CORSERV

CORMAC CORSERV FACILITIES CORSERV CARE

Nature Recovery Plan

2024/25 Update

A CORNWALL COUNCIL COMPANY

Contents

About Corserv Solutions

We are a diverse commercial service business owned by Cornwall Council and established to: *"improve the lives of people in our communities".*

Sectors include:
- Highway and environmental maintenance
- Infrastructure and engineering
- Facilities management
- Vehicle maintenance
- Adult social care

Our published strategic plans for environmental sustainability:

Sustainability and Social Value Strategy
Overarching approach for people, planet, and prosperity

Carbon Reduction Plan
Climate emergency approach

Nature Recovery Plan
Ecological emergency approach

We are currently facing both an ecological and climate emergency.

Evidence tells us that local biodiversity is following the same worrying trends as those seen globally. Once common species are becoming rare and there are fewer places where nature can prosper.

By outlining strategic initiatives, innovative approaches and collaborative efforts, this Nature Recovery Plan aims to embrace the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead of us, securing positive outcomes for local people, places, and nature.

Stuart Wright

Stuart Wright - Head of Environmental Sustainability

Recent Highlights

Up to 90% reduction
in rural highway verge cutting

7 beaches awarded
Blue Flag status during 2024

Charity partnership
with Cornwall Wildlife Trust

National recognition
for green infrastructure work

14 towns benefitting
from green infrastructure

90% of our waste
is reused or recycled annually

170 community groups supported +
34,899 volunteer hours facilitated last year.

110 bird + 33 bat boxes
installed during recent projects

244 sites treated
for invasive plants last year

98% reduction
in glyphosate herbicides

10,500 trees planted
as part of recent projects

Why is Biodiversity Important?

Biodiversity can be defined as all the different types of life in one area.

It includes the animals, plants, fungi, and microorganisms like bacteria that make up our natural world. These species and organisms work together in closely connected ecosystems that are essential for supporting and balancing life on Earth. Without a wide range of nature, we will not have the healthy ecosystems that we rely on for the air we breathe and food we eat. We are completely dependent upon biodiversity, so we must conserve it.

Air

Trees and other plants (both on land and in the ocean) produce the oxygen that we breathe, reduce air pollution, and help us to tackle climate change by absorbing and storing carbon dioxide.

Water

Trees, plants, and green spaces slow down water, absorbing rainfall, and binding soil together via their root systems. When they are removed, the risk of flooding and erosion is significantly increased.

Food

Pollinators such as bees, butterflies and other insects are responsible for one third of the world's food crop production. Without them we would not have many of the common foods that we like to regularly eat.

Products

In addition to natural foods and forestry products such as timber and paper, many medicines, and other complex chemicals that we use in our daily lives also originate from plants and nature.

Soil

Invertebrates, fungi, and microbes maintain the health of the soil that food crops are grow in. They liberate the nutrients that plant need to grow, which are then passed up the food chain to us when consumed.

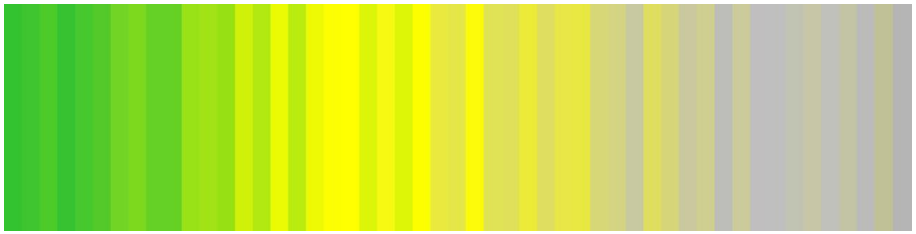
Wellbeing

Spending time in nature can lead to improvements in physical and mental health. Simply having access to green spaces has been shown to decrease hospital admissions, reduce stress and lower blood pressure.

Ecological Emergency

We are currently experiencing both a local and global biodiversity crisis, impacting everyone and everywhere.

We are losing wildlife faster than ever before. Even if society reaches net zero, we still risk ecosystem collapse as habitats are being degraded, polluted, and lost. The progression from green to grey stripes in the graphic below portrays the 73% decline in the variety and abundance of global nature that has occurred from 1970 to 2020 (left to right).



Global Biodiversity Stripes created by Miles Richardson and based upon the famous 'Global Warming Stripes' graphic developed by Ed Hawkins MBE.

During 2021, Cornwall Council formally declared an 'Ecological Emergency', recognising the need for urgent action to address the biodiversity crisis. We recognise that we have a leading role to play in addressing this and that by facilitating positive organisational changes, we can protect and enhance local biodiversity, helping nature recover.

The UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world and Cornwall is experiencing significant local declines:

16% of species in the UK are threatened with extinction

151 species have already become extinct in the UK since 1500

50% decline recorded in Cornish breeding birds since the 1980s

60% of Cornish butterfly species are now found in fewer places

- State of Nature 2023 - report on the UK's current biodiversity
- State of Nature Cornwall 2020 Report | Cornwall Wildlife Trust

Our Biodiversity Challenge

We recognise that many of our business activities have environmental risks associated with them and that we have an obligation to manage these in a responsible manner, minimising adverse impacts and maximising positive opportunities.

The sectors in which we operate does present us with some challenges:

- New build developments and construction activities have historically played a significant role in causing biodiversity loss.
- Some of our operational maintenance activities are deemed to be ‘safety critical’ by law and cannot be avoided.
- The construction industry is heavily reliant on natural resources.
- Our client’s decisions can directly impact our pace of change.

These challenges will not stop us from being ambitious and aiming high. By prioritising meaningful action that result in significant biodiversity improvements and by utilising offsets, we can still work towards a biodiversity ‘net’ gain ambition.

Cormac’s Long Rock Coastal Protection Project involved habitat enhancements at Marazion Marsh SSSI using a specialist amphibious excavator and received an ‘Excellent’ CEEQUAL sustainability rating.

Our Pledge for Nature

We recognise that nature is in trouble and that affects all our futures. We have therefore made a ‘Pledge for Nature’ with Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Nature Partnership.

CORNWALL & ISLES OF SCILLY
LOCAL NATURE PARTNERSHIP

https://naturecios.org.uk/

Our commitment is based around the following objectives:

1	2	3
Support Cornwall and Isles of Scilly's ambition that at least 30% of our land and seas are well-managed for nature by 2030.	Take action to protect, enhance, create, and restore local nature-rich areas, whilst also reducing pressures on our environment.	Support opportunities for people to better enjoy and benefit from nature, such as through nature-based jobs, skills, and volunteering opportunities.

Understanding Nature

Regular assessment of local species and habitats is key to targeting positive action and measuring progress.

While we do not own any land, we do manage and maintain a large amount on Cornwall Council's behalf. If we add up all the green spaces that we look after throughout Cornwall, it becomes clear that we have a significant responsibility and opportunity to achieve highly positive outcomes for nature.

Surveying and mapping activities are crucial for achieving nature recovery because they provide detailed information on the distribution, health, and diversity of wildlife and habitats. This data identifies areas of importance, detects changes, or declines, and helps us to pinpointing exactly where intervention is required.

163 ecological surveys and inspections were undertaken during the 2023/24 financial year.

Country Parks	295 ha	Moorland	51 ha
Highway Verges*	259 ha	Churchyards	42 ha
River Valleys	167 ha	Public Parks	38 ha
Woodland	116 ha	Meadows	22 ha
Sand Dunes	90 ha	Public Gardens	17 ha
Coastline	64 ha	Marshland	11 ha
Trails	58 ha	Other	124 ha

We can help to ensure 1,354 hectares of land are well managed for nature by 2030.

This is comparable to 5.2 square miles or 1,896 football pitches.

* Excludes safety critical highway verge areas where regular vegetation cutting is unavoidable to maintain visibility for road users.

Conservation Approach

To protect biodiversity, we will be aligning our actions to the mitigation hierarchy used within Environmental Impact Assessment literature.

While this hierarchy was originally designed for planning new developments, we think the general principles can be applied to the other types of operational activities that we undertake.

1. Avoid - preventing impacts entirely

Avoidance is the first step in this hierarchy and the most preferred option because it ensures that no adverse environmental impacts occur at all.

2. Minimise - reducing adverse impacts

When adverse impacts cannot be completely avoided, it is often still possible to reduce the duration, intensity, or extent of activities to ensure that minimal harm occurs.

3. Restore - repairing and reconstructing

When an impact cannot be avoided or minimised, it may still be possible to retrospectively correct any damage, returning an area back to its original state.

4. Offset - balancing impacts

As a last resort, this balancing act ensures no ‘net’ loss. Offsetting typically involves undertaking positive action off-site to compensate for the negative impacts onsite.

Biodiversity Action

We already have a wide variety of nature recovery initiatives underway, identified by transforming global threats into positive opportunities.

