

# St Briavels, Hewelsfield and Brockweir Biodiversity Action Plan

## Introduction

This biodiversity action plan aims to support the Parish Councils of St Briavels and Hewelsfield and Brockweir in considering and taking actions to conserve biodiversity, as required by Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021. The plan sets out ambitious headline targets to improve biodiversity in the parishes by 2030 and some possible actions that could help to achieve these outcomes. The plan is owned by the two Councils who will be responsible for oversight of progress and review of the plan. A biodiversity working group has been established to provide advice to the Councils and to support the implementation of the plan, working with parishioners, local groups and other bodies. The plan needs the whole community to be involved, building on the many positive actions already taking place in the Parishes. The working group comprises Councillors Chris McFarling and Ed Haythornthwaite and other volunteers from the local area. Involvement in the working group is open to anyone with an interest (please contact Chris McFarling [chrismcfarling@phonecoop.coop](mailto:chrismcfarling@phonecoop.coop) or 015934 531225).

The parishes are a hotspot for biodiversity including several sites which are nationally and internationally important. The varied wildlife habitats include ancient woodlands, species-rich meadows, wetlands and streams, orchards, hedges and veteran trees, arable fields, road verges, cliffs and quarries, traditional farm buildings and, of course, the River Wye itself. There's a big contrast between the small-scale mosaic of woods, tiny fields, streams, lanes and cottages on the former common land on the sides of the Wye valley and the much more open landscapes of large fields of arable crops and improved grassland and modern farm buildings on the plateau to the east. The special character and natural beauty of the area is recognised in its designation as a National Landscape.

Globally biodiversity is in crisis with over a million species threatened with extinction. Threats to biodiversity locally include loss and degradation of habitats, pollution and pesticides, climate change and invasive alien species. In our parishes we have a special responsibility for wildlife that still survives here and to seek to recover the species and restore habitats that have been lost or degraded, whilst also building resilience to climate change and contributing to net zero carbon emissions.

## Headline targets

Biodiversity continues to depend on our actions and we're not doing very well globally, nationally or locally. This plan aims to make it better. Our targets for 2030 are:

- Locally important wildlife species are more abundant.
- Planning applications affecting biodiversity have been assessed and any impacts have been avoided or mitigated, delivering at least 10% net gain for biodiversity.
- Community spaces, road verges and gardens are improved for wildlife.
- Nationally designated nature conservation sites are in favourable condition or recovering towards favourable condition.

- Farmland and woodland is being managed sustainably and at least 60% is being managed to enhance biodiversity and improve resilience to climate change, including through establishment of ecological networks.
- Impacts of pollution (including air, water, land, light, noise, litter) on wildlife are significantly reduced.
- More people are aware of, engaged with, and have easy access to, wildlife and wild places.
- More people are observing biodiversity and sharing their records.
- Local wildlife (e.g. deer and wild boar) is used and managed sustainably.

## **Actions**

### **Enable Parish Councils to respond to planning and other official consultations, implementation of decisions and enforcement:**

- assess biodiversity impacts (including light pollution) and respond to planning applications and local plan consultations;
- help developers implement biodiversity conditions and local biodiversity net gain.

#### *Examples of possible specific actions:*

- *planning officer to attend meeting with PCs/public to discuss planning policy, biodiversity considerations (including light pollution), biodiversity net gain and enforcement.*
- *establish a process for providing local advice on biodiversity to PCs*

### **Work with landowners and managers, public bodies and voluntary groups to restore biodiversity and ecological connectivity:**

- Raise awareness of opportunities to enhance biodiversity and improve resilience to climate change (including woodland management and tree planting) with landowners, land managers and their advisers
- Provide local information and advice, facilitate information exchange on biodiversity and land management including grassland, woodland, hedges, verges, orchards, dry stone walls and other historic features
- Help to facilitate and co-ordinate sustainable farming/countryside stewardship applications
- Mobilise volunteer support to help land managers undertake actions, including monitoring and control of invasive alien species

#### *Examples of possible specific actions:*

- *identify opportunities to collaborate with Wye Valley National Landscape on relevant projects on climate resilience and invasive alien species*
- *arrange a meeting with farming and wildlife groups to explore opportunities of new land management schemes*
- *make a list of local experts who are willing to offer advice, including consultants*

## **Raise awareness and promote engagement and action for biodiversity in the local community:**

- Raise awareness and promote actions to conserve locally important wildlife species (e.g. barn owls, swifts, amphibians and reptiles, glowworms)
- Support PCs and other local community groups to develop management plans for enhancing biodiversity in community spaces (e.g. playing fields, churchyards, St Briavels moat, common land and road verges etc)
- Assess and raise awareness of light pollution and promote best practices in outdoor lighting
- Provide information, written guides and guided local walks giving access to nature and encouraging identification of wildlife
- Support educational visits and activities for local schools
- Provide information about activities to local residents and visitors through newsletters and social media etc

### *Examples of possible specific actions:*

- *Undertake a questionnaire/quiz on simple actions for wildlife*
- *Support PCs and local community groups in developing management plans for community spaces and road verges*
- *Arrange a talk on light pollution*
- *Encourage contributions and publish regular updates and news of events in Village News*
- *Invite Parish Grassland Project to continue and extend its initiatives on homes for wildlife, local walk leaflets, spring walks, talks and educational visits*
- *Invite Garden Society to continue to arrange talks and promote gardening for wildlife*

## **Promote sustainable farming, forestry and wildlife management and sustainable consumption**

- Celebrate and promote the contribution of sustainable local produce to the local economy
- Raise awareness of the issues relating to management of local wildlife populations including deer and wildboar
- Raise awareness of consumer choices and their wider impacts on biodiversity and climate change, locally and globally

### *Examples of possible specific actions*

- *Organise talks on deer and wild boar management (PGP)*
- *Encourage sale of locally sourced sustainable produce at community shops and farmers market (including wild boar and venison) (community shops)*
- *Explore options for co-operation in local production, storage and distribution of firewood and other coppice products*
- *Encourage community apple juicing facility*
- *Organise talks on sustainable consumption and consumer choices*

## **Monitor and record biodiversity**

- Build up citizen science skills and encourage local observations and recording of wildlife and threats to wildlife (including light pollution).
- Encourage public bodies, voluntary groups and landowners to undertake legal obligations for monitoring of biodiversity and to make this information publicly available.

*Examples of possible specific actions*

- *Organise talks (and walks) on identification and recording of different groups of wildlife, including the use of mobile phone apps*
- *Encourage surveys by experts, including 'bioblitz' activities*
- *Participate in volunteer monitoring of River Wye*
- *Undertake Dark Night survey*

**Reporting and review**

The biodiversity working group will monitor progress and provide an annual written report to the Councils and will support a review of the action plan every two years.

St Briavels, Hewelsfield and Brockweir Biodiversity Working Group

October 2024