



**Somerset**  
Wildlife Trust

# Wilder Community Action

## Empowerment Pack

Empowering YOU to take action  
for wildlife on your patch

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# Creating a Wilder Somerset – together

We need to create a Nature Recovery Network that extends into every part of our towns, cities, and countryside, bringing wildlife and the benefits of a healthy natural world into every part of life.

Currently only 10% of Somerset can be classified as being in good natural or semi-natural condition with species-rich natural habitats supporting abundant and diverse wildlife, enabling it to move, reproduce, and thrive. For nature to recover, we need to triple the amount of land managed for nature, creating an interconnected network across our entire county.

Land of any size can contribute to the Nature Recovery Network – nature reserves, community spaces, gardens, farms, parks, churchyards, streets, and schools. Local people must step forward to give nature a voice and ensure nature is placed at the heart of all decisions. Evidence says that if we get 1 in 4 people taking visible action for nature, we create a social ‘tipping point’, and the majority will follow. We need your help to tip the balance in nature’s favour, to be part of ‘Team Wilder’ – people taking action for nature across the county that they care about.

Only together can we bring about the change that nature needs! So let’s get started.



# Using this guide

This pack is a basic guide to help you set up an action group for nature within your community, focusing on practicalities and logistics. Starting a new group can be both exciting and overwhelming, so we've kept it simple, including just the basics and keeping things focused on the resources available to you in Somerset. It's a checklist to getting started. You'll find further links throughout for more detailed resources.

Team Wilder is about working collaboratively, with an evidence-based approach, to achieve more for nature. It is a movement of people taking action; doers, movers, shakers, ambassadors, campaigners and changemakers. At the heart of this ethos is that we can all make a difference together by sharing knowledge, ideas, and resources. We would encourage you to join our network and make the most of the experience and enthusiasm of others, who are working to similar aims across the county.

## Further reference and resources:

**Somerset Community Action Map:** Wild initiatives across Somerset. Find out what's taking place in your area, add your group or connect with others.

[somersetwildlife.org/get-involved/team-wilder/team-wilder-map](https://somersetwildlife.org/get-involved/team-wilder/team-wilder-map)

**The Resource Centre:** This is a Sussex-based support centre, but the information section is one of the most comprehensive resources available online for setting up and running a group.

[resourcecentre.org.uk/information](https://resourcecentre.org.uk/information)

**The Urban Handbook TCV:** This guide is part of a suite of TCV conservation handbooks available on an annual subscription. The Urban Handbook includes useful chapters about community involvement; the other handbooks provide excellent guidance on various habitat management tasks.

[conservationhandbooks.com](https://conservationhandbooks.com)

**South Somerset Community Biodiversity Toolkit:** An overview and introduction section, alongside three separate appendices that provide further detail and local case studies to support the i) planning and engagement, ii) development, and iii) delivery of your community environment plans.

[southsomersetenvironment.co.uk/biodiversitytoolkit](https://southsomersetenvironment.co.uk/biodiversitytoolkit)

**The Transition Handbook:** Transition Towns is a movement about cultural transformation to become more self-sufficient in terms of energy, skills and food. The Handbook dives deeper into group dynamics, how to work effectively with people and creative methods for working in your community.

[transitionnetwork.org](https://transitionnetwork.org)



# Setting up and formalising a community group

## Group structures and terminology

Your group may begin as just a few neighbours litter picking together on a weekly dog walk. There is no need to overcomplicate your set-up, but as your ambitions and membership grow, you may want to consider formalising your group. This is particularly important if you wish to:

- apply for funding or generate income
- own or be responsible for land
- run events and activities for which insurance would be required

There are several different structures an organisation could copy, depending on the aims and ambitions of the group.

Below is an outline of some of the most common structures and legal terms relevant to community-led voluntary activities. This is by no means comprehensive. Further resources are provided, and you should ensure you do your own research and use tools, such as the Resource Centre RouteMap, to make an informed decision.

### **Unincorporated Association**

An unincorporated association is an organisation set up through an agreement between a group of people who come together for a reason other than to make a profit (e.g. a voluntary group or a sports club).

You don't need to register an unincorporated association, and it doesn't cost anything to set one up. Individual members are personally responsible for any debts and contractual obligations.

An unincorporated association is the cheapest and simplest form a group can take. It is a membership organisation, set up to do whatever the members wish, and is suitable for small community and campaigning groups that do not own land or assets. Many smaller groups fall into this category, sometimes without knowing it! Unincorporated associations do not need to register with a regulatory body, do not need to have a name, a formal constitution, bank account or any money. Unincorporated associations may or may not also be charities.

Whilst this is often the most straight-forward set-up for smaller community groups, you should be aware that with this structure, any purchases, contracts and liabilities fall to you and your members as individuals.

### **Incorporated Organisations (corporate structures)**

From a legal perspective an unincorporated association is a collection of individuals. Whereas an incorporated organisation has its own organisational identity and can enter into contracts, buy or lease property, and any debts or obligations belong to the organisation, rather than to the individual group members.

Incorporated organisations have limited liability which means committee members are only personally liable for anything that they have individually guaranteed. There are several structures an incorporated organisation can take, including Charitable Company, Community Interest Company (CIC) or Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

### **Charitable status**

A charity is not a recognised legal structure. A charity is defined, by law, as an organisation which has exclusively charitable purposes, and is regulated by the High Court's charity law jurisdiction. Charities



must prove they exist for the public benefit and must govern themselves in accordance with the Charities Act.

Most charities are required to register with the Charity Commission, if their income is higher than £5,000 per year.

### **Charitable Trusts**

A charitable trust is a type of unincorporated charity run by a small group of appointed trustees, with no wider membership. To set up a trust, your group must write and sign a trust deed, which must show that the organisation is legally charitable, and follows charity regulations. This type of set-up is usually only appropriate for specific activities, such as philanthropy and grant giving.

### **'Friends of' groups**

'Friends of' is not a recognised legal structure; groups may either work under another organisation (usually a council) or be set up independently. A 'friends of' group is set up to voluntarily maintain, improve, and promote parks and public green spaces, working closely with the landowner or site manager. They may be involved in a wide range of activities associated with their green space, including practical conservation activities, fundraising for new infrastructure, and running educational events.

These groups do not generally own their own land but work closely with the landowner and play a role in both management and decision making. Each council has different guidance for coordinating 'friends of' activities. Councils may cover groups under public liability insurance, and sometimes have some funding available for groups, but will generally require key group members to attend specified training.

A 'friends of' group may be an appropriate set-up for your group if your work is primarily focused on one or two areas of public green space. Working with the appropriate landowner can be a simple and well-supported way to set up a practical group, but you need to be prepared to work closely with them and your decision-making abilities may be limited.

### **Working under another organisation**

Many community-led action groups grow out of events or projects run by existing organisations within the community. If your group is primarily associated with another organisation – such as a school, church, village hall or parish council – then your group activities may already be governed by this existing organisation.

This can be a straightforward way to protect your group assets and members, without the hassle of setting up independently, but it may have implications for the activities that you can carry out.



# Purpose, Aims, Objectives, Mission

Depending on the structure you choose, you may be required to have certain documents in place such as constitutions or governing documents. The Charity Commission provide model documents for some of these, which can be a useful starting point when formalising your group.

*If you are keeping things simple, and don't require any specific legal documentation, then it can still be valuable to agree a basic outline of the group's aims and purposes. Establishing aims for the group early on will help you manage everyone's expectations, avoid conflict or confusion later down the line, and can be helpful when deciding which areas of work to prioritise.*

Groups often start with just one, or a few, enthusiastic and like-minded members, but devolving responsibility and empowering others to feel that they have a role in the decision-making process is key to making an impact, and ensuring people stay enthused. Having your aims defined early on can help ensure these larger meetings don't get completely derailed – but be prepared to listen too – new people means new ideas.

