites through which species can pass.

Part of Sutton Brook LWS, St Helens.

> "The Local Wildlife Sites system should select all areas of substantive value, including both the most important and the most distinctive species, habitats, geological and geomorphological features within a national, regional, and local context. Sites within the series may also have an important role in contributing to the public enjoyment of nature conservation."
>
> *Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), report April 2000.*

In parts of the country, LWSs provide the largest area of nature conservation designation. In England, Local Wildlife Sites cover 5% of the total land area (*The Wildlife Trusts, 2018*). Whilst there are some significant variations between districts e.g. the heavily designated Sefton Coast, almost a quarter of North Merseyside is protected by local planning policy. Therefore, LWSs are extremely important spaces for our local nature and wildlife.

LWSs within North Merseyside continue to be a valuable asset to wildlife and people. The importance of green spaces to the health and wellbeing of our local communities has been long highlighted and our monitoring shows high levels of public use of the LWS network. The protection Local Wildlife Site's receive from Local Plans and appropriate management is key to not only providing a refuge for important habitats and species but also conserving green spaces that are fundamental in providing economic and social benefits to local people.

In 2019, a climate emergency was declared in the Liverpool City Region, and biodiversity continues to be in a general state of decline. Therefore, opportunities for increasing and buffering our Local Wildlife Site network should be explored, to ensure our most valuable assets are protected for future generations.

Against a continued backdrop of global ecological/climate emergency and a locally depleted ecological network, the work of the LSP is essential for maintaining and restoring biodiversity locally.

1.2. Defra Guidelines

In 2006 Defra issued guidelines based around the principle that:

> "Whilst Local Sites may also provide other benefits, they contain features of substantive nature conservation value and that the purpose of selection is to provide recognition of this value and to help conserve those features by affording the sites an appropriate degree of protection."

Defra advise that the general condition of each LWS is monitored, to ensure the features for which the site was originally designated are still present. LWS monitoring is also needed to establish trends which can then be used to inform LWS management and future Local Sites Partnership priorities. The information gathered from monitoring is reported to Defra Single Data List - a collection of datasets through which Local Authorities report their data for a variety of services to central government. The '160-00 Improved Local Biodiversity Indicator' requires reporting of condition data over a 5-year period. Monitoring a minimum of 10% of Local Wildlife Sites each year supports the reporting of this performance indicator.

Further, Local Authorities have a 'Strengthened' Biodiversity Duty (Environment Act 2021), and recommendation 12 of *Making Space for Nature* (*Lawton et al. 2010*) is that Local Authorities take responsibility for the identification and monitoring of Local Wildlife Sites. Within North Merseyside this is being undertaken through the North Merseyside Local Sites Partnership and published through 'The status of Local Wildlife Sites in Merseyside, Local Wildlife Sites Annual Monitoring Report' each year.

1.3. Local Sites Partnership

The North Merseyside Local Sites Partnership (Local Sites Partnership) was established following Defra's 2006 Guidelines and comprises representatives from local authorities (Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens and Sefton), Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS), nature conservation charities, statutory agencies, consultant ecologists and local nature experts. The Local Sites Partnership selects sites to be designated and can deselect sites as a last resort.

Wild Garlic, Childwall Wood and Fields LWS, Liverpool.

For a site to be recommended for designation, it must meet selection guidelines using the North Merseyside Local Wildlife Sites Designation Guidelines, which are currently under review. This review process allows for conservation efforts to be focused on the sites which have the most value for designation.

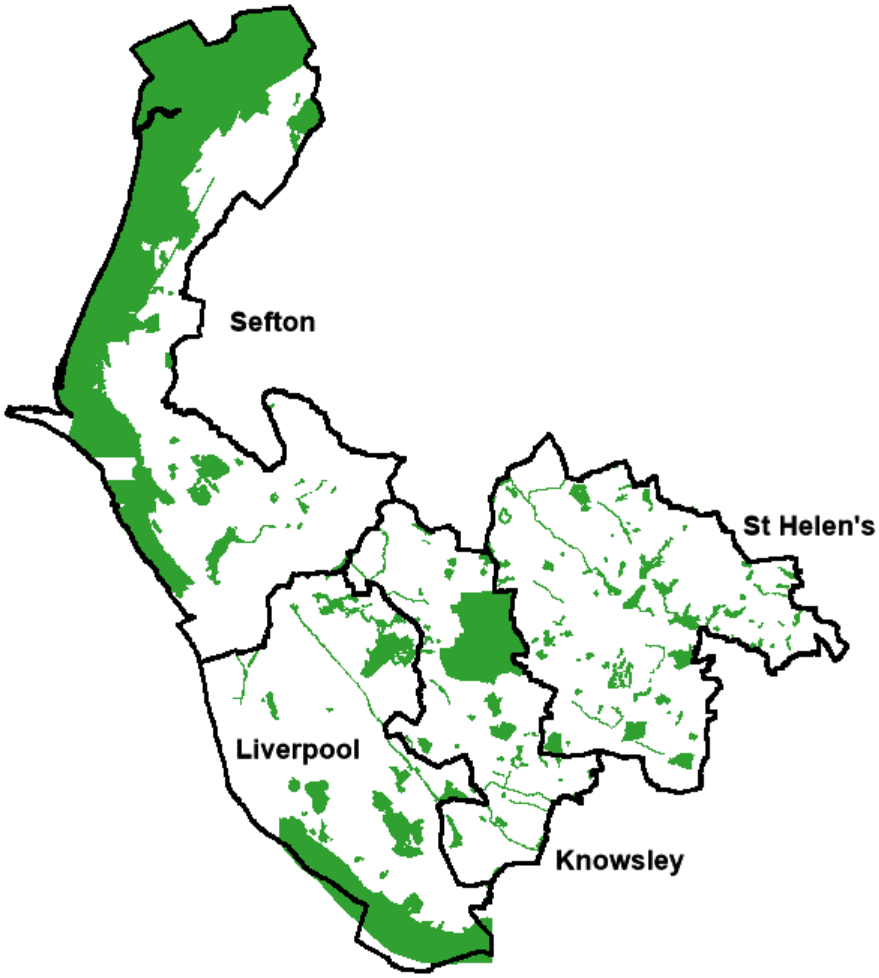

Figure 1: Local Wildlife Sites in North Merseyside.
This map (password protected) can also be accessed online at:
https://northmerseysidelsp.org.uk/lwsim/

The Local Sites Partnership is responsible for 266 LWSs in North Merseyside. MEAS, in association with Merseyside BioBank, are responsible for co-ordinating monitoring the condition of LWSs on behalf of the Local Sites Partnership and North Merseyside's Local Planning Authorities. Monitoring allows us to confirm the presence or absence of designation features on site so that we can inform and make recommendations to the landowner or manager of the most appropriate management to benefit those designations features.

Whilst sites are occasionally lost or fragmented by development, this is generally rare and shows the strength of protection LWSs receive through local planning policy. Furthermore, this demonstrates the importance of up-to-date monitoring and the need for a proactive LWS designation system led by the Local Sites Partnership.

1.4. Aims

The aims of Local Wildlife Site monitoring are to:

- Maintain an overview of the condition of the site (i.e. are the features of importance still present and in good condition);
- Identify management actions required so that landowners can be informed as to how to maintain and enhance LWS they own;
- Provide information on sites that are at risk from development, inadequate land management and invasive species;
- Provide data to help the Local Authorities report on the Single Data List indicator - Local Wildlife Sites in Positive Conservation Management;
- To inform the evidence base for the emerging Liverpool City Region Nature Recovery Networks and Local Nature Recovery Strategies as required by the Environment Act;
- Recommend actions to help Local Authorities meet their Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) duties under Section 40 and Biodiversity reporting requirement from the Environment Act.

Environment Act & Local Wildlife Sites

In January 2018, the Government published A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment which sets out a broad strategy to leave the "*environment in a better state than we found it*". One key approach is to strengthen the planning system so that biodiversity net gains become mandatory, effectively changing the NPPF's "should" to a "must".

Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is now in place (January / April 2024). In addition, the Biodiversity Duty on Local Authorities has been updated and requires Local Authorities to both conserve and enhance biodiversity (May 2023) and produce regular Biodiversity Reports. Therefore, the role of LWS and the Local Sites Partnership has never been more supported by policy and legislation.

In March 2023 Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) guidance was published effectively giving LWSs a heightened status. This guidance recognises LWSs as areas of particular importance for biodiversity being a mandatory and integral part of local nature recovery.

LWSs are already being identified through development management as recipient sites for biodiversity enhancement or to provide compensation sites for loss of biodiversity from development sites. and this is likely to continue within the new era of mandatory BNG, and offsite solutions are sought. This has the potential to increase investment in our LWS with resultant improvements in condition.

In North Merseyside, MEAS have been liaising with strategic partners to identify options for implementation of BNG in our subregion and baselining opportunities on LWSs. The team has also been working closely with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority on LNRS preparations.

The ongoing Local Wildlife Site monitoring programme provides an important habitat and species baseline to deliver on Environment Act obligations and wider environmental net

2.Methods

2.1. Site Selection

The annual sites survey programme is guided by a number of criteria, including:

- Date of previous monitoring;
- Condition;
- Accessibility; and
- Seasonality.

The aim of the LWS monitoring programme is to provide a rolling programme of survey so all sites are monitored at least once every 10 years.

In addition to date of survey and condition, the survey programme will increasingly be driven by seasonality of designation features e.g. Ancient Woodland indicators and expanded to include those larger sites in private ownership where access is possible.

Surveys are undertaken following up-to-date best practice guidance e.g. UKHab classification and the use of appropriate risk assessments.

The monitoring of Local Wildlife Sites has eight key stages as outlined below:

Desktop Analysis

Desktop analysis of sites is the initial stage of data collection:

- Species records from previous surveys of the site are obtained from the Local Environmental Record Centre – Merseyside BioBank;
- Previous survey proformas, maps and photographs are used to provide an initial baseline understanding of the site;
- Aerial imagery, online mapping resources (such as DEFRA's MAGIC) and historical Phase 1 Survey maps are used to further determine baseline conditions;
- Other information that has been carried out for a number of functions, such as planning applications or monitoring schemes, are also consulted to gather as much data as possible.

Contact Land Managers

Where sites are in private ownership, permission is sought for access to the land. For sites that are in public ownership, notice is sent to council departments informing them that surveys will be taking place during the monitoring period.

Risk Assessment

A site-specific risk assessment is produced for each site and each surveyor is required to read and sign a copy to state that they have read and understood the document before any monitoring commenced.

Site Visit

Walkover surveys are conducted for each site. Surveys are conducted between April and March the following year. Surveys include inspection of r(?)ed site boundaries, habitat and species features, current activities and management practices, and suggest management and enhancement that would be of benefit to biodiversity. Photographs are taken of sites to provide an additional visual record.

Complete Monitoring Forms & Maps

The monitoring forms are completed on site visits as part of walkover surveys. From 2021-22 we aim to complete a UKHab baseline survey of each site. Maps and monitoring forms are digitised to ensure an electronic copy is created. Site and habitat condition are assessed using the Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain Metric guidance.

Capture Species Data

Copies of the species list and target notes (where relevant) are passed to Merseyside BioBank for inclusion within their database.

Report to Landowners

Upon completion of the desk study and survey visit, the completed monitoring forms and maps will be collated and sent to the appropriate landowners. This ensures that the management recommendations are provided as quickly as possible so that any updates to management regimes can be made accordingly.

2.2. Survey Limitations

Within North Merseyside, there is both a large number of sites and huge variation in designation features both across the region, and within individual sites. Considering this, it is rarely possible for a single survey visit to be carried out at a time of year when all the designated features are likely to be found. Due to staff capacity and resource, where a large number of sites are designated for a similar habitat or feature (e.g. grassland or ancient woodland) or a feature that requires multiple survey visits such as breeding birds, it can be difficult to visit all sites at the optimum time of year or carry out repeat visits on the same site.

Similarly, access to private sites can take a significant amount of time to arrange, which may mean the site cannot be visited until after the optimum time for the designated features on site.

Blackneck Moth *Lygephila pastinum*, Rimrose Valley LWS, Sefton.

3. Results

3.1. Sites Monitored

A total of 29 sites were surveyed in the 2025 period. The largest proportion of sites were in St Helen's (Figure 2) due to this district having the highest number of sites in North Merseyside (116 sites). This uneven spread of LWS across North Merseyside continues to be taken into consideration when programming site surveys. The LWSs surveyed during 2025 are given below.

