

## **PROPOSED EARDINGTON LOCAL NATURE RESERVE**

### **CONSULTATION REPORT FOR NATURAL ENGLAND**

Consultation with Natural England prior to designation by Shropshire Council of Eardington Nature Reserve as a Local Nature Reserve. This is a requirement set out in Section 21(6) of the 1949 National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act where a local authority shall exercise their functions in consultation with Natural England. The text for this consultation report is based on the checklist in Appendix 3 of Natural England *Local Nature Reserves in England: a guide to their selection and declaration* NE301 (2010).

Shropshire Council, tenants of Eardington Nature Reserve, wish to designate the nature reserve as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR). The nature reserve is owned by Tarmac who have leased the land to Shropshire Council for 99 years from 21 May 2013. Tarmac are supportive of the proposed LNR designation. The nature reserve has been managed by the Friends of Eardington Nature Reserve since 2013.

Eardington Nature Reserve (6.73 ha) lies close to Bridgnorth and the Severn Valley Country Park with the river Severn nearby to the east. The nature reserve supports a superb range of habitats including ponds, open mosaic habitat (bare ground, moss and lichen areas), species-rich grassland and secondary woodland that have all developed on what was a sand and gravel quarry that ceased operations in 1994 although the site contained a ready-mix concrete plant until 2010. There is also a small area of semi-natural deciduous woodland, unaffected by the quarrying operations, that is part of the extensive wooded corridor along the Mor Brook. Eardington Nature Reserve has been designated as a Local Wildlife Site. The nature reserve is managed by the Friends of Eardington Nature Reserve, who commit a large amount of voluntary time every year, together with expert technical input from Shropshire Council staff based at the Severn Valley Country Park. There is a small car park adjacent to the main road that is linked to surfaced paths and a section of Public Footpath together with very useful information boards. The Friends group maintains an excellent website with a range of up to date information including many records of animals, plants and fungi. Two detailed information leaflets on the website are available to be downloaded.

Shropshire Council believes that having environmental designations on its sites raises their profile with the public and can increase visitor usage and the health and wellbeing benefits this provides. Designation as a statutory Local Nature Reserve also provides protection for the nature conservation and recreation interests. Declaring Eardington Nature Reserve as a LNR will:

- Improve local quality of life, health and wellbeing.
- Create opportunities for education, enjoyment and recreation, helping attract visitors and preserve links with the local community and its past.
- Safeguard local ecosystem services – the benefits nature provides for people – such as reducing carbon in the atmosphere and absorbing surface water.
- Protect and enhance the natural heritage as a key part of building sustainable communities.
- Raise the nature conservation and recreation interest.
- Recognise of the wildlife and biodiversity value
- Recognise local community involvement
- Provide protection within the planning system from future built development.

In addition, LNR designation meets the following Shropshire Council strategic outcomes set out in the following Strategies:

- Shropshire's Great Outdoors 2018-2028 <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/10853/go-strategy-oct18-final2.pdf>

- Shropshire’s Economic Growth Strategy 2022-2027. Developing the visitor economy, agricultural support post- Brexit, developing skills, improving Quality of Life and ensuring attractive environments. [Shropshire’s Economic Growth Strategy 2022-2027 | Shropshire Council](#)
- Shropshire’s Local Plan 2016-2038. Better planning of meaningful greenspace and non-motorised access, new destination country parks, protecting environmentally-sensitive sites. [Regulation 19: Pre-Submission Draft of the Shropshire Local Plan 2016 to 2038](#)
- Shropshire’s Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2027. Harnessing the power of the outdoors to increase physical activity, address mental health issues and help people stay independent for longer. [Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy | Shropshire Council](#)
- Shropshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026. Encouraging walking and cycling. [Local Transport Plan | Shropshire Council](#)
- The Shropshire Plan 2022-2025. This sets the context of delivering Healthy People, Healthy Environment, Healthy Economy and Healthy Organisation. [The Shropshire Plan 2022-2025 | Shropshire Council](#)
- Shropshire Destination Management Plan 2023-2025 [Shropshire DMP 2022-25 FINAL DRAFT - Aug 2023.pdf](#)