The key points to recognise are:

- Why are we doing this?
- What do we hope to achieve?
- How do we plan to do this – and who will be responsible?
- Your 'elevator pitch'. How would we briefly explain our group to a member of the public?
- There are some great examples available of how to set this out in a clear and usable format:

**Stoke Environment Group** established a Vision, Mission and Objectives:

[envirostoke.org/about](http://envirostoke.org/about)

**Sedgemoor Conservation Group** use 6 simple questions to explain their objectives:

[sedgemoorconservationvolunteers.org.uk](http://sedgemoorconservationvolunteers.org.uk)

**Stowey Green Spaces** explain who they are and their objectives:

[netherstowey-pc.gov.uk/stowey-green-spaces](http://netherstowey-pc.gov.uk/stowey-green-spaces)

## References and further resources:

**SPARK Somerset** provides information, advice, training, and support to the voluntary and community sectors in Somerset. They have a number of resources available and can provide guidance on choosing the right structure: [sparksomerset.org.uk/resources](http://sparksomerset.org.uk/resources)

**Resource Centre RouteMap** can help you work out what legal structure is right for your not-for-profit group: [resourcecentre.org.uk/information/routemap](http://resourcecentre.org.uk/information/routemap)

**Gov.uk** provides information on how to set up and register a 'charity': [gov.uk/set-up-a-charity](http://gov.uk/set-up-a-charity) and how to choose a structure: [gov.uk/guidance/charity-types-how-to-choose-a-structure](http://gov.uk/guidance/charity-types-how-to-choose-a-structure)

**The Resource Centre** provides a detailed guide to legal structures for community and voluntary groups:

[resourcecentre.org.uk/information/legal-structures-for-community-and-voluntary-groups](http://resourcecentre.org.uk/information/legal-structures-for-community-and-voluntary-groups)

**Parks Community** provides guides and resources for 'friends of' groups:

[parkscommunity.org.uk/how-to-guides](http://parkscommunity.org.uk/how-to-guides)

**The National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces** provides support and coordination for 'friends of' groups: [natfedparks.org.uk](http://natfedparks.org.uk)



## Setting up a bank account

Opening a bank account is not essential if your group is unincorporated, but it can be very useful, particularly if you are seeking funding or grants. Having a separate bank account is a requirement for receiving most grants. Please note that having a separate bank account for your group does not alter the legal structure of the group, or the liability of the members.

Several banks and building societies offer accounts for small voluntary and community organisations (or clubs and societies) and offer free banking as long as the account is in credit. Ensure that the account you choose is not for businesses, as banks usually charge for business accounts. (Confusingly, community accounts are usually managed by the same team in the bank as business accounts and will be listed on bank websites under 'Business' rather than 'Personal'. So, you will need to go to the Business section of the website, but choose a 'Community', or 'Club and Society' account.)

To set up your account, you will be asked to prove that your group is a voluntary, non-profit-making organisation – you can use documents such as your constitution or group objectives to do this. You will also need to provide evidence of the identity of each signatory; it is advisable to have several people as signatories.

## The 'boring bits'

Starting a new group is exciting, and no one wants to lose momentum by getting bogged down in bureaucratic details, but ensuring you have given some consideration to **insurance, risk, safeguarding** and **data protection** will help your group move forward with confidence.

Keep it simple: the actions you take should be proportional to your group's size and aims.

### Insurance

The kind of insurance you require will depend on many factors, including group size, group activity and whether you are a charity or not. When you are just starting out you may choose not to purchase insurance, but if you do this it is important that you make it clear to group members that everyone is working at their own risk. Stating this will not necessarily absolve you of liability.

Once you start running public events, practical days, owning kit or managing land it becomes essential to have public liability insurance, as a minimum. Public liability insurance will provide cover for your legal liability arising from accidental damage or injury (to a member of the public or their property) that might occur during activities.

Some groups work as part of, or in support of other causes, in which case you may be covered by another organisation's insurance, e.g. if you exclusively work within a churchyard, you may already be covered under the church insurance, but it is important to check this and to notify your insurer of a new activity to ensure that adequate cover is in place.

### Appropriate training and competence

Countryside work can involve sharp tools, working closely with animals or livestock and potentially using machinery. Your insurance will usually require that volunteers demonstrate competence, not just common sense, and work in-line with industry standards. The terminology can be vague, but it is your responsibility to ensure you have fulfilled the terms of your insurance, or your members will be working unprotected. Some points to consider before beginning work:

- Always check if a license or specialist training is required for surveying, disturbing, working directly with or close to wildlife. See section 'seeking advice' for more details.
- It is good practice to undertake an industry-standard certification – such as LANTRA or City and Guilds – for the use of machinery or power tools including chainsaws, brush cutters, strimmers and ride-on mowers or tractors.

- Standard garden and household tools such as push-mowers or power drills, as well as hand tools such as spades, loppers and bow saws should be used according to the manufacturer's instructions.

### Further references and resources:

**NVCO** provide guidance about what to consider when choosing insurance:

[knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/organisation/operations/insurance](https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/organisation/operations/insurance)

**Zurich** insurers specialise in insurance for charitable bodies and community groups:

[zurich.co.uk/charity-insurance/community-groups-insurance](https://zurich.co.uk/charity-insurance/community-groups-insurance)

**TCV** offer subsidised off-the-shelf insurance packages for practical conservation groups, if you join the community network: [tcv.org.uk/communities/join-community-network](https://tcv.org.uk/communities/join-community-network)



## Risk assessments

Writing a risk assessment doesn't have to be complicated or onerous. The most important thing is that safety has been considered and communicated before starting an activity.

The risk assessment should address:

- What are the risks?
- Who might be harmed?
- How can risks be minimised?
- Is it safe to do the activity with the risk mitigations in place?

The risk may change during the day, or the way you work may need adjusting to stay safe – this is a 'dynamic risk assessment' and is something we do naturally, every day, as we move through the world. If your organisation meets in the same location, or does similar activities each session, an 'overall risk assessment' could be adequate – briefly reviewing it at the start of each session to check for any changes.

## Communicating your risk assessment

Everyone is responsible for health and safety, so having written your risk assessment it's important to ensure everyone present is aware of it and its contents. Make sure you discuss safe working with everyone involved in a way which makes sense to them. Usually, the most appropriate way to do this is a verbal briefing, but for some audiences a written copy may be preferred. Demonstrations or use of images could be more helpful for children.

There is a link to a sample risk assessment at [somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources](https://somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources)

Another useful document, to sit alongside the risk assessment, is an emergency reference sheet, with important up-to-date information that might be needed quickly such as: location (postcode and [what3words](#)); nearest defibrillator; essential contact numbers (site manager or key holder).

## Safeguarding

All organisations have a duty of care and a legal responsibility for safeguarding their employees, volunteers, visitors – anyone that the organisation has contact with. Safeguarding applies to everyone and is about creating an organisation which actively prevents harm, harassment, bullying, abuse, and neglect – and responds promptly if there is an issue.

A safeguarding policy is often a requirement when applying for funding. As a minimum, you should appoint a responsible person and write a short safeguarding statement, which all your key group members are aware of. There are many examples online, but your statement should be relevant to your organisation. If your group works under the umbrella of another organisation, such as a parish council, village hall or church, then they will already have this in place, you simply need to ensure you are aware of how it applies to your group's activities.

If your group works directly with children, young people, or adults at risk then you must have a more comprehensive document, which details procedures for working with vulnerable groups, and provides appropriate checks and training for anyone working closely with these individuals.

## Further resources and references

**NVCO** provide up-to-date information about safeguarding and developing a safeguarding policy, aimed at voluntary organisations: [ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/information/safeguarding](https://ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/information/safeguarding)

Voluntary organisations in Somerset can access FREE Basics of Safeguarding training through **SPARK Somerset**. Contact: [training@sparksomerset.org.uk](mailto:training@sparksomerset.org.uk)

## Data Protection (GDPR)

Data protection laws apply to personal data, whether it is stored electronically or in paper format. Personal data is information that relates to an identified or identifiable individual, such as a name and email address.

When setting up a new group, data protection can feel litigious and overwhelming, but there are a few basic guidelines you can follow to keep your group and your participants safe. In general, you should always treat personal data as confidential, to be used for specific purposes only, and to be stored securely when not in use.

**1. Collection of data:** If you wish to collect details of those attending your meetings or events, you must include a simple 'Data Protection Statement' on the form which they fill in, which explains why you are collecting their data and how you will use it. You must only collect the basic information you need, e.g. contact details to keep people informed about future events and meetings. You cannot pass this data on to third parties (including other local groups) without explicit permission.

**2. Storage of data:** Data must be held securely (e.g. in a locked drawer or password-protected document). Try to avoid storing data in multiple places, as it can become difficult to maintain it accurately.

**3. Accuracy of data:** Ensure data is kept up to date (e.g. if someone tells you of a change of name and would like their details amended).



**4. Removal of data:** Personal data should only be used and stored for as long as it is required for the purposes it was collected for and deleted when no longer required (e.g. if the group disbands, then the mailing list should be destroyed).

