

# Our future vision for the Farm

It's a scary thought...

In the last 50 years, the loss of wildlife habitat in the UK has reached staggering proportions with direct and disastrous consequences for our wildlife. In that time we have lost 154 species of animals and birds and over 100 species of plants and unless we do something quickly, the worst is yet to come.

With this in mind, our vision for the Rare Breeds Farm is to ...

- **Create a safe and sustainable haven for wildlife by creating and managing the right habitats for a wide range of animals, birds and insects**

- **Hopefully give you our visitors, the chance to learn something about the countryside, farming and the environment and inspire us all to do our bit to preserve and protect it**

- **And of course to create a fun, exciting and really different day out for you to enjoy. As well as supporting our work with disabled adults, part of the income from your visit will help fund our environmental work**

## Plans for the future...

As well as ensuring the Rare Breeds Centre remains a fun and exciting day out, we have ambitious plans to create a major wildlife haven and centre for countryside education and interpretation here on the farm. Some projects are already well underway and others are planned for the future.

Have a look at the map below for more details

**1. Restoring and planting hedgerows** In the last 50 years, close to 200,000 miles of hedgerow have been lost in the UK and given that hedgerows support, feed and shelter up to 80% of our birds, animals and insects this is bad news! By restoring and replanting our hedgerows we hope to attract and provide safe habitats for wildlife.

**2. The woodland** Our woodland is ancient coppice wood that has been allowed to grow too much. Coppicing (cutting back) of the trees will take place to allow in more sunlight and encourage new plants and flowers to grow. Once coppiced the trees will grow back and be coppiced again every 5-7 years

**3. Willow walkways** Walk through willow and honeysuckle walkways are planned for the path that runs alongside 'Woodside' field. Willow is a fast growing tree whose roots help bind together the soil and whose branches can be used for weaving and as building materials. When in flower, the honeysuckle will smell beautiful and provide food and nectar for butterflies and insects

**4. Parsley Meadow** Currently 7 acres of pasture, the meadow will be ploughed and soem with traditional wildflower seeds to create a beautiful wild flower meadow. This will not only provide hay for our animals to eat, but when in flower it will attract hoards of different butterflies, insects and birds. The tall grass will also provide shelter and protection for many species of animals. Our meadow will go some small way to replace the 95% of the traditional wild flower hay meadows that have been lost in recent years due mainly to the fact that farmers have had to produce lots of cheap, uniform food as demanded by the government, the supermarkets and ultimately us, the consumer.

**5. Wildlife corridors** The intensive farming methods of today involve cultivating the whole field right up to the hedge and often ripping out the hedges altogether to create bigger fields. All the way around Great Oak Field we are creating 'wildlife corridors' - a strip of land that isn't cultivated or grazed where the grass and flowers can grow tall and wild and create habitats and safe corridors for wildlife to move through. We will also be making a new footpath and interpretation trail around Great Oak field.

**6. Pond creation and management** Ponds and their surroundings create habitats not just for aquatic wildlife but also for many birds, animals and insects. Our intention is to create networks of ponds as many creatures like newts, frogs and toads like to move from pond to pond.

