



PCNR

Private and Community Nature Reserves Network Newsletter
Spring 2019



Introduction

By Valerie Godsmark

Welcome to new members of the Network. As I write this, our Nature Reserves are recovering from unseasonably dry weather, followed by snow in early February then temperatures higher than they should be followed by gales and stormy weather.

How resilient they can be, only time will tell. Spring is definitely approaching: Brimstone butterflies have been seen, primroses and daffodils abound; wood anemones, wood sorrel and some bluebells have started to flower. Buds are bursting, land is greening, birds are singing, weeds are trying to take over the garden and British Summer Time is here.

It is pleasing that three members of the Network have offered visits. Others always welcome. Those of us who currently "Volunteer" to run the PCNR Network are all busy people with our own Nature Reserves to manage and are often involved in other Conservation groups or have family commitments. Unfortunately Vanessa Mason has decided she can no longer find time to act as Area contact for West Somerset. Their reserve now benefits from recent tree planting and a large pond already attracting frogs to spawn. We thank her for her interest (still member of the Network). **Susan Bates told us of her Nature Reserve and the background to her interest in wildlife and its conservation in our Autumn 2018 Newsletter.** She came along to our Committee meeting early in March and has offered to take on the voluntary

role of PCNR Network Area Contact for Wells area.

There is plenty of variety in this Newsletter, much to do with legislation and the the relevance of recording species. Thanks to those who have contributed. Further items are invited for the Autumn 2019 edition. "Networking" is the most important role of the group: sharing experiences, ideas, knowledge and frustrations of working on our reserves. We now have a **new membership information leaflet**, a copy of which will be included with this Newsletter. Use it to encourage others to join the Network. Information on the website is under-going review: ideas and input appreciated.

Knyfton Firs

By Peter Bright

in the Autumn 2018 Newsletter, I invited Members who are interested in the site or their work, to visit by personal arrangement (subject to availability). Peter can be contacted on: peterbright60@btinternet.com

Photo Above: Seasons Change ©Valerie Godsmark

Zanna and Andy Beswick tell us of their interesting property and development of their reserve and offer to host a visit to Rugbourn farm morning of Saturday 13th July 2019.

"We have 13 acres of land, farmed for wildlife in E. Level Stewardship (Natural England) since 2003, when we moved into the near-derelict small 17th c. manor house, which we have been saving for the next 400 years! The house, apart from its own beauties, is notable historically because William Smith, 'the Father of English geology' lived here between 1792-5 and started the first and famous Volunteer, Amphibian & Stratigraphical map here - where, in fact, we have a good copy.

About 6 acres of our land is grazed by our neighbour's dairy herd, and we have planted over 600 trees, making a wood of about 3 acres. Our front 'garden' is allowed to grow wild with flowers until the seeds have set in June. We also have a large pond which had become silted up, but shows clearly on Smith's map of the valley. We dug it out, and this now has frogs, dragonflies etc, mallard and this year our first family of coot chicks. Our kestrel roost is used every year, usually producing up to 3 chicks that fledge successfully (although last year only one!), and we have a pair of white doves that have adopted a barn and are currently 7 in number. Deer, pheasant, fox, tawny owl, great tits, mistle thrush etc, voles (and unfortunately squirrels) all live side-by-side with our farm cat and dog.

This is a real family home, so not at all a showpiece - work of

one kind or another always going on beside our professional lives... - so a practical as well as much-loved place.

There's room for cars in our yard and the 'carriage-turning circle' (18thc map). No particular cap on numbers, though it would be good to know beforehand. and yes to a cuppa! Timing: perhaps an hour for a gentle stroll round the land, but at least another one if anyone wants to see round the house (which I'm happy to include - I'm sure ladybirds, happy spiders, bats in the attic etc. make the house an extension of our little Reserve!). But this can be optional!"

Note: this is out of our usual area but offers Geological & Architectural interest as well as Habitat management for conservation. Booking is through Valerie Godsmark
01460 234551 johngodsmark123@btinternet.com

Directions: from the A39 going through High Littleton SW from Bath towards Wells, take left-hand fork at corner (before church and school) down lane Timsbury Road, signed to Timsbury and Recreation Field. In 100-200 yds you leave the village as you pass the Rec on left, and then you see the old sign on the left at the top of our track 'To Rugbourn Farm where William Smith "Father of English Geology" lodged...' Take that very bumpy track left down to the bottom where the farm is. If you get lost call on the landline **01761 470285** as we have almost no mobile signal here.