3.2. A list of sites monitored during 2025:

Knowsley

1. Brickwall Covert Tarbock
2. Copse, s of A58 Prescot (St Joseph's Playing Field)
3. Ditton Brook
4. Dog Clog Brook, Tarbock
5. Green's Bridge Plantation Halewood
6. Pex Hill
7. Wango Lane Wetland Kirkby

Liverpool

1. Banks Road and Garston Gas Works
2. Reynolds Park
3. Speke Hall and adj Sites
4. Childwall Woods and Fields

Sefton

1. Flea Moss Wood and ponds
2. Land e of Canal, n of Wango Lane, Waddicar
3. Parkhaven Trust, Maghull
4. Pond and open space, n of Copy Lane, Netherton
5. Rimrose Valley and Canal
6. Sniggery Farm

St Helens

1. Crow Lane Copse
2. Depot, Rainford
3. Lyme Pit Tip
4. Mesnes Park, Newton le-Willows
5. Moss Plantation
6. Newton Brook 05
7. Old Mineral Line, Lea Green
8. Sales Wood/Gorse Plantation
9. Sutton Brook
10. Woodland, Old Garswood Railway
11. Wood Pit Covert
12. Wood Pit Tip, grassland

Note: *Full monitoring reports will be provided to landowners and managers and can also be provided on request to LSP members.*

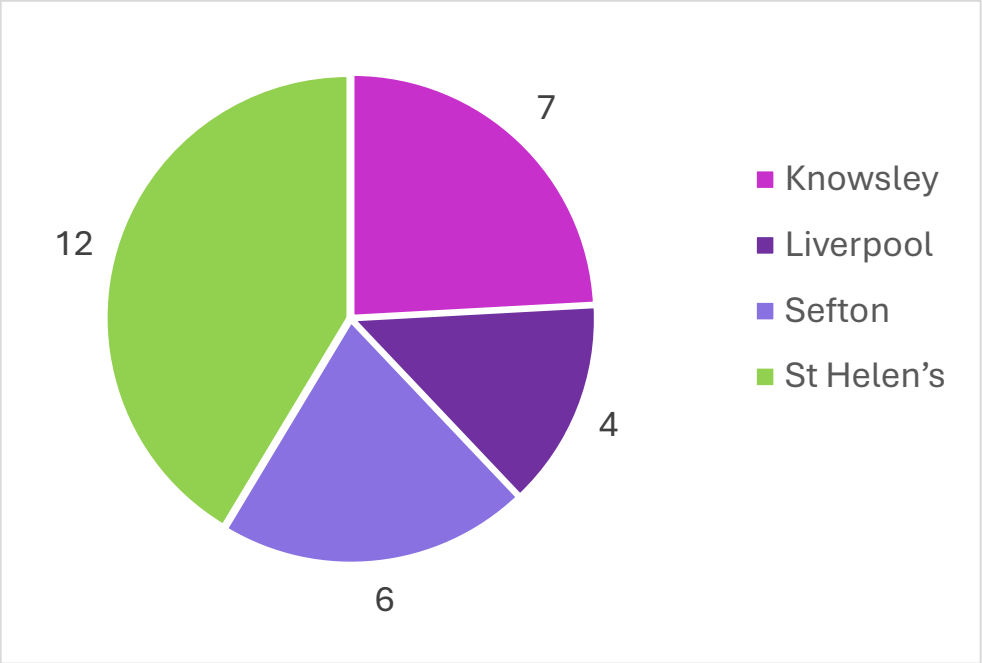

Figure 2: The number of Local Wildlife Sites monitored across the districts in North Merseyside in 2025.

3.3. LWS bat monitoring programme

In collaboration with MEAS, Merseyside and West Lancashire Bat Group (MWLBG) carries out structured bat monitoring on several LWSs in North Merseyside and Wirral. Results of these bat monitoring surveys are provided in Appendix 5.

3.4. 2025 Sites Results and long-term trends

Overall, 7% of LWSs surveyed this year were determined to be in an overall good condition in relation to their habitat designation features, 62% of sites were in moderate condition and 24% in poor condition (Figure 3). 7 % of the sites surveyed this year were not assessed as part of the survey visit. The trends are due to a variety of different reasons including invasive species presence, lack of funding and conflicting management priorities. This is discussed further in sections 3.5-3.10 below. Since LWS monitoring re-started in 2020, most sites monitored in each year have been in moderate condition and this trend continues this year. Long term this season, 2025, saw the joint lowest percentage of sites assessed as being in good condition which is the same proportion as last year 2024-2025.

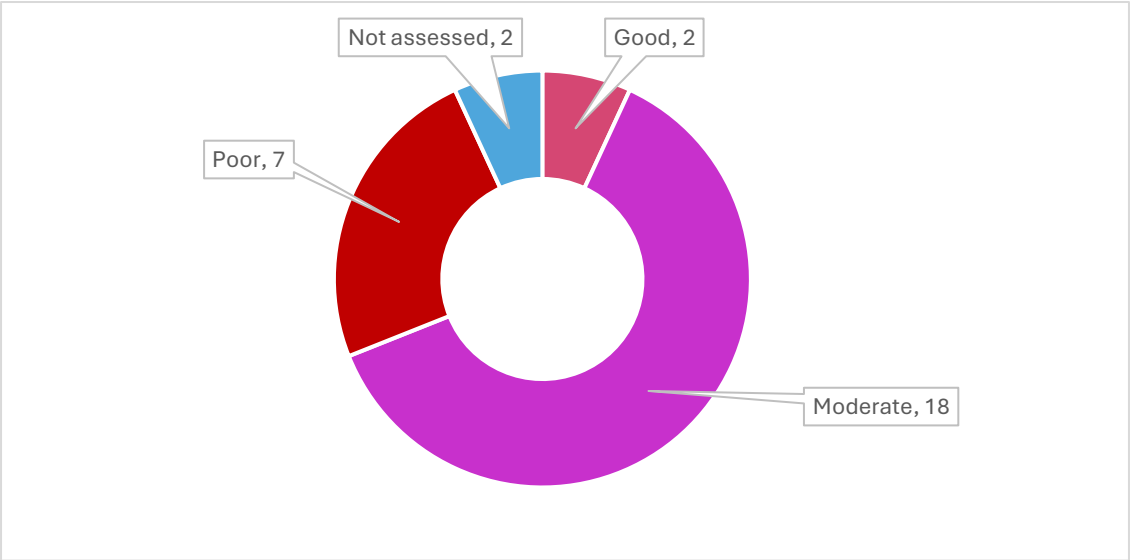

Figure 3: The condition of designation features at each Local Wildlife Site surveyed in 2025.

Year-on-year comparisons must be treated with caution, as different sites are surveyed each year with the mix of publicly and privately owned sites varying, sometimes significantly. As annual surveying continues, the long-term trends will become more relevant and comparable. In general, the lack of sites in good condition has continued into 2025 (Figure 4). The majority of sites surveyed are in "moderate" condition, where some designation features are present but not all and they suffer from a general lack of management. Trends in LWS condition is clear from monitoring over 2020-2025, see figure 4 below.

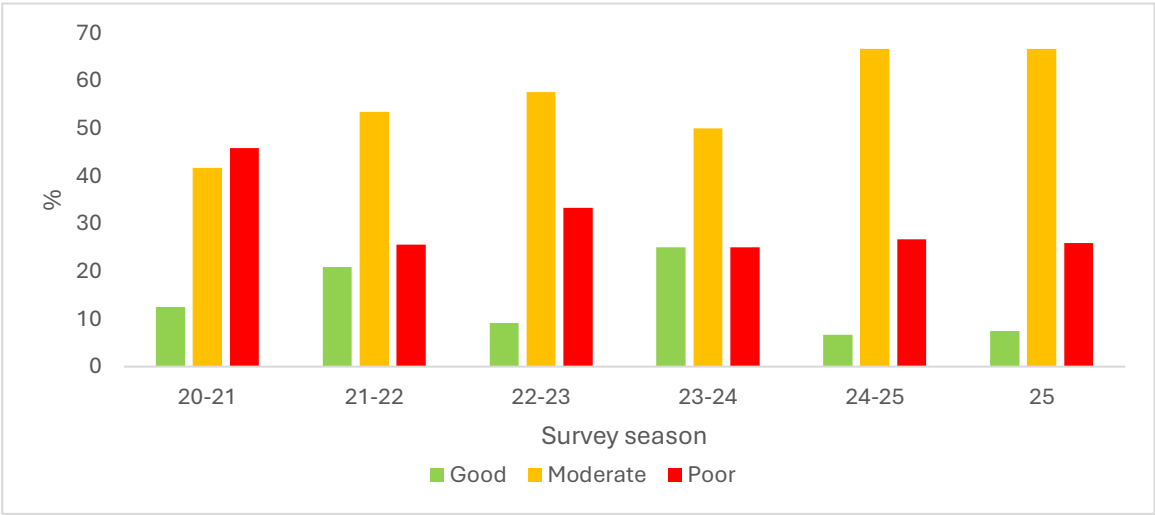

Figure 4: Condition of Local Wildlife Sites surveyed since 2020.

3.5. Current Management

This year, of all the sites surveyed across the four districts, 48% were found to have some level of management carried out on site, though this management was not always in relation to their designation features and often prioritised for amenity uses. Just 10% of sites surveyed were recognised as being in positive conservation management (Figure 5).

The majority of LWSs do not have formal management plans in place and most management carried out on site is for public access and amenity use. This could be due to prioritisation of health and safety and limited resources for other management, but also due to a lack of awareness of designation features and appropriate management strategies for these.

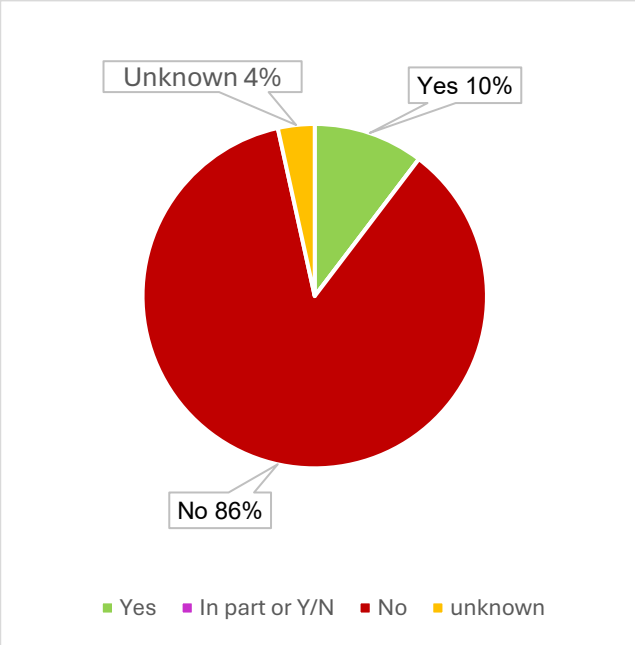

Figure 5: The proportion of Local Wildlife Sites surveyed that are in positive conservation management in 2024-25.

Trends are difficult to draw as different sites are monitored each year. However, broadly, results show that from 2024-2025 to 2025 it is fairly consistent with around half of the sites surveyed receiving some management. The long-term trend seen is for between 85-50% of sites to receive some form of management.

It is evident that the majority of Local Wildlife Sites require targeted management to maintain, recover and improve the condition of the designation features. Since 2020, most sites surveyed have not been in positive conservation management (Figure 6), though the number of sites receiving some level of management varies across the years (Figure 7). LWSs across the whole of North

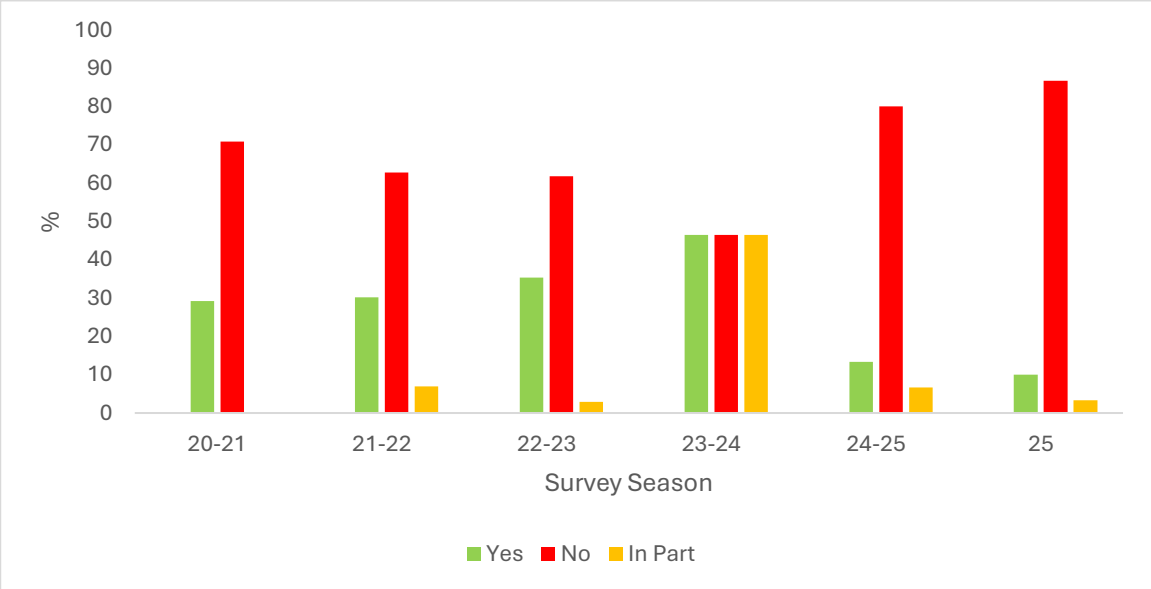

Figure 6: The % of Local Wildlife Sites surveyed since 2020 in positive conservation management.

Merseyside would benefit from targeted, conservation management. Landowners of public sites should be encouraged to go beyond maintenance of amenity features where funding allows, and private landowners should be encouraged supported in their efforts to manage sites for biodiversity.

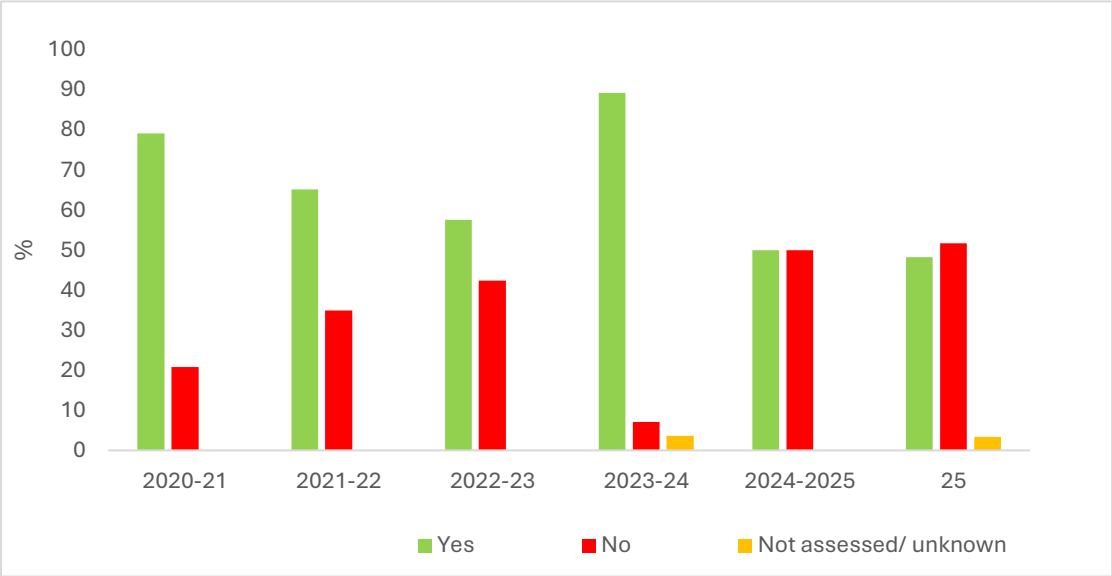

Figure 7: Trends - % of Local Wildlife Sites where management was observed from 2020-21 to 2024-25.