The Greatest Global Threats to Nature*

- **Land Use Change** — Loss of important habitats
- **Resource Exploitation** — Overuse of natural resources
- **Climate Change** — Warming that exceeds critical limits
- **Pollution** — Harmful and damaging practices
- **Invasive Species** — Loss of native biodiversity

Our Nature Recovery Opportunities

- **Habitat Creation** — Creating new spaces for nature to thrive
- **Responsible Consumption** — Reducing, reusing, and recycling resources
- **Nature-Based Climate Solutions** — Addressing the climate emergency
- **Environmental Protection** — Safeguarding wildlife and habitats
- **Biosecurity Practices** — Helping our native species to survive

Awareness and Engagement — Promoting understanding and collaboration

* According to IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services)

Habitat Creation

Creating new spaces for nature to thrive

We have already delivered national award-winning green infrastructure projects, providing us with a strong foundation to continue our biodiversity journey.

Green Infrastructure for Growth

This pioneering collaboration between Cornwall Council, Cormac and the University of Exeter transformed 40 hectares of urban green spaces in seven Cornish towns for people and wildlife, winning ‘Project of the year’ and ‘Overall winner’ at CIRIA’s national ‘Big Biodiversity Awards’.

Making Space for Nature

Continuing enhancements across a further seven towns, an additional 28 hectares of improved nature friendly space was created within parks, public spaces, road verges, churchyards, and cemeteries through the planting of wildflowers, trees, and orchards, the installation of new habitats, and the adoption of less intensive mowing regimes.

Urban Green Shoots

Work recently started on delivering Cornwall Council’s new Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) flagship nature project, building upon previous successes to increase biodiversity in even more community spaces.

Making Space for Nature at Permarin Park, Penryn.

14 towns currently benefiting

55 separate sites transformed so far

68 hectares of land enhanced for nature

Reduced Verge Cutting

We have been working with Cornwall Council to adopt new highway verge cutting approaches that promote wildflowers and support pollinators to thrive without compromising safety. Vegetation cutting on the rural network is now focused solely on safety-critical areas, with reductions of up to 90% achieved in recent years in certain locations. Where feasible, our goal is to time the cutting activities that we do still need to undertake to occur after wildflowers have bloomed and re-seeded, maximising the biodiversity potential of these areas.

Previously successful verge transformation along the A391 near St Austell.

Living Churchyards

Starting as a single site pilot at Ludgvan Churchyard, this wildlife friendly management scheme has now been extended to 15 closed churchyards throughout Cornwall. These churchyards were predominantly grassed areas that were heavily mowed with little focus on biodiversity. New site management practices have significantly increased the abundance of wildflowers and are testament to the collaborative methods adopted by Cormac and various local community volunteer groups.

Rewilding at St Uny Old Churchyard, Lelant

Responsible Consumption

Reducing, reusing, and recycling resources

We are committed to adopting sustainable materials and embedding circular economy principles throughout our operations, expanding the lifespan of existing resources.

Sustainable Forestry Products

We are committed to sourcing all timber, wood, and paper products from certified sustainable sources, which have been harvested responsibly from continuously replenished forests. In many areas around the world, logging contributes to habitat destruction, climate change, pollution and displaces the indigenous people or wildlife that dwells there. The link between logging and these negative impacts can be broken, enabling forests to be both well-managed and protected.

Aggregate Recycling Scheme

We operate four internal recycling facilities, where waste from our highway maintenance activities is processed into high quality, affordable and sustainable secondary aggregates. By transforming waste back into a valuable resource and keeping existing materials in use for longer, we have been able to reduce demand for the extraction, processing, and transportation of new construction materials. During 2023/24, we internally recycled 62,903 tonnes of construction waste (comparable to 6 Eiffel Towers in weight).

Waste for Wildlife

Expanding upon our popular ‘Bug Hotels’ made from wooden delivery pallets, surplus building materials and other waste items, we have been recently experimenting to see whether waste drainage pipe offcuts from our infrastructure work can be transformed into kestrel, owl, or sparrow nesting boxes.

Nature-Based Climate Solutions

Addressing the climate emergency

We have started to explore ways in which natural systems can be used to store carbon and help society adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change.

Carbon Reduction Plan

Following Cornwall Council's Climate Emergency declaration, we have been actively identifying, exploring, and pursuing key opportunities to significantly reduce emissions across our operations. We maintain a comprehensive published 'Carbon Reduction Plan' aligned to IEMA's 'Greenhouse Gas Management Hierarchy', helping us to track our progress towards carbon neutrality.