PCNR Events

By Valerie Godsmark

Check out **Somerset Wildlife Trust's events pages** for details of the following PCNR related events and other events which may be of interest. Valerie and John have their annual Bluebell and Spring flower walk following the Chaffcombe Coffee morning fund-raiser for Somerset Wildlife Trust Weds 1st May. If you were interested in David's article about **Moth trapping** last year, **Heart of**

the Levels group intend to hold a similar event in Curry Rivel 19th July. They also have Ruth Pavey giving the talk "A Wood of her own" 10th September in Somerton 7.30pm. Peter Bright is talking about **Glow worms** and leading walks.

Forestry Commission 100 years Anniversary events.
Look out for events in your area.

Pam and Christopher Langton tell us about their reserve and extend an invitation to visit for Members who are interested - by personal arrangement (subject to availability)

Our small holding here in Wellisford is not suitable for a large group but if anyone shows particular interest in, for example trying to manage grass, we would be happy to show them around sometime. We are still learning, often by our mistakes.

We own about 3 acres bordered by the river Tone. Some is garden, wildlife and pollinator friendly, with hedges and old stone walls. There's a paddock where we graze a few sheep with lambs. The meadow along the river margin where we have managed to establish some wildflowers including yellow rattle, campion, ox eye daisy, betony to name a few and lots of grasses is mown by hand with a scythe and the hay is hand-baled in a home-made manual baler, thus giving the sheep winter and early spring fodder when grass

is not growing. The river bank hosts alders, sycamore, elder, wild garlic and yellow flag iris, with the inevitable Himalayan balsam which is a pain! We have planted a few native trees too. There are otters around periodically, and kingfisher, dipper, moorhen, mallard and tree creepers amongst other birdlife. Buzzards visit the garden in harsh winters and are usually somewhere around the meadow and trees or soaring high above. Sparrowhawk prey on the bird table visitors and sometimes a hobby is seen flying over. There is usually a family of kestrels reared nearby which hunt over the meadow and garden.

If anyone would like to arrange to visit please contact direct by email: pmlangton49@icloud

Sedgemoor Conservation Volunteers would happily undertake a task in Mendip or Sedgemoor or in the Castle Cary/Somerton area on one of the following dates Sundays 28 April, 12 & 26 May, 9 & 23 June if any of your members would like us. They can ring me on **01278 641521** or e-mail **leesmark@supanet.com** to talk about their need. It would be first come, first served.

A is for Area:

acres & hectares: there are 2.471 acres in a hectare. An acre is about the size of a football pitch. A hectare equates to 100 x 100 metres.

Derek Simmons tells us of a chance encounter with a Sparrowhawk

"I saw the female sparrowhawk when walking from my house to garage. She flashed past me to attempt to catch one of the birds on feeders on a small tree. She missed and circled the garden and alighted on a raised flower bed less than five metres away from me much to my surprise. Fortunately I had my camera in my pocket and took a couple of shots. She just gazed at me for at least a minute as if she wanted something, but I knew we had no raw meat. When I went back to the house she flew off.

It seems likely that some essential element of her hunting ability had deteriorated through age. Some evidence for this was that for several weeks she had been targeting small birds whereas previously she killed larger birds such as pigeons.

About two days later I heard an animal squealing and discovered her struggling to kill a rat that she had caught. It took about another minute for her to be successful. Three days later she was found dead, uninjured, about 25 metres away in a neighbour's yard. (Should she have eaten that Rat? Ed.)

We have regularly seen a pair of sparrowhawks in the area for several years, but had had no sightings of the male for several months. We saw another male about six months after the female died."



Tree Planting

By Valerie Godsmark

Many of our Network members have decided to plant trees on their land. For some, their primary objective is to plant trees and there are many reasons for this. (see previous Newsletters).

