

St Briavels, Hewelsfield and Brockweir

Biodiversity Working Group

The Parish Councils of St Briavels and Hewelsfield and Brockweir have agreed an ambitious joint action plan to prevent further decline and restore biodiversity within the two parishes. The plan has been developed by a small group of local volunteers. It contains nine targets to improve biodiversity by 2030 and some suggested actions to achieve these outcomes. The plan has been endorsed by the two councils, helping them to meet their responsibilities under the Environment Act 2021.

The plan needs the whole community to be involved, building on the many positive actions already happening in our parishes. An informal 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 working group will be headed by Councillors Chris McFarling and Ed Haythornthwaite with other local volunteers. Involvement in this informal group is open to anyone with an interest and we would welcome any offers to contribute from local groups and societies and individuals. For more information please contact Chris chrismcfarling@phonecoop.coop or 015934 531225.

The parishes are a hotspot for biodiversity including 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 commons on the valley sides 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 west of the B4228 is recognised in its designation as a National Landscape.

Globally biodiversity is in crisis with over a million species threatened with extinction. This year we have seen a devastating decline in butterflies in England. 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 the wildlife that still survives here and to recover the species and their habitats that have been lost, whilst building resilience to climate change. 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:

- more abundant wildlife
- more people engaged with wildlife
- community spaces, road verges and gardens improved for wildlife
- special sites for nature in better condition
- farmland and woodland managed sustainably to reduce carbon emissions, improve biodiversity and build resilience to climate change
- developments deliver at least 10% net gain for biodiversity
- impacts of pollution reduced

A draft working copy of the plan is available on the St Briavels Parish Council website <https://www.stbriavels-pc.gov.uk/biodiversity/>

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