### Site name

Eardington Nature Reserve

### Parish, District and County

Eardington, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

### Declaring authority

Shropshire Council

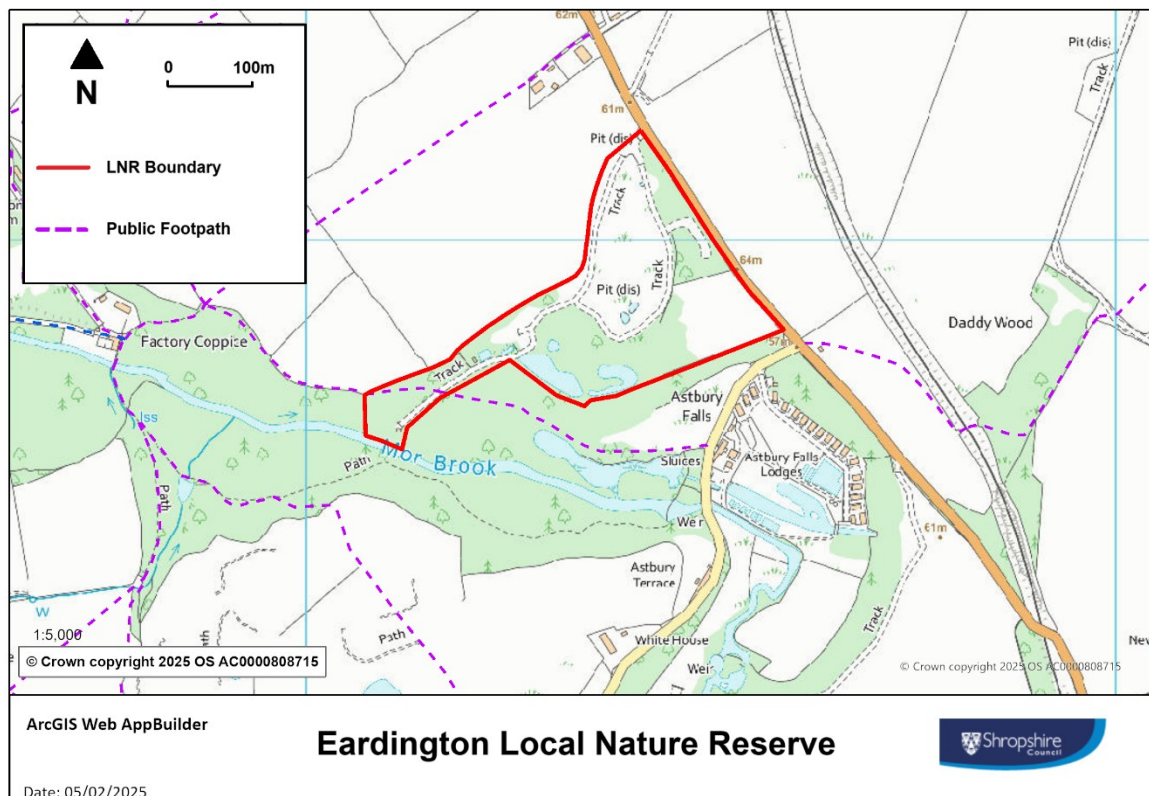
### Area

6.73 ha

### Map showing site location (Figure 1)



**Map showing site boundary (Figure 2)**



### Site Ownership

Eardington Nature Reserve is owned by Tarmac who have leased the land to Shropshire Council for 99 years from 21 May 2013 (Appendix A). Clause 3c of the lease specifically refers to the land being managed "...as a public recreation area and or nature reserve..." not to include camping or caravanning.

The meeting on 9 January 2025 involving Graham Fyles (Tarmac, Estates Manager for entire mineral portfolio), Emanuel Skelton (Fisher German, agents for Tarmac), the Friends of Eardington Nature Reserve and Ed Andrews (Shropshire Council Parks and Countryside Sites Manager) considered the benefits and implications of the proposed statutory LNR designation and Graham Fyles was supportive of nature conservation and the LNR proposal. Tarmac have confirmed their support for the proposed LNR designation (Appendix B).

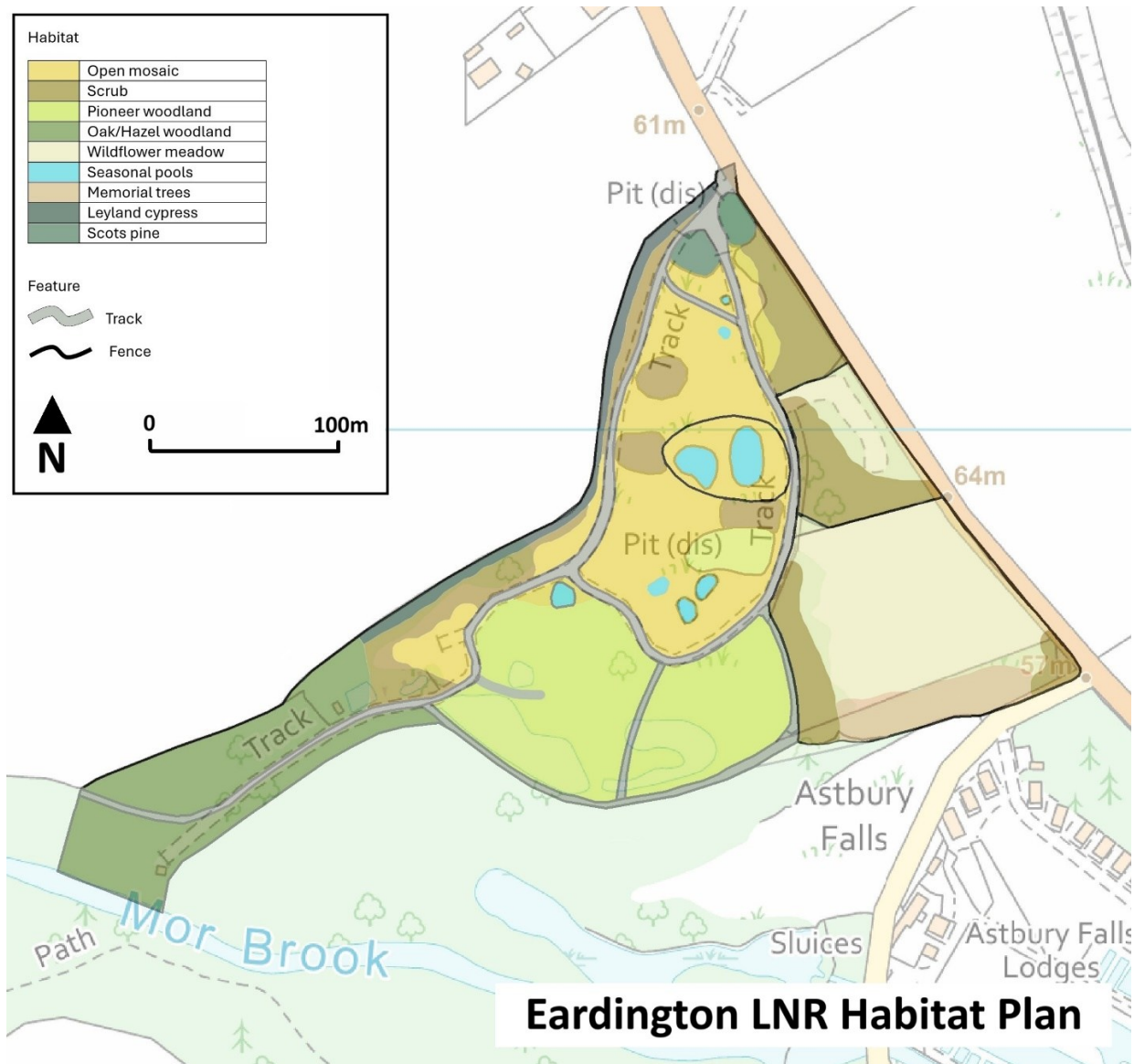
### Description of the habitats and species of interest based on a full survey of habitat types

