

Wild Parishes

Engaging your local community

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- Rhiannon Flemming Bucks Buzzing
- Fiona Everingham Bucks & MK Env. Records Centre
- Jane MacBean Chesham Town Council
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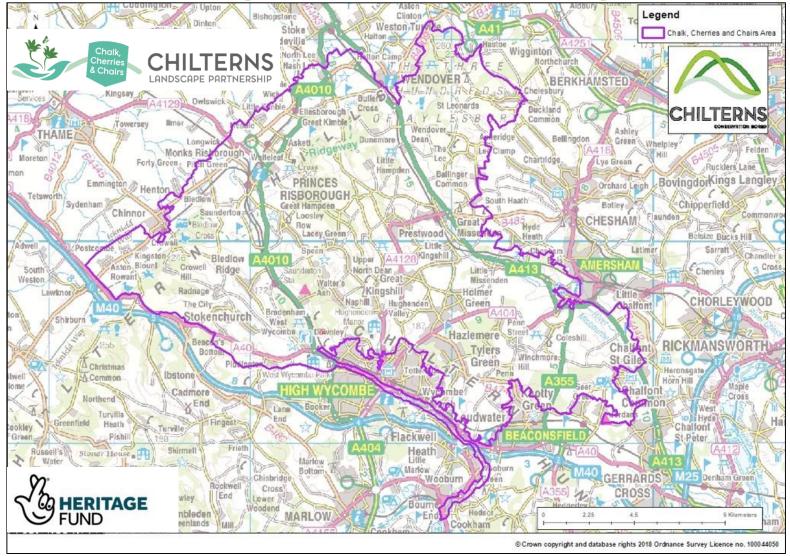
www.bbowt.org.uk/wildparishes

www.bbowt.org.uk

Berkshire Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire



Rough Around the Edges







Rough Around the Edges

Creating local spaces for wildlife across the Central Chilterns

Ecologically sound

Community & volunteer engagement

Long term legacy

Berkshire Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire



Rough Around the Edges



St. Mary's Church, Sydenham



Credit: Helen McCammond

Pupils and their families helping to improve wildlife habitat at Widmer End Community Combined School

Wildflowers sown by gardeners and volunteers at Missenden Walled Garden





Rough Around the Edges



Prestwood Nature volunteer preparing hedgehog survey



Greening Chinnor chairs taking a rest at Donkey Lane orchard

Local Groups can help with:

Consultation and advice Local knowledge Expertise Engagement

Parish councils can support with:

Spaces
Events
Permissions
Insurance
Funding

Both help with:

Networking Publicity

katiehorgan@bbowt.org.uk



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership

Bucks Buzzing

Bucks Buzzing is a project to raise awareness about the decline of insects and loss of wildflower habitats

Anyone can do their part, from window box gardeners to large landowners





43% gardening heroes

like Susanna who leaves areas to grow wild in her pesticide-free garden



8% healthcare, local council, and places of worship



26% community groups

like the Micklefield Library Garden A community planting day led by social enterprise Chiltern Rangers reinvigorated this library garden. Local volunteers planted a mix of native wildflowers, including plants for pollinators.

15%

students and schools

like William Harding Gardening Club who made seed balls to brighten up neglected areas of their schoolyard







Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership

Bucks Buzzing

For more information and to get involved, contact Rhiannon:

rhiannon.flemming@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

You can also find us online:

www.bucksmknep.co.uk/bucks-buzzing www.twitter.com/bucksbuzzing www.instagram.com/bucksbuzzing



