Photo: © Kayleigh Wright

DERWENT CONNECTIONS VISION

Derwent Connections is a pioneering project aiming to improve woodland habitat connectivity and reduce flood risk in the Derbyshire Derwent catchment.

DERWENT CONNECTIONS

The Derwent Valley derives its name from the Brittonic 'Deruentiū' meaning "forest of oak trees". Unfortunately, due to woodland clearing and fragmentation, associated with increased agriculture and urbanisation, the Derwent catchment is no longer a vast forest of oak trees!

Not only have we lost significant areas of woodlands, but with them also a large number of species including plants, insects and mammals, and those that have not been lost have experienced significant declines. Despite this, the catchment is still a very important area for ancient semi-natural woodland, and restoring this habitat is an important step toward ensuring Nature's Recovery across Derbyshire, and linking similar habitats in neighbouring counties.

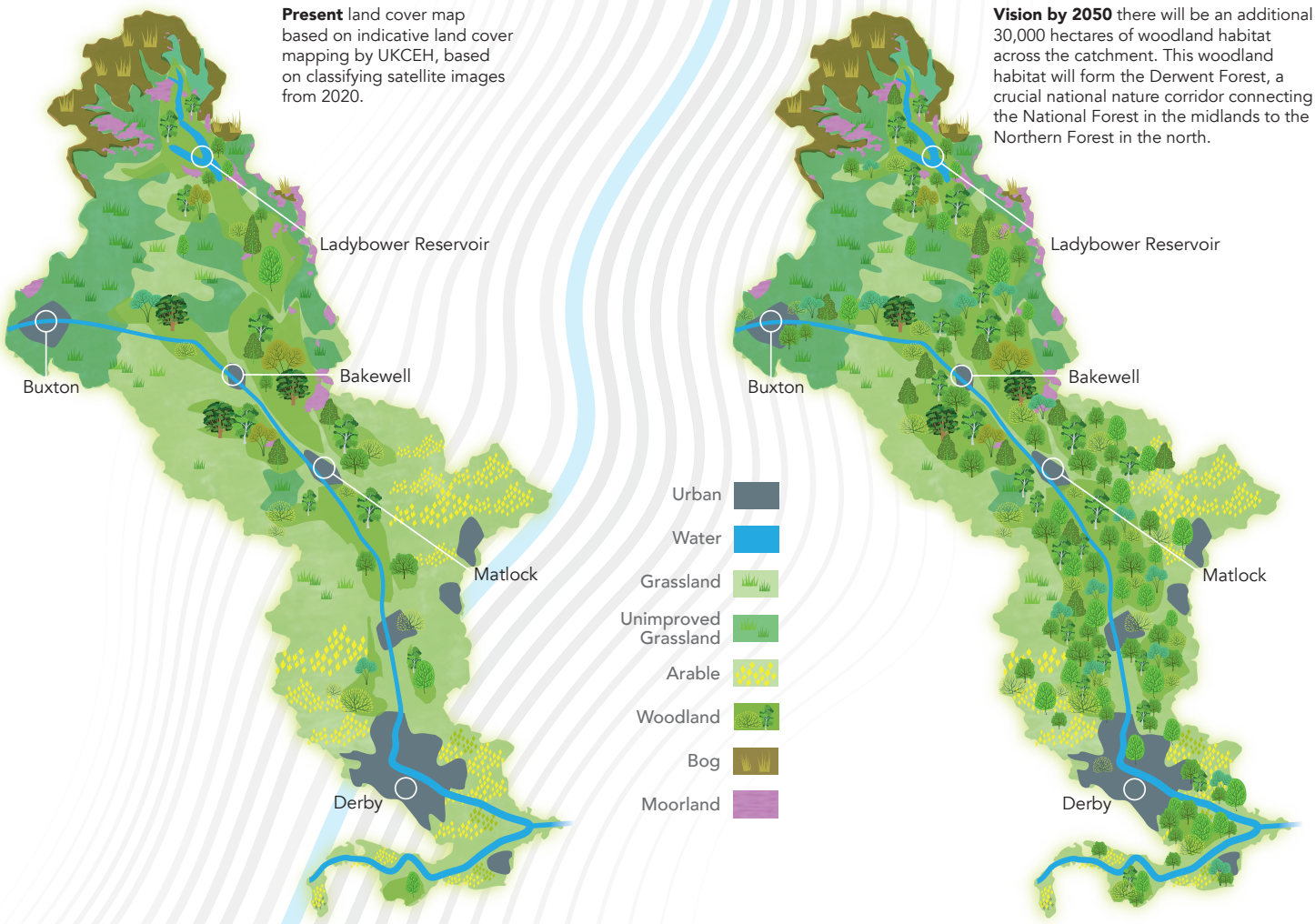
Derbyshire sits at a key transition point of the UK, between upland and lowland Britain. Climate change will have a significant impact on species and habitats within Derbyshire – upland species will be affected by the increasing temperatures and drier summers, and there will be a greater pressure on species and habitats in lowland Derbyshire due to increased development and agricultural pressure as more coastal and low-lying land across the country is lost to sea level rise.