#### Habitats

Eardington Nature Reserve comprises an interesting complex of habitats (see Figure 3):

- Open mosaic habitat on previously developed land (around 2 ha in area)
- Open water - a complex of ponds set within the open mosaic habitat
- Lowland species-rich meadow (around 2 ha)
- Secondary woodland (around 2 ha)
- Broadleaved woodland (around 1 ha)

**Figure 3 Eardington Nature Reserve habitat plan**



*Open mosaic habitat on previously developed land (see [description for UK Biodiversity Action Plan](#))*

The habitat known as ‘Open mosaic habitat on previously developed land’ is around 2 ha in area and has developed through natural colonisation and succession on the bare sand and gravel left after the ready-mix concrete plant ceased operations in 2010 (Photo A). This is a very important feature of the nature reserve as such an extensive area of this habitat that is being maintained at the moss and lichen stage is unusual. There are a variety of ruderal plant species including wild strawberry, evening primrose, purple loosestrife and a few patches of bee orchid. The area is being encroached by birch which is generally controlled by annual hand-pulling and mowing.





Photo A. Open mosaic habitat (Photo: T. Langford)

There are areas of bare sand and very short vegetation on sand (Photos B and C) that are maintained by both rabbits and the volunteers as a 'bee village' for species such as the nationally scarce vernal colletes (or early colletes or spring mining-bee) and the ivy bee that was first recorded in the UK in 2001 and has now been found in much of southern England and Wales.



Photo B (left). Bare sand maintained by rabbits and volunteers (Photo: John Box)

Photo C (right). Mounds of vegetated sand with various slopes and aspects for solitary bees (Photo: John Box)

Several areas of rubble and debris have become overgrown providing shelter for invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians. The two artificial structures created as nesting sites for sand martins have not been used by these birds but are used by invertebrates including solitary bees.

### *Open water*

There is a pond that has been present for many years. It proved to be unsuitable for two reasons: a) the pond drains freely (20-25 mm/day in summer) and readily dries up in fine weather and b) the pond is difficult to access for those with impaired mobility. Thus, a complex of six new ponds was excavated in 2016 (Photos D and E). Two of these were lined to provide a more reliable environment for breeding amphibians and dragonflies and damselflies. Four of these are interconnected with a clever system of drainage pipes where a short extension of the outflow pipe can be rotated from the upright position blocking the outflow to below the water level allowing water to flow to an alternative pond below, thus regulating water levels. To facilitate easy access, a low gradient, hard surface, path was constructed to the larger lined pond along with a post and rope handrail. Water is a scarce resource on the nature reserve as the soils are mainly sands and gravels. All the unlined ponds are seasonal and dry up in the summer.



Photo D (left). Interlinked seasonal ponds soon after construction (Photo: Ian Barrie)

Photo E (right). Volunteers installing liner for one of new ponds (Photo: Ian Barrie)

### *Lowland meadow*

This grassland (around 2 ha) has developed on deeper, more nutrient-rich soils that are likely to have originated from topsoil cleared from the underlying sands and gravels at the start of quarrying. A wide variety of wildflowers and grasses have colonised the grassland area (Photo F) including yellow wort, reflecting the basic soils (pH 8) in this area. There are small populations of pyramidal orchid, southern marsh orchid, common spotted orchid and the occasional bee orchid. It is developing into a species-rich grassland and this will be helped by the regular cut&collect operation in September/October with disposal of the arisings on site ensuring that nutrients from the vegetation do not accumulate in the grassland area.





Photo F. Meadow with wildflowers (Photo: T. Langford)

#### *Secondary woodland*

There is well-developed birch woodland that has become established on the sands and gravels after the quarrying operations ceased in the mid 1990s. There is also some Scots pine and hazel. Alder and willows (mainly sallow) dominate in the damper areas where silts have accumulated in the former settling lagoons. Silt laden water from the sand and gravel washing process was pumped into the lagoons for drying.

The woodland at its northeastern edge is defined by a surfaced path that will limit birch encroachment into the open mosaic habitat. Its southwestern edge is the break of slope down to the Mor Brook. The extent of the secondary woodland reflects the sands and gravels revealed by soil stripping prior to the quarrying operations.

