



Westbere Parish Council

NEWSLETTER

Special Biodiversity edition

September 2024

Welcome to this special edition of the Westbere Parish Council newsletter focussing on biodiversity. This newsletter has tips, ideas and suggestions for you to consider.

Westbere Parish Council adopted its first [Biodiversity Policy](#) at its 16 September 2024 Westbere Parish Council meeting.

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INTRODUCTION - STATUTORY DUTY

Under the 2021 Environment Act, public authorities (including town and parish councils) in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Government guidance published on 17 May 2023 clarifies that, as a public authority, town and parish councils must:

- consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.
- act to deliver their policies and achieve their objectives.

Town and parish councils, unlike other authorities, are not obliged to publish a report on their actions. They must agree their policies and objectives and must reconsider the selected actions within five years of completing their previous consideration, or more frequently if they choose.

BACKGROUND

In accordance with the duty imposed on town and parish councils by Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, updated by Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021, Westbere Parish Council 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.

This duty also means that town and parish councils can spend funds in conserving biodiversity.

DEFINITION

According to Defra (Biodiversity 2020), biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants – everything that is alive on our planet. Biodiversity is important for its own sake and has its own intrinsic value. A number of studies have shown this value also goes further. Biodiversity is the building block of our 'ecosystems' that in turn provide us with a wide

range of goods and services that support our economic and social wellbeing. These include essentials such as food, fresh water and clean air, but also less obvious services such as protection from natural disasters, regulation of our climate, and purification of our water or pollination of our crops. Biodiversity also provides important cultural services, enriching our lives.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Council's area. The Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

You can read our full Biodiversity policy at [BIODIVERSITY-DUTY-WPC-Policy.docx \(live.com\)](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-05/BIODIVERSITY-DUTY-WPC-Policy.docx)

Beebombs

Beebombs make the perfect gift for any friend, loved one or even for yourself! 📺
They are native wildflower seedballs that help bring the bees back and need no gardening skill.

Beebombs can be scattered straight onto open ground at any time of the year and just need lots of sun, water & time. 1 pack costing just £8 will cover roughly 21ft² / 2m².

Bee bombs wildflower seed mix work in planters and pots too.

With bee numbers dropping at a terrifying rate, it's incredibly important we do everything we can to bring the bees back 🐝

How to make seed bombs

wildlife
watch



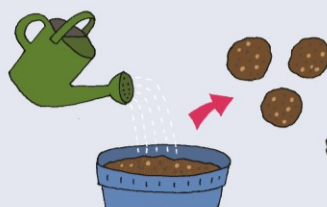
You will need:

- Meadow flower seeds or seeds collected from the garden 
- Peat-free compost 
- Water 
- Powdered clay (from craft shops - use clay soil if you can't find any) 
- Mixing bowl 

1 In a bowl, mix together 1 cup of seeds with 5 cups of compost and 2-3 cups of clay powder.



2 Slowly mix in water with your hands until everything sticks together, then roll mixture into firm balls.



3 

4 Now for the fun bit - plant by throwing your seed bombs at bare parts of the garden!



Kent's Plan Bee pollinator action plan

The KCC Kent's Plan Bee pollinator action plan was developed by the county council to take the lead and encourage local communities to improve the habitat and food sources for pollinators in Kent. The purpose of the plan is to make the council a community leader in action for pollinators. Pollinators such as bees, wasps, butterflies, mosquitos and hoverflies are vital for our food, economy and environment and we must act to reverse their rapid decline. The plan may be read at the following link:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/environmental-policies/kents-plan-bee-pollinator-action-plan#:~:text=Kent's%20Plan%20Bee%20is%20a,sources%20for%20pollinators%20in%20Kent.&text=The%20purpose%20of%20the%20plan,leader%20in%20action%20for%20pollinators>

Gardening for a wilder Westbere

Gardens are an important part of biodiversity and can be the essential pathways and corridors for wildlife to expand and survive.