Forest for Cornwall

We are a key partner in delivering Cornwall Council's 'Forest for Cornwall' project. This is an ambitious tree planting project in response to both the climate and ecological emergencies. When complete, it will add 8,000 hectares of new tree cover by 2030, which is equivalent to 2% of Cornwall's total land area, increasing woodland habitat, sequestering carbon, and enhancing ecosystem resilience. 10,500 trees have already been planted as part of the St Austell Bay Resilient Regeneration (STARR) project.

Biochar Partnership

We have recently partnered with local start-up Restord to explore how our forestry waste could sequester carbon and improve soil quality. Biochar is a carbon-rich, charcoal-like material made by heating organic material at over 500°C in an oxygen deprived environment through a process known as Pyrolysis. Traditional decomposition and burning of forestry waste releases greenhouse gases. However, transforming this biomass into biochar can lock away carbon for over one thousand years while improving soil health through its microbial, nutrient, and water-retention properties.

Environmental Protection

Safeguarding wildlife and habitats

We are committed to preventing adverse impacts from our activities, carefully planning all our operational activities, and helping to shape industry best practice.

Environmental Management Systems

We maintain a comprehensive internal Environmental Management System which is externally certified to the international ISO 14001 standard, helping us to thoroughly plan, control and monitor all our operational activities. As part of this system, we recently developed new detailed Biodiversity, Pollution Prevention and Waste Management Standards for managers, strengthening our internal processes even further and helping to embed exemplary environmental performance expectations into everything that we do.

Alternative Equipment

Where possible, we are currently transitioning away from petrol powered handheld equipment to battery electric equivalents. In addition to reducing emissions, this has the added benefit of significantly reducing noise and vibrations which could disturb wildlife when working in sensitive locations and eliminates the risk of spills, as onsite refuelling practices are no longer necessary.

Cleaner Waters

Cormac's Beach Management Team are committed to ensuring local beaches continue to be rated among the best in the world. Seven Council owned beaches were awarded the prestigious international Blue Flag status during 2024, meeting the highest water quality classification standards set by the EU Bathing Water Directive. We additionally encourage our own employees to volunteer, with beach litter picking to remove marine plastics often proving a popular staff choice.

Corserv's Communications Team supporting 'Plastic Free July'

Biosecurity Practices

Helping our native species to survive

Invasive non-native species, pests and diseases outcompete or harm our native ecology and therefore presents one of the greatest threats to local biodiversity.

Biosecurity refers to a set of precautions that aim to prevent the introduction and spread of harmful non-native tree pests, such as insects, and disease-causing organisms (called pathogens), such as some bacteria and fungi.

Robust Operational Protocols

We are committed to continually refining our biosecurity protocols to protect native biodiversity. Effective standards that align with industry best practice and that lead by example to others will be key to achieving local nature recovery. This includes routine cleaning and disinfection of tools, vehicles, and personal protective equipment when moving between sites to minimise cross-contamination risks. Additionally, we will continue to responsibly source planting stock through reputable nurseries and quarantine any imports for at least one month. By increasing stakeholder awareness of biosecurity protocols and by training staff to identify common plant diseases prevalent in the local area, we can strengthen our preventative efforts.

Controlling Invasive Species

We have been adopting alternative treatment solutions for harmful weeds and invasive plants that are safer for pollinators and human health. By continual refining our working practices, we have been able to significantly reduce the amount of herbicide chemicals used. Our new integrated weed management approach combines four methods:

1. Physical: Hoeing, brushing, mulching and thermal.
2. Biological: Insects and competitive plants.
3. Cultural: Sowing time, seed mix and watering.
4. Chemical: Selective or alternative products.

342 sites monitored for invasive plants during 2023/24

244 sites treated for invasive plants during 2023/24

98% reduction in Glyphosate herbicide chemicals

Awareness and Engagement

Promoting stakeholder understanding and collaboration

We want to develop an exemplary business culture, ensuring all people-led activity is delivered in line with our strategic ambitions for nature recovery.

We recognise that our employees and stakeholders are crucial to the success of our nature recovery commitments. We will only be able to deliver this plan if everyone understands why we need to act, shares our ambition to do things differently and has the information, support, and ability to make those changes.

Sustainability Committee

We have established a Carbon Reduction, Environment and Sustainability Taskforce (CREST) to help drive meaningful action. By bringing together 'sustainability champions' across the business on a regular basis, we can promote effective collaboration, encourage innovation, and drive positive organisational transformation.

Wildlife Training

To ensure our staff have the knowledge and skills required to help tackle the ecological emergency and maximise biodiversity, we will continue to undertake regular awareness briefings and host a range of specialist equipment demonstrations and habitat talks.