THE PROJECT

This project will work to establish a connection between the new woodlands of the National Forest in the south and the soon to be established woodlands of Northern Forest in the north. North-south connectivity, which this project will provide, is critically important to allow movement of species in response to climate change.

Derwent Connections will kick-start the creation of a new landscape centred around the River Derwent catchment – a landscape dynamic enough to support a rich and diverse range of habitats from which species can spread; a landscape complex enough to deliver a range of crucial ecosystem services, from carbon sequestration to natural flood management; and a landscape durable enough to withstand the untold impacts of climate change.

Working with local land-owners and community groups, the project will make more space for nature, through improving woodland ecosystem connectivity; and make more space for water by implementing natural flood management measures and slowing the flow across surfaces and down slopes. The project will also work to make more space and opportunities for the public to access, enjoy and engage with these spaces!



THE VISION

2023

By 2023, at least 250 hectares of new habitat will have been created in the Derwent Catchment, with a road map for the creation of 30,000 hectares of woodland and wetlands across the catchment over the next 30 years! Natural Flood Management measures will have been implemented across at least 300ha of existing habitat in the catchment.

2030

By 2030, 30% of Derbyshire will be connected and protected for Nature's Recovery, with the developing Derwent Forest playing a key role in this. With more space being made for nature, lost and declining species, like the beaver will finally be wild and actively managing our ecosystems again!

2040

Woodland networks will be growing across the catchment and reaching out and connecting with the landscapes in our neighbouring catchments and counties, and species such as pine marten will be using these woodland corridors to return to Derbyshire.

2050

From native woodlands and hedgerows, to community orchards, wood pasture and agroforestry, to tiny forest and trees planted in back gardens… by 2050, there will be an additional 30,000 hectares of woodland habitat across the catchment! This woodland habitat will form the Derwent Forest, a crucial, national nature corridor connecting the National Forest in the Midlands to the Northern Forest in the north, which in turn will connect to the wild, upland expanses in Northern England and Scotland!

As well as woodland, other habitats such as wetlands, grasslands and ecotones (the habitats we find between and on the edge of these habitats) will have also recovered across Derbyshire. With the growth and recovery of these habitats, we will have seen the return of the pine marten, red squirrel, nightingale, turtle dove and pearl bordered fritillary.

Our rivers will be colder and will be bursting with salmon and other native fish. Beavers will be wild and thriving, and their presence, combined with the woodland creation and other natural flood management measures implemented, will be slowing the flow and reducing flood risk across the catchment.

The developing Derwent Forest will have captured millions of tonnes of carbon from our atmosphere in the last 30 years and will continue to do so for many decades to come.

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

People will be connected to the landscape, not only physically through greater opportunities to access the natural environment, but economically as we move towards a nature-based economy. As our connection with nature has grown, so has our physical and mental wellbeing – people are happier and healthier and so is our planet!

Photo: © Sam Rose

This is not the end of the Derwent Forest story… it's just the beginning!

Can you play your part in realising the vision of the Derwent Catchment Forest and allowing nature to recover in our region? If so, please visit our project webpage: **www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/derwent-connections** and find out how you can get involved.

FUNDED BY THE GREEN CHALLENGE RECOVERY FUND
AND IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE DERBYSHIRE DERWENT CATCHMENT PARTNERSHIP.

Photo: © Michael Hardy

Green Recovery Challenge Fund

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs
The National Lottery Heritage Fund
Environment Agency
NATURAL ENGLAND
trent rivers trust
Derbyshire Wildlife Trust
PEOPLE'S POSTCODE LOTTERY