Wildlife needs three basic things: food, water and shelter. What it does *not* need is being killed or depleted by pesticides, fungicides and herbicides. These poisons can kill animals and plants directly – as they are designed to do – but also indirectly by removing essential elements in the food chain. If you spray the greenfly on your roses, what will the bluetits feed to their nestlings? If you poison slugs and snails attacking your lettuces, you are removing an important food source for toads, slowworms, thrushes and hedgehogs, and may even be contributing to a build-up of fatal toxins in these animals.

Challenge

Can you reduce your use of harmful garden chemicals by 10%? 50%? 100%? This could make a huge difference across the parish. And do check with your local authority for the best way to dispose of these safely. These are poisons that don't just disappear if you pour them down the drain.

Plants for wildlife

So, if you do reduce your use of toxic chemicals, how will you protect your plants from being eaten? The answer is perhaps two-fold: encourage natural predators and be prepared for some losses. If you aren't using insecticides for example, you will begin to build up a healthy population of predatory ladybirds, lacewings and hoverflies – a good thing, given the current catastrophic decline in insects.

Wildlife Watch (from The Wildlife Trusts) has lots of downloadable identification charts for youngsters, such as the minibeast spotter: <https://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/activities>

These could be very handy for ideas of what to do during school holidays and ideas for home schooling!

To help you garden for a Wilder Kent, Kent Wildlife Trust run some study days and open gardens – check out the web site for details:

<https://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/explore/education/wildlife-study-days>

These Wildlife Study Days are designed to help the people of Kent to learn more about the wildlife of the county. Beginners are very welcome and those with some experience will be able to improve their knowledge and identification techniques.

The Wildlife Trust Study Days offer the chance to enhance your wildlife knowledge, identification and management skills. The face to face courses are held outside or in centres across the county and there are now also courses online.

Please note that only adults aged 18 and over can attend Study Days (for safeguarding and insurance reasons).

Courses include fungi identification, and Beaver ecology and field signs.

	<u>Beaver ecology and field signs</u> Saturday 30 November 2024 or Saturday 07 December 2024 9am-4pm At Old School Hall, Fordwich
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Gardening for a Wilder Kent – water for wildlife – article from a Kent Wildlife Trust volunteer advisor.

Ask anyone who gardens for wildlife and they will tell you that installing a pond is one of the best things you can do. There is a mass of information on how to do this, including on the Kent Wildlife Trust website.

Here I am going to write about other, easier ways of providing water for wildlife.

The birds and the bees

Birds need water all year round – a beautiful stone bird bath or just a shallow dish on the lawn. Keep it topped up and the birds will find it. But because you will attract so many birds there is a real danger of disease being spread amongst them, so regular cleaning is vital. The RSPB give clear advice on this at: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/how-you-can-help-birds/birds-and-water/>

And not only birds – you may find honey bees and other insects drinking from your bird bath, and often drowning themselves. Another dish, full of pebbles with water not quite covering them, provides a much safer watering hole. Incidentally, honey bees don't actually 'drink' water – but they carry it back to the hive to help keep their brood cool and to moisten their stored honey.

Hoverfly lagoons

Some of you will have heard Prof Dave Goulson speak, or read his books – I do recommend *The Garden Jungle*. In it, he explains how to make lagoons for hoverfly larva. *'All you need is a waterproof container, some organic matter, such as lawn clippings or fallen leaves, and a few small sticks. You place the organic matter in the container, fill it with water, shove in the sticks so that they protrude from the top (allowing the full-grown larvae to climb out), and place the whole lot in a quiet corner of the garden'*.

You may find that, like me, you have inadvertently created these behind the dustbins or the shed where a discarded container has filled with water and leaf mulch.

There are over 240 species of hoverfly in England – not all with an aquatic phase – but they are all brilliant pollinators for your fruit and veg. And though some look like wasps – they don't sting.