3.6. Designated Features

The majority of sites surveyed in 2025 had at least one designation feature present at the time of survey. No sites were found to have all their designation features present and three sites had no designation features present (Figure 8). One site (Reynolds Park) was not assessed for designation features. As per the limitations discussed in 3.3, in most cases these results reflect survey effort rather than the feature being lost. One site has been identified where de-selection has been recommended due to the loss of features - Pond and Open Space n of Copy Lane Netherton. All other sites surveyed were found to still qualify for Local Wildlife Site status.

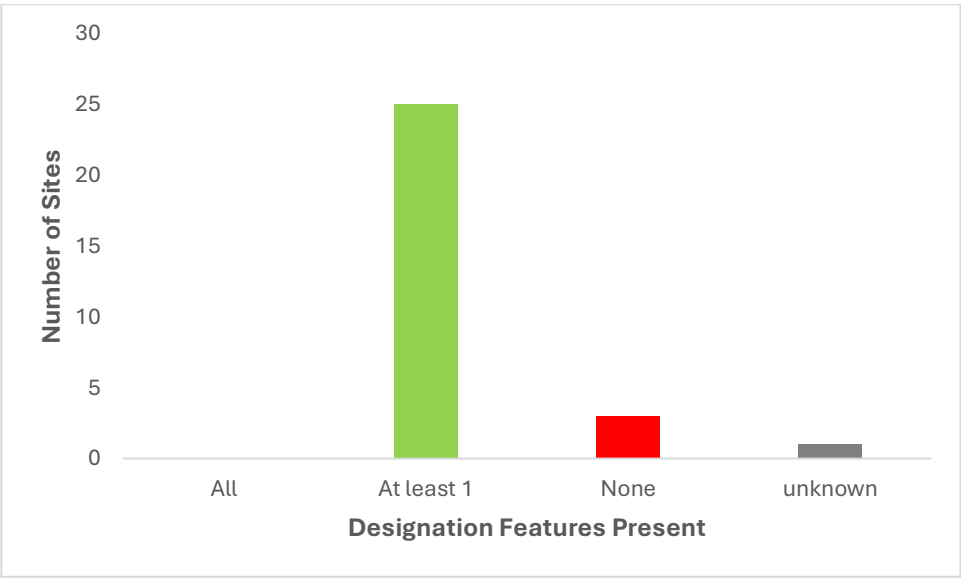

Figure 8: The number of Local Wildlife Sites surveyed in 2024-25 with All, At Least One or No designation features present.

3.7. On-site activities, threats and pressures

A wide range of activities were observed on the surveyed sites that did not impact designation features. With the most commonly recorded being walking and dog walking. These activities continue to be the most recorded activities within LWSs with cycling and fishing being observed on 6 sites and shooting or evidence of shooting being observed on 5 sites (Figure 9). This highlights the importance and value of Local Wildlife Sites to local communities for recreation as well as the pressures which can come from these activities. This can be especially true where these activities are not controlled, or limited, and alternative spaces are not available in the local area.

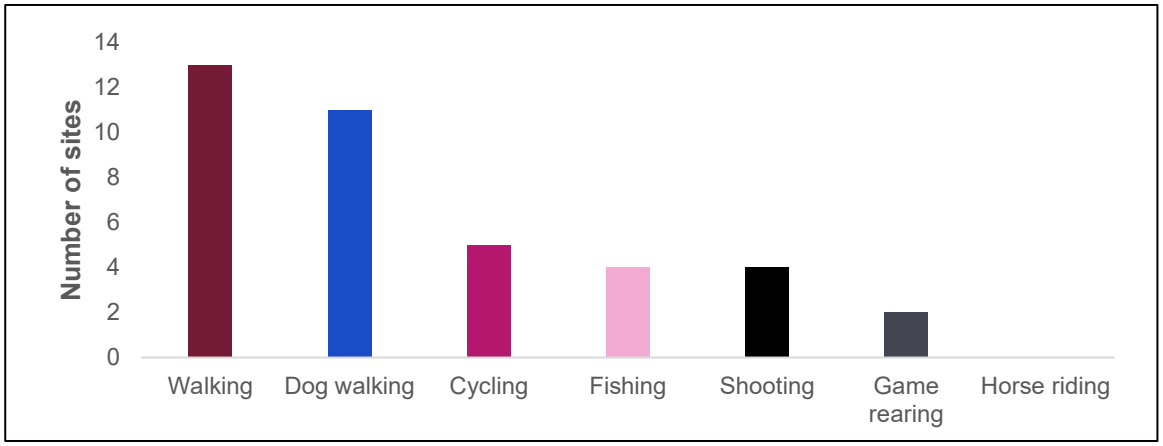

Figure 9: Onsite activities observed 2025

The actively damaging activities, threats and pressures which were observed on sites are shown in figure 10. Invasive non-native species (INNS) were the biggest threat to designation features, being observed on 20 sites. This can be linked to fly tipping on certain sites as well as a lack of management. Littering was observed on 14 sites, with dog fouling and fly tipping being observed on 13 sites each. Evidence of anti-social behaviour such as dog fouling, burning/fires, and damage from motor vehicles were observed on several sites visited in 2025.

Damage caused by recreational pressure was also observed on 10 of the sites surveyed with this being typically seen through trampling of sites due to overuse. This highlights the risk these Local Wildlife Sites face from potential misuse by the public.

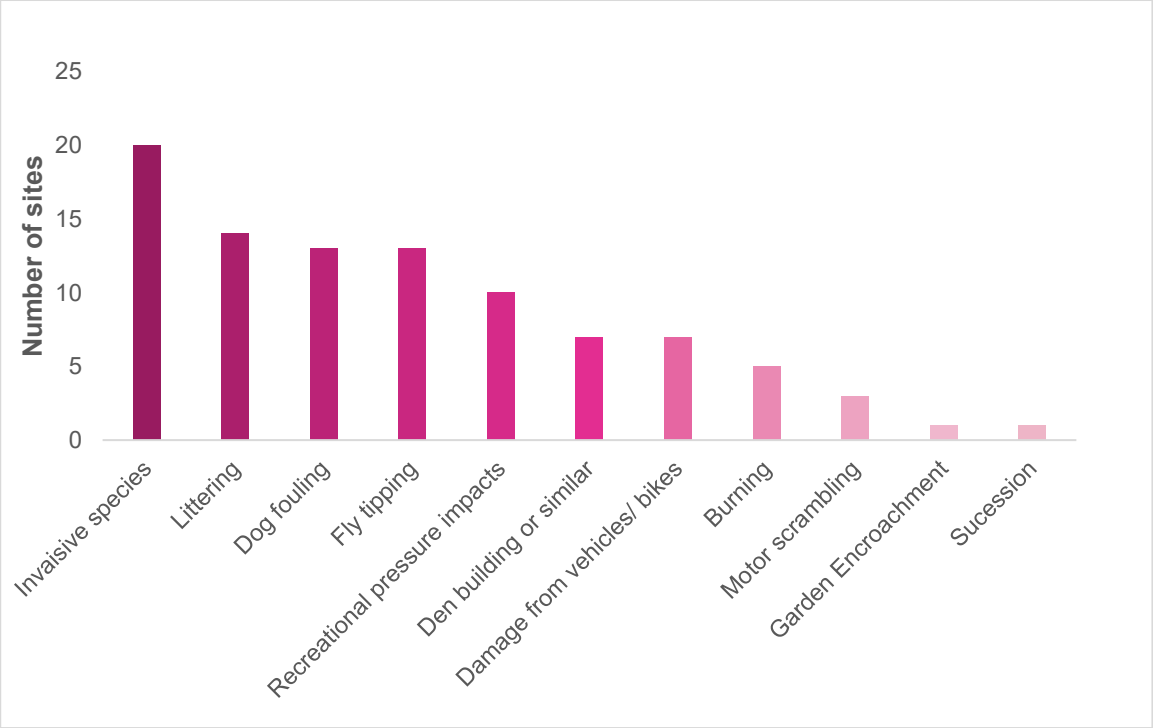

Figure10: Threats and damage causing activities observed 2025

3.8. Management needs, threats and pressures

Invasive species, littering, fly tipping and dog fouling continue to be identified as being the most common threats to Local Wildlife Sites during surveying in 2025 (Figure 10). Compared to previous year's LWS monitoring results the number and type of threats remain largely unchanged.

Invasive species

A major problem across the regions LWS continues to be invasive species, with one or more invasive species present in 21 of the 29 sites surveyed during this period. Invasive species including Himalayan Balsam, Japanese knotweed and Rhododendron are common within standing water, running water and most woodland habitats across Liverpool City Region. Whilst some invasive species management was observed across select sites and is welcomed, many of the sites surveyed had no clear management of invasive species on site, and their spread often putting designated features at risk.

The continued presence of these invasive species reduces the condition of important habitats and this is subsequently impacting protected and locally important species. It is recommended that a scheme of invasive species control is implemented across all LWSs with invasive species present. The aim of the scheme should be to remove, control, restrict and limit the presence and spread of invasive species across the LWS.

Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) was the most common species and found on 37% of surveyed sites, including several woodland sites. The second most common species were Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) in 27% of sites and Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*) in 17% of sites (Figure 11).

Six of the LWSs had 5-10% of the total site covered by invasive species. Three sites had between 26-50% of the site covered by invasive species and another three sites had cover of between 51-75% by invasive species. Two sites had over 75% cover of invasive species Only six sites had no invasive species present.

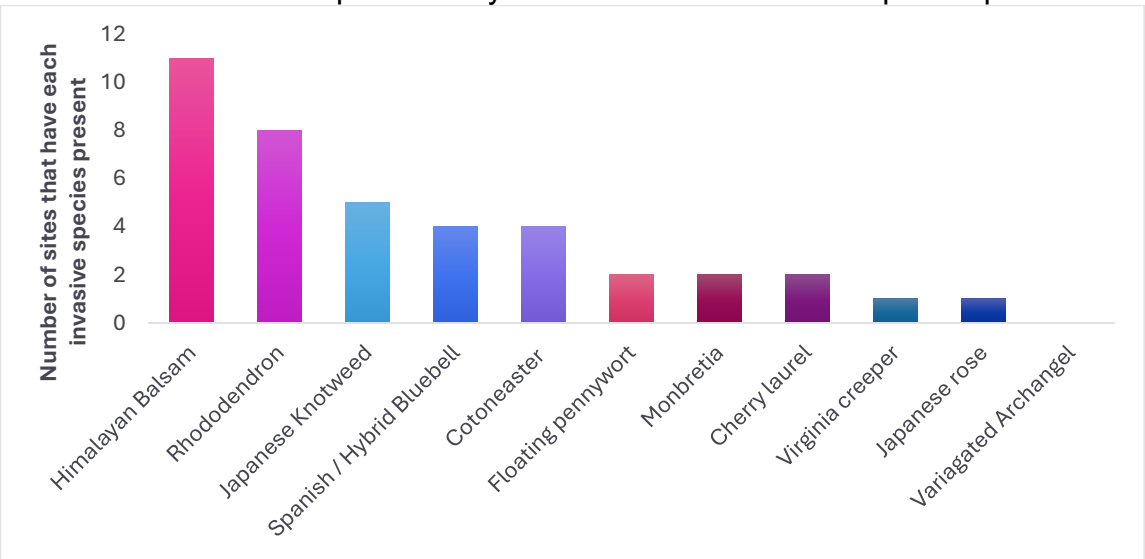

Figure 10: The extent of invasive species at Local Wildlife Sites surveyed. (Rhododendron ponticum and any species of cotoneaster listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act).

Invasive species control is a costly, intensive process, often requiring disposal permits and repeat visits to carry out continued treatment. Some species are extremely difficult to fully remediate, and on-site eradication is only effective if species cannot move back onto the land from adjacent sites. The presence of these species represents a real risk to the condition and features of many Local Wildlife Sites within the region.

The presence of invasive species over the past 5 years has remained reasonably static with presence being recorded at between 70-85% of sites visited between 2020-2025 (Figure 12).

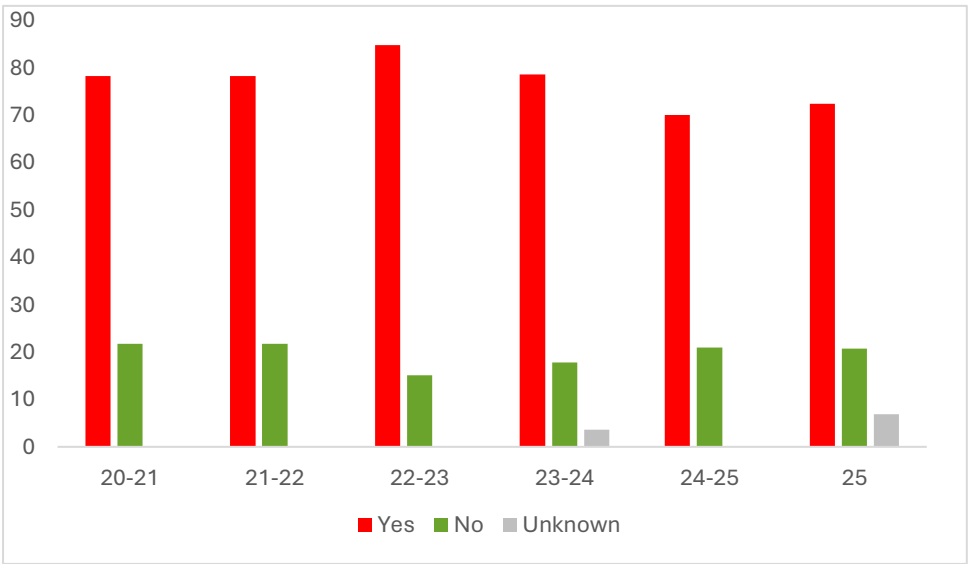

Figure 11: % of sites with invasive species present 2020-21 to 2025.