Communications

We will regularly share communications on our nature work, highlighting the specific actions and decisions employees and other stakeholders can take to have a positive environmental impact.

Supply Chain

All our key supply chain partners will be made aware of our Nature Recovery Plan. We will continue to embed exemplary environmental standards into our procurement criteria and will incrementally introduce nature related targets into our key contracts.

Partnerships

In addition to membership of CIRIA's national 'Biodiversity Community of Practice' and the Invasive Non-Native Specialist Association (INNSA), Cormac has recently selected Cornwall Wildlife Trust for corporate charity fundraising activities.

Community Volunteer Programme

We are committed to supporting local people and local groups with enhancing their green spaces.

While Cormac provides a level of environmental maintenance in line with Council service agreements, residents often want to take their open spaces to another level. From individuals wanting to plant flowers on the verge outside their house, to groups managing local woodland, and from re-wilding local parks to weeding open spaces, we are committed to helping co-ordinate and support these activities.

To make volunteering as easy as possible for all, we have two free of charge toolkit trailers which contain basic tools, equipment and PPE with advice, guidance and insurance also provided.

170 community groups supported during 2023/24

34,899 volunteer hours facilitated during 2023/24

£590,840 of social value generated during 2023/24

Cormac Volunteering (cormacltd.co.uk)

Prescribing Nature

Spending time in nature is scientifically proven to improve physical and mental health, helping to engage wider communities with nature recovery.

Social Care

We plan to explore ways in which the health and wellbeing benefits of nature can be embedded into our adult social care services, incorporating outdoor activities, and designing care environments with access to natural light and views of nature to create calming and restorative spaces for our service users.

Sensory Gardens

Sensory gardens include plants and features that stimulate senses through touch, sight, scent, taste, and hearing. During September 2023, a new healing and sensory garden for critically ill patients opened at the Royal Cornwall Hospital, Treliske. This has been a particular rewarding project for Cormac, as the garden is one of the first in the country with a medical gas facility, enabling patients to receive treatment whilst in a therapeutic outdoor space, experiencing and connecting with nature as part of their recovery.

Governance

This Nature Recovery Plan has been approved by our board of directors and will be regularly reviewed, considering our challenges, performance, and new emerging opportunities.

To ensure this plan remains relevant and ambitious, we have a system of governance and accountability, ensuring biodiversity and nature recovery is discussed at a wide range of meetings and embedded into our key business decision-making.

High Impact Leadership

Our expectations for change need to be clearly communicated from the top. All our directors and managers are expected to visibly lead by example and are responsible for ensuring all teams and business areas make meaningful contributions to the delivery of this strategic plan.

All Employees

Nature recovery will not just be for specialist groups or roles, we will ensure there is always fair consultation and representation when developing strategic plans. All our employees are key to our success and will be encouraged and empowered to do what they can in their own personal role, identifying opportunities, pursuing action, and supporting others with implementing positive change.

Independent Verification

In addition to our own extensive internal audits and inspections, our comprehensive Environmental Management System is externally audited every six months as part of our continued certification to the international ISO 14001 standard. This provides assurance to our key stakeholders and additionally helps us to refine our operational processes, ensuring continual performance improvement.

bsi ISO 14001 Environmental Management CERTIFIED

Internal Expertise

We currently have three Chartered Environmentalists (CEnv) within the business, overseeing organisational performance and providing specialist technical support. This is considered the industry gold standard for environmental sustainability professionals and helps to ensure all our nature recovery work remains ‘SMART’ (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound).

CEnv Chartered Environmentalist

Definitions

Descriptions of key nature recovery terminology used within this document:

Biodiversity

The variety and variability of life forms, including different plants, animals, microorganisms, and ecosystems, found in a particular area or on Earth as a whole.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Approach to development that leaves habitats in a better state than before, by ensuring that any negative impacts on biodiversity are outweighed by measures taken to enhance it.

Conservation

Protection, preservation, and management of natural environments and wildlife to ensure the sustainability of ecosystems and biodiversity.

Ecology

The branch of biology that studies the interactions between living organisms and the physical environment where they live.

Ecological Emergency

Critical situation where severe damage to the environment threatens the health and stability of ecosystems and biodiversity.

Green Infrastructure

Network of natural and semi-natural areas, designed to provide environmental, economic, and social benefits by managing water, improving air quality, and enhancing biodiversity.

Mitigation

Actions taken to reduce or offset the negative impacts of human activities on the environment, particularly through the preservation, restoration, or creation of natural habitats.

CORSERV

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