What is BMERC?
Buckinghamshire & Milton
Keynes Environmental Record
Centre



Local plans
Whole Parish
searches



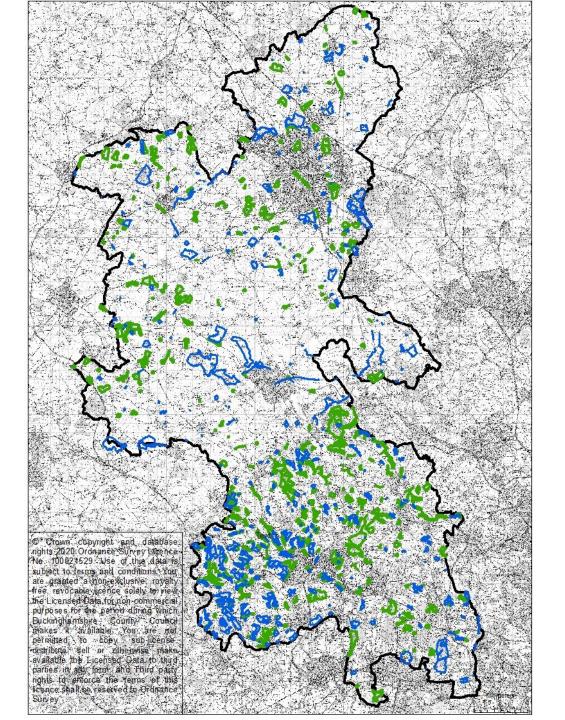












SUPPORTING OUR LOCAL SITES AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY





LWS & BNS survey



Training and event support



Veteran tree verification

Management advice



Working with a town council

- Advising on managing existing wildlife sites
- Looking at wider landscape to join up existing wildlife hotspots
- Investigating ways to manage amenity ground less intensively
- Developing management plans
- Involving local schools, Scout groups, Forest School and volunteer group
- Liaising with other community groups allotment society, sustainability group and climate emergency committee

What did we learn?

Know what you have and where



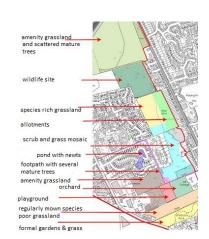
Talk to the man with the mower





Involve as many people as possible





We have to persuade folk to value this.....



....instead of this



How can we help you?

- Provide data from our database via our 'Parish Boundary Search' tool for Parish Councils seeking environmental information to support a Parish Plan, a standard package is provided, £50 + VAT: this includes Notable Species, Invasive Non-native Species, Statutory Sites, Local Non-statutory Sites & Priority Habitats within a Parish boundary
- Highlight people and resources to support you either through our website and newsletter or email us with specific queries
- Help develop management plans for Local Wildlife Sites
- Guidance on identifying existing wildlife rich areas and potential 'linking areas' to create 'bigger, better,
 more joined-up' landscapes you need to know what you have and where before you change things,
 particularly tree planting
- Loan equipment field guides, trail-cams, bat detectors etc
- Provide some limited survey support for Biological Notification Sites, Local Wildlife Sites or sites that might be considered of high enough quality to merit local wildlife site status.
- May be able to provide some training next year for groups (in conjunction with other bodies such as Caring for Gods Acre)

Land Management Resources

- Caring for God's Acre they have an abundance of resources relating to managing churchyards for wildlife. These can be expanded out into the wider countryside(https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/resources/)
- Butterfly Conservation a lot information about how you can help invertebrates including 'How to garden for pollinators' (https://butterfly-conservation.org/how-you-can-help/get-involved/gardening)
- Plantlife and Buglife keen to help people manage road verges in a more wildlife friendly way (https://plantlife.love-wildflowers.org.uk/roadvergecampaign/management-guidelines; https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/b-lines-guidance/ and https://cdn.buglife.org.uk/2020/04/Sheet-4-Management-of-wildflower-rich-grasslands-for-insects-1.pdf
- Hedgehog street mapping hedgehogs across the country and providing information and advice to make your community more hedgehog-friendly (https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/)
- People's Trust for Endangered Species (https://ptes.org/)
- Floodplains Meadows (http://www.floodplainmeadows.org.uk/)
- Chiltern Rangers they have a wealth of experience in delivering conservation land management on the ground (https://chilternrangers.co.uk/)
- Bucks Buzzing (https://bucksmknep.co.uk/bucks-buzzing/)