For others it is to add another use to the land, creating other habitats and increasing species diversity. For those in the early stages of contemplating tree planting on a site, points to consider are:

- 1. What land you have:** area, geology, soil, current vegetation/land use, topography and the site's history.
- 2. What your objectives/reasons are for creating a wooded area.**

- 3. Species choice:** size (saplings, whips), spacing, protection. *No longer able to include Ash.*
- 4. The design of the new woodland:** access, rides, paths, open space, sun and shade.
- 5. Costs: self-funded or grant:** ground preparation, weeding, tree-shelters/ spirals, fencing.
- 6. Time of year to plant:** October-March, time taken, who will do it, what is achievable in a season?
- 7. Advice and grant aid.**
- 8. After care:** weeding, beating up, pruning, monitoring: threats pests: rabbits, squirrels, deer and diseases. *Several years on if tree-shelters were used: how are they disposed of?*

Photo Above: Female Sparrowhawk ©Derek Simmons

During the last couple of years PCNR Members were alerted to the proposed revision of the National Planning Policy Framework and some responded to the consultation. There was concern that Locally Designated Sites ie Local Wildlife Sites (County Wildlife Sites) were being overlooked and would cease to be considered by planning authorities.

Anne Halpin sourced the information for us: The new guidelines are available on https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779764/NPPF_Feb_2019_web.pdf

Locally Designated Sites are mentioned explicitly in the text of the new NPPF.

The NPPF is more about Plan making at the Local Planning Authority level but principles within it will be used by planning officers to decide the outcome of planning applications.

In terms of wildlife, the key section is section 15 (page 49-53) and in particular, paragraph 171 states: "Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and **locally designated sites**; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green

infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries."

Local sites are also referenced in paragraph 174 which states: "To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

a. Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity⁽⁵⁶⁾; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation"

This references (56) Circular 06/2005 which is a Government circular on Statutory obligations and their impact within the planning system. Part III covers the **Conservation of Habitats and Species** outside Designated Sites.

Finally, paragraph 177 states: "The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site."

Have you sent any interesting records to Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC)?

By Valerie Godsmark

Keeping records of species is a worthwhile and crucial part of Nature reserve management. Is your site already designated as LWS or is it SSSI? Do we have a record of it together with a map of its boundaries? It may be adjacent to a LWS, SSSI or SWT reserve and could have the potential to be designated.

The UK biodiversity action Plan (BAP), the governmental response to the Convention on biological diversity lists 65 priority habitats, 9 of which are classified as woodland, and 1149 priority species – around 450 of these are either dependent upon or associated with woodland.

Priority habitats have the potential to provide for the richest and most varied components of biological diversity. Priority species are those that are rare and at risk of extinction, threatened, or have special requirements.

Native woodlands, and especially ancient woodlands, have a very high biodiversity value or potential, and support a large proportion of priority species.

Diversity of tree and shrub species is generally beneficial for biodiversity; genetic diversity within species is an important component of biodiversity. Structural diversity in woodland creates a wide range of habitats. Old trees and deadwood are particularly significant for woodland biodiversity.

Open ground and edge habitats associated with woodland provide important resources and habitats for biodiversity.

Riparian ecosystems are rich in wildlife habitats and provide linear habitat linkages. Does a river run through your site?

Significant gains for biodiversity arise from restoring degraded habitats and the targeted creation of new habitats.

Species that are invasive, and particularly non-native and invasive, can diminish biodiversity and need effective control eg Himalayan Balsam.

Managing domestic stock and other herbivores effectively is necessary to protect and enhance biodiversity.

These are all points worthy of consideration. Do you have European Protected Species on your site? Are you aware of the regulations? All species of Bats are protected, as are their roosts. Amphibians, Reptiles and many others including large Blue butterfly.

Let SERC know of occurrence/sightings of rare, uncommon or unusual species.

34 Wellington Road, Taunton, Somerset TA1 5AW

Switchboard: **(01823) 664450**

E-mail: info@somerc.com

Website: www.somerc.com

For information on how to submit your wildlife sightings, please visit our website: <http://www.somerc.com/submit-your-sightings/recording/>

We are advertising our lichen 'New Generation Botanist' training programme, which will be taking place on Exmoor in 2019-2020. We are looking to recruit interested individuals from the Exmoor/Quantocks area.