Public access

Most LWSs within Liverpool City Region are subject to a degree of public access, with the most common land management practices observed on sites, predominantly linked to this, being for amenity access purposes. Impacts from public access have been observed across all publicly accessible sites with the observation of trampling and formation of informal paths across designated habitat features. Formalising of paths within some LWS would reduce the impact of trampling across the wider site and protect designation features. Increased signage and interpretation boards detailing the value of the habitats and species present within sites, would help to educate members of the public on the value and need to protect habitats within LWSs.

Dog fouling

Dog fouling was recorded on thirteen of the sites surveyed in 2025. As well as trampling and recreational pressure effects, the enrichment of grassland habitats through dog fouling can also have long term effects on grassland condition. A review of current signage regarding penalties for allowing dog fouling, issuing of penalties, education strategies and provision of additional dog waste bins could help to reduce enrichment of nutrients on habitats.

Buring

Fire damage from activities such as BBQs and arson was evident across five sites. Consequences of fire damage can be large in scale and have occurred on Speke and Garston Coastal reserve (Part of the Mersey Estuary LWS) at the start of 2025 and most recently at Formby Point. Appropriate management, restoration of habitats, and prevention through awareness raising signage and education can aid with the threat of fire damage.

Fly tipping

Fly tipping was evident across 13 sites, this occurred mostly on sites where ranger presence, security or surveillance was absent, and the sites were close to a public road and/or public presence was low. Fly tipping can also be linked to the spread of invasive species. Fly tipping prevention through warning signage, surveillance, reporting, enforcement and waste disposal campaigns would aid with tackling this issue.

Motorbike/ E-Motorbike scrambling

Three sites showed signs of damage from motorbike and e-motorbike scrambling where grassland had been torn up by the tyres of scrambler bikes. Assessment of the access for motor bikes/ e-motorbikes along with repairs to fencing and gates, as well as installing new fencing where required, could aid with keeping motorcycles off Local Wildlife Sites in the Liverpool City Region.

3.9. Management practices

Condition assessment undertaken as part of LWS site monitoring identified some key management themes (Figure 13) which require addressing to ensure that LWS are in positive conservation condition.

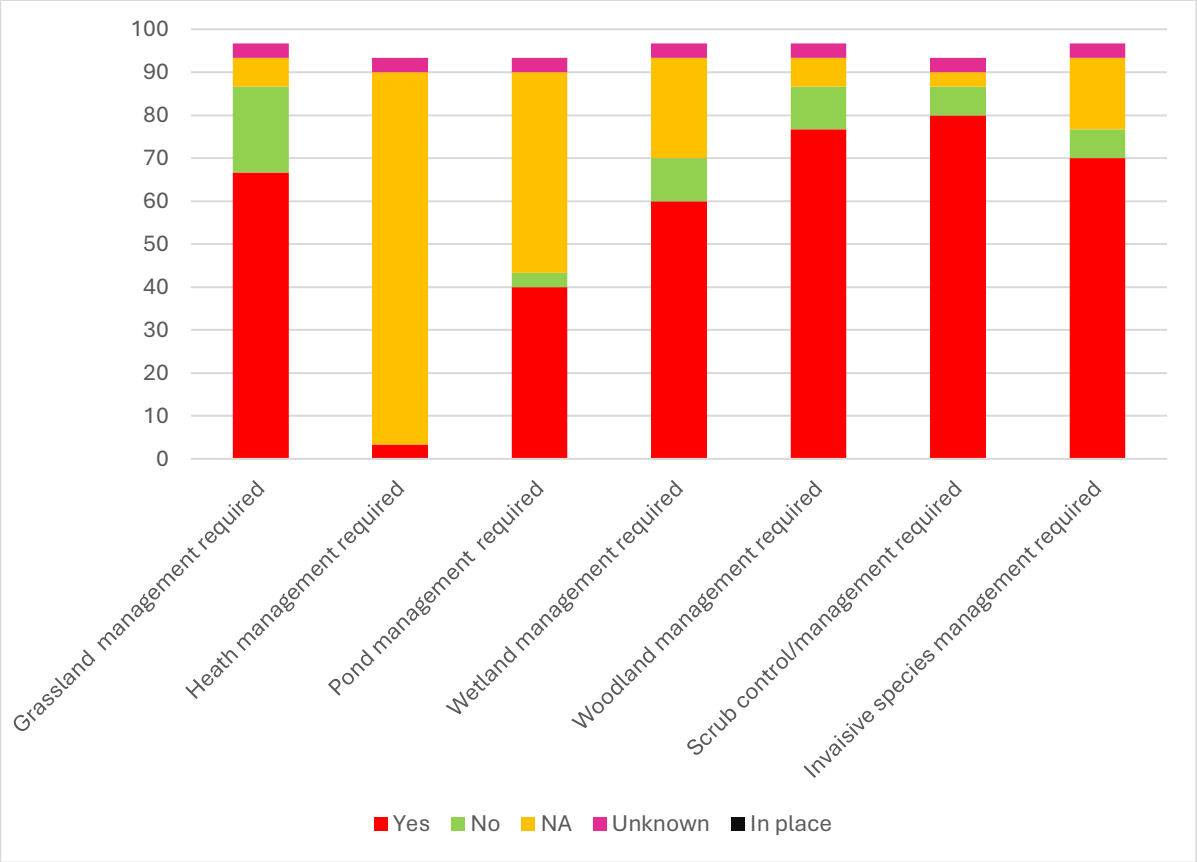

Figure 12: Management targets for sites surveyed in 2024-2025 (% of sites requiring each management type)

The key management themes identified are:

Grassland management

A large proportion of the grasslands within the LWSs observed are unmanaged and suffering encroachment from woodland and scrub, along with becoming less diverse due to a lack of appropriate management. Most sites that are managed are either cut once in the autumn, or areas are “picture framed” to leave some areas uncut for biodiversity.

Additional management would improve the condition of these grasslands and would ideally consist of a twice annual cut in spring and autumn with arisings removed. This serves to both maintain the openness of the grassland habitats, improve the diversity of species, and prevent a build-up of nutrients to prevent more vigorous grasses taking over. In certain LWS (and LNR) management through conservation grazing is, or could be carried out, and is a more natural method of managing the grasslands and often yields better results than cutting, though this option is not always viable for every LWS due to amenity use.

Scrub Control / management

Scrub encroachment into sensitive habitats such as grasslands and wetlands is a common problem across many sites. Scrub control should aim to reduce and/or entirely remove scrub within sites to prevent the loss of other habitats. Scrub does hold good biodiversity value and areas should be maintained in most instances to provide habitat for species, however where sites have been selected on the presence of wetlands, unimproved grassland habitats, or other sensitive habitats and their associated species, management for the success of these areas and species should take precedent.

Woodland management

Woodland management is required in both established, mature woodland, and planted woodland. Though the prescriptions and required works are different between the two.

Within recently planted woodlands, the planting density can be very high, and a large stand of trees planted at the same time can grow into a dense “leggy” woodland which provides little ecological value. Activities such as thinning, underplanting and replanting in later years can help mimic natural process that occur in more natural woodlands and allow a varied habitat that benefits a range of species to form. Thinning young woodlands to create 10-20% open space in pockets will encourage regeneration and should be coupled with other activities such as invasive species control to ensure the woodlands grow to create biodiverse habitats that benefit wildlife.

Management of mature woodland is often a less regular requirement. Management in these woodlands should focus on removal of invasive species – particularly rhododendron, Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and cherry laurel as these can be particularly harmful in woodlands and quickly choke out ground flora and woodland regeneration. Other management should include gradual thinning of both mature and sapling sycamore to allow room for native trees to regenerate and occasional removal of over-mature trees to create room in the canopy.

Pond management

Management of ponds can involve;

- Invasive removal (where present) and clearance of excess algae, yellow flag iris, typha or duckweed to allow access to and from water for amphibians and mammals and prevent drying out of ponds.
- Management of trees through mechanical means around ponds to preventing overshading, aiming for less than 50% shading around a pond.
- Management of ponds in LWS on the Sefton Coast for Natterjack Toad may also require fencing and signage to prevent disturbance and inform the public.

Wetland management

Management of wetland can involve:

- Removal of invasive species;
- Ensuring water supplies are pollution free and trace back, investigate and treat any offending sources;
- Remove scrub, willow and other trees to below 10% of cover;

- Clearance of stands of rush (on rotation) to allow areas of open water, and a mix of habitats.

For any ditches the following is required to achieve good condition;

- Less than 10% of the ditch heavily shaded;
- >10 species of emergent, submerged and floating plants should be present along each 20m stretch;
- Less than 10% cover of duckweed (Lemna spp) or filamentous algae;
- Physical damage should be below 10%. 75% of the ditch should have aquatic marginal vegetation;
- No litter or fly tipping debris

Heath management

Within North Merseyside, only small pockets of heathland remain, and most are heavily degraded due to lack of management. Heathland should be cleared of invasive scrub and trees such as bracken, bramble and birch. Heather should also be cleared on rotation to create space for grasses and flowering plants and create fire breaks.

Management of Heathland in good condition should aim for:

- At least 2 dwarf shrub species are present, and cover is 25-75%;
- All heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) age-classes (pioneer, degenerate and mature) are present with at least 10% pioneer heather (in lowlands);
- Unshaded bare ground should account for 1-10% of area and;
- No invasive species or litter/fly tipping is present on site.

3.10. Impacts to LWS during the 2025 monitoring period

Land at Parkhaven Trust, Magull

Previously we reported on trees on the Sefton Lane frontage to Land at Parkhaven Trust, Magull Local Wildlife Site, Sefton Lane, Maghull which were felled in early 2025. The site was visited this year as part of our monitoring and the loss of some the trees (approximately 8 trees; 4 large and 4 medium) was confirmed. This site is designated due to the presence of a Rookery (one of two sites in Sefton) in mature trees on site. However, as a result of the tree felling this feature has been lost. Upon visiting the site, the presence of rooks was confirmed in trees north of the boundary of the LWS. Amending the LWS boundary to include the rookery is recommended.

Further action regarding the loss of the Priority Habitat, Lowland mixed broadleaf Woodland/ Lowland mixed deciduous Woodland and Lowland Wood-pasture and parkland, comprising mature possible veteran beech and lime is ongoing. The action including investigation with regard to loss of the rooks, and any other protected species (bats) and the requirement for a felling licence is being pursued.

Pond and open space, n of Copy Lane, Netherton

This site was originally designated due to the presence of unimproved neutral and acid grassland and the presence of a pond. The site visit in Summer of 2025 found low diversity amenity grassland throughout the site and a single species stand of hawthorn woodland. The general species diversity within the site was low, and the heavy amenity use has likely both degraded the grassland and gives

little room for recovery unless areas are fenced off. The pond was heavily overgrown and as such, access was not possible.

Overall, the site is unlikely to meet the criteria for a Local Wildlife Site under current management practices. However, the original designation implies a general soil condition that may favour good quality grassland, so could be capable of restoration should management change.

Impacts from development and proposed development

Sefton

The Stray

Works to facilitate flood risk management and create Suds floods water storage have occurred in The Stray in Southport as well as habitat improvement works as part of statutory Biodiversity Net Gain. The works demarked to follow the course of the existing footpath through the site and impacts are deemed minor. No long-term impacts which affect the designation or the ability of the sites to meet the designation criteria were deemed and short-term impacts have been mitigated for through a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

Loop Line and Adjacent Sites

Widening and access improvement works were carried out on the Loop Line and Adjacent sites. Impacts have been mitigated for through a CEMP and whilst some habitat has been lost these impacts are deemed minor and do not affect the designation or the ability of the sites to meet the designation criteria.

Rimrose Valley and Canal, and Edge Farm Rookery

Installation of a communication mast. The designation means that the site will require management for access and conservation management on site will not be possible. The inclusion of this land which is within the ownership of LCFA Sefton, within the Rimrose Valley and Canal LWS designation area is possibly due to coarse boundary demarcation and should not have been included. Amending the boundary to exclude this area of the site will not affect the functioning of the LWS or the designation features. The Adjacent LWS Edge Farm Rookery may have been affected by the proposals and monitoring of the rookery is suggested in the next round of monitoring.

Orrell Hill

Seasonal Christmas event on site with lighting effects on designation features (red squirrel). Mitigation for long term yearly events is to be assessed in relation to LWS designation features.

St Helens

Shaley Brow Brownlow LWS.

Development of a hotel and carpark which will encroach onto the LWS and may affect AW. To be investigated in 2026 survey season.

St Helens Canal, broad oak basin and Frog Hall LWS and Sankey Brook LWS.

Minor works have been carried out which were limited to the Demolition of a footbridge. No loss of LWS or adverse effects

3.1. Adjacent land use

The most common land use adjacent to Local Wildlife Sites surveyed this year were residential, closely followed by roads and recreational (Figure 14). Other LWSs, Parkland and other Designated Sites were also notable adjacent land uses in 2025. The sites surveyed this year were mainly located in urban areas and therefore it is unsurprising that in these areas, residential roads and recreational land use was common. There were also a number of sites located on the urban fringe, meaning that adjacent agricultural was also encountered. In these situations, opportunities to encourage farmland species should not be overlooked.

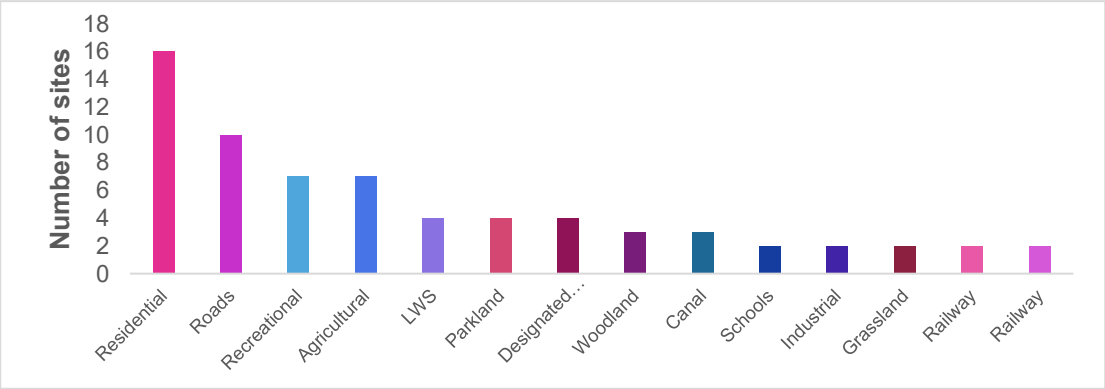

Figure 13: The different type of lane use found adjacent to each site surveyed.