Identification and other resources

- iSpot if you are not sure what you have found try uploading a photo to ispot and get the community to help you (https://www.ispotnature.org/)
- iRecord a good way to store your wildlife records, you can even set up a recording group specifically for your parish or a particular site (https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/)
- Field Studies Council (https://www.field-studies-council.org/) particularly their biolinks project (https://www.fscbiodiversity.uk/projects/biolinks)
- Chalk, Cherries & Chairs have been holding a series of webinars during lockdown which should be available on YouTube including butterflies, bird song, ladybirds and dragonflies.
- Butterfly Conservation id pages to help you identify the butterflies and moths you see (https://butterflyconservation.org/butterflies/identify-a-butterfly)
- RSPB online resources to help identify birds and their songs (https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/identify-a-bird/ and https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-wildlife-wildlife/wildlife-wildlife/wildlife-wildlife/wildlife-wildlife/wildlife-bird-songs/what-bird-is-that/)
- Botanical Society of the British Isles has lots of resources to help identify plants (https://bsbi.org/get-involved)
- Local natural history societies a wealth of information and expertise through their members as well as providing a varied programme of talks in the winter and summer field excursions, considering joining one near you. (Bucks Fungus Group (http://www.bucksfungusgroup.org.uk/); Milton Keynes Natural History Society (https://mknhs.org.uk/); Bucks Mammal Group (https://bucksmknep.co.uk/directory-categories/bucksmammals/) to name but a few.
- The Conservation Volunteers this organisation can provide help and support when setting up a volunteer group, particularly in relation to insurance (https://www.tcv.org.uk/)

......there are many more, as a quick internet search will reveal......and several national schemes to get involved with through citizen science projects such as Treezilla (the monster map of trees!); BTO Garden Birdwatch; Big Butterfly Count etc.

Thank you





Chesham Town Council Community Engagement

Cllr Jane MacBean

Chair of Community, Assets & Environment Cttee

- Partnership Working bringing people on the journey achieves better buy-in and much better results.
- Early Communication generates support for projects, identifies potential issues & solutions before you get into detailed scoping.
- Local Expertise tap into specialist knowledge in the local area.
- Resident Input & Ownership local expertise, hidden gems, protective of homegrown ideas.
- O Partners In Delivery a larger volunteer force, shared learning, better after care.
- Reflect & Re-Evaluate plan, budget, be flexible, adapt as you progress, be prepared to compromise.



Chesham Town Council



Wildflower Sites

- Project originally the idea of a retired employee of the Environment Agency who helped with all the initial scoping work.
- Pre-awareness increased understanding and buy-in.
- Created a group of volunteers to regularly assess sites during the summer season.
- Practical knowledge eliminated problems, guaranteed sound site selection.
- Passed on knowledge and a passion for the environment to a larger group of volunteer residents who are also now paying it forward.



Communi-Tree

- Initially a local Councillor led project but community involvement from Day 1 crucial.
- Actively encouraged residents to nominate planting sites, and volunteer for planting parties and after care of new trees via a print, social media and town council comms campaign.
- Over 60 sites nominated, strong project name recognition and good feedback.
- Strong relationship with Buckinghamshire Council and Transport for Bucks ensured support of officers in site selection.
- Attention to detail careful site mapping made it a quick and easy process for licensing teams and an easy win meant quick attention to issuing of licenses.
- Local retired landscape gardener offered expert advice and how to physically plant the trees to maximise chances of success.
- Involve other community groups with expertise to engage and participate: The Chiltern Society, Chesham Environmental Group – expands your potential workforce and increases likelihood of identifying local expertise.



Berkshire Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire





Ches	ham Communi-Tr	ee Project
Name		
Email		
5000		
Address		
Telephone Numb	per	
Site/s where you	would like to see a tree planted (F nd / or building name to help easy	
Site/s where you	would like to see a tree planted (F	
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Are you willing to	would like to see a tree planted (F nd / or building name to help easy over the second of the second of the second over the second of the seco	ns on a planting day?