Exmoor 2019

15th-16th April at Exmoor House, Dulverton

24th-25th April at Piles Mill, Holnicote Estate

Register here: <http://tiny.cc/lichenNGB>

2-day Foundation Course: Introduction to Lichens

Plantlife.org.uk/events

Opportunity for free specialist training to learn about lichens and develop your ID skills

Lichens are not plants, but a symbiosis between a fungus and a photosynthetic partner (usually an alga). They are often overlooked due to their small size, but with some basic tips and practice you will find lichens are a diverse and fascinating group of organisms to study. The south west is internationally important for its lichens but they are under threat. To help conserve them Plantlife is offering free training to help develop lichen identification and recording skills.

On completing a 2-day course, participants will have an opportunity to register for an advanced course (as part of our New Generation Botanist programme) to develop more in-depth ID skills. Advanced courses are free but require commitment to attend 10 sessions on Exmoor over the course of a 12 month period, as well as taking part in own study and peer-supported study sessions.

Please note places on these courses are limited. Our aim is to increase the number of people in the region who contribute to biological recording. You do not need previous knowledge of lichens as you will learn about this on your course, however we will prioritise people who are interested in contributing to the region's

lichen records beyond the course. For an informal discussion about the courses, please contact Alison Smith: alison.smith@plantlife.org.uk or 07889 733232. This training is being run by Plantlife in partnership with the British Lichen Society, as part of a 3.5 year project to conserve the south-west's internationally important temperate rainforests and their rare and threatened lichen and bryophyte species. The project is funded by National Lottery players through the Heritage Lottery Fund and is part of the Building Resilience in South West Woodlands project.

Pass this information on if you know of anyone who would be interested in this training.

For those of you who own woodland or have access to one, you may be interested in their Rapid Woodland Assessment "which is a survey we are asking woodland owners to take part in so that we can build up a better picture of the condition of the region's woodland for Atlantic woodland lower plants. You might be interested in taking part – it provides you with an indication of the condition of your site and potential management issues. Once completed you can send in your results to us online."



Ticks & Lyme disease: Be informed, be aware!

By Valerie Godsmark

Remember to check for ticks after being outdoors, particularly in early Spring-Autumn.

They can be tiny at first and are easily removed if noticed early (straight pull with tweezers). Most tick bites are harmless but occasionally, the tick carries a small bacterium called *Borrelia burgdorferi*. It is this bacterium that can lead to Lyme disease. Ensure you and anyone you have working or visiting your site is made aware of possible threat if passing through rough vegetation and suggest precautions: insect repellent; light coloured, loose clothing. Early Symptoms: not always the same: can start with expanding reddish, round rash in area of the bite; could resemble flu with swollen glands near site of bite; headaches, aching muscles and joints, tiredness. Inform your Doctor if you

know you have been bitten by a tick and have developed any symptoms. Early Diagnosis means early treatment with antibiotics. Delay can lead to complications.

Check out: www.nhs.uk/conditions/lyme-disease

lymediseaseuk.com = a not-for-profit voluntary group raising awareness and offering support. Website includes "Wake up to Lyme" downloadable awareness pack.

Rabbit Spirals: Some still Free to a good home!

Let Valerie & John know if you can use some. Bamboo canes can be found if needed.

Discussion continues: we replied to the SWA survey. Chris Brewchorne and Susan Bates came up with some ideas. Please get in touch if you have any ideas or have made arrangements such as setting up a trust or are involved with one, that may be of interest to members of the Network.

In relation to this Anne Halpin (Landscape Ecologist at SWT) advised us of a DEFRA consultation on Conservation Covenants (end date 22 March).

“SWT (and the Trusts at a national level) are supporting the proposal to introduce conservation covenants into law as it could be an important tool to ensure the long-term protection and management of habitats (and in particular, ones outside of designated sites). They could be applied to Local Wildlife Sites to ensure that landowners inheriting or buying land are aware of the sites importance for wildlife and can enter into an agreement on future management.”