4. Conclusions

In 2025, collectively we surveyed 29 Local Wildlife Sites across three districts in North Merseyside (Sefton, St Helens, and Knowsley) equating to 10.6% of LWS.

The 10% monitoring target was met for the fourth year running which is a welcome achievement given the heightened importance of LWSs in recently published Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) guidance and need for baseline data. The information gathered during each of these site visits, in particular habitat condition data, is extremely valuable and will help target local nature recovery and delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain.

The results of the 2025 survey season highlight that many LWSs in North Merseyside continue to be in suboptimal condition (62%, moderate and 24% poor), with 7% in good condition in relation to the status of their designation features.

86% of the surveyed LWSs were not in positive conservation management. This reflects the previous monitoring season, and there continues to be an increase year on year in the number of surveyed sites not in positive conservation management. Whilst some sites have management plans in place, away from the Sefton Coast management continues to be largely limited to amenity purposes. These sites typically lack tailored management specific for the designation features of a site. This trend is not new, the monitoring between 2020-25 and previously in 2011 noted similar issues.

It is evident that the majority of sites require targeted management to maintain, restore or improve the designated features to a greater or lesser extent. This is an urgent priority and in order to meet national targets to halt biodiversity loss by 2030 this issue needs to be urgently addressed. The LSP will continue to work with landowners and managers of LWSs and provide advice on the most appropriate management of individual sites.

Since monitoring restarted in 2020-21, invasive species have regularly been recorded across a high proportion of surveyed sites, particularly within woodland, coastal and riparian habitats. 72% of site surveyed in 2025 required invasive species control management. Prevalence of invasive species at LWSs is undoubtedly due to a lack of management, but also due to illegal activities such as fly-tipping, garden escapes and a lack of a co-ordinated strategy for treatment and control particularly along waterways. This also reflects the findings of the Liverpool City Region State of Nature Report.

Grassland, woodlands and ponds formed the majority of habitats that required management. The management requirements identified included reduced mowing regimes, thinning of woodland and management of pond shading alongside the removal of invasive species. These issues are common throughout North Merseyside and a coordinated approach through the LSP land managers sub-group across the districts would greatly benefit these habitats.

Where sites were in good condition, the sympathetic conservation management being carried out was seen to directly contribute to the retention of habitat and species features. Where habitats are suffering due to a lack of management, a change in management to balance amenity uses and biodiversity would contribute to a significant increase in the condition and ecological value of many LWSs. The relaxation of some management strategies could also result in a reduction in costs for site managers and landowners. This is particularly relevant for Council owned parks, grass verges and greenspaces. Through adjustments of management practice e.g. relaxation of mowing regimes significant biodiversity and environmental gains could be achieved.

The continued monitoring of LWSs remains vital across North Merseyside to inform Local Authorities, landowners, and managers of the most appropriate management of LWSs under their control. Monitoring can also inform approaches to Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategy delivery. This data is also used to inform Defra's mandatory Single Data List indicator 'Local Sites in Positive Conservation Management' and provide baseline information for future Biodiversity Net Gain contributions.

MEAS have also review the current LWS guidelines for site selection and will be issuing updated guidance for reviewed by the LSP in early Spring and are expected to be adopted in full later this year. Thank you to all wildlife specialists who have contributed.

Liverpool City Region (LCR) LNRS will be adopted and launched in March 2026 and the Local Sites Partnership (LSP) has integrated LNRS priorities into selection guidelines. Further, LWSs are key to delivery of LNRS and the LSP is working closely with the LCR Combined Authority and the newly formed Nature Recovery Delivery Partnership

Sefton Council is consulting on their draft Nature Conservation SPD in Spring 2026. The SPD includes a new section outlining the process whereby LWSs are selected and designated in the borough during the Local Plan period. This allows for flexibility within the designation process, allowing LWS to be designated when identified and ratified by the LSP.

MEAS's engagement with land managers and assessment of potential new sites for designation, including sites that need boundary extensions, remains ongoing. We encourage landowners of public and private sites to ask for advice on managing their sites and endeavour to provide simply, easy to understand suggestions to improve sites for biodiversity. We welcome input from the wider LSP in this process and we hope that these proactive steps will ensure that the selection and de-selection process regarding LWSs remains dynamic and the LSP will be a fundamental part of this process.

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Appendices

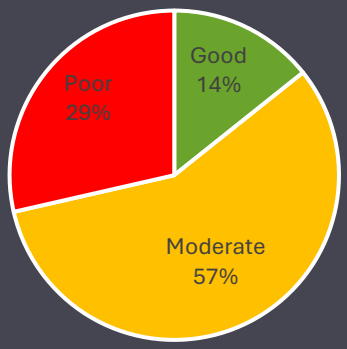
Appendix 1 – General District Trends, Knowsley

1. Brickwall Covert Tarbock
2. Copse, s of A58 Prescot (St Joseph's Playing Field)
3. Ditton Brook
4. Dog Clog Brook, Tarbock
5. Green's Bridge Plantation Halewood
6. Pex Hill
7. Wango Lane Wetland Kirkby

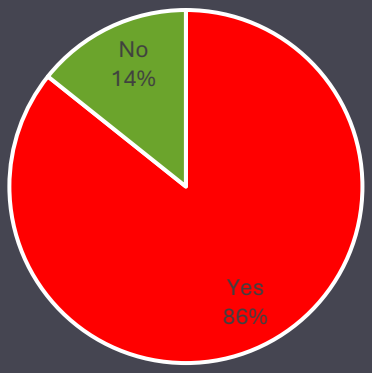
Was evidence of management observed on site?

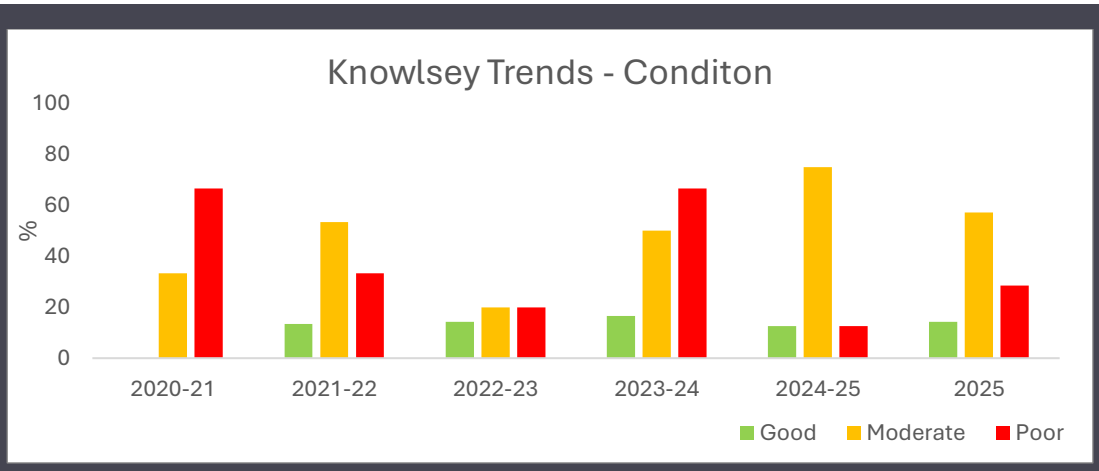
Were sites in positive conservation management?

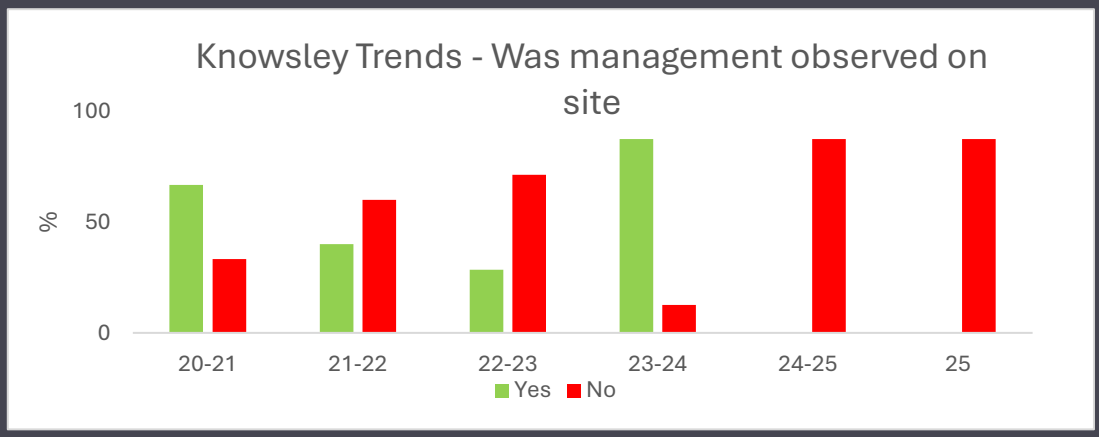
Condition of Knowsley LWSs surveyed



Were invaisve species observed on site?




Knowlsey Trends - Conditon
100
80
60
40
20
0
%
2020-21
2021-22
2022-23
2023-24
2024-25
2025
Good
Moderate
Poor


Knowsley Trends - Was management observed on site
100
50
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%
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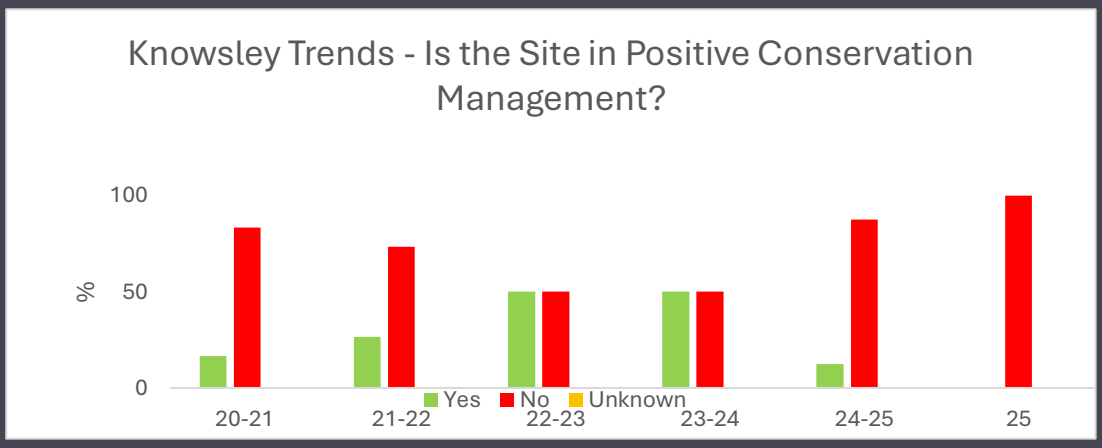
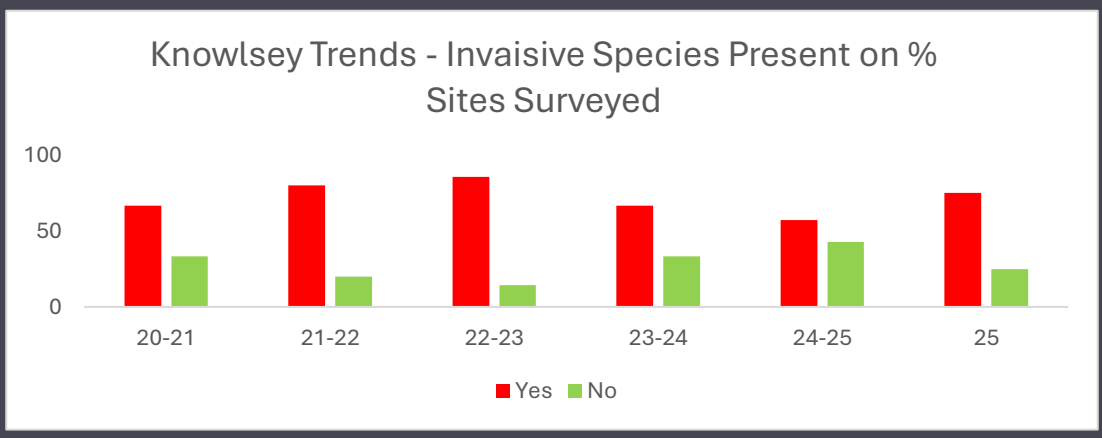
21-22
22-23
23-24
24-25
25
Yes
No


Knowsley Trends - Is the Site in Positive Conservation Management?
100
50
0
%
20-21
21-22
22-23
23-24
24-25
25
Yes
No
Unknown


Knowlsey Trends - Invaisive Species Present on % Sites Surveyed
100
50
0
20-21
21-22
22-23
23-24
24-25
25
Yes
No

Knowsley Site Monitoring Survey Summary

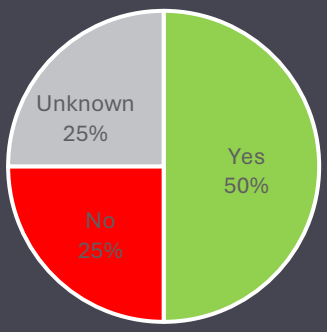
Site Name	Condition of site	Threats/ pressures observed	Management Requirements				
			Grass-land	Wood-land	Pond	Invasives	Other/ details
Brickwall Covert, Tarbock	Moderate	• Fly tipping, • Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) species			✓	✓	• Scrub management
Copse, s of A58, Prescot (St Joseph's Playing Field)	Moderate	• Den building or similar activities, • Dog fouling, • Fly tipping, • Damage from bikes/motorbikes/vehicles • Littering, • INNS			✓	✓	• Scrub management
Ditton Brook	Poor	• INNS a large threat with extensive growth of Himalayan Balsam over the site, • Shooting (wood pigeon shooting observed adjacent to site)					• Scrub management • Wetland management
Dog Clog Brook, Tarbock	Poor	• INNS a large threat with extensive growth of Himalayan Balsam over the site					• Scrub management • Wetland management