#### *Broadleaved woodland*

There is broadleaved woodland (around 1 ha) that is part of Factory Coppice and extends in a corridor from the western end of the nature reserve to the Mor Brook (Photo G). The woodland in the nature reserve has well-spaced mature oaks with many well grown hazel stools, some of which are large and multi-stemmed. Other tree species include ash, small-leaved lime and beech. This area of woodland contains several plant species that are indicators of ancient woodland but it is not defined as ancient woodland by Natural England ([Multi Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside](#)), probably because of lack of evidence when the ancient woodland assessments were being undertaken. It would appear from the presence of the mature oaks and the numerous well grown hazel stools that this area of woodland in the nature reserve was managed, together with the rest of Factory Coppice and the adjacent woodlands, from the 18<sup>th</sup> century as oak standards over hazel coppice. The hazel coppice would have been used to fuel the forges that converted pig iron from a blast furnace to wrought iron at the nearby Upper Forge and possibly also at Lower Forge on the bank of the river Severn. These two forges were connected by a canal or leat to the pool at Upper Forge that took water from the Mor Brook (Appendix C).



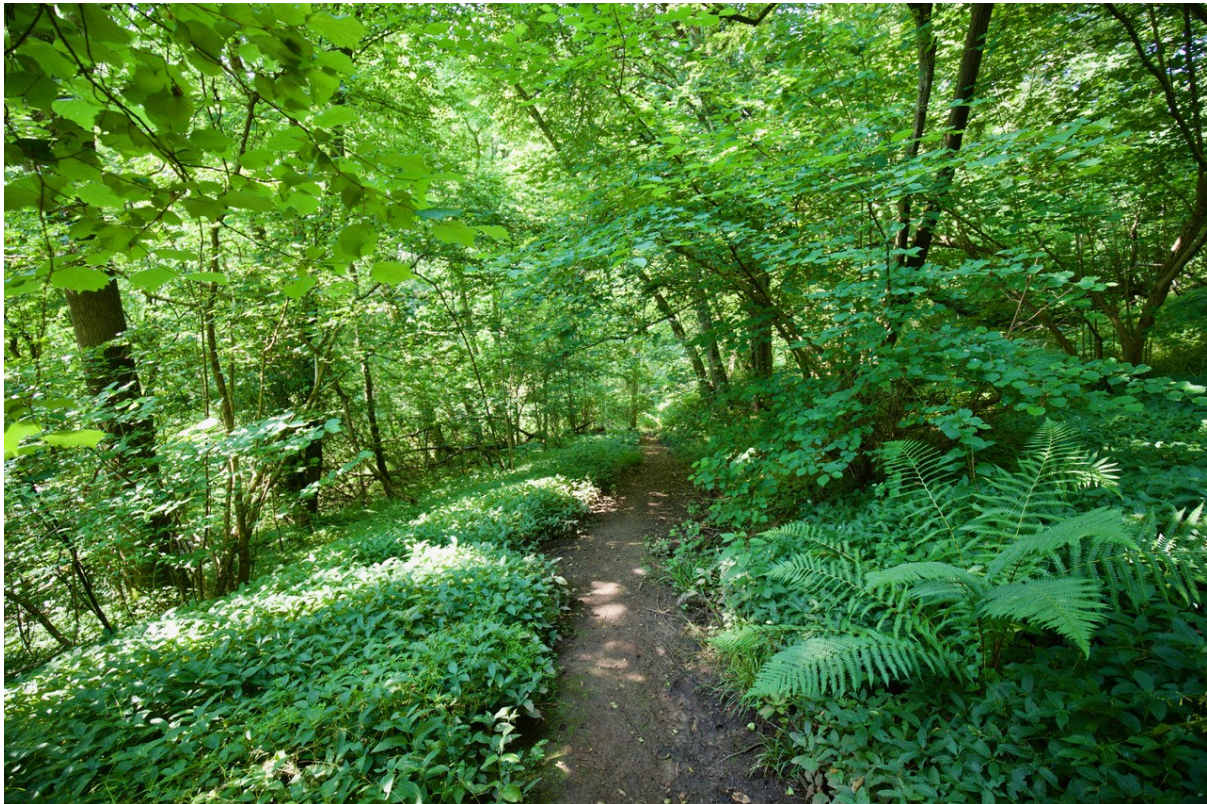


Photo G. Coppiced woodland and path to Mor Brook (Photo: T. Langford)

The woodland immediately adjacent to the Mor Brook is wet woodland with alder, willow, opposite-leaved golden saxifrage and thin-spiked wood-sedge.

### ***Plants, animals and fungi***

Formal surveys of the nature reserve, commissioned by Shropshire Council, were undertaken in 2006 and 2007 when habitats, vascular plants, bryophytes, lichens and invertebrates were covered (Appendix D).

Species recording has also taken place subsequently with visits to the nature reserve by experts, county recorders and county recording groups including Dan Wrench (vascular plants), Mark Lawley (bryophytes & lichens), Pete Boardman (invertebrates), Tony Jacques (moths), Les Hughes (fungi) and Peter Thompson (fungi).

The [species list on the Friends of Eardington Nature Reserve](#) contains current records for birds, butterflies and the other species groups are based on the 2006/2007 surveys together with subsequent records.

