

Biodiversity Working Group St Briavels, Hewelsfield and Brockweir Note of meeting on Wednesday 5th February 2025, Assembly Rooms, St Briavels

Present

Chris McFarling (CM)
Nick (NW) and Penny Woodman (PW)
Edith Sleas (ES)
Brian (BB) and Sheila Bocking (SB)
Clare Fletcher (CF)
Andy Stott (AS)

Apologies

Mitch Crossingham (MC), Mike Topp (MT), Joe Weaver (JW)

Notes

1 Round of introductions. Clare was welcomed to the group. CM gave a brief introduction to wildlife in the Forest of Dean and his view of re-wilding the Forest.

2 Light pollution

NW and PW reported on training received in dark skies monitoring and initial survey results. Sensors were on loan for 1.5 months. Surveys could only be taken with no moon and very low cloud cover. So far only one night was suitable. Survey found generally good levels of darkness (green) apart from in parts of St Briavels village. A second survey window would be around 22-27 Feb. It was clarified that the survey was a measure of overhead sky darkness rather than localized ground level light pollution. Further evidence was needed on impacts on wildlife and safety aspects. Sources such as Buglife were suggested.

Action 25-1 NW and PW to co-ordinate survey at end of Feb.

Action 25-2 BB, NW, PW to prepare an evidence review and draft motion for GCC on measures needed to reduce light pollution.

Action 25-3 CM to contact WVNL to ask about their dark skies initiative.

3. Garden Society Hedgehog presentation

The Garden Society talk by Dylan Allman was appreciated and some further follow-up was discussed. Incidentally it was noted that the Moat Society was seeking to ensure safe crossing of frogs to the pond in the moat.

Action 25-4 ES to contact Garden Society to ask if a news item would be written for Village News with a link to further information and to suggest that any sightings hedgehog should be reported SB.

Action 25-5 CM to provide a link to further information on St Briavels PC website



4. Woodland for sale at Lindors and woodland grants

CM reported that he had been contacted by Piers Cardiff and Hugo Waitley about potential community involvement in the purchase of a large area of woodland for sale at Lindors. It was determined that the asking price for woodland was £950,000. The general view was that the interests of the community should be taken into account by any new owners. It was also noted that Joe Weaver had indicated a willingness to attend an open meeting and provide information about new opportunities for grants for woodland management and tree planting.

Action 25-6 CM to ask Piers and Hugo to keep the working group informed of any developments.

Action 25-7 CM to follow-up on Joe's offer to provide information about grant opportunities.

5. Tree planting opportunity at Wyegate lane

CM reported on a situation at Mork concerning a public right of way and drainage work with an opportunity for planting a small number of trees. It was felt that should the need arise willing volunteers could be found to help the landowner with tree planting.

6. Update from PGP

AS reported that PGP committee was meeting on 6th Feb and would be following up on a number of actions arising from the Biodiversity Working Group. The AGM on 27 March would include a talk on wild boar in the Forest of Dean, an update on the 'homes for wildlife' initiative and a short presentation on glow-worms. Further proposals to be considered include:

- Producing a calendar for 2026 which illustrates and describes a theme from the Biodiversity Action Plan for each month of the year. Invitation for photos could be advertised in the Village News; and,

- Producing a tree guide and trail for the parishes;
- Organizing a workshop about the use of on-line information resources and wildlife recording applications.

These proposals were noted.

Action 25-8 MT to inform the working group of PGP committee decisions and report back on these items at future meetings

3 Any other business

AS commented on opportunities to enhance biodiversity of St Briavels' playing fields. CM explained some previous actions and their outcomes. SB reported that she was undertaking further discussions with WI on the villagescapes initiative with a focus on essential local character – genius loci. NW noted that the stated lack of progress on the long list of actions circulated by CM was discouraging and asked if this could better reflect priorities and be expressed more positively. AS commented that the long list contained specific details on properties that were inappropriate.

SB wanted to undertake some water quality testing and NW agreed to help with testing kits.

Action 25-9 AS to consider scope for biodiversity enhancement on the playing fields

Action 25-10 SB to report back on initiative with WI

Action 25-11 AS to review long list of actions (again).

Actions from meeting on 4 Dec (not discussed - carried over) :

- **ES, SB and PW to arrange for printing and further distribution of the garden wildlife checklist.**
- **CM to arrange for the shortened action plan and wildlife checklist to be posted on the PCs websites.**
- **BB to contact MC to ask what information she had gathered on Garden Society meetings and interests of other local groups.**
- **ES to explore additional information and resources on local character, including contacts with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and Brockweir History Group.**
- **ALL to consider further articles to raise awareness and promote actions for biodiversity to be submitted to the Village News.**

- **SB offered to contact an expert on lichens and bryophytes to arrange a local walk.**

4 Date of next meeting Weds 26th March, Assembly Rooms.

AS 06/02/2025