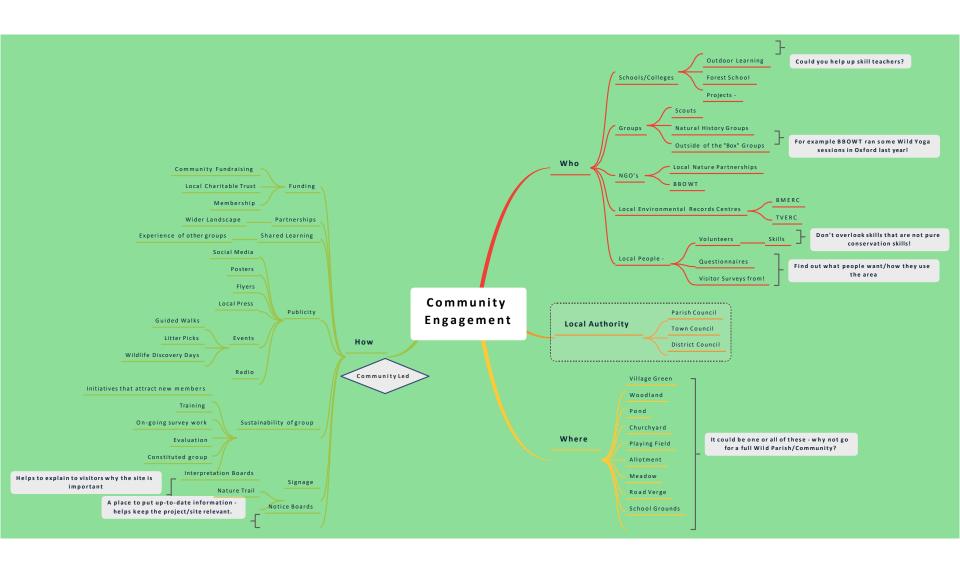
Inclusion, Involvement & Education:

- Changing perceptions and leading residents on a journey.
- About improving the public realm and not just the Council cutting corners.
- Avoids potential conflict & encourages involvement and compromise.
- Involvement from the start increases buy-in site nomination, action plans and after care.
- Pre-empt queries and complaints by being transparent about what you want to do, are doing and plan for the future.
- Increased resident knowledge gives them the confidence to get involved.



For further information / support you can email any questions to:-jmacbean@chesham.gov.uk

Tel: 07812 177 794





The idea for creating a local NRN of people grew out of a few stark facts:

Membership of environmental organisations in the UK, in 2016, was **8 million people**, more than any country in Europe (*Our Place*, Mark Cocker, 2018)

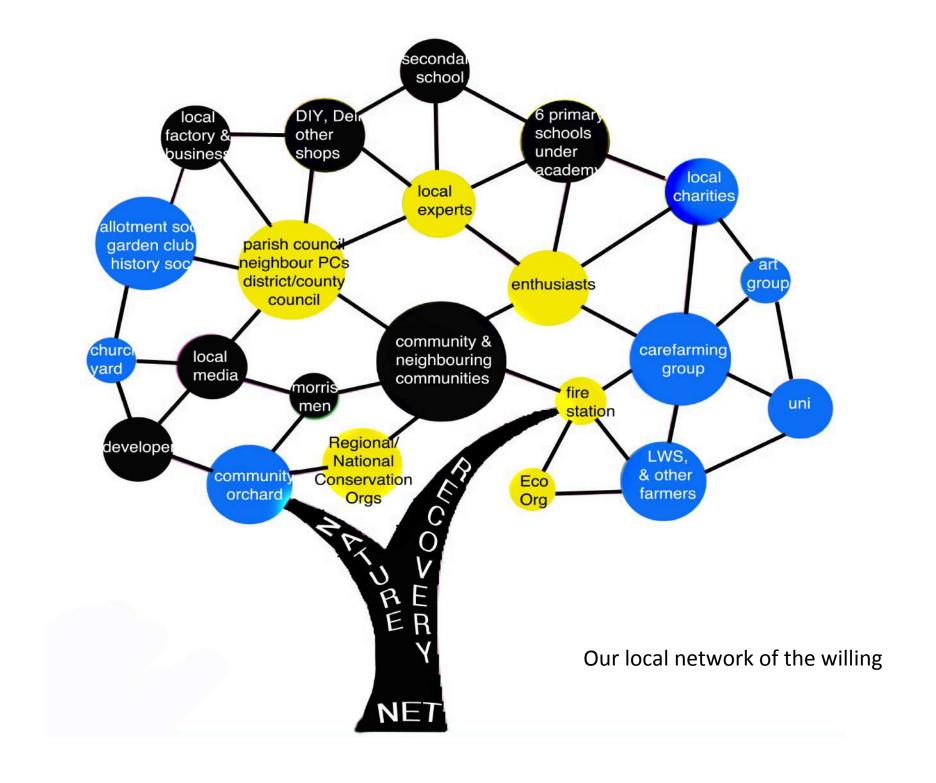
Britain is among the **most nature-depleted countries** in the world: 189th out of 218 assessed ie **29th from bottom** (State of Nature Report, 2016)

In Oxfordshire, only around **4% of the total land area** retains any special value for wildlife.