Susan Bates' Tree Planting 17th March 2019

By Susan Bates



at her field near Wookey. “It was a bit muddy on Sunday with some standing water but we nearly finished the job of planting 550 native trees and shrubs. Some are coming back to finish next Sunday. About 15 people came although a few did not do a full day but we were lucky to have a dry day and not too windy. THANKS to those who helped. I am hoping to plant bluebells and native daffodils in early October. The photos show this year’s planting and those that were planted five years ago.”



Photos: Left: Susan's planting 5 years ago
Right: Susan's new planting

In Autumn 2018 I said “Watch this space!”

WILDCARE Discount: 10% Special offer to Members of PCNR Network. Valerie has made this arrangement with Dr Fran Tattersall, Manager of Wildcare who writes:

“I think the easiest would be for your folk to buy online. To get the discount they just need to type **PCNR2019** in the discount box at checkout. This should give them 10% off anything in the HABITAT MANAGEMENT and WORKWEAR,

SAFETY & FIELD KIT sections on our web site (in the header section).

wildcare.co.uk

This offer is strictly limited to April & May 2019.

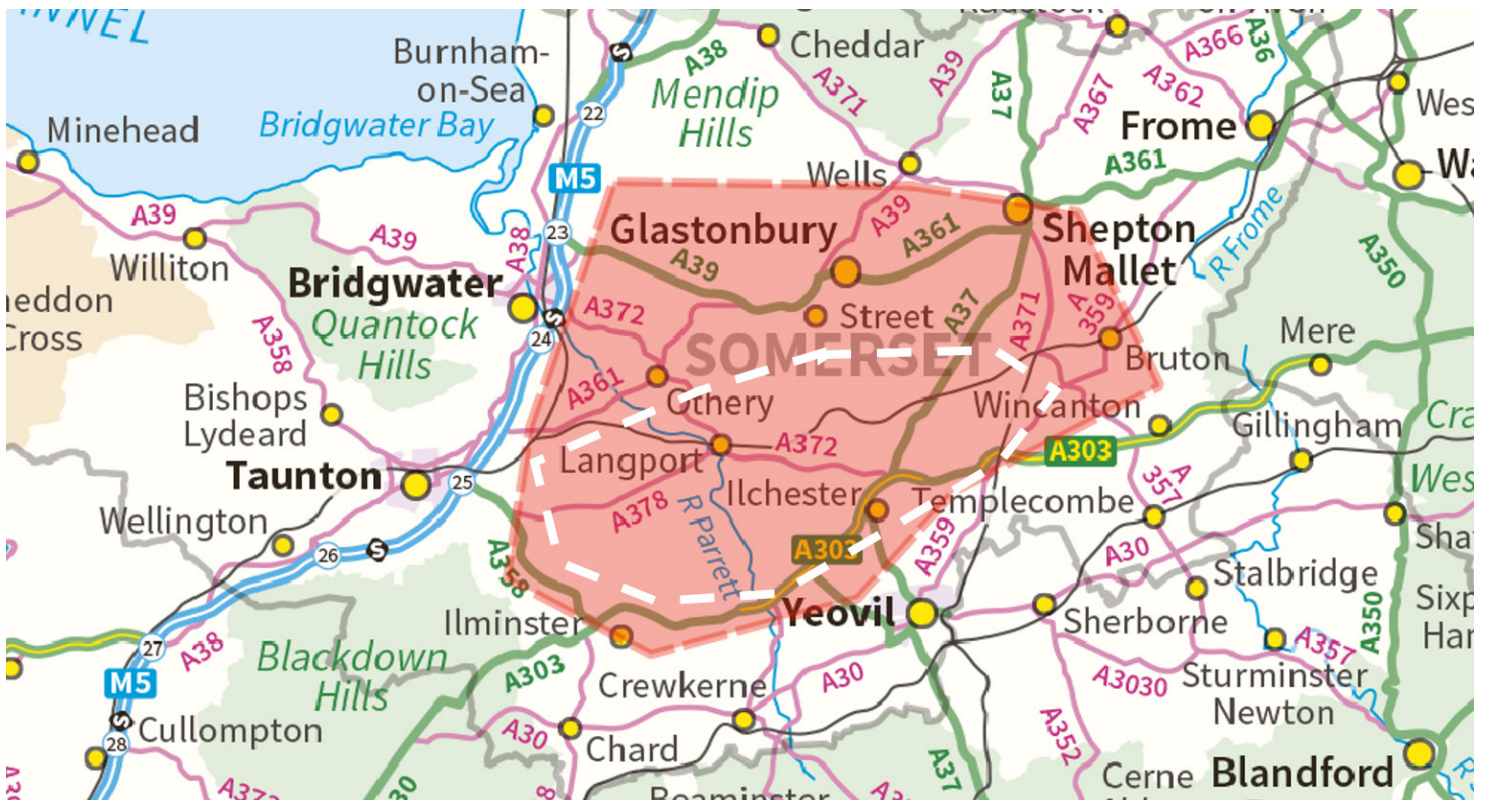


Bringing our Shrill Carder Bee “Back from the Brink” By Daisy Headley (Project Officer)

“The Shrill Carder Bee is one of the smallest and rarest bumblebees in England having suffered dramatic declines over recent decades. One of the remaining sites where we still find this species today is in South Somerset. (We know they have been recorded on PCNRs in past few years: Ed) As such the Back from the Brink project led by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust in partnership with Buglife is aiming to gain a better understanding of the distribution and abundance of this bumblebee, protect sites where populations exist and provide advice to improve land management activities with the objective of strengthening and increasing the population. On the map the red marked area is where we are working but the white marked area is where we generally find SCB’s at the moment so is a primary

target area for both surveys and land management advice.

If you own or manage land within our target area we can provide a free, no obligation visit to provide bespoke advice on enhancing your land for Shrill Carder Bees. We would also love to hear from you if you have seen the species – please do take lots of photos and send them through for verification. Surveys can be undertaken when part of an advice session or, where possible, one of our expert volunteers will pop down to help you look for this elusive bumblebee.” Please note: Daisy’s Normal working days for the Project are Mondays & Tuesdays: Contact details Mobile **07377 875073** email daisy.headley@bumblebeeconservation.org