Green's Bridge Plantation, Halewood	Moderate	• Himalayan Balsam (INNS) growing in wetter areas, • Shooting		✓			• Wetland management
Pex Hill	Good	• Dog fouling, • Impacts from recreational pressure, • Damage from bikes/motorbikes/vehicles, • Littering, • Dog walking, • Cycling, • Walking	✓				• Heath management • Scrub management
Wango lane Wetland, Kirkby	Moderate	• Walking, • INNS • Main threats for this site are due to succession processes and lack of habitat management. These will be hampered by the difficulties of accessing the site - it is isolated and bunded by a river, a railway a canal and steep banks and ditches.		✓		✓	• Wetland management

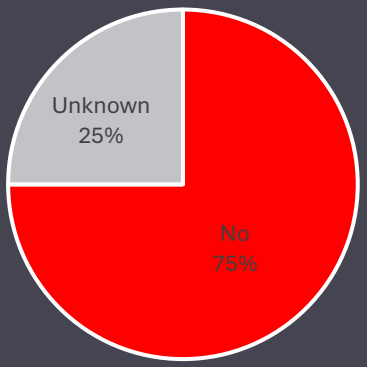
Appendix 2 - General District Trends, Liverpool

1. Banks Road and Garston Gas Works
2. Reynolds Park
3. Speke Hall and adj Sites
4. Childwall Woods and Fields

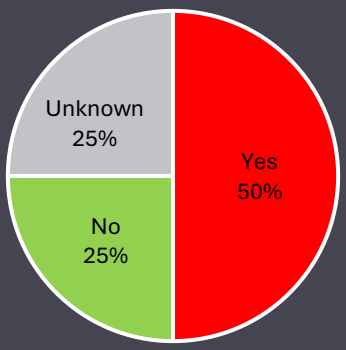
Was evidence of management observed on site?



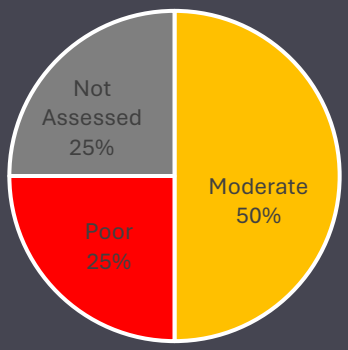
Where sites in positive conservation management?

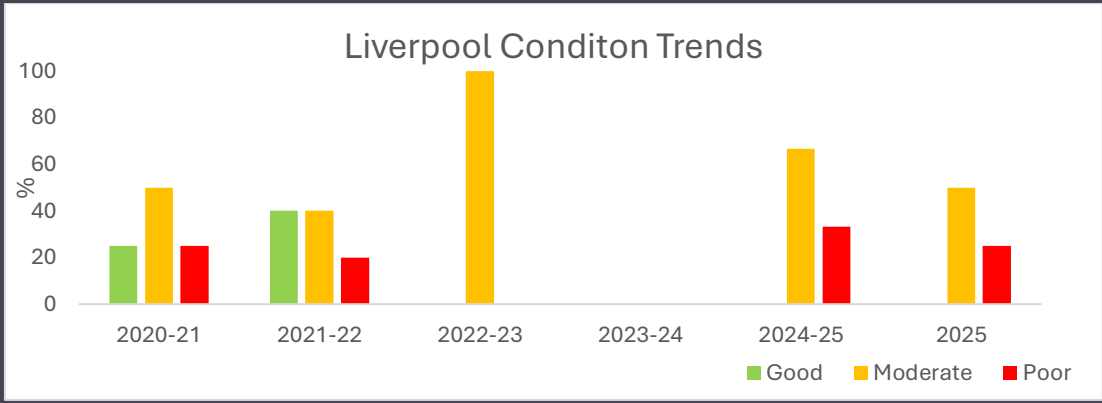


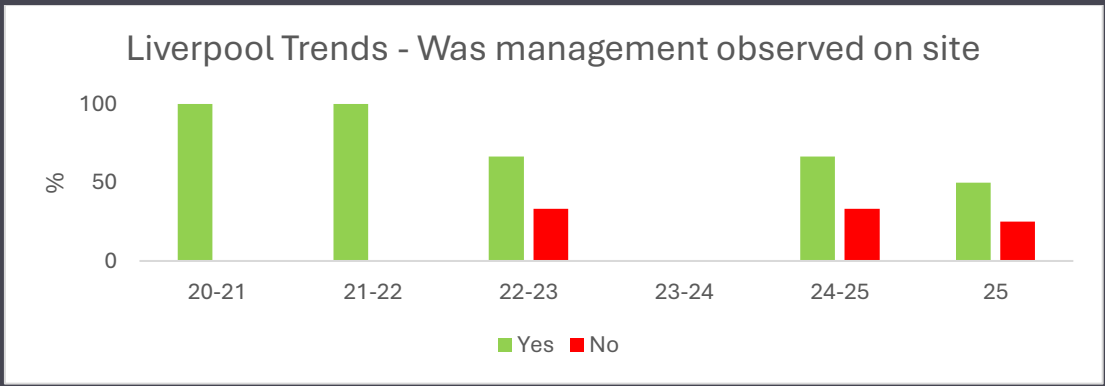
Where invasive species observed on site?

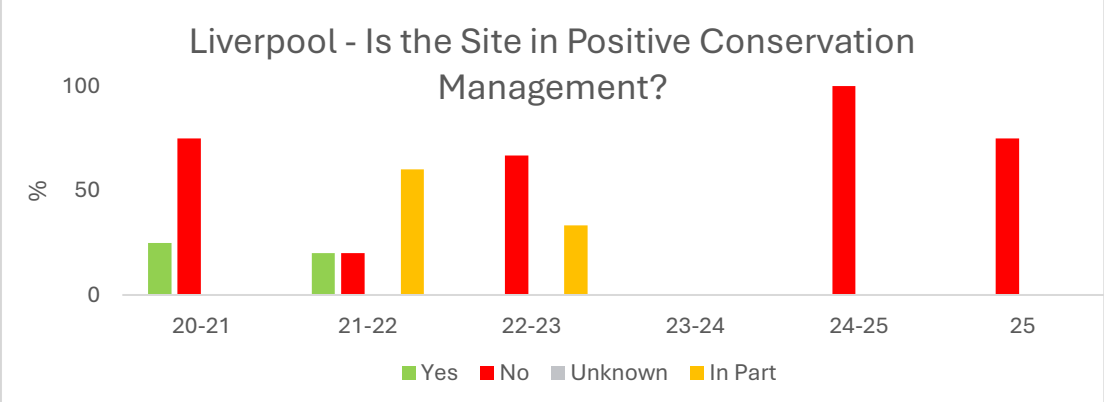


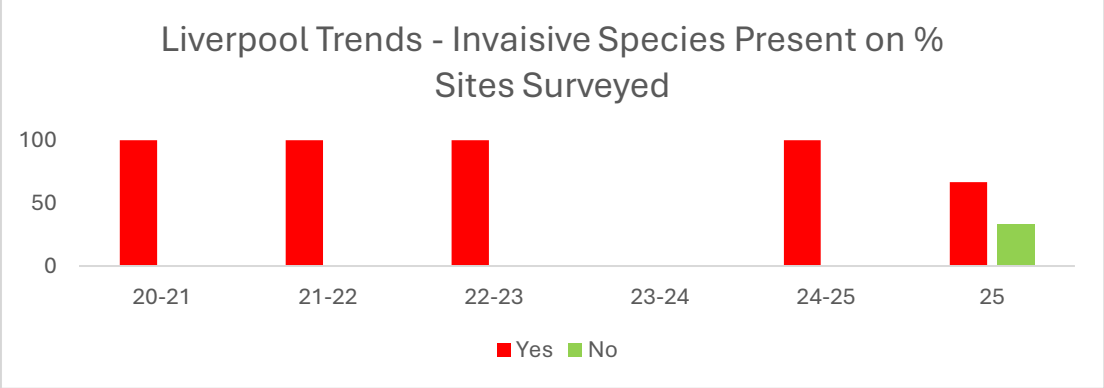
Condition of Liverpool LWSs surveyed




Liverpool Conditon Trends
100
80
60
40
20
0
%
2020-21
2021-22
2022-23
2023-24
2024-25
2025
Good
Moderate
Poor


Liverpool Trends - Was management observed on site
100
50
0
%
20-21
21-22
22-23
23-24
24-25
25
Yes
No


Liverpool - Is the Site in Positive Conservation Management?
100
50
0
%
20-21
21-22
22-23
23-24
24-25
25
Yes
No
Unknown
In Part

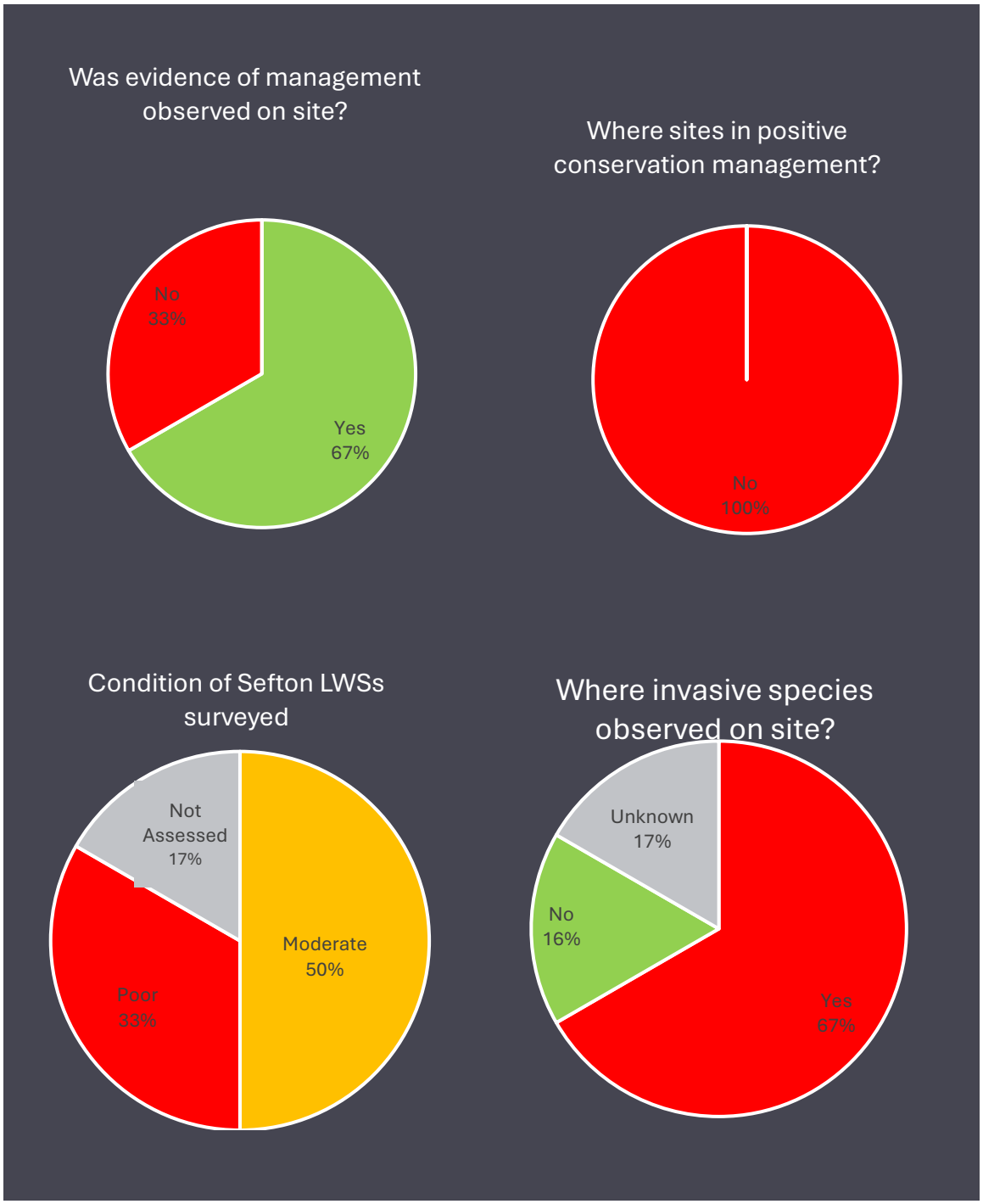

Liverpool Trends - Invaisive Species Present on % Sites Surveyed
100
50
0
20-21
21-22
22-23
23-24
24-25
25
Yes
No

Liverpool Sites Monitoring Survey Summary

Site Name	Condition of site	Threats/ pressures observed	Management Requirements				
			Grass-land	Wood-land	Pond	Invasives	Other/ details
Banks Road and Garston Gas Works	**Poor**	• Littering, • Fly tipping	✓	✓		✓	• Scrub management
Reynolds Park	**Not Assessed**						
Speke Hall and adj sites	**Moderate**	• Dog fouling, • Fly tipping, • Impacts from recreational pressure, • Littering, • Dog walking, • Cycling, • Walking	✓	✓	✓		• Wetland management • Heath management
Childwall Woods and Fields	**Moderate**	• Burning, • Dog Fouling, • Scrub Encroachment, • INNS	✓	✓	✓	✓	• Scrub management • Wetland management

Appendix 3 – General District Trends, Sefton

1. Flea Moss Wood and ponds
2. Land e of Canal, n of Wango Lane, Waddicar
3. Parkhaven Trust, Maghull
4. Pond and open space, n of Copy Lane, Netherton
5. Rimrose Valley and Canal
6. Sniggery Farm