(Biodiversity and Planning in Oxfordshire, Oxfordshire County Council, BBOWT, and TVERC, 2014)

Only **2% of land** in the UK is owned by **environmental organisations** (*Our Place*, Mark Cocker, 2018)

How do you scale up efforts at nature recovery given, on the one hand, the massive public interest and concern and, on the other, problems of access to land and the finite resources of environmental organisations to support projects over the long-term outside their own sites?



Nature Recovery Network - a network of local people

Our vision is to connect individuals, community groups, local businesses and councillors, living in the same place in order, to facilitate and scale up the recovery of nature in the local area.

Focused on Eynsham and the surrounding parishes (and expanding all the time) it is dedicated to mapping, protecting and restoring the local landscape and wildlife in all its diversity.

This bottom-up approach aims at connecting enthusiasts with experts living in the same local area. The idea is to build up over time a cadre of skilled people in the community and in local government. Our hope is that this will increase engagement, ensure sustainability and above all lead to well-informed interventions for biodiversity gain over the long-term.

- Education Group: 6 primary schools under the local Academy and one secondary school
- Willow coppice and weaving group
- Care-farming group, providing nature-based activities for adults with learning disabilities and autism
- ◆ Bird survey group

- ◆ Freshwater habitats survey group
- Botanical survey group
- ◆ Reptile survey groups
- ◆ Flowers for Wildlife group
- ◆ Wildflower and tree propagation group
- ◆ Meadow restoration groups
- ◆ Art group
- ◆ Veteran tree survey group

The power of a local network is that it can grow spontaneously and in unexpected ways



Photo sent in for ID by a participant in our garden wildlife survey

A resident posted the previous picture as part of the Garden Wildlife Survey asking what it was. Another resident sent it to an entomologist colleague in Oxford University who identified it as a *male hairy footed flower bee*. This sparked the entomologist's interest in the NRN and, as a result, the Local Wildlife Site, which is an important node in the network, has been connected into research taking place in the university.

Other connections made through the network:

- ◆ Local Fire Station offer to help Scouts make swift boxes and put them up around the parish
- ◆ The Morris Men take on the parish mapping of veteran trees
- ◆ The Marathon Run offers to donate car parking fees to NRN. Local shop gives 10% of sales for nature recovery. Local charity offers £500 and its volunteers.
- ◆ Local factory asks NRN to help increase biodiversity around its site, providing potential for activities with the NRN's care-farming group.

Charity begins at home!



Bird box workshop – off-cuts from firewood donated by local sawmill

Local businesses keen to donate to local projects

Green volunteers reduce car mileage and see the results of their efforts every time their walk out of their front door How did we start?



Bottom up: think big, start small...

Google satellite photo of local parishes in local shop for 2 months. People invited to put stickers on their favourite nature places, and places that might be suitable for biodiversity gain (wildflowers, trees or ponds) - in their own gardens or in public places.

Our local wildlife needs YOU!

15th Jan Village Hall 7.30pm – 9.15pm Introductory Workshop

Going for maximum participation at the outset

- promotes inclusion
- enhances ownership
- generates broad support
- reveals extent of local expertise that can be called upon

2000 households got invitations to the launch



250 people, coming together on a dark wet January night, generated:

- Local experts offering to do surveys, run workshops and restoration work with the community, as well as support the strategic work of the local parish councils
- Enthusiasts of all kinds, eager to take part in, or run, self-organising groups supported by the experts.
- 'Local champions' residents on individual streets willing to canvas neighbours and come up with ideas for increasing diversity on their patch.
- Interested councillors keen to collaborate
- Existing community groups willing to work together to make 'the whole greater than the sum of its parts'.
- Local business and charities eager to fund projects. Seeking help to increase diversity on their premises

Getting all the help you can get!