**5. Reviews of data:** Regular reviews are important, to check on accuracy of the data and the continued need to retain it. Keep a dated record of this activity.



## Funding your group

Please be aware that the advice below is correct at the time of writing, but links and resources may change. Please always check with potential funders in advance to make sure you have the most up-to-date criteria and advice, before you approach them, to avoid disappointment.

### The basics – before you start to raise money for your group

Before you can start to raise money, you need to ensure that as a group you protect yourselves and your money. If you are looking to raise money from charitable trusts, or apply for a grant, then most funders and donors will want to see that your group has a bank account. This is important for keeping track of your group's money and making sure it does not get mixed up with individuals' money. You also need a bank account if you are collecting donations or fees. Some funders will only accept applications from registered charities, so it is important you understand the specific needs and requirements of any funder you consider, to ensure you are eligible. Please see '[Setting up a bank account](#)' section for more information.

It's important to do research, to understand your options, and to make sure you are eligible to apply for funding and have the proper systems in place to accept money.

## Develop a diverse fundraising strategy:

Potential donors and funders come in a variety of forms; drawing on a diverse range of sources can help increase financial resilience. Consider a mix of the following sources in your fundraising plan:

### **Statutory sources – local authority or national government grants and contracts**

Most parish and district councils have small pots of funding for community action. Contact your local council/councillor for more information. The AONBs also have small community funds that distribute funding for environmental work in the community, e.g. Mendip Hills AONB Fund. Thinking local is a great way to raise money and means less competition for limited funds.

### **Grant making bodies – including trusts and foundations, lottery funding and community funds**

Think local wherever possible and try to apply to funders based in Somerset. It reduces the competition and local funders will be more interested in your project. Most local shops in your community, like **Co-op, Budgens, One-Stop, Tesco, Waitrose, Asda** etc will have community foundations established to support local projects, with their funding often generated from the levy on carrier bags. Contact your local store to introduce yourselves, tell them about your work and see if you can apply.

### **Corporates – including sponsorship, mentoring or pro-bono work and payroll giving**

Perhaps there's a local business that might consider sponsoring your project in return for some publicity? We've all seen the roundabouts that have been planted 'with thanks to' a local business.

### **Community and individuals – including volunteering, running fundraising events and supporting crowdfunding initiatives**

Crowdfunding raises money from large numbers of people, typically via the Internet. **Crowdfunder** is the UK's leading platform for supporting crowdfunding initiatives and has helped lots of community projects raise donations towards their projects – [crowdfunder.co.uk](https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk)

### **Earned income – including Ebay stores and charity shops, running cafes, selling merchandise, or hiring premises**

Check out our [Wilder Fundraising Pack](#) for some creative ideas.

### **Collaborating – reaching out to other charities and local groups to work in collaboration**

Collaborating with other groups, or even a registered charity in your local area, may help in sharing resources, reaching more people, and reducing outlay. If you'd like to raise funds for your project with a split of proceeds going to Somerset Wildlife Trust and/or another charity or community group, this is encouraged so long as you are clear in any promotional materials how the funds are being split.

## Purchasing land for community ownership

Owning and safeguarding land is a long term and costly responsibility, and not a decision that can be taken lightly. Raising funds is one of the biggest challenges, and whilst platforms such as crowdfunder are a great place to start, you may also need the banking of an environmental fund, these are a good place to start:

We Support - We Have The Power: [wehavethepower.org/we-support](https://wehavethepower.org/we-support)

The Esme Fairburn Foundation: [esmeefairbairn.org.uk](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk)

Rewilding Britain: [rewildingbritain.org.uk](https://rewildingbritain.org.uk)

If you are looking to obtain a larger area of land for community ownership, please get in touch, we may be able to offer support with surveying and seeking funding:  
[teamwilder@somersetwildlife.org](mailto:teamwilder@somersetwildlife.org)

## Top tips for success when applying for funding grants

There are lots of sources of grant funding in Somerset and beyond for local groups and charities. However, these are often hotly sought after, with lots of groups applying for the same limited pot of money. Here is a list of top tips to follow, to maximise your chances of success:

### 1) Plan your project

Know what it is you want to achieve and how you are going to get there. What will success look like, how much time will it take to deliver, what equipment do you need, what are the key milestones, who needs to do what to deliver it on time?

If you have a properly thought-out plan for your project then it will make it so much easier to work out the cost and the funding you need, plus make a compelling case to funders.

### 2) Research funding sources

Many funders receive hundreds of applications every meeting, so improve your chances of success by ensuring you are eligible to apply and that your project will interest them. Funders all have their own set of criteria and giving preferences – sadly, it's not a case of one size fits all. Writing applications can take a lot of time so you want to make sure that you are applying to those funders that are most likely to fund you.

If in doubt, pick up the phone and talk to them. Sometimes that phone call can make all the difference and if they like your project they will be looking out for your application.

#### What to look for when researching:

- The name of the funder
- What type of project they will fund – capital, core, revenue
- Area of interest, e.g. they may be interested in protecting the environment and natural heritage; promoting the arts; or helping marginalised sectors of society.
- How much will they fund? Do you have to be a certain size to apply, e.g. group income of less than £20k?
- Deadline to submit applications.
- Do they only support projects from a certain geographic area?
- How do you apply? Is it an online application form, letter of application, pitch?
- What things won't they fund?
- Who have they funded in the past? Check out the type of projects they have funded.
- Who is on their board of trustees – do you have any connections to them?
- Do you have to be a registered charity or have a bank account? Do you need to supply any of the following: financial information such as accounts, proof of bank account; safeguarding policy; insurance details?
- Is there a number you can call to speak to them about your project if you have questions?
- What are the next steps you need to take to apply to them?



## Jargon Buster!



**Core** – Core cost refer to ongoing and unavoidable costs to keep an organisation running efficiently. This could include things like accounting, fundraising or insurance.

**Capital** – Capital funding can be used to purchase new assets (property), or the significant refurbishment of existing assets. For example; purchase of a bench, wildflower seeds or machinery.

**Revenue** – Revenue funding can be used to put on events, activities, pay for the running costs of an organisation. For example; funding first aid training for the group or venue hire.

### 3) Write your application

You've done all the preparation – you know who to apply to and what you want to achieve.

Some funders will have an application form to complete, with many accessible through online portals to reduce paper. Some funders will ask for a letter of application. If they don't tell you what to include it is helpful to cover the following:

- An introduction to the group and your aims
- A contact number and email for your group
- The purpose of the intended project – describe the current issue and what is needed to resolve it
- The project cost or budget
- Where applicable, the amount raised so far, with a breakdown of how much has been raised from within the local community and how much from other grant making bodies or other sources
- Describe what success will look like. How will the success of your project be measured? What difference will the funder make? What are the outputs or outcomes of the project, for the future?

A really helpful tip is to get someone who doesn't know your project to read your application. If they feel compelled to support you, then so will the funder!

### 4) Keep up your communication with them

Once you get funding from a donor (business, trust or individual), make sure you say thank you, give them updates and show how their funding is making a difference. This will stand you in good stead to apply again – only this time they already know who you are and that you will use their funding to good effect.

### Further references and resources

The **Team Wilder** newsletter includes a monthly funding and grants round up, sign up here:

[somersetwildlife.org/form/team-wilder-newsletter-signup](https://somersetwildlife.org/form/team-wilder-newsletter-signup)

Our **Team Wilder** Community Fundraising pack is full of ideas and inspiration for raising funds for the work of **Somerset Wildlife Trust** and community initiatives:

[somersetwildlife.org/support-us/fundraise-us/request-fundraising-pack](https://somersetwildlife.org/support-us/fundraise-us/request-fundraising-pack)

**SPARK Somerset** have an extensive library of funding available and can offer a bespoke funding search for your group: [sparksomerset.org.uk/somerset-funding-portal](https://sparksomerset.org.uk/somerset-funding-portal)

**Somerset Community Foundation** administers several local funding pots: [somersetcf.org.uk](https://somersetcf.org.uk)

**Directory of Social Change** has lots of free materials and expert advice: [dsc.org.uk](https://dsc.org.uk)



# Tech, Publicity, and Communications

Local promotion is the most effective way to ensure people hear about your group. Different channels help in different ways:

- Press releases in local circulars and magazines can help get the message out widely, but it does take some planning (see below).
- **Facebook** group or page, including making use of existing village and local pages. You can also follow local groups, businesses, news outlets and high-profile people in your community and encourage them to help you promote your activities.
- Page or announcement on your parish website.
- **WhatsApp** or **Next Door** is a great way to spread the word amongst your friends and neighbours; and keep them engaged with quick updates.
- Emails and letters are still one of the most effective ways to let people know about what you are doing. Amongst endless junk mail, an email or letter from a friend or neighbour still stands out! Hand delivering flyers in your target area can ensure your message lands on everyone's doorstep.
- Posters on community notice boards are great for raising awareness locally, particularly for events. Always ask permission of the site owner before displaying any posters, and please remember to remove them afterwards.