Priority species, also known as species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity or Section 41 species, for which there are records on the nature reserve in the last ten years include: great crested newt, slow-worm, soprano pipistrelle, cinnabar moth.

### ***Vascular plants***

Twenty of the plant species that have been recorded are axiophytes - these are notable indicator plants of habitat that is considered important for conservation, such as ancient woodlands, clear water and species-rich meadows (<https://bsbi.org/axiophytes>). The list of Shropshire axiophytes can be found at <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/axiophytes-of-shropshire?tab=about>.



### *Mosses, lichens & bryophytes*

The 2006 bryophyte survey recorded numerous species including the [clay screw-moss \(\*Syntrichia amplexa\*\)](#), only recorded from a few British sites.

The 2006 lichen survey produced two new county records (*Caloplaca cerinelloides*, *Catillaria atomarioides*) and a new record for the West Midlands (*Verrucaria bulgarica*).

### *Birds*

Eighty species of bird have been recorded at the reserve. The latest version of [Birds of Conservation Concern 5](#) lists fifteen of these in the Red List, with a further twenty one in the Amber List. Of those known to breed within the nature reserve, there are five on the Amber list and possibly one on the Red list (marsh tit). Notable Red List species include grasshopper warbler and spotted flycatcher, both of which are occasionally recorded on passage.

The Friends group also maintains and regularly monitors a set of over 40 nest boxes, with a few targeted specifically at rarer species: marsh tit, grey wagtail, tree sparrow and starling.

Little ringed plover, a species that can be associated with sand and gravel quarries and bare sands, gravels and open water, was recorded once in 2006 and is unlikely to return as natural colonisation and succession has changed the open areas of bare ground.

### *Mammals*

A 2017 survey by a member of Shropshire Bat Group recorded common, soprano and Nathusius' pipistrelles on the nature reserve that are likely to be breeding locally. A variety of bat boxes were erected between 2014 and 2018.

There is good evidence that badgers use the nature reserve for foraging and the nearest setts are in the woodland close to but outside the southern boundary of the nature reserve.

### *Reptiles & amphibians*

A good assemblage of reptiles and amphibians is present at the nature reserve: grass snake, slow-worm, great crested newt, smooth newt. Common toad has been recorded in the recent past but there are no records for common frog or common lizard.

Great crested newt has been recorded since 2014 in the two lined ponds and juvenile newts have been recorded frequently indicating a breeding population. This population will use the surrounding terrestrial habitats, especially the woodland, throughout much of the year.

### *Invertebrates*

Twenty three species of butterfly are currently resident on the nature reserve and clouded yellow and painted lady are visiting migrants which are recorded in most years, although the numbers vary greatly. Given the abundance of wild strawberry, it is hoped to attract grizzled skipper. It is also hoped to attract white admiral whose food plant is honeysuckle and there is an established population some 3 km to the east. The modest population of honeysuckle was augmented by the volunteers when new hedgerows were planted in the winter of 2017/18.

Moth trapping is a regular feature at the nature reserve and over two hundred, mostly common, species, have been recorded among the larger moths (mainly under the supervision of the county moth recorder). Micro-moths are also present in large numbers.

Nineteen species of dragonfly and damselfly are currently resident on the nature reserve in addition to migrant hawker whose status is resident/migrant. Most of these species breed in or close to the two lined ponds. Two of the scarcer species are the brown hawker and black darter.

The invertebrate assemblage includes these notable species:

- Six-belted clearwing (*Bembecia ichneumoniformis*), nationally scarce moth
- Vernal colletes (or early colletes or spring mining-bee) (*Colletes cunicularius*), recently downgraded from nationally rare to nationally scarce
- Lesne's earwig (*Forficula lesnei*), nationally scarce
- Fallen's leatherbug (*Arenocoris fallenii*), nationally scarce
- *Tachydromia smithi* and *T. connexa*, two nationally scarce hybotid flies
- *Cheilosia cyanocephala*, nationally scarce hoverfly
- *Hylaeus signatus*, nationally scarce solitary bee
- *Nomada flavopicta*, nationally scarce solitary bee

The invertebrate survey in 2006 & 2007 also recorded the following notable species: • *Cerceris rybyensis* (Aculeate Hymenoptera: Digger wasp; Restricted) • *Adonia variegata* Adonis Ladybird (Coleoptera: Ladybird; Local) • *Antocha vitripennis* (Diptera: crane fly; Local, six Shropshire sites) • *Phasia barbifrons* (Diptera: Parasitic fly; Local, 1st Shropshire record) • *Phasia obesa* (Diptera: Parasitic fly; Local) • *Phasia pusilla* (Diptera: Parasitic fly; Local) • *Philantus triangulum* (Aculeate Hymenoptera: Bee Wolf; five Shropshire sites) • *Symplecta hybrida* (Diptera: Crane fly; Local, 3rd Shropshire record) • *Thecoptera atra* (Diptera: Thick-headed fly; Local).

#### Fungi

Sixteen of the long list of species recorded at Eardington Nature Reserve could be described as being rare with 50 or less records for Britain, but none are on the *Red Data List of Threatened British Fungi* maintained by the British Mycological Society and none are associated with a rare host.

A notable species is winter stalkball (*Tulostoma brumale*) that is also present on sandy habitats at Venus Pool near Shrewsbury. Rarely found inland in the UK, the most common of the stalkballs is an autumn and winter species found among moss or short grass mainly on sandy, alkaline soil in dune slacks just behind the first stable sand dune ridges.