The project recognises that the *will-for-change* has to be tightly coupled to scientific knowledge and 'best-practice'.

Restoring nature is a complex and long-term process – history shows that great harm can be done with, the best of intentions.

Gathering local experts to support the Parish Council and the community, and bringing in outside expertise where necessary is an important first step.

Local experts coming together with Parish Councillors to survey, assess and map the parish-managed land - to understand what needs protecting and where interventions for biodiversity gain are most appropriate.



Local experts include: professional environmentalists living in the parish, older residents with long-term knowledge of the landscape and habitats of the locality, local farmers, experienced bird-watchers, gardeners, fishermen etc.

Look before you leap!

Trees to be ripped up in Brampton wildflower blunder

21 February 2020



Dozens of saplings are to be ripped up after a Cumbrian farmer was wrongly advised to plant them in a wildflower meadow.

Surveying and mapping of existing biodiversity is critical in order to protect it and to determine the most appropriate place for interventions.

Local experts facilitating community surveys and mapping



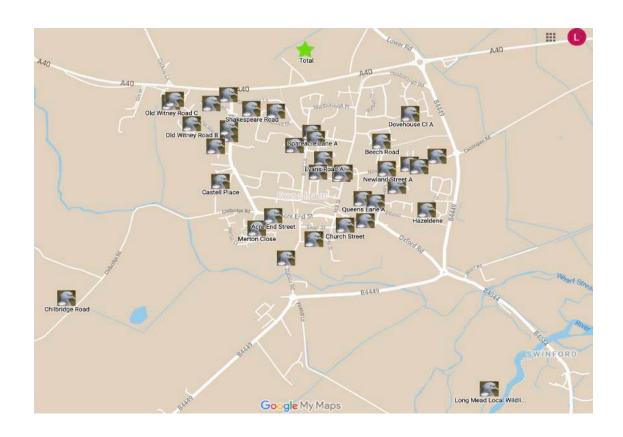
Expert botanist trains members of NRN Wildflower Group: Baseline botanical survey of Playing Fields before restoration with wildflower seed from local wildlife site.

Bringing in outside expertise: a local network helps environmental organisations connect with communities.



Wychwood Project CEO, Neil Clennell, setting up a slow worm and grass snake survey In St Leonard's Churchyard

Building a local database and map accessible to everyone



A local database allows the community to build up a picture of the nature around it, creating a shared experience of its wildlife.: e.g. marking the meadow where cowslips have survived, recording the return of the cuckoo, documenting the sparrowhawk that hunts in a whole street of gardens.

Interactive Map of Parish Garden Wildlife Survey – almost 40 households are taking part

Adopting an incremental approach

Small but visible pilot areas enable enthusiasts and sceptics to walk in step



Surveying verges to determine those that will perform best as pilot 'reduced-cut' areas

Public consultation and 'Local Champions'



Creating wildflower meadow areas often gets top votes. Having enthusiasts living close by helps explain the process to other residents. (Particular expertise and patience needed for meadow creation)

Using plants and trees of local provenance to avoid hybridisation of rare local species



Care-farming group propagating crab apples trees from seeds collected on Long Mead Local Wildlife Site