The **Team Wilder** support team at **Somerset Wildlife Trust** can help promote your group by:

- Adding your action to the [community action map](#), so that other people can find you.
- Signposting potential volunteers and supporters to you, as and when they get in touch with us.
- Providing **Team Wilder** poster templates and other adaptable promotional material.
- Celebrating your news through our regular newsletters and social media streams, which reach people across Somerset.

**Don't forget** to let us know what you've been up to! Email us at [teamwilder@somersetwildlife.org](mailto:teamwilder@somersetwildlife.org)

## Setting up a new email address

Setting up a dedicated email address for your group helps people feel confident in the group and helps you to separate and organise your emails. Benefits to setting up a separate email account are:

- You can also choose to set up automatic responses, directing people to other information such as your **Facebook** group. Make sure you tell people if the email account is only checked on certain days of the week.
- Several people can have access to the account, so the burden isn't all on one individual.
- No need to publish your personal email address when advertising the group, helping to maintain your privacy and security.
- There are many different account providers – **Gmail** is often favoured because accounts are free and it provides access to document share spaces, which you can use amongst your group.



## Web video chat and meetings

Whether you love video conferencing or you grudgingly participate, there's no denying that video calling can be a useful communication tool and helps us cut down the environmental impact of travel when meeting with peers across the county.

**Skype:** popular for informal chats, FREE for up to 50 participants, some connection issues.

**Zoom:** highly rated, very easy to use, FREE version limited to 40 mins and 100 participants then must log in again. Only the host is required to download software. Zoom allows various controls and settings such as muting participants on entry, which lends itself to use for public meetings and events.

**'Face time'** through **Facebook** and **WhatsApp**. Popular for informal chats – but has less features available for group meetings. **WhatsApp** video conferencing is limited to 4 people.

**Microsoft Teams:** available to those with appropriate **Office** package. Popular in workplaces due to a suite of features including easy document sharing tools and can be accessed as a 'guest'.

## Website

A website can help give your group visibility and is a space to share your news and successes. Websites take considerable time and effort to maintain, and require regular updating, so it is worth considering seriously if this is something your group can commit to long term. Rather than setting up a standalone website, you may find it is more appropriate to have a page on an existing parish council, village or community website, or a Facebook page.

If you choose to set up a standalone website there are 3 basic types:

### 1. Free, hosted

These sites are quick and easy to set up using basic templates online. You would have limited control over what your site looks like, and you will probably have to host adverts.

Your web address will include the host name e.g. Wix.SomersetVillageGreenGroup.co.uk

### 2. Paid, hosted

This option allows you to pick an 'off-the shelf' design, which you can adapt.

You also get your own web address, without inclusion of the host name, and no adverts. There is an annual fee for maintaining your site, as well as an upfront set-up cost.

### 3. Paid, unhosted

This option offers the most control. However, unless you are confident with web development this is generally not a good option as you would be responsible for the design, ensuring legal compliance and keeping your security settings updated.

This is generally the costliest option and even the most basic package is likely to exceed the needs of a community group.

# Facebook

Love it or hate it, Facebook (FB) is ubiquitous, free, and relatively user friendly. A FB Page or a FB Group is probably the most effective way to create an online presence without committing to a website.

You need to create a FB account to set up a FB Page or FB Group. For this you will need to enter an email address (or mobile phone number) name, password, date of birth and gender.

There are numerous potential options and settings (which frequently change!) when using both FB Pages and FB Groups, and a myriad of features you can utilise if you choose to.

The table below outlines some of the basic things to consider.

Facebook Page	Facebook Group (Public)	Facebook Group (Private/Closed)
Pages can be found by searching on FB or Google, like having a website.	Groups can be found by searching in FB but are less likely to show up in Google searches.	Groups can be found by searching on FB but only the name, admins and description will be visible.
Anyone on or off FB can see what has been posted on the Page. Pages are public.	Anyone on or off FB can see who's in the group and what they post.	Only members can see who is in the group and what they post.
Anyone can see or 'Like' the page.	Anyone can join or be added to the group.	Admins need to approve group members and may choose to set membership questions.
Anyone can share posts.	People both in and outside the Group can share posts outside to their own friends and other Groups.	Posts cannot be shared beyond the Group.
Admins can control if visitors can post on their Page. Often this is limited so that visitors can only comment on an Admin post.	Only group members can post in the group.	Only group members can post in the group.
Page settings vary, many pages do not allow any (or very limited) audience interaction.	Admins have complete control over who can or can't post and can remove a post or member at any time, but this requires active moderation.	Admins have complete control over who can or can't post and can remove a post or member at any time, but this requires active moderation.
Pages cannot be changed to Groups later.	Public Groups can be changed to Private later.	Private Groups cannot be changed to Public later.
Pages are like a 'shop front' and are the closest equivalent to having a Webpage.  Pages allow 'ads' which means they are a good tool for businesses to spread messages widely. They are more of a 'one-way' communication tool, and not designed to create community or conversation.	Public groups are a good option if you want a public presence but still create an interactive community space, where you can moderate interactions.	Private groups are the best option if you want a closed space where group members can discuss local and specific topics.  They aren't such an effective option if you want to be able to advertise events or spread a message to the wider community.

# Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and TikTok

These apps appeal to different generations and communities but all of them are fast moving. If you can provide regular content (ideally daily, but at least weekly) including snappy headlines and lots of visual appeal, then you may enjoy using them and they can help spread your message to a younger audience, but they can be onerous to use otherwise.

## Writing a press release

Your local newspapers, magazines and radio stations are always on the lookout for stories with local interest and a press release can help get your message across to an entire county, parish, or district. Some media, particularly magazines, will have very long lead times, often months in advance.

Press releases are generally reserved for significant events, such as the launch of a new project, securing funding, or celebrating a big achievement. Here are some tips for sharing your story:

### Step 1: Identify your local media outlets

Consider the Parish News, local circulars, magazines, newspapers, and radio stations. Many local publications have a regular slot for environmental updates. Many publications will specify word limits and a deadline for submissions, so make sure you take these into consideration before you begin writing.

There are also lots of websites that will list groups and events for free, including local radio. If you add your event to local radio sites, they may well promote your event on the radio too – fantastic free publicity!

### Step 2: Writing and sending a press release

**Headline:** Keep it short and descriptive. Puns are fun but don't try to be so clever that the message gets lost!

**Content:** Ideally find out what the word count is from each publication. If you are releasing a generic press release to several publications stick to a maximum of 500 words.

**Images:** Always ask permission before taking any photos and confirm that people are happy for their photos to be shared with local media and any other associated organisations for publicity. If children are in your photographs, you must ask parents or guardian's permission to use them. It is important to provide a description and credit with all your images. If you cannot provide an image, then the publication may choose a stock image on your behalf.

**Call to action:** Do you want people to do something as a result of your press release? Volunteer, join an event or bin their litter? Include a clear 'Call to Action' e.g. 'Book your place now' or 'Get involved today'.

**Further information:** Include your group email, website or Facebook and any other social media tags. Don't forget to credit any funders or organisations that have supported, it's not just good manners, it can also help you secure further support in the future.

**Be prepared to be edited:** Most publications will edit your piece in some way, and you may not have an opportunity to review it before it goes public. Make sure you clearly state in your submission if there is any information that is essential to include.

We also have a sample press release that you can edit with tips on how to write it should you need some guidance.

### Step 3: Follow up

Celebrate your fantastic day of tree planting/litter picking/campaigning with an update to any of the publications that picked up your press release. This is an opportunity to say thank you to everyone involved and keep the momentum going!

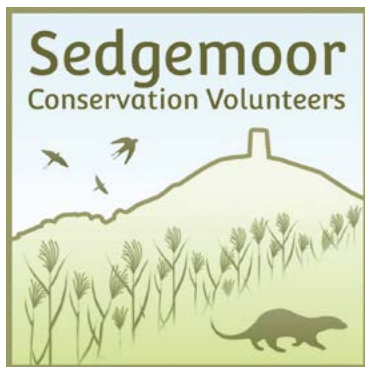


## Branding, Logos and Design

Once you have decided on a group name you may wish to think about designing a group logo to use on posters and publicity. The most effective logos are simple, so ask amongst your community if anyone is arty or creative and you may find you have an attractive design in no time!