Was evidence of management observed on site?
No 33%
Yes 67%
Where sites in positive conservation management?
No 100%
Condition of Sefton LWSs surveyed
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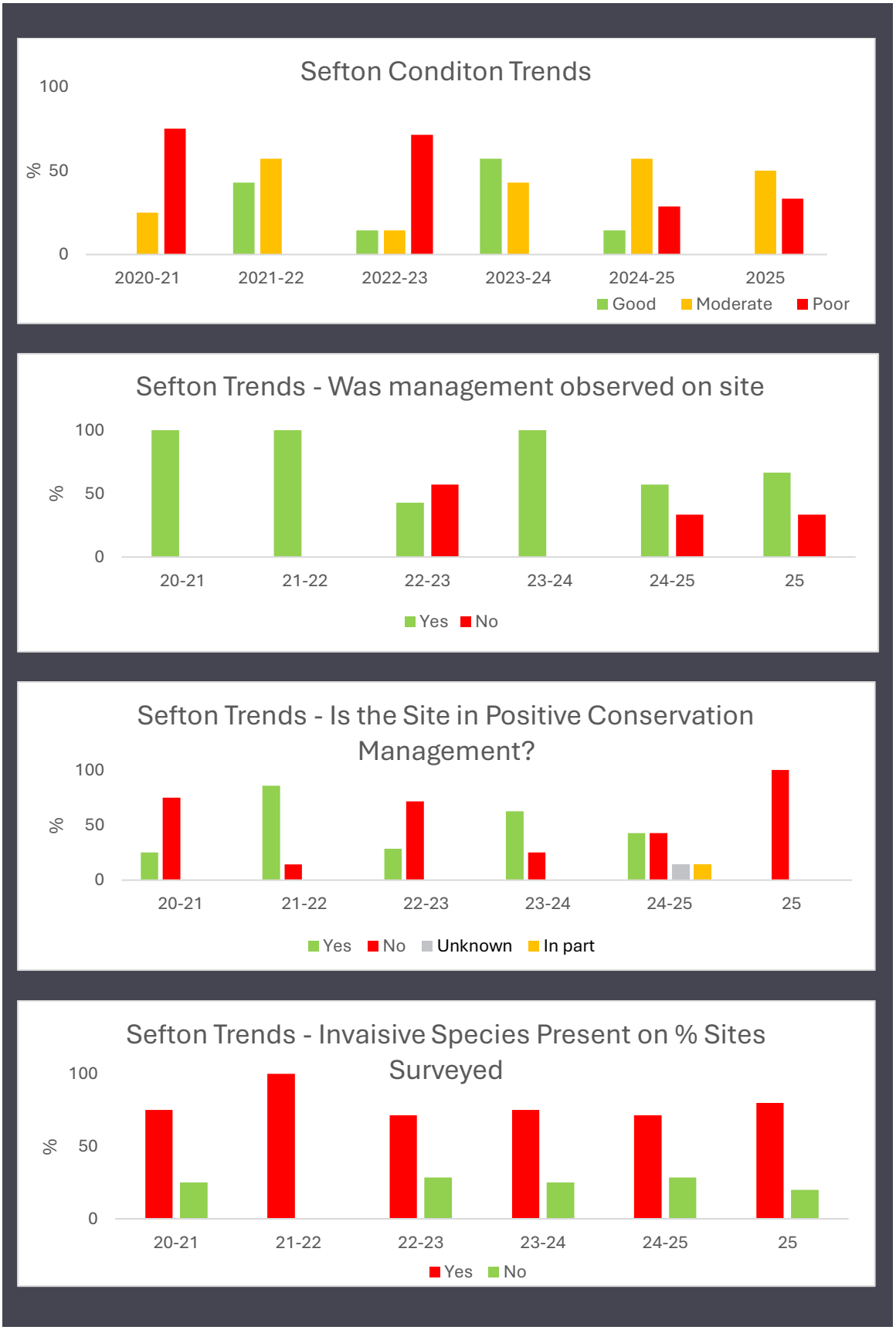
Moderate 50%
Poor 33%
Where invasive species observed on site?
Unknown 17%
No 16%
Yes 67%


Sefton Conditon Trends
100
%
50
0
2020-21
2021-22
2022-23
2023-24
2024-25
2025
Good
Moderate
Poor
Sefton Trends - Was management observed on site
100
%
50
0
20-21
21-22
22-23
23-24
24-25
25
Yes
No
Sefton Trends - Is the Site in Positive Conservation Management?
100
%
50
0
20-21
21-22
22-23
23-24
24-25
25
Yes
No
Unknown
In part
Sefton Trends - Invaisive Species Present on % Sites Surveyed
100
%
50
0
20-21
21-22
22-23
23-24
24-25
25
Yes
No

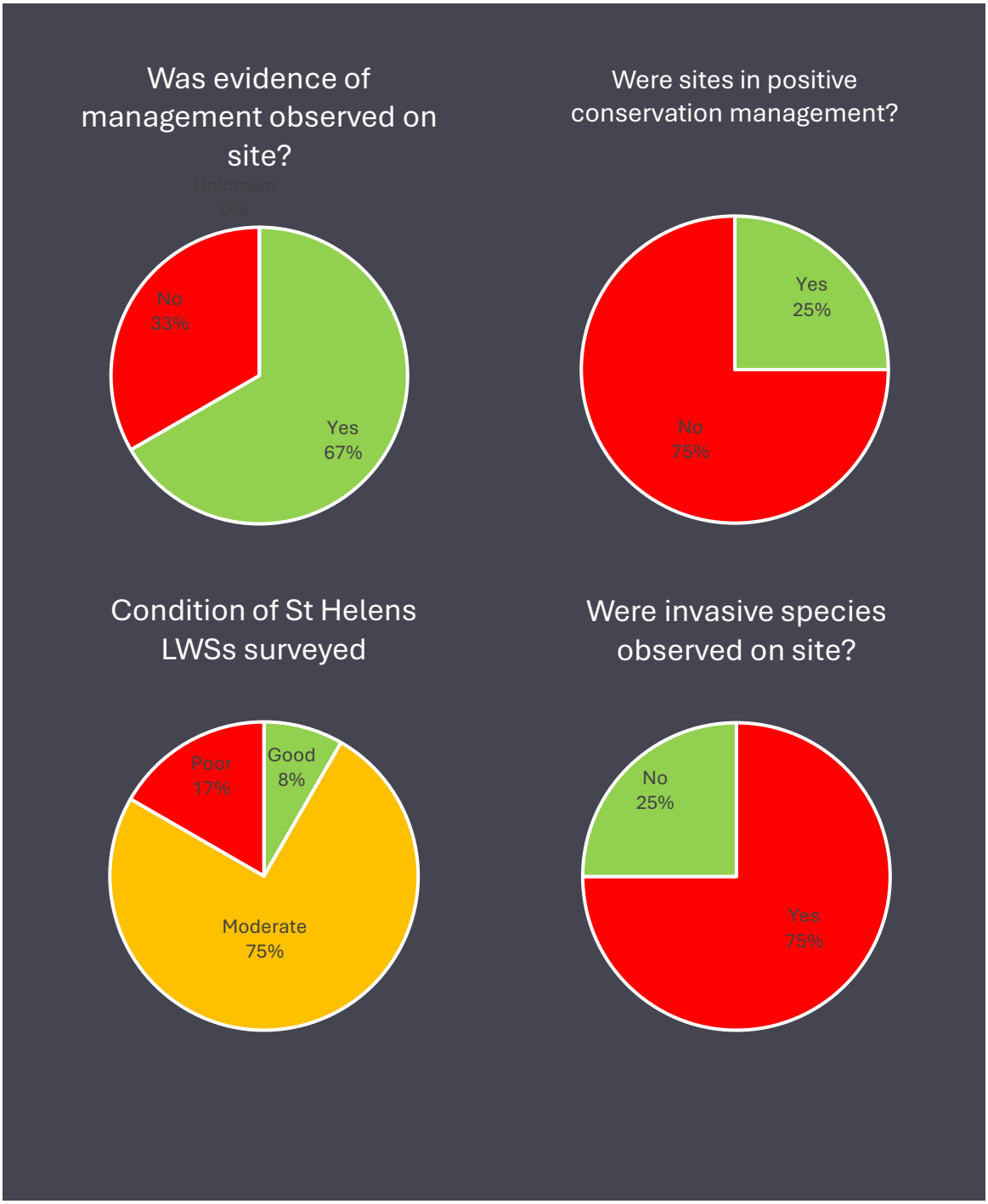
Sefton Sites Monitoring Survey Summary

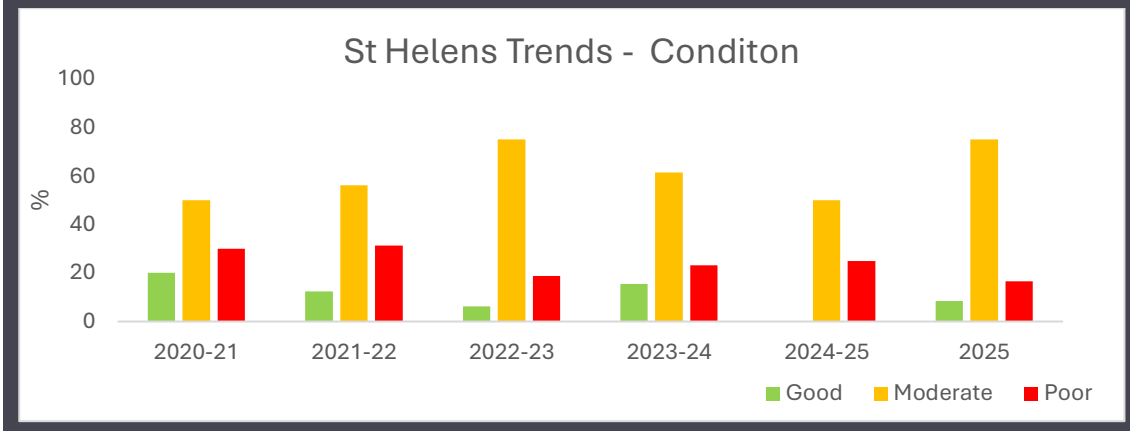
Site Name	Condition of site	Threats/ pressures observed	Management Requirements				
			Grass-land	Wood-land	Pond	Invasives	Other/ details
Flea Moss Wood and ponds	**Moderate**	• Littering, • Shooting, • Fishing, • Game rearing, • Walking, • INNS		✓	✓	✓	• Wetland management
Land e of Canal, n of Wango Lane, Waddicar	**Moderate**	• Walking, • Dog Walking, • Dog fouling, • Den building, • Fly tipping, • Burning, • Littering, • INNS	✓	✓		✓	• Scrub management • Wetland management
Parkhaven Trust, Maghull	**Poor**	• Walking, • Dog Walking, Dog fouling, • Den building, • Fly tipping, • Burning, • Littering, • INNS	✓	✓			• Scrub management

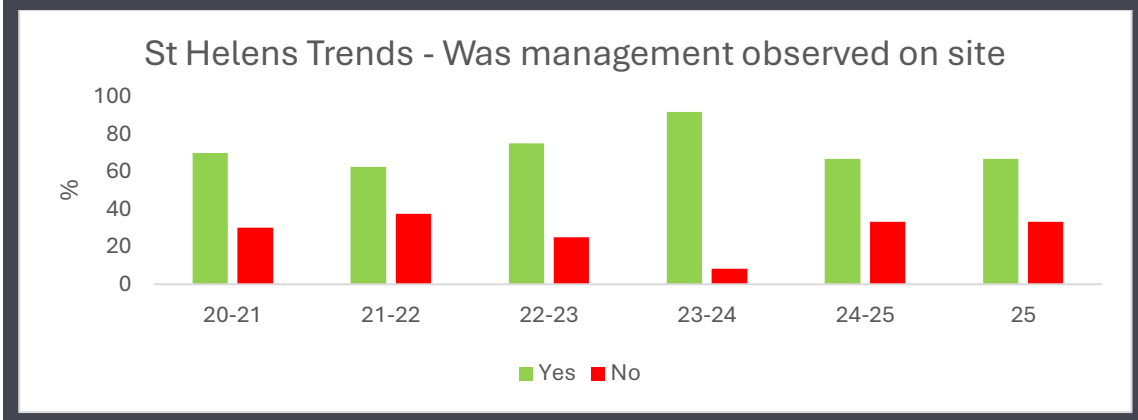
Pond and open space, n of Copy Lane, Netherton	**Poor**	• Den building or similar activities, • Dog fouling, • Walking, • Dog walking, • Cycling, • INNS					• Site is considered for deselection unless it can be brought into positive management.
Rimrose Valley and Canal	**Moderate**	• Den building or similar activities, • Dog fouling, • Burning, • Fly tipping, • Impacts from recreational pressure, • Littering, • Damage from bikes/motorbikes /vehicles, • INNS	✓	✓		✓	• Scrub management
Sniggery Farm	**Not Assessed**	• Damage from bikes/motorbikes/vehicles • Den building or similar activities,	✓	✓		✓	• Wetland management • Scrub management

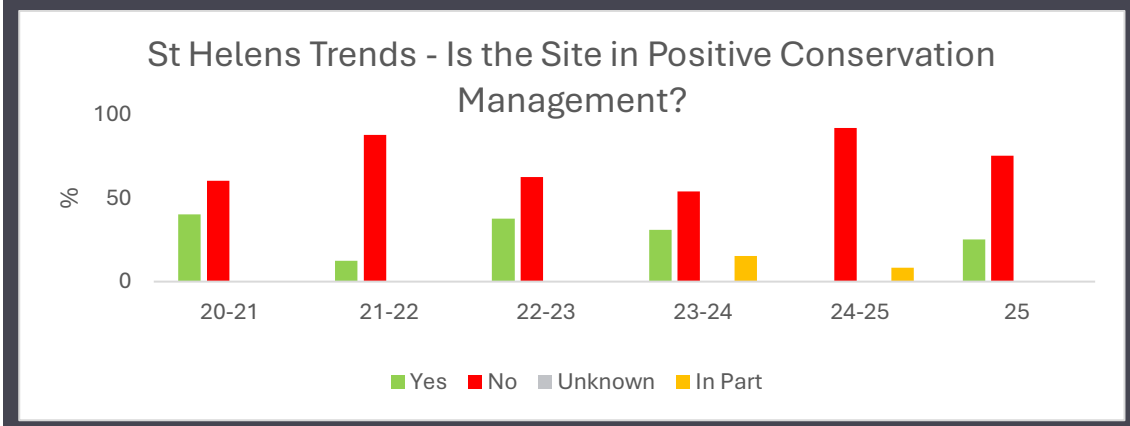
Appendix 4 – General District Trends, St Helens