#### Description of the value of the main natural and physical features on the site

Eardington Nature Reserve is almost wholly within the Eardington Nature Reserve Local Wildlife Site (Appendix E), one of around 700 in Shropshire. Part of the woodland at the southwestern end of the nature reserve as far as the Mor Brook is within the Cleedsmore LWS which includes Cleedsmore Coppice, part of Factory Coppice and the Mor Brook down to Upper Forge.

Eardington Nature Reserve is a very significant environmental resource in the Bridgnorth area. It is a former sand and gravel quarry that ceased operations in the mid-1990s. The site was then used as a ready-mixed concrete plant until 2010 when the site was finally closed.

The sand and gravel habitats that are undergoing natural colonisation and succession are a rare habitat in the modern countryside, particularly the areas of bare sand and the extensive area of open mosaic habitat of mosses and lichens. Ten species of solitary bee have been recorded, mainly in the specially constructed "Bee Village" where mason and miner bees dominate. There are particularly large populations of vernal colletes (or early colletes or spring mining-bee) that appear in April and the ivy bee that appear in September/October. Winter stalkball fungus is present on the sandy



habitats; rarely found inland in the UK, this species is usually found among moss or short grass mainly on sandy, alkaline soil in dune slacks just behind the first stable sand dune ridges.

**Description of the value of the site to schools (where appropriate), and the type and scale of current use. Other educational uses of the site.**

There are no toilet facilities on the nature reserve and very little interaction with schools. The Friends group has supported youths involved in the volunteering aspects of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

See below for more detail about the facilities for the public.

**Description of the value of the site as a place in which local people can enjoy contact with wildlife**

Eardington Nature Reserve is a superb accessible natural greenspace and recreational site for people from the local area and from Bridgnorth that is nearby. The nature reserve is located adjacent to the B4555 about 450 m south of Eardington and 3 km south of Bridgnorth. There is open access for people of all ages and abilities to enjoy the great outdoors. The nature reserve is readily accessible to local residents living nearby and is on the bus route from Bridgnorth to Highley and just a short drive from Bridgnorth. Wildlife groups from further afield have also visited the reserve where Friends of Eardington Nature Reserve volunteers have acted as guides upon request.

Shropshire Council has an open access policy for all of its countryside sites. The Eardington Nature Reserve is open every day of the year for pedestrians. There are brown tourist signs for the nature reserve at the entrance to the car park from the main road and on the main road itself. There is a bus service between Bridgnorth to Stourbridge via Highley that stops at Eardington with a request stop at Eardington Nature Reserve. Eardington Halt on the nearby Severn Valley Railway from Bridgnorth to Kidderminster is not normally open to passengers and there is no direct footpath link from the platform to the nature reserve. The free car park off the B4555 is available all year round and the gate to the car park is opened at 9 am and locked at 6 pm in summer and 4 pm in winter. The car park is well provided with information boards, holders for paper copies of the two nature reserve leaflets, and two rubbish bins.

Pedestrian access to the reserve is through wheelchair-friendly kissing gates. A RADAR key is required to open the larger inner gate for easier access for users of wheelchairs and mobility scooters. These are readily available online and from a wide range of shops and other businesses. These kissing gates are not big enough to accept the latest large mobility scooters. There are good surfaced paths and tracks within the nature reserve and a wheelchair-friendly bird hide in the secondary woodland. There are no toilets on the site but many facilities are available in Bridgnorth which is 3 km away by road or at the visitor centre at the [Severn Valley Country Park](#) which is some 12 km by road to the south and is owned and managed by Shropshire Council. Visitors are encouraged to take litter home with them and two litter bins are provided on the nature reserve. No dogs are allowed on the nature reserve between 1st March and 31st August to prevent disturbance to wildlife including ground-nesting birds; at all other times, dogs should be on leads.

There is a walkway and viewing platform on the original pond (Photo H). The bird hide is in the secondary woodland with an open clearing, a small pond that is connected by a pipe to the roof gutter, and bird feeders that are regularly checked. There are a number of information boards on the nature reserve (Photo I) and six more will be installed in 2025 that are linked to the industrial heritage trail.



Photo H. Main pond with walkway and viewing platform (Photo: Ian Barrie)



Photo I. Information board for the solitary bee village (Photo: John Box)

Two superb illustrated leaflets about the nature reserve can be downloaded from PDF files on the home page of the [Friends of Eardington Nature Reserve website](#): [Eardington Nature Reserve](#) and [Industrial Heritage Trail](#). There is also a trail and leaflet to help children engage with nature at the reserve. [Rub along with Nature](#) features eight posts with wildlife-themed rubbing plaques located in



appropriate habitats around the site. Copies of all three leaflets are available in weatherproof containers at the reserve car park.

Public Footpath 0123/39/1 crosses the woodland corridor at the western end of the nature reserve. It runs westwards starting from the road from Upper Forge to the Astbury Golf Club and through the woodland adjacent to the Mor Brook (Figure 2). The Public Footpaths on and around the nature reserve can be seen on the Shropshire Council [Definitive Map](#) of [public rights of way](#).

Eardington Nature Reserve contributes to the local delivery of the national [Green Infrastructure Standards for England](#) (Natural England, 2023). The nature reserve meets the accessible greenspace standard for a doorstep natural greenspace of 0.5 ha within 200 m and for a local natural greenspace of 2 ha within 300 m for the residents living nearby and for a neighbourhood natural greenspace of 10 ha within 1 km for the residents of the village of Eardington (450 m away).