'Branding' can be as simple as choosing a handful of colours and fonts to use consistently on your posters and publicity. While this is by no means essential, it can help to make your group more recognisable and professional in appearance.

Here are some examples of effective logos in use in Somerset:



There are logos, branding tools and poster templates that you are welcome to use for your initiative as part of Team Wilder. You may choose to use these exclusively or alongside your own designs to align your work to the wider Team Wilder network:



For full guidelines and creative materials please see the **Team Wilder** resource library:  
[somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources](https://somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources)

# Building your team and involving your community

Wildlife needs all of us to change our ways, to act, and to convince others to join a movement for nature's recovery. With your help, we can put nature into recovery, create more space for wildlife to thrive, and reduce the pressure on the environment. This must be a joint effort. We all have different skills, knowledge, and experience to offer.

Getting your group, project or campaign off the ground is dependent on convincing others to join your cause!



## The power of the word – how to convince people to help

### 1. Make your message relevant

What motivates YOU to act? Nature recovery is such an overwhelming topic that people can switch off, so it's important to focus on what matters and motivates people locally. For many people it might not even be wildlife that concerns them... but they might be interested in having green spaces for their grandchildren, or enjoy the wellbeing benefits of time in nature, or they may be fed up with negative

things like excessive dog poo. Consulting with your community can help you understand what it is that they care about and communicate in a way which is relevant to their concerns.

### 2. Don't focus on the doom and gloom

We are all too familiar with hearing bad news, especially when it comes to the destruction of nature and the environment. Whilst it's not unreasonable to make sure people are aware of the facts, it's also important to recognise that too much bad news can make the situation feel hopeless and people will feel demotivated and disinclined to help. Without twisting the reality or dismissing hard truths, can you highlight what positive action people CAN take to make a difference?

For instance, which of these makes you feel motivated to make a change?

- 'We are heading towards the global collapse of the bee population, due to inaction by governments and agriculture'
- 'If we all say no to neonicotinoids, plant for pollinators, and support organic farming, we can give the bee population a chance to bounce back'.

### 3. Include a call to action

A 'call to action' is a powerful tool to move people from thinking about what you're saying to actually doing something.

A call to action is a direct and clear request, it could be a simple

- 'Get in touch' or
- 'Join our volunteering day'

or it might be more specific like

- 'Protect rivers by choosing phosphate-free products for your household'

## Case Study:

### Church of St Lawrence, Priddy.

The original project involved many people from the community, and there is support for the continued management of the wildlife areas. Visitors to the area find the wildflower areas peaceful and inspirational.

Key lessons we have learnt:

- Be realistic about what you can achieve with the people and resources you have
- Start with smaller, easily managed projects – increasing the value of the churchyard to wildlife takes time and effort
- Engage as broadly as possible with the community – if you start with too much ambition you may find people drop by the wayside as too much commitment is required, and people have very busy lives!



## The 5 pathways to nature connection

Nature connectedness is a measurable psychological construct that refers to an individual's sense of their relationship with the natural world. All of us need a relationship with nature, not just contact or access to nature, but a deep and personal connection. This relationship is the foundation for both pro-nature behaviours and improved mental wellbeing.



Extensive academic research has been done on nature connections which aims to understand people's sense of their relationship with the natural world, and how it is formed. This research identified the '5 pathways to nature connectedness'. The pathways are:

- **Senses** – tuning in to nature through the senses
- **Emotion** – feeling alive through the emotions and feelings that nature brings
- **Beauty** – noticing nature's beauty
- **Meaning** – nature bringing meaning to our lives
- **Compassion** – caring and acting for nature

When sharing nature with others, whether through publicity, events, or practical design, it's important to have the 5 pathways in mind. Facts, taxonomy and science are important but can be dry, particularly for people who may be less engaged with the natural world. By incorporating the 5 pathways you can encourage people to engage in a meaningful way and build a lasting relationship with nature.

Find out more about nature connection research:

[derby.ac.uk/research/centres-groups/nature-connectedness-research-group](https://derby.ac.uk/research/centres-groups/nature-connectedness-research-group) and [derby.ac.uk/blog/5-ways-closer-nature](https://derby.ac.uk/blog/5-ways-closer-nature)

### Did you know?

When shopping trolleys were introduced in the 1930's people were hesitant to use them. The store paid actors to use them around store, normalising the behaviour and encouraging others to try them.



## Understanding human behaviour

We know valuing and taking action for nature starts with experiencing it, enjoying it, being in a relationship with nature and experiencing the wellbeing benefits of time spent in nature. Derby University have been able to demonstrate that connection to nature correlates with pro-nature behaviours.

But it's not enough.... Even if we feel connected to nature there are many other influences on our behaviour. It's a common misconception that if we give someone all the information they need, then we will enable them to change, but behaviour change is much harder and more complex than this!

As humans, we do not rationally weigh up every decision we make, we often apply short cuts to our thinking and go with our gut, we tend to like status quo and there are lots of influences that will impact the decisions we make, including:

- **Habit** – Our habits are learnt over time by repetition until the behaviour becomes automatic. To change a habit, we must make effortful decisions to change.
- **Motivation** – We can be motivated to pursue outcomes we want such as a pay cheque or better health. We can also be motivated to avoid outcomes we don't want such as pain, boredom, or criticism. We can also be motivated to do things just because we like them.
- **Social influence** – Humans are evolved to be deeply social creatures. We like social norms; we want to behave in a way that is acceptable to our peers.
- **Physical influence** – A person's ability to change or try something new could be influenced by time, money, access to knowledge or equipment.
- **Values** – Our values are our underlying guiding principles, what we believe is right. But our values don't always translate into behaviour!

The value-action gap is a phenomenon where people act in a way that's inconsistent with, or entirely contradicts, their values, because another influence gets in the way!

All of us behave like this to some extent, which is why changing someone's mind won't necessarily change their behaviour. But understanding why people behave the way they do means we can use tools to influence behaviour, e.g. if we recognise that someone would like to take part in volunteering, but they can't commit at certain times due to childcare responsibilities (a physical influence), we could alter the times to enable them to join.

Another tool is the concept of the 'social tipping point', which recognises that social influence is very powerful. We need to make action for nature an achievable social norm, helping to bridge the gap between intention and behaviour and actually move people to take action. **Evidence shows that just 25% of people need to visibly change their behaviour to tip the balance in nature's favour!**

This starts with you! As leaders in your communities you can help to build the movement and encourage a much bigger impact!



## Working with volunteers

### Did you know?

The 2019 NVCO report on the volunteer experience: Time Well Spent, showed that the most popular form of volunteer recognition (42%) was a simple verbal or written thanks from the organisation.



Without the dedication, skills, experience and enthusiasm of volunteers, wildlife organisations such as **The Wildlife Trust** would simply never have come to exist. Whilst many of these organisations now employ paid staff and operate on an international scale, they are still relatively small and cash-poor

for confronting the global issues of nature's decline. Therefore, the work of volunteers is still at the heart of conservation, in particular on-the-ground habitat management, surveying, fundraising and engagement. Nature recovery simply isn't going to happen without the goodwill and dedication of volunteers.

A volunteer is anyone who gives time to carry out activities that aim to benefit community or society, working without pay and choosing how they wish to give their time.

Volunteers may be motivated to get involved for many different reasons. They might be passionate about what you are trying to achieve, or they may be looking to rejuvenate their social life, or they might want to get physically active. Taking a person-centred approach to involving volunteers and getting to know every individual can help you keep your volunteers motivated and involved.

It goes without saying that a thank you is always appreciated! But no amount of thanking can make up for poor communication, chaotic organisation, or an unrewarding volunteer role. Involving volunteers is not 'free'. It takes time, effort and at least some resource, so it's important to plan carefully and ensure you make good use of people's time, utilise their skills and involve them in decision making.

'Volunteer' is not a legally defined term, and their legal status is a complex area. Volunteers are not covered by all the same protections as employees, but your group do still have a duty of care towards volunteers. In practice, if you are involving volunteers, you should simply expect to give due consideration to safety, training and treating people fairly – just as you would with paid staff.