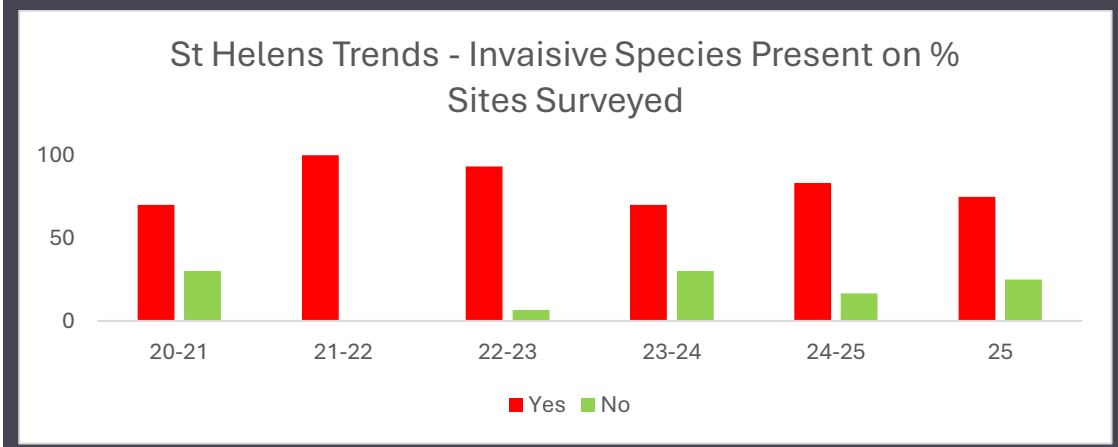
1. Crow Lane Copse
2. Depot, Rainford
3. Lyme Pit Tip
4. Mesnes Park, Newton le-Willows
5. Moss Plantation
6. Newton Brook 05
7. Old Mineral Line, Lea Green
8. Sales Wood/Gorse Plantation
9. Sutton Brook
10. Woodland, Old Garswood Railway
11. Wood Pit Covert
12. Wood Pit Tip, grassland


Was evidence of management observed on site?
Unknown 0%
No 33%
Yes 67%
Were sites in positive conservation management?
Yes 25%
No 75%
Condition of St Helens LWSs surveyed
Poor 17%
Good 8%
Moderate 75%
Were invasive species observed on site?
No 25%
Yes 75%


St Helens Trends - Conditon
100
80
60
40
20
0
%
2020-21
2021-22
2022-23
2023-24
2024-25
2025
Good
Moderate
Poor


St Helens Trends - Was management observed on site
100
80
60
40
20
0
%
20-21
21-22
22-23
23-24
24-25
25
Yes
No


St Helens Trends - Is the Site in Positive Conservation Management?
100
50
0
%
20-21
21-22
22-23
23-24
24-25
25
Yes
No
Unknown
In Part


St Helens Trends - Invaisive Species Present on % Sites Surveyed
100
50
0
20-21
21-22
22-23
23-24
24-25
25
Yes
No

St Helens Sites Monitoring Survey Summary

Site Name	Condition of site	Threats/ pressures observed	Management Requirements				
			Grass-land	Wood-land	Pond	Invasives	Other/ details
Crow Lane Copse	Good	• Fly-tipping, • INNS	✓		✓	✓	
Depot, Rainford	Poor	• Fly-tipping, • Burning, • Littering, • industrial activities, • INNS	✓	✓	✓	✓	• Wetland management • Scrub management
Lyme Pit Tip	Moderate	• Recreational Pressure, • INNS, • Damage from motorbikes/scrambling, • fishing	✓	✓	✓	✓	• Wetland management • Scrub management
Mesnes Park, Newton le-Willows	Moderate	• Dog fouling, • Den building, • Littering, • Recreational pressure impacts	✓	✓			• Wetland management
Moss Plantation	Moderate	• Ash dieback, • Game rearing, • INNS	✓	✓	✓	✓	• Scrub management • Wetland management

Newton Brook 05	Moderate	• Dog fouling, • Fly-tipping, • Impacts from recreational pressure, • Damage from bikes/motorbikes/vehicles, • Littering, • Fishing, • Dog walking, Walking, • INNS	✓	✓		✓	• Scrub management • Wetland management
Old Mineral Line, Lea Green	Moderate	• Dog fouling, • Fly-tipping, • Littering	✓			✓	• Scrub management • Wetland management
Sales Wood/Gorse Plantation	Moderate	• INNS, • Recreational Pressure, • Shooting, • Walking, • Dog Walking	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Sutton Brook	Poor	• INNS, • Dog fouling, • Den Building, • Fly-tipping, • Littering, • Recreational pressure impacts, • Walking, • Dog Walking	✓	✓		✓	• Scrub management • Wetland management

Woodland, Old Garswood Railway	Moderate	• Fly-tipping, • INNS		✓		✓	• Wetland management
Wood Pit Covert	Moderate	• Recreational pressure, • Fly-tipping, • Walking, • Dog • Walking, • Cycling		✓			• Scrub management
Wood Pit Tip, grassland	Moderate	• Recreational Pressure, Damage from motorbikes/scrambling, • fishing, • Walking, • Dog Walking	✓	✓	✓		• Scrub management • Wetland management

Appendix 5 – MWLBG LWS Bat Monitoring Report

Document Title	North Merseyside Local Wildlife Sites 2025 Summary of Monitoring Results in Relation to Bats
Report Date	3.6.2026
Author	Stan Irwin: Merseyside & West Lancashire Bat Group

Introduction

The fourth year of Local Wildlife Site (LWS) monitoring for bats continued to the same protocol as previous years whereas the objectives of the previous surveys remained in as much as the surveys aimed to inform the process as to how LWS are assessed, selected and designated in relation to the inclusion of bats. However, two sites (Carr Mill Dam & Lunt Meadows were substituted as it was considered that a sufficient quantity of data has been gathered in context with how the sites are used by bats and their LWS status; the new sites are shown in blue text along with habitat illustrations.

Bat echolocation calls from some sites were submitted to Stan Irwin (Merseyside & West Lancashire Bat Group) which were then analysed using SonoBat software purchased by MWLBG that was partly funded with a Bat Conservation Trust grant.

LWS that were monitored are shown below.

SITE	LOCATION	FEATURE	LWS
Reynolds Park	Liverpool	Urban Park & disused quarry	Yes
Lyme Pit & Country Park	St Helens	Woodland, water body, former landfill site	Former landfill – Yes remainder of the park -no
Ince Blundell	Sefton	Habitat & Roost	Yes
Croxteth Hall	Liverpool	Habitat & Roost	Yes
Tarbock	Knowsley	Habitat	No
Knowsley Safari Park	Knowsley	Roost	Yes
Crank Caverns	St Helens	Hibernacula	Yes

Results

Reynolds Park

An ornamental park consisting of woodland, ponds and amenity grassland (Photograph 1). The sandstone quarry was closed for stone abstraction in the late 1800s and has been naturally colonised with an array of woodland and understorey, (Photograph 2) an excavated chamber into the sandstone is present (Photograph 3) but typical crevices for hibernating bats are absent. A static bat detector was deployed within the quarry during summer to monitor foraging activity and close to the excavated sandstone chamber in autumn to ascertain if any “swarming” behaviour takes place.

Parkland Transect Results

Species	Bat Passes Transect 1: 28.5 25	Bat Passes Transect 2: 2.6.25	Total
Soprano Pipistrelle	4	18	22
Common pipistrelle	12	65	77
Total Passes	**16**	**83**	**99**

Static Bat Detector Results (Quarry)

Species	Bat Passes 31.7 25 - 8.8.25	Bat Passes 9.10.25 – 17.10.25	Total
Soprano Pipistrelle	80	0	80
Common pipistrelle	1500	61	1561
Brown Long Eared	6	0	6
Noctule	5	0	5
Total Passes	**1591**	**61**	**1652**

Photograph 1: General habitat features

Photograph 2: Quarry floor habitat

Photograph 3: Chamber entrance

The results of the static detectors indicate the presence of two additional bat species and that the number of Pipistrelle bat passes per night on the first deployment were higher in the quarry to that of the parkland but lower on the second deployment. It should be noted however that the static and transect dates were not coordinated and that the first deployment was conducted during a time when bat activity tends to be higher and more

concentrated. The analysing of calls during the second deployment resulted in a single species i.e. Common pipistrelle and that the highest number of calls were indicative of "social" calls which, during autumn, is generally associated with the mating or pre-hibernation season.

Tarbock Island

Species	Bat Passes Transect 1: 2.6.25
Common pipistrelle	39
Soprano pipistrelle	14
Total Passes	**53**

Data is only available for transect 1 however the number of bat passes during the same period have increased since monitoring began.

Croxteth Hall Stables– Roost Count

In 2023 a total of 44 Brown Long Eared bats were present but were absent in 2024 due to a number of reasons, 1) the presence of Grey Squirrel in the roost loft, the roost heater wiring chewed in half, probably by squirrel, and a significant increase of feral pigeons in the pre-emergence flight area. Brown Long Eared appear to be making a return to the roost. Discussions with Liverpool City Council are ongoing to resolve the issues that are affecting the roost and aim to retain and assist the recovery of the colony.

Species	15.6.2025	14.7.2025
Brown Long Eared	12	14

Ince Blundell Old Hall – Roost Count

Species	6.6.2025	28.7.25
Brown Long Eared	6	7
Common pipistrelle	6	4
Soprano pipistrelle	2	2
Whiskered/Brandt's	2	3
Total Emergence	**16**	**16**

The Old Hall continues to be used by several species with numbers being stable; within the grounds of Ince Blundell two other buildings are used by Brown Long Eared

Knowsley Safari Park: Bat Box Results

Species	9.2.2025
Common pipistrelle	27
Noctule	0
Total bats	**28**

Knowsley Safari Park: – Park Farm Roost Count

Species	11.6.2025	30.6.2025
Brown Long Eared	2	9
Common pipistrelle	14	23
Total Emergence	**16**	**32**

Total numbers located in boxes are similar to 2024 but numbers at Park Farm indicate a decline of Brown Long Eared since 2023; Common pipistrelle remain relatively constant.

Lyme Wood Pit & Country Park

The site is located between Earlestown and Haydock, consists of 274 acres with 180,000 trees planted. The country park was originally two coal mines, and their legacy remains as both Wood Pit Colliery and Lyme Colliery mines were the inspiration for the park's name. The landfill was completed in 2019 and since then, volunteers have been contributing to the site's developments to achieve a biodiversity park for a greener area.

General habitat features & transect route

Lyme Pit Tip

An extensive area of grassland which has developed around the foot of a disused slag heap. Both acid and neutral habitats are present. The grassland is species rich with over 200 species recorded including a number of regionally and locally important species. Lyme Woodland provides valuable habitat for foraging and commuting bats.

Results

Data is only available for transect 1

Species	Bat Passes Transect 1: 2.7.2025
Common pipistrelle	72
Soprano pipistrelle	1
Noctule	1
Total Passes	**74**

Former Lyme Colliery

Post colliery closure restoration

Crank Caverns – Hibernation Surveys

Species	Winter 2025
Brown Long Eared	10
Daubenton's	10
Whiskered/Brandt's	9
Natterer's	11
Common pipistrelle	2
Total bats	**42**

Although disturbance still continues at Crank Caverns the total over two hibernation surveys in 2025 continues to show an upward trend in bat numbers; a significant increase of Brown Long Eared to that of previous years was notable in 2025 and Natterers also shows the same trend. Daubenton's numbers are higher that recent years whilst Whiskered/Brandt's numbers are consistent, the presence of Pipistrelle is sporadic, which can be expected, as generally this species is not found regularly hibernating in underground sites. Occasionally "ringed" bats are discovered, which are likely to be individuals "ringed" at Crank during the combined South Lancashire & Merseyside & West Lancashire Bat Groups autumn trapping sessions several years ago. A ringed Natterers

at Crank was re-captured at Knowsley Safari Park which “as the crow flies” is approximately 9 kilometres.

“Ringed” Natterers bat (Image: Steve Parker: South Lancashire Bat Group)

2025 Summary Conclusions

- Common Pipistrelle unsurprisingly still remains the species with the highest recordings
- Tarbock Island showed an increase in bat contacts but limited to two species
- Ince Blundell Old Hall continues to be used by several species and numbers appear to be stable
- Knowsley Safari Park bat boxes are still being used by good numbers of Pipistrelle with a small number of Noctule but an absence of Brown Long Eared in 2025
- Park Farm counts indicate a decline of Brown Long Eared since 2023; but Common pipistrelle remain relatively constant.
- Crank Caverns remains an important hibernaculum for five bat species and numbers show an upward trend
- No significant changes have occurred at any of the sites that would impact bats
- Brown Long Eared at Croxteth Hall stables appear to have re-located back to the roost although in much lower numbers
- Reynolds Park is used by a small number of Pipistrelle bats; however the quarry is used by more species and more extensively; recordings adjacent to the excavated chamber indicate that it is used as a Common Pipistrelle mating site
- Surveys at Lyme Pit and Woodland Park have the potential to discover more species and would benefit from additional transects and static bat detector deployment, if possible
- During 2025, apart from Reynolds Park Quarry, all monitoring has still been manual whereby transects follow the most accessible route and as such bat activity may be under-recorded. It is likely that automated recording with static bat detectors deployed in less accessible areas will produce more results
- At all existing LWS and the non LWS i.e. Lyme Wood Country Park bats were recorded and should be included in the LWS citations. The results of the surveys can be used in future LWS selection criteria whereby foraging/commuting habitat and recorded activity should be the determining factor and not by placing an emphasis on numbers or species