### **The features and values of the site in the context of the local authority area**

Eardington Nature Reserve lies approximately 1 km in a direct line to the west of the river Severn. The nature reserve is adjacent to the magnificent series of ancient semi-natural woodlands and ancient replanted woodlands that extend along the Mor Brook northwestwards from Factory Coppice, part of which is in the nature reserve, to Cleedsmore Coppice, Uplands Coppice, Newfoundwell Coppice and Thatchers Wood & Westwood Covert SSSI ([Multi Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside](#)).

The nature reserve lies some 7 km in a direct line to the northwest of the [Severn Valley Country Park](#), which is a superb 50 ha site that is owned and managed by Shropshire Council with a complex of paths, trails and a visitor centre, and some 3 km to the north of Chelmarsh Reservoir, which is a 40 ha reservoir owned by South Staffs Water that is a notable birdwatching site with a nature reserve.

### **Outline of past uses of the site**

Eardington Nature Reserve is a former sand and gravel quarry that started in the late 1930s and ceased operations in the mid-1990s. The site was then used as a ready-mixed concrete plant until 2010 when the site was finally closed. The nature reserve is a wildlife hotspot.

The nature reserve has an interesting geomorphological history. Bridgnorth is situated at the limit of the last ice sheet to occupy the region, during the Late Devensian (approximately 30-17,000 years ago). This ice sheet originated in the Irish Sea basin and meltwater from the snout of the glacier laid down sands and gravels in a landform known as an alluvial fan where the Mor Brook tributary joins the Severn Valley at Eardington. Glacial deposits have also been recorded at the site and are intimately associated with the meltwater deposits and indicate that the glacier moved back and forward across this area. The glacial and meltwater sediments were deposited over other riverine deposits of the river Severn (known as the Holt Heath Member by the British Geological Survey). In total, the deposits quarried at Eardington comprised around 10 m of sand and gravel whose surface is around 30 m above the present river.

An illustrated leaflet about the industrial past of the nature reserve called the [Industrial Heritage Trail](#) can be downloaded from the home page of the [Friends of Eardington Nature Reserve website](#).

**Any known constraints on management of the site, for example soil toxicity, wayleaves, tenancies, rights of common, mineral rights separately owned**

The public footpath that starts from the road from Upper Forge to Astbury runs through the woodland adjacent to the Mor Brook and crosses the narrow western end of the nature reserve (Figure 2).

There is a 33 kV electricity line that runs northeast/southwest along the northern edge of the nature reserve. The eastern section from the car park and the main road is underground, probably because this was adjacent to the sand and gravel quarry and an operational hazard. The overhead line passes along the woodland corridor at the western end of the nature reserve and across the Mor Brook. The wayleave under the electricity line is currently with National Grid Electricity Distribution after the recent purchase of Western Power Distribution by National Grid.

There is not expected to be soil toxicity nor pollution. The previous landuse was a sand and gravel quarry that ceased in the mid 1990s. The site was used as a ready-mixed concrete plant until 2010 when the site was finally closed.

Tarmac holds the mineral rights.

**Purpose of formal declaration as an LNR**

Eardington Nature Reserve is proposed as a Local Nature Reserve as described by Section 15 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended). The nature reserve is managed for nature conservation and for preserving its characteristic flora and fauna. The nature reserve is also managed for informal recreational purposes without compromising its nature conservation value by providing opportunities for the public to enjoy nature and for open-air recreation.

Eardington Nature Reserve meets the recommendations by Natural England for Local Nature Reserves (page 7, *Local Nature Reserves in England: a guide to their selection and declaration*, 2010) because the site is of high natural interest locally, of high value locally for environmental education, and of high value locally for the enjoyment of nature by the public.

**Outline management policies/objectives/prescriptions, including access**

The original management plan for Eardington Nature Reserve outlined the first five years of management tasks that are now largely completed. Key outcomes included: creation of a secure car park and vehicular access to the site; creation of an accessible path around the nature reserve; construction of a bird hide and bird feeding area in the secondary woodland area; creation of more wetland areas; construction of an access platform next to the original wetland area; creation of a bee village including scrapes to encourage solitary bees.

The current management plan for the nature reserve *Eardington Nature Reserve Management Plan 2021-2026* (Appendix F) prepared by Ed Andrews of Shropshire Council and the Friends of Eardington Nature Reserve plan is reviewed annually and sets out the eight objectives for improvements to the biodiversity value of the site and for encouraging appreciation and quiet recreational use by both locals and visitors to the area:

1. Cut back encroachment of birch, bramble and scrub in the open ground and grassland areas. To prevent encroachment of scrub/birch/bramble into grassland and open ground habitats and maintain these important habitats at a suitable level for optimum biodiversity. Scrub and bramble cover should be reduced to around 5% and should be cut back to the edges of the birch stands and maintained as such. Scrub and birch cover



should be reduced to 15% in the open ground habitat and again cut back to the edges of the birch stands and maintained as such.