However, if your organisation has both paid and voluntary roles you must clearly distinguish between employees and volunteers, otherwise you may find yourself in legal difficulty.

You should also be aware that although the word 'volunteer' is used to describe anyone giving their time freely for a good cause, your insurance is likely to have a stricter definition of what constitutes a volunteer, in order to be covered by the policy, e.g. there may be certain requirements for training, equipment, or age limits.

### Further resources and reference:

**NCVO** is a national organisation that seeks to support volunteer-involving organisations with support, advice, and best practice resources:

[ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/information/volunteer-management](https://ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/information/volunteer-management)

**Spark Somerset** is the county's volunteering centre that provides various training and resources and localised support: [sparksomerset.org.uk](https://sparksomerset.org.uk)





# Running events and activities

An 'event' can refer to everything from a practical volunteering day to a school visit, to a larger fete or fair. Public events are, for most conservation groups, a significant part of their work and an important way to deliver action for nature.

## Planning ahead

Even small events and volunteer days take some pre-planning. It's important to consider who will be responsible for each element. Key considerations for all events, regardless of size, are:

- What is the purpose of the event? Who is it aimed at?
- What is the budget for each element of the event?
- Are there appropriate permissions and insurance in place?
- Is the venue or site booked?
- Who will assess the risks and write the assessment?
- Who will be responsible for providing first aid on the day?
- Who will be leading the activities? Is the necessary equipment and resources available?
- What will everyone's responsibilities be on the day? Don't forget set-up and clean-up too.
- Who will be responsible for cash handling? Is a kitty required?
- Will bookings be taken, or will it be a drop in event? How will people's details for insurance and safety purposes be obtained? **Eventbrite** is a familiar and user-friendly bookings tool.
- Has access been considered? How will people get onto site, and do they need parking for cars or bikes?
- Have you got something in place to request photo permission?
- Contingency planning: what will happen if the weather is bad, or an activity leader drops out at the last minute?
- Publicising your event: ensure it is clear whether people need to book, when, where, costs, and contact details.
- If there are children's activities, be clear whether or not there is care for unsupervised children provided.

See '[the boring bits](#)' for more details on risk assessments, insurance, safeguarding and data protection.

See [template documents](#) for our leader's checklist to running practical volunteering days.

## Landowner permission

If you are holding an event in a public place that you do not own or manage, you will need permission first from the local authority or landowner. Many landowners will require evidence of your risk assessment, insurance, and policies and some may also require you to complete their own documentation.

## Staying safe and legal

Larger events, fetes and fairs may come with additional legal considerations. In particular, be aware that:

- Fundraising activities are heavily regulated, including raffles which require a license or registration with your council. Competitions and prize draws do not require a license and can be a fun alternative to a raffle or tombola.
- If serving food and drink, or organising a bake sale, obey food safety laws.

- If alcohol is being sold at the event and the venue isn't licensed, a Temporary Event Notice will be required. Alternatively, ask a local pub to organise a bar at the venue.
- If live music is part of your fundraising plan, a PRS license from your local council may be required. Check with the venue first, as they may already have one.

### Online events

Although holding an online event eliminates the need to consider things like the weather, you still need to put some planning into ensuring your event runs smoothly. Some basic things to consider are:

- **Online security and safeguarding:** Consider the settings you use in order to keep unsavoury characters out! This might mean adding a password, specifying if people should keep their cameras on or off, or only sending out the link to people who have booked.
- **Hosting and managing your event:** A good practice is to have someone responsible for the technical 'hosting' i.e. letting people into the meeting, with someone different responsible for meeting, greeting, and presenting. Background noise can be hugely distracting, so ensure your technical 'host' has the ability to mute participants if needed.
- **Technical trouble:** Don't panic! Just as you would at an in-person event, stay calm, apologise, and take steps to resolve the issue. The worse-case scenario is to close the event and apologise, so ensure you have contact details for everyone attending.
- **Recording your event:** One of the benefits of holding events online is that they can be recorded for reference later. If the event is being recorded, the participants must be informed. Ensure that someone is responsible for pressing the record button!
- **Follow up:** It can be difficult to gauge the reception during an online event so consider inviting feedback in the form of a short survey or follow up email.

### Postponing or cancelling an event

As a general guide, it is good practice to consider cancelling, postponing, or halting events if:

- The event takes place in a wooded area and a yellow warning for wind has been issued
- The **Met Office** has issued 'only essential travel' advice
- The weather or circumstances mean the event has become unsafe or extremely unenjoyable e.g. heavy rain on a butterfly walk
- The location is no longer suitable or contravenes your risk assessment, e.g. recent rock falls or changes to livestock management

When cancelling events, we recommend the following:

- 48 hours or more until the event: amend all online advertisements; email participants
- 48 hours or less: amend all online advertisements; email participants and ask for a confirmation of receipt; follow up if confirmation not received
- 24 hours or less: call all participants; amend all online advertisements
- For drop in events: get the message out as soon as possible on all your channels and, if safe to do so, have someone present on site to turn people away.

## Wildlife comes first!

Of course, whatever events or activities are happening, it's important to remember that events should be planned with wildlife in mind. Depending on what is planned, it may be necessary to implement a 'canine code' or zoning areas in order to minimise disturbance or trampling to sensitive wildlife areas.



*Aim to lead by example and make your event as environmentally friendly as possible. It goes without saying, but avoid single-use-plastic, balloons, sky lanterns and anything that leaves a trace. Source locally, always recycle, and lift share, walk or cycle where possible.*



**Further resources and references:**

See [Template documents](#) for a checklist to running practical volunteering days

**Somerset Wildlife Trust** Wilder Fundraising Pack – it contains lots of information and ideas for running events and activities, and staying legal:

[somersetwildlife.org/support-us/fundraise-us/request-fundraising-pack](https://somersetwildlife.org/support-us/fundraise-us/request-fundraising-pack)

Extensive guidance on organising events and activities from the **Resource Centre**:

[resourcecentre.org.uk/information-category/organising-events-and-activities](https://resourcecentre.org.uk/information-category/organising-events-and-activities)

Government guide to running larger voluntary events:

[gov.uk/government/publications/can-do-guide-for-organisers-of-voluntary-events/the-can-do-guide-to-organising-and-running-voluntary-and-community-events](https://gov.uk/government/publications/can-do-guide-for-organisers-of-voluntary-events/the-can-do-guide-to-organising-and-running-voluntary-and-community-events)

Food safety laws for community events:

[food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/providing-food-at-community-and-charity-events](https://food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/providing-food-at-community-and-charity-events)

Arranging a temporary licence to serve alcohol:

[gov.uk/government/collections/alcohol-licensing-temporary-events-notice](https://gov.uk/government/collections/alcohol-licensing-temporary-events-notice)

# Seeking advice

You don't need to be an expert to take action for nature's recovery but taking a considered and evidence-based approach can help – ensure that your efforts benefit nature and don't go to waste.

Often just speaking to neighbours and peers who are working on similar initiatives will be enough to get you started and, as a local, you know the secrets of your site. However, as you progress, particularly if you plan to make changes to the environment, you may need to do a little more research or seek advice from a qualified person.

Here are some top tips on seeking relevant and high-quality advice for your project:

## Reputable resources

Natural history writing has exploded in popularity in the past decade, producing some beautifully lyrical and inspiring texts, as well as how-to guides. There is also an ocean of information available online. But sometimes the quantity of information can be overwhelming, and the quality is highly variable! For general guidance try to seek out resources from reputable, science-led organisations.

Use caution when reading personal blogs, magazine articles, social media, and popular nature writing – It is often less clear if these sources have been written by an expert or novice, whether they have been verified, or if they have been written primarily to entertain rather than inform.

The **Team Wilder resources page** has a curated list of reliable resources as well as a growing package of advice sheets, toolkits and webinars, developed specifically for Somerset, by the Wildlife Trust's team of experienced staff and volunteers.

[somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources](https://somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources)

**Somerset Environmental Record Centre** is the main centre holding data on wildlife sightings, types of environments and geological information for Somerset. Enquirers seeking data for non-commercial activities, such as conservation work and research, can usually access data for free. <http://www.somerc.com/>

**The Conservation Volunteers Handbooks** are available on annual subscription covering practical topics such as footpaths, woodlands, and hedging. These well-respected guides are used by volunteers and conservation professionals across the UK. [conservationhandbooks.com](https://conservationhandbooks.com)

The **Peoples Trust for Endangered Species** has a wealth of resources and national survey methodologies, focusing on several key species and habitats. Particularly useful if you are working on hedgerows, orchards, and wood pastures. [ptes.org](https://ptes.org)

There are many other reputable, science-led wildlife organisations which provide some great resources or in some cases have regional reps available to offer specific advice, these include (but not limited to!):

**RSPB; Bumblebee Conservation Trust; Butterfly Conservation; Marine Conservation Society; Plantlife; Woodland Trust; World Wetland Trust; Bat Conservation Trust; Amphibian and Reptile Conservation; Buglife; Natural England...**

## Specialist recording groups

Somerset Wildlife Trust and Somerset Environmental Record Centre work in partnership with several specialist interest volunteer groups dedicated to conserving and recording Somerset's wildlife, habitats, and geology. Many of these groups also provide advice to public and conservation organisations. They may be able to assist with training on specific survey skills and are an invaluable source of local expertise.

Find a specialist group: [somersetwildlife.org/get-involved/specialist-groups](https://somersetwildlife.org/get-involved/specialist-groups)





## Ecological consultancies

An ecological consultant undertakes research and surveys to provide professional advice on ecological matters. This service is generally used to identify how an event (e.g. a development) within an area of land may affect the plants, animals, and habitats present (e.g. through an ecological impact assessment).

Ecological consultants are usually associated with larger scale development work such as the building of houses, but many also assist with ecological research, writing management plans for conservation organisations, or smaller-scale projects such as checking bat activity ahead of church roof repairs.

Ecological consultancy is a professional sector and, while some may offer their expertise pro bono, generally you should expect to pay commercial rates, if employing their services. As a measure of professional competence, look for individuals or companies registered with the **Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management** [cieem.net](http://cieem.net)

Such professional services may be of benefit in some scenarios, e.g. if your project requires suitable assessment to support a planning application; if surveys need to be undertaken by a licence-holder (e.g. great crested newt or dormouse); or if a disturbance licence is necessary to safely complete works associated with a project. Some of these services may be available through collaboration with local monitoring groups and **Somerset Wildlife Trust** can provide further advice on a case-by-case basis.

## Jargon buster!

**Environmental impact assessment** – A procedure to be followed for certain types of project to ensure that decisions are made in full knowledge of any likely significant effects on the environment.

**Nature Recovery Network** – The Nature Recovery Network (NRN) is a major commitment in the government's 25 Year Environment Plan. A joined-up national network of places important for wild plants and animals, on land and at sea. It allows plants, animals, seeds, nutrients and water to move from place to place and enables the natural world to adapt to change.



## When to seek advice and legal issues to be aware of

Some species and habitats have special statuses and protections associated with them, e.g. all bats are protected by law from interference.

Wildlife law is written to protect wildlife and habitats from persecution, destruction, damage, and disturbance. If your ambitions are to encourage more wildlife in your area the last thing you want to do is find yourself causing harm! In most cases this is unlikely, particularly if you are following our essential principles as [detailed below](#), however it is a good idea to familiarise yourself with the basics to avoid unintentionally causing harm.

In particular you should be aware that:

- All British birds, their nests, and eggs, are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Unintentional destruction or disturbance can be caused through tasks such as hedge cutting or scrub control, so it is important to take precautions and plan habitat management tasks accordingly.
- It is an offence to kill or injure any wild animal listed in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is also an offence to intentionally or recklessly damage or obstruct any place used for their shelter or protection. Some of the species protected under this are bats, dormice, slow worms, and water voles, which are present in many areas of Somerset.
- There are numerous different national and international designations that may be applied to land, e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest. These designations offer different levels of protection and responsibility for land managers, so it is important to be aware of these, if you are working within or adjacent to a protected site, including if you are planning to run a survey event such as a BioBlitz.

A brief guide to wildlife and the law: [somersetwildlife.org/uk-wildlife-law](https://somersetwildlife.org/uk-wildlife-law)

A brief guide to nature designations:

[rspb.org.uk/our-work/policy-insight/england-westminster/nature-protection/nature-designations-england](https://rspb.org.uk/our-work/policy-insight/england-westminster/nature-protection/nature-designations-england)

Check your area for designations using **MAGIC Maps**: [magic.defra.gov.uk](https://magic.defra.gov.uk)

# Essential principles of habitat management and creation



For nature to recover, we need to triple the amount of land managed for nature, creating an interconnected Nature Recovery Network across our entire county.

You do not need to be an expert to play a role in nature's recovery, but habitat management should always be evidence-based to ensure a positive impact for nature. Sometimes well-meaning but hasty action can lead to detrimental impacts for wildlife, so make sure you take your time to understand your area, so you can make informed decisions and work with (rather than against!) nature.

We always recommend following these key principles:

1. Get to know the wildlife you already have in your community or space
2. Prioritise celebrating and caring for existing areas of wildlife value
3. Take action to create new spaces for people and wildlife to thrive together

## Work with nature and the seasons

The majority of species surveying takes place during the spring and early summer, when wildflowers are in bloom, and wildlife is breeding (depending on species). Late summer and autumn can be a good opportunity to invest in community events and installing signage whilst the weather is still good. The winter months are when many habitat management tasks such as tree planting or hedge-laying can safely take place.



# Get to know your space

Before you make any physical changes to an area it's important to understand what habitats and species are already using the space, as existing ancient habitats are home to substantially more species than newly created habitats. For instance, did you know that in the UK more priority species are associated with grasslands than with any other habitat type? Sadly our remaining species-rich grasslands now cover a tiny fraction of the area in which they once flourished, in some cases lost to well-intentioned interventions such as tree-planting.

Recording wildlife is fun, engaging and a great way to kick off a local project. There are so many ways to get started, and there are a variety of methods to engage every generation and ability.

- Use 'spotter sheets' and short checklists. Help beginners engage with recording, and highlight species or habitats of interest.
- **Make the most of iNaturalist** (and companion app **Seek**). These simple digital tools can be used on a PC or smartphone to record wildlife, aid identification, and ensure your records are fed into the county data.
- **Organise a BioBlitz**. If you want to gather a lot of information quickly about a specific location, then a BioBlitz is a great way to do this whilst also engaging the community.
- **Science for schools**. Is the area waterlogged or dry? What is the pH of your soil? Simple scientific tests can determine the answer to these important considerations, so why not involve your local school to do the investigating for you?
- **Map lost features**. Studying old maps can reveal features, such as hedgerows and historic ponds, that have since been lost and help make decisions for the future.
- **Consider your corridors**. Wildlife needs to be able to move through the landscape. Even if you are only planning to manage a small area, make sure you survey or check records beyond your boundaries too, so you can consider what value your site has within the whole landscape – just as wildlife will!
- **Enlist the help of experts**. There are many specialist recording groups within Somerset, or you might have a local enthusiast who can help. Some species (such as dormice, great crested newts, and reptiles) have legal protections so you should always seek specialist advice before surveying for protected species.
- **Make your records count**. Submit records using **iNaturalist** or directly to the **Somerset Environmental Record Centre**, so they can contribute to long-term monitoring and decision making across Somerset, as well as within your project. All species records are valuable, not just rarities!

## Further reading and resources:

**Somerset Environmental Records Centre** is the main office for collating and holding data on wildlife sightings, types of environments and geological information for Somerset:  
[somermerc.com](http://somermerc.com)

**Great Somerset Wildlife Count** is a community science initiative delivered by **Somerset Environmental Records Centre** and **Somerset Wildlife Trust** to monitor changes in both the diversity and abundance of wildlife using targeted species counts through the year:  
[somersetwildlife.org/wildlife/great-somerset-wildlife-count](http://somersetwildlife.org/wildlife/great-somerset-wildlife-count)

**Side by Side Maps** is a mapping feature that allows you to view historic maps against aerial views, which can be helpful for identifying changes across the landscape:  
[maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/side-by-side](http://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/side-by-side)

**iNaturalist** is a global wildlife recording app. Records can be verified by other community members (who can also help you narrow down your ID) and will contribute to science. Companion app **SEEK**, is also helpful if you want a little more help learning about your species ID. Other apps are available but iNaturalist is the most widely supported platform and feeds directly to Somerset Environmental Records Centre: [inaturalist.org](http://inaturalist.org)

**Somerset Wildlife Spotter Sheets** are great for engaging young naturalists and families  
[somersetwildlife.org/get-involved/next-generation/education-resources](https://somersetwildlife.org/get-involved/next-generation/education-resources)

A comprehensive **Guide to Running a BioBlitz** has been produced by the **Natural History Museum** and **Bristol Natural History Consortium**

[parkscommunity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/bioblitz-guide.pdf](https://parkscommunity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/bioblitz-guide.pdf)

A much simpler guide is also available on **iNaturalist** [inaturalist.org/pages/bioblitz+guide](https://inaturalist.org/pages/bioblitz+guide)

### Jargon Buster!

**Abundance** – (sometimes ‘Bioabundance’) describes the numbers of individuals of each species of plant or animal rather than the diversity.