Drought-tolerant plants

Many of us are turning to drought-tolerant plants to cope with our increasingly dry summers. All the Mediterranean herbs – lavender, thyme, sage, rosemary, marjoram – can withstand dry summers, but they hate being wet in winter, so need to be grown in well drained soil or pots.

If you already have established plants, May is the month to take cuttings from them which you could share with neighbours at your next plant sale. Cuttings and new plants will need

watering until they are established. As a bonus, each of these herbs provides nectar for butterflies, bees, hoverflies and other beneficial insects. Oh, and another bonus is, you can cook with them!

“Tidying” the garden

Now is the time of year when you may be itching to get out into the garden to tidy up ready for winter. But the fact is, too much ‘tidying’ is bad news for the wildlife that makes its home in our gardens. Wild creatures need the dead stems, fallen leaves and dying growth for shelter over winter. Many of the butterflies and moths that delight us in summer will be hibernating – as pupae and larvae - in this dead and dying foliage. If you clear it all away, you will be destroying them.

There are of course parts of the garden that will need to be cleared – for paths, access etc, but can you make a heap of the dead stems and seed heads somewhere out of the way so insects and small mammals can still use them? Log piles and heaps of stones, bricks or rocks in a quiet corner are wonderful for insects, and for amphibians and reptiles such as newts and lizards.

You can supplement natural homes such as these with ones you buy. All the wildlife catalogues sell bird boxes, bee hotels, insect homes, bat boxes and hedgehog houses (e.g. <https://shopping.rspb.org.uk/>) and with Christmas approaching, these make ideal gifts, especially for families with children.

Or you could make your own – whether simply drilling holes in a log for solitary bees, or using an RSPB template to make a blue tit or swift box (<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/how-you-can-help-birds/nestboxes/>) If you want to involve your children in this, The Wildlife Trusts have a wonderful range of animal home making activities for youngsters – from bat boxes to bumblebee nests, from hedgehog houses to bug hotels – at <https://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/activities> .

While at this time of year we are thinking mainly about shelter, before we know it, it will be Spring and the wildlife in your garden will be thinking about nesting. Blue tits, for example, start prospecting for nesting sites in February so having your boxes in place by then increases the chance of them being used. The boxes will also be used for roosting in cold weather. And not only by blue tits – 63 wrens were found huddled together in one nest box, keeping warm over winter!

Happy gardening!

Article credit to a Kent Wildlife Trust volunteer advisor.

Hedgehog Highways



Hedgehogs R Us Highway Project

With hedgehog numbers in decline and hedgehog awareness on the rise, there has never been a better time to get involved in hedgehog conservation.

Hedgehog highway surrounds are perfect for this.

A Hedgehog Highway is a 5-inch gap in a fence and is essential in the battle to prevent the extinction of our endangered spiky friends. This gap allows them access to forage for food and meet mates. A Highway surround raises awareness to their plight and encourages others to take part.

More information at <https://hedgehogsrus.co.uk/hedgehog-highway-project> Prices start from £4.50. Money is donated to Hedgehog Conservation for every box sold.

Bird nesting boxes and Bat boxes

Westbere Parish Council is considering purchasing and installing both Bird nesting boxes and Bat boxes for the village's churchyards. This is to be discussed further at the 21 October 2024 parish council meeting.

Your parish councillors: Paul Glover (Chairman), Sylvia Harlow. (vice chairman), Kathryn Fielding (previously Kathy Wilson), Ken Dekker, Georgina Glover, Granville Glover, Dave Wilson

Parish Clerk, Amanda Sparkes: 07759 263725 clerk@westbereparishcouncil.gov.uk

Canterbury City Councillors: harry.mckenzie@councillor.canterbury.gov.uk and keji.moses@councillor.canterbury.gov.uk

KCC Kent County Councillor: Alan Marsh 01227 265112 alan.marsh@kent.gov.uk

KCC Community Warden for Westbere Sturry, Fordwich and Hersden: Linda Hayes. Call: 07969583916. Email Linda.hayes@kent.gov.uk

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