2. Create new ponds and a varied topography in the central area to encourage wetland plants, invertebrates and newts. To enhance and enlarge the area of wetland habitat in the central area of the site for the benefit of Great Crested Newt and aquatic flora and fauna. All pond creation works must take place between November and January to avoid great crested newt activity.
3. Instigate a mowing/strimming regime to manage the grassland area for flowering plants and look at the possibility of introducing some grazing. To maintain this lowland meadow habitat in a condition to maximise biodiversity, with particular focus on flowering plants and insects. Mow or strim in late June to August using hand tools or mechanical trimmer, varying the cutting height and frequency throughout the area to create a patchwork effect. Adopt some kind of rotational pattern to vary the degree of cutting that each area receives each year.
4. Removal of non-native tree species, and possible replacement with native species. Removal of non-native species, particularly conifers from around the site. These are mostly in the fence line area. Replanting of native boundary species to replace them and provide habitat for native species. Suitable substitute trees/hedges might include hawthorn, blackthorn, holly, hazel and guelder rose.
5. Thinning and glade creation in the birch woodland, ensuring that mature trees and dead wood are left.
6. Creation of earth/sand banks for invertebrates and clearance of vegetation from suitable existing sites. Felling of two Scots Pines that currently overshadow an existing bank. To create exposed banks of earth or sand for the benefit of insects (and potentially basking reptiles).
7. Creation of sand martin bank in the central open area (must be south-facing).
8. Provision of bird, bat and/or dormouse nest boxes. Maybe bird-feeding station. To provide encouragement for nesting bird species, and provide viewing opportunities for the public. Also enables monitoring of bird species.

#### **Outline of capital and revenue costs in first year**

Grants were awarded to help create Eardington Nature Reserve. SITA, the waste management company, provided £20,000 for key habitat management works on site. Shropshire Council created the car park and installed fencing and vehicle bollards.

The Friends of Eardington Nature Reserve were awarded £1,500 from the Shropshire Council Local Joint Committee for Bridgnorth, Worfield, Alveley and Claverley funding to help with fencing and signage. Subsequent grants have included Postcode Local Trust funding to plant trees, improve access and create new wetland areas.

The future management of the nature reserve will be dependent upon Shropshire Council funding (through the southern parks and countryside budget) and grant funding awarded to Shropshire Council and the Friends of Eardington Nature Reserve.

The current management plan for the nature reserve *Eardington Nature Reserve Management Plan 2021-2026* (Appendix F) provides a guide to rough costings of habitat management and site improvements works in Section 7.

## **Staffing**

There are no site-specific staff associated with Eardington Nature Reserve.

Volunteers from the Friends of Eardington Nature Reserve provide almost 1,000 hours of assistance each year with a wide range of contributions. There are teams of volunteers that open and close the gate to the car park and that maintain the bird hide and bird feeders. Volunteers undertake a wide range of practical habitat management works and the maintenance of fences, the bird hide and bird boxes, the footpaths and gates.

Shropshire Council staff (the Ranger team) based at the Severn Valley Country Park undertake the annual cut & collect grass cutting and tree works as required. The Ranger team and the Friends of Eardington Nature Reserve organise [regular work parties](#) for habitat management and site improvement works from October through to March. There are two each month, alternating between council led and Friends of Eardington Nature Reserve led. There are additional, less frequent, Friends of Eardington Nature Reserve work parties in the summer months, totalling between three and five each year, with Council rangers contributing when necessary. Volunteers for the work parties are under the supervision of Shropshire Council rangers or experienced members of the Friends group. Tasks vary according to the season but include monitoring nest boxes, monitoring pond hydrology, woodland management, scrub clearance, environmental and habitat improvements, and maintenance of footpaths and gates. There is a secure shipping container that contains hand tools and other equipment and materials.

Shropshire Council update the formal risk Assessment for Eardington nature reserve annually in January. The current risk assessment is attached (Appendix G).

Shropshire Council staff from the nearby Severn Valley Country Park provide detailed advice and have obtained two major grants to upgrade the structure and facilities of the nature reserve.

## **Links with voluntary nature conservation bodies and site users**

The Shropshire's Great Outdoors website has detailed information about [Eardington Nature Reserve](#). [The Friends of Eardington Nature Reserve](#) have a good website with a wealth of information including contact details and keep an ongoing lookout for new members.

Eardington Parish Council were a key partner in establishing the nature reserve and have been informed about the proposed LNR which was raised at the Parish Council meeting in January 2025 where many complimentary remarks were made about the nature reserve.

The Friends group used Community Pay-Back teams from the Probation Service, mainly between 2014 and 2019 to help with the formation of the main tracks and selective woodland clearance.

The Friends group maintains informal links with the Shropshire Wildlife Trust, which is happy to provide information and support when needed. Several of our members are also SWT members.

The nature reserve has been visited by expert groups for fungi, moths and invertebrates led by County recorders.

## **List of Appendices**

**Appendix A** Lease from Tarmac to Shropshire Council for 99 years from 21 May 2013.

**Appendix B** Letter of support from Tarmac for proposed LNR designation.

**Appendix C** Poyner (2017) Eardington Forge – Background History and Archaeology, *Below!, Quartely Journal of the Shropshire Caving & Mining Club*, Winter issue 2017.4, pages 19-23.

**Appendix D** *Shropshire Quarries: Positive Action for the Future. Biodiversity surveys of Eardington Plant site 2006-2007.*

**Appendix E** Eardington Nature Reserve Local Wildlife Site citation, proposal, boundary.

**Appendix F** *Eardington Nature Reserve Managment Plan 2021-2026.*

**Appendix G** Risk Assessment for Eardington Nature Reserve prepared by Shropshire Council, January 2025.