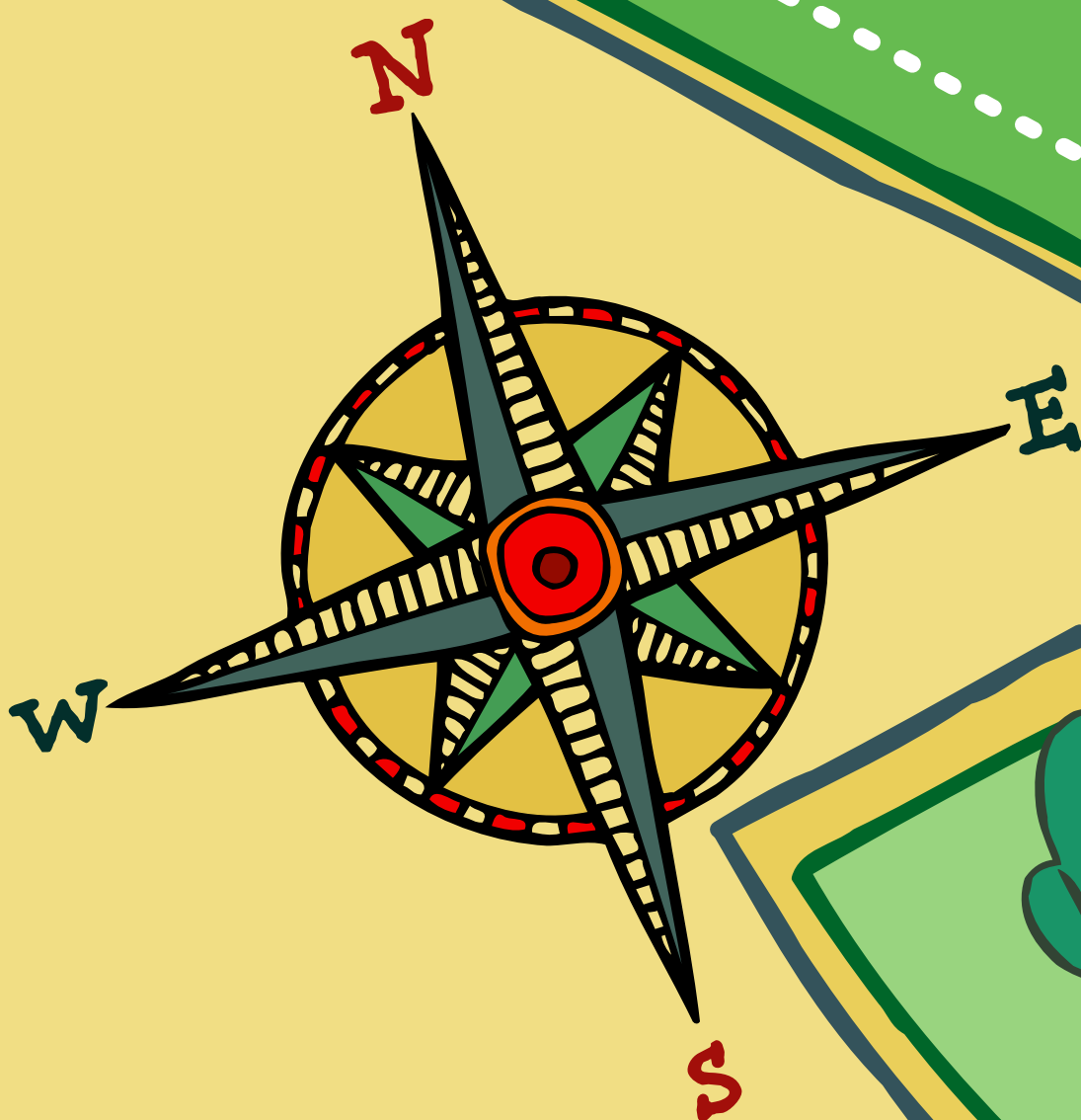
**7. The Human Sundial** The soil mound at the tractor turnaround is being made into a human sundial - stand in the set spot on a sunny day and you'll be able to tell the time!

**8. Rainbow Wood** This was planted 10 years ago as a commemorative wood - part of it is kept clear and orderly and other parts left wild for wildlife. Eventually the trees will be thinned to allow the bigger, healthier ones to grow tall and strong. Why not sponsor and dedicate a tree in Rainbow Wood to help support our conservation work? - ask at Admissions for a leaflet.

**9. The Secret Lake** Is home to a wide range of aquatic life including thousands of small roach and rudd. We hope to manage the lake more effectively in the future and perhaps reduce the numbers of roach and rudd allowing what remains to grow larger.

**10. The Marsh** Halfway down Great Oak field is an area of fenced off marshland that over the years has become neglected and silted up. The intention is to dig out and reinstate the marsh and reintroduce various marsh plants to attract key species of endangered butterflies that we will breed and release on site. We also hope to have a board walk across the marsh for visitors to enjoy as part of your walk around the farm

**11. Great Oak Field** The main field is sown with an intensive grassland seed to provide grazing. In the summer the tall grass will be cut down, allowed to dry a little in the sun then wrapped tightly in plastic. Inside the plastic wrapping the grass turns to silage that provides feed for the animals through the winter. You'll see the big rolls of silage stacked up by the barn at the bottom of the farm. It will also be interesting to compare the traditional hay meadow in Parsley Meadow next door with the more intensive meadow planting of Great Oak Field.



Grey = Boundary  
Red, Blue, Green = Trails

**BE CAREFUL** - Much of the Rare Breeds Centre is wild open country so take care on the paths, keep your eye on your children and supervise them on all the play equipment.