Future Workshops/ Walk & Talk themes

Suggestions are **Habitats, Managing for Birds**. What about PCNR members who are Artists, Bloggers or Authors delivering an afternoon or evening presentation? Community group members what have you to offer? **When, Where, Who?**

Illustration: Project Area Map

Remember:

Remember

to check out Somerset Wildlife Trust events. There are always lots of fun, interesting and informative events for all of the family happening all across Somerset. To find out more visit somersetwildlife.org/events

Remember

to keep Ruth White our "Volunteer Administrator" up-to-date if there are changes in email addresses, personal circumstances or reserve ownership. If you can provide an email contact it will help to cut costs and save time in printing. We can communicate more quickly to the half of the 200+ members who have given an email address.

Remember

to mention the PCNR Network to new owners if you move away: they may need encouragement and help.

Remember

What do you, the members of the Network want? Got a question? Get in touch. Let Ruth, Valerie or your Area contact know.

What next will depend on the Network members and the team: our next committee meeting is scheduled for **11.00am Tuesday 17th September 2019** at Somerset Wildlife Trust HQ 34 Wellington Rd Taunton. We welcome interest from any PCNR members who would like to join us ideally as Area contacts for Mendip Hills, East Mendip, Wells and Central East. OR to get involved to help the Network to develop and thrive. We aim to publish the next Newsletter in Autumn 2019 and articles are welcomed. Previous Newsletters and information are on the PCNR web page : see under Reserves on Somerset Wildlife Trust site but note the only contacts for the Network are the up-to-date ones in this issue.

Remember Biosecurity!

KEEP IT CLEAN: Don't give pests & diseases an easy ride

THINK KIT: clean soil & debris from boots, clothing & tools before leaving any site.

THINK PLANTS: ensure they are sourced responsibly; Keep records of purchases & suppliers; Monitor plants for signs of ill health.

THINK MATERIALS: source landscaping materials from areas known to be free of pests & diseases.

Find out more at forestry.gov.uk/biosecurity

Please note: opinions expressed herein are those of the individual writers & do not necessarily agree with Somerset Wildlife Trust or other members of the PCNR committee.

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If you change your email address please inform Ruth

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