Sharing stories



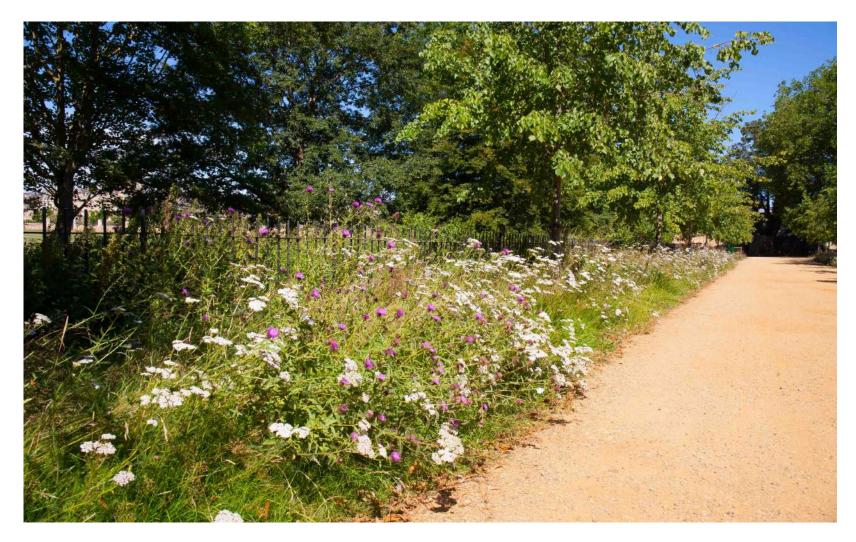
Artist, Anne Gingell, of Newland Street, putting up her *Nature Recovery In Progress* signs

A newsletter, website, facebook page, instagram and twitter where groups and individuals can share their news and connect up for activities.



Collecting seed with a forage harvester to spread fresh on the Playing Fields.

Having a planting strategy – the community needs to be able to read the new streetscape



Christ Church Meadows – designed borders with wildflowers: yarrow and knapweed

Mown paths through uncut areas show that it is planned and not the result of neglect



Kirtlington Parish wildflower areas

Having a working strategy

Structures need to be put in place at the outset for effective collaboration between the Parish Council, local experts and the community.

Consistency, transparency and good communication are essential to creating a sense of fairness and ensuring that doubters and enthusiasts feel supported as changes are implemented.

Central to nature-based solutions for climate change are:

- Local and expert knowledge
- **♦** Leadership
- **♦** Engagement
- ◆ Collective action

Greatest successes are to be found in parishes that have moved on from the 'top down' approach, where the parish council operates as one part of a joined-up community.

Ensuring that Parish Council decisions are 'led by the science'.

This may require structural changes:

- ◆ Creating a Biodiversity (or Climate and Ecology) sub-committee with local experts co-opted.
- ◆ Inviting local experts to join full meetings as consultants when relevant issues are being discussed.

Avoid requiring local experts to advise the Parish Council in the 15 minute public slot before the discussion takes place.

This can lead to ill-informed decision-making and loss of support from the experts.

Adopting a language that facilitates change:

Grass management/winter management. Management of a parish's biodiversity usually comes under these headings. Management is usually by the clerk who might consult only on contractors' quotes. If, in the past, these contractors were individual local professionals who knew the village and its various habitats and had a sense of ownerships, today they are likely to be large multi-county companies with staff trained only in machine-handling.

Re-naming 'management' to reflect its importance for biodiversity, and the level of responsibility required to do it effectively is an important step towards change. A second step is to consider returning to more local, professional contractors.

Wilding/rewilding. Rewilding - letting nature run wild - is rarely appropriate in an urban setting and risks alienating a large section of the community who will see it as 'neglect'.

