

WILDLIFE ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SOUTH WEST CHILTERN PARTNERSHIP

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Introduction

UK's biodiversity continues to be massively depleted by centuries of habitat loss, management changes, development, and persecution. Now, climate change adds to the challenges that wildlife faces, further accelerating the declines.

In order to reverse this dramatic loss in biodiversity, we need to work together on a landscape-scale to restore habitats, create new places for wildlife to thrive and link wildlife-rich areas together.

This document identifies some of the priority actions that Parish and Town Councils in the South West Chilterns Partnership can consider to help wildlife recover.

For assistance with any of these initiatives, please contact [Alex at Sundew Ecology](#).

Recommendations

1. Undertake a biodiversity audit of your town or parish area

One of the most important actions that we can undertake to help wildlife is to preserve what we already have.

In order to do so, it is vital to have an understanding of the wildlife present in your area. Information about protected sites, important habitats and notable species is valuable so that a vision can be produced, and appropriate objectives agreed.

Information can come from a number of sources. There is lots of data available from your local environmental record centres (TVERC or BMERC) about protected sites and habitats. The National Biodiversity Network and local naturalist groups have their own records of species. These sources of information are not complete, but provide a good starting point.

In addition, further surveys can be undertaken to 'fill in the gaps' of local knowledge.

The collation and presentation of this data into an accessible format by an experienced ecologist can be useful.

2. Identify actions and projects that will enhance habitats and species in your area.

Once an audit has been undertaken, a vision for the area and priority actions to restore biodiversity can be identified.

This might include:

Encouraging more landowners to enter Environmental Stewardship Schemes.

Encouraging local wildlife recorders to submit their records to BMERC.

Facilitating coppicing and other beneficial woodland management through the promotion of local woodland products.

Ensuring that the owners of valuable habitats understand the importance of their land and are aware of how they can be managed to benefit wildlife.

Promoting wildlife-friendly hedgerow maintenance across the Parish.

Identifying wildlife-rich road verges and work with the highways authority to encourage beneficial management.

Encouraging residents to manage their gardens in a wildlife-friendly way.

3. Ensure that wildlife is central to your Neighbourhood Plan

Neighbourhood Plans are a great opportunity to improve the local environment, including protecting and enhancing existing assets, such as local parks, nature reserves and other green spaces.

Your plan could look at all the existing greenspace in your area and identify where green corridors for people and wildlife could be created to link up open spaces. These may include planting, improving or linking up hedgerows or enhancing the habitats that border a Public Right of Way. When it comes to new development, the Plan can make sure they reflect and compliment the wider countryside and provide space for people and nature.

Making biodiversity an integral part of neighbourhood planning can also help to manage environmental risk and improve resilience to climate change. For example, local land use policies could help to manage the risk of flooding by promoting the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage schemes (SUDs). By allowing trees to grow you can help create green space, which can store water and provide shade for people, as well as supporting nature. ([From Sussex Wildlife Trust](#))

4. Engage with existing initiatives to create 'wildlife links' with your neighbours.

There are a number of initiatives, often led by charities, local authorities or the government, which aim to restore wildlife on a larger scale.

Here are some examples:

The [Chilterns Conservation Board](#) has a management plan that identifies how biodiversity can be enhanced across the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

[Buglife's B-Line project](#) promotes 'insect pathways'

The [South Chilterns Catchment Partnership](#) has a vision and a strategic plan to deliver and maintain a healthy, functioning water environment.

Buckinghamshire Council has a [Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#), part of the National Nature Recovery Network.