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Extravagant plans for Rutland nature reserve

Extravagant plans have been drawn up for a new nature reserve in Rutland that the landowners would like to one day be home to bears and wolves.

Farmers Joss and James Hanbury, from a family that have farmed in the county for centuries, hope to transform 400 ha of land between the Oakham bypass and Burley Wood – and make it a home for native British mammals including Brown Bear, Wolf and Eurasian Lynx.



The Hanbury family hopes to establish a population of Wolf on its Rutland land (Marcel Langthim via Pixabay).

Restoring wild habitats

James told [LincsOnline](#): "Like many farms in the UK, Burley needs to diversify in order to remain self-sufficient, but it has been a long-held dream of our family to develop a project that benefits the natural environment, builds upon what Rutland has to offer both residents and visitors and retains the integrity of the county.

"We hope that our proposal will be seen as complementary to what is already on offer for nature lovers, and provide a place where people can explore and learn more about indigenous species and their habitats. We sincerely hope that Wild Rutland will enhance the county and be something that Rutland can be proud of."

A planning application will be submitted to Rutland County Council in 2024. As well as the wildlife reserve, the proposal aims to improve the biodiversity of Burley Wood and the surrounding fields by introducing wildflower meadows and planting native trees.

James added: "The overriding intention is to improve the natural habitat and ecology of the area, which in turn will create new opportunities for greater bird, insect and reptile diversity.

"Ultimately our ambition is that Wild Rutland will facilitate education and understanding and encourage people to enjoy the natural world, while reflecting positively on and promoting Rutland to a wider audience."

Three-year plan

The Hanburys have employed a captive wildlife consultant to help with the early stages of their plans. As things progress, they will work with specialists for each species. The animals would be allowed to free roam in certain areas, with a secure perimeter of the site, to create the most natural environment possible.

A [Wild Rutland website](#) has been set up to share progress on the plans. The team will also consult with the public throughout the process. If planning permission is granted, it is hoped the reserve would open within three years.

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