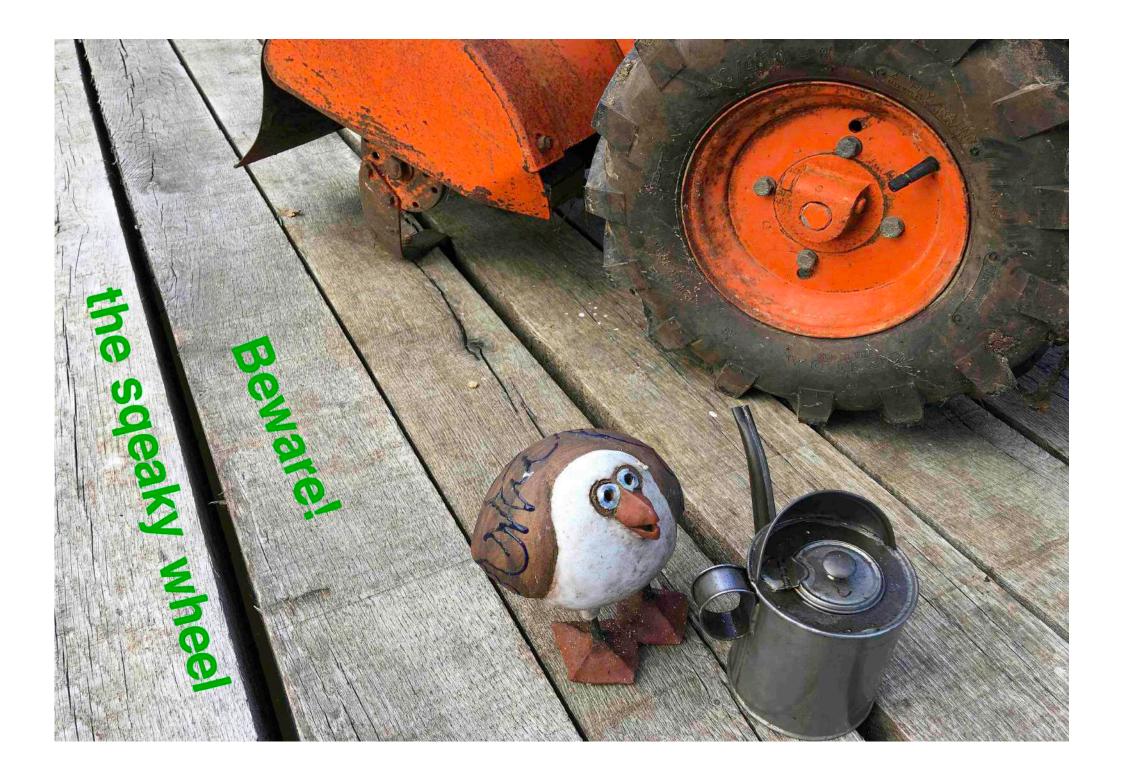
Carbon storage (trees). *Native* trees are a fantastic habitat and a carbon sink, but so are Britain's other habitats - permanent grassland, hedgerows, freshwater habitats. It is critical that we protect, restore and recreate **all** these diverse habitats in our parishes if we are not to create a monoculture – and jeopardise our wildlife further in mitigating climate change.

Working out a strategy for public consultation

Traditionally, Parish Councils don't consult on management of biodiversity in green spaces. Redefining green space management as 'nature recovery' offers a new opportunity for engaging with the community.

It is important to have a consultation strategy in place at the start. Here are some examples of areas that we have had think about.

- ◆ What level of consultation will be required for neighbours wanting to restore the verge outside their houses?
- ◆ What level of consultation is required for a large green in an estate with a well-used footpath to other areas of the village?
- ◆ Does changing verge management in line with Plant Life guidelines require public consultation or is this an extension of 'grass management'?
- What does nimbyism look like in a village context?



There are those who will not like the changes that come with increasing biodiversity and who will voice their resistance. It is a fact of our culture that we are more likely to contact our authorities to complain than to praise them.

In the current situation, where grass management is undertaken by large outside contractors with semi-skilled staff, management can be a bit ad hoc. Indeed, parts of the village are always in the process of being 'rewilded' where a verge is on a slope or tree branches come low or where someone simply forgot.

Most parishes have a long tradition of a handful of people pulling up the Council up on 'neglect'. In the absence of positive feedback from anyone else, there is an equally long habit of Councils using these complaints to guide their management.

It is really important that this habit is recognised, in order for necessary changes to occur.

The Environment Bill can be used to break old habits and to challenge the complainers. Parish Councils will have a new statutory duty to pay attention to increasing biodiversity.

"A public authority which has any functions exercisable in relation to England must from time to time consider what action the authority can properly take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective."



Community hedgerow planting in Storm George, February 2020

The challenge of the Climate and Ecological Crisis presents a great opportunity for parish councils.

In the face of increasing development, over which the parish council is largely powerless, it is one area where it can help deliver real and lasting change for and with the community.

The Ecological Crisis can help reconnect the parish council with the community it serves. In an era when almost half of UK parish councils lack councillors, it provides an opportunity for genuine engagement and the potential recruitment of new councillors.

"It is not too late to make a difference, but only if we start now at every level from local to global.

Through 'transformative change', nature can still be conserved, restored and used sustainably."

Sir Robert Watson, Chair Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, 2019