**Biodiversity** – describes the variety of plant and animal life in an area

**Ecosystem** – describes a community of interacting plant and animal species and their physical environment including things like weather conditions.

**Habitat** – the word ‘habitat’ refers to how that place provides food, shelter and everything else needed for survival for a particular species.

### Creating a local wildlife map

Creating a local wildlife map is one of the actions you can take as part of getting to know your space and is a hugely effective way to engage and communicate with people. Mapping can involve the whole community and enables people to really appreciate the value of their gardens and green spaces, as part of a whole landscape.

Using a digital platform, the data you record can be fed into countywide datasets highlighting features such as hotspots and corridors, alongside biodiversity and abundance metrics and highlighting those special areas that might not necessarily be currently considered as important for wildlife.

**Somerset Wildlife Trust** and **Somerset Environmental Records Centre** have built a community map using the **iNaturalist** app. iNaturalist is a user friendly, international recording app with built-in verification – every time you record wildlife using this app it will be copied into the Somerset Parish Maps. Records are public when recorded on iNaturalist, so if you are concerned about a species sighting being publicly visible, please report it directly to Somerset Environmental Records Centre instead.

Somerset Parish Wildlife Maps: [somerc.com/community-wildlife-mapping/com-map](https://somerc.com/community-wildlife-mapping/com-map)

Although not as useful from a data perspective, creating a physical map can help inspire people to get involved and value their local wildlife. We’ve seen lots of imaginative variations of this, from fold out illustrations to murals on the walls of village halls!

#### Further reading and resources:

**Community Wildlife Mapping in Somerset** Get in touch to discuss mapping in your community or explore our online resources: [teamwilder@somersetwildlife.org](mailto:teamwilder@somersetwildlife.org)

The **Wildlife Trust** Parish Wildlife Map Toolkit:

[basingstoke.gov.uk/content/page/57854/Parish%20Wildlife%20Map%20Toolkit.pdf](https://basingstoke.gov.uk/content/page/57854/Parish%20Wildlife%20Map%20Toolkit.pdf)

**Transition Town Wellington** have created an illustrated wildlife map and gardening booklet which can be adapted for your community: [ttw.org.uk/wildlife-map-and-booklet-download](https://ttw.org.uk/wildlife-map-and-booklet-download)

**Parish Online** is a layered mapping tool for local councils, prices start from £30 per year: [parish-online.co.uk](https://parish-online.co.uk)

## Care for what's there

### **Manage, restore, and connect existing habitats**

Once you've completed your surveys, you'll have a good understanding of what habitats and species you have in your area; this can form the basis of your management plan.

Time, funding, and resources are always limited, so make sure you prioritise caring for existing areas of wildlife value before you commit to creating anything new. It's human nature to want to get started straight away and do something, but existing ancient habitats are irreplaceable and home to substantially more species than newly established habitats, so first and foremost we need to protect and restore what we've already got.

Somerset is home to a rich network of habitats, home to precious wildlife, and embedded with human stories. Historic orchards, ancient churchyards, species-rich grasslands, ancient woodlands, wetlands, peatlands, and heaths... These habitats now often exist only in remnants of the areas they once covered, making their protection and restoration a priority for nature's recovery. Many of our most species-rich habitats were established either during a time when large mammals and predators moved across an extensive landscape creating a mosaic of scrub, woodland and grassland, or later in history when traditional agricultural techniques such as coppicing, reed cutting and hay making maintained these dynamic habitats.

Today, without these forces at play, it is up to us to look after these remaining spaces in a way that prioritises nature. See '[writing a management plan](#)' for the next steps to consider and for habitat specific resources.





## Did you know?

Did you know there are more priority species associated with meadows than woodlands? Or that wetlands and peat are one of the most effective carbon stores we have?



### It's about people too...

Hopefully, having taken part in previous wildlife surveys, many members of your community will already be involved with your project, and starting to understand the value of your space. But there is still work to be done! You may need more hands to help coppice your woodland, or you might be considering leaving your churchyard unmown over the summer months... Now is the time to get the message out, to celebrate, communicate, and collaborate! Including people at every stage of your action for nature is vitally important, as collaborative efforts will be so much more impactful and ensure long-term success.

'Consultation' might conjure up images of confrontational meetings in village halls or long-winded questionnaires posted through letter boxes, but it needn't be a dry process. Build opportunities for feedback into your process, by thinking creatively about how you can encourage people to share their views.

- Raise awareness with newsletter, posters, social media. Let people know why this matters – get them excited and invite them to join the conversation! Encourage people to share their feedback throughout the process, e.g. encourage people to share their stories during a BioBlitz event or incorporate informal conversations into a guided outdoor activity.
- Use signage and noticeboards to highlight local wildlife and draw people's attention to the flowers and the bees benefiting from longer areas of grass.
- Use a chalk board or interactive art to encourage people to share the species they have seen or what they enjoyed about their visit.
- Set up a temporary trail around the area to explain and engage. Include a response box as a way to gather feedback and thoughts.

We can achieve so much more if we work together. Make sure you take the time to listen to opinions, share ideas, understand how the space is currently used and hear everyone's values and views. Invite genuine collaboration and give everyone a stake in the project.

## Sharing your message

As well as highlighting ID and interesting facts, the 5 pathways to nature connectedness can help bring your communications to life:

**Contact** – Encourage people to explore with their senses, notice the smells or the sounds.

**Beauty** – Draw people's attention to beautiful details during the seasons, the shape of a seed head or the pattern of a snail's shell.

**Meaning** – Ask people for their personal stories. What are their memories of nature in this space?

**Emotion** – How does this space make you feel?

**Compassion** – Share the stories of the wildlife, the plight of the butterfly or the life of the bee. Make it real to people, and ask how can they help?

### Further reading and resources:

The Team Wilder land management resources pages includes specific habitat advice and toolkits: [somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources](https://somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources)

The TCV urban handbook has a section about consultation, perceptions and working within communities: [conservationhandbooks.com/handbooks](https://conservationhandbooks.com/handbooks)

Wilder Churches is an online training series and peer support network that focuses on managing churchyards and burial grounds, but the advice is applicable to many community spaces, with guidance videos on taking action for wildlife and involving your community: [somersetwildlife.org/events/wilder-churches](https://somersetwildlife.org/events/wilder-churches)

Managing School Grounds for Wildlife is a step-by-step curriculum linked guide to improving your school ground for wildlife and learning: [somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources](https://somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources)



# Taking action for people and wildlife

Your wildlife surveys should have revealed what's in your space, or maybe what's missing, and you will have a good idea of the kind of action that's right for both wildlife and people in your community. It's time to pick up your spade and start taking action to create new spaces for people and wildlife!

**Work with schools, businesses, local groups and landowners to identify new spaces that could be enhanced for people and wildlife.**

- Could a corner of a playing field become a mini orchard?
- Could your local business fit some swift boxes?
- Could you support local landowners to fill up gappy hedges?
- Think about edges and under-used spaces that could provide homes and habitats for wildlife – use these to create corridors for nature, and opportunities for people to connect.

You must always seek landowner permission (including if it is a public space) before you take part in any active management – this is a legal requirement, and the landowner may have an existing management plan or essential knowledge of the site.

Be intentional about creating paths and seating areas for people to connect with nature. By inviting people to enjoy the space with paths, signage and seating, people will understand and respect the space more.

**Keep it local.** Prioritise the use of native species, ideally of local provenance, if you are doing any kind of planting or sowing. It is also important to consider local traditions and reflect the local character of a space wherever possible, e.g. by using the historic local hedge-laying technique, or an appropriate type of stone.

**Plan for the future.** All habitat types require some form of ongoing care or management. Newly planted trees may need watering and weeding, orchards need pruning, hedges need laying, grasslands need mowing (and sometimes grazing), infrastructure will need repairing and replacing. Consider the work, costs, and who will do what, before you get started.



## Wilder churches

Churchyards and burial grounds are often one of the most valuable areas for wildlife within a community, having been untouched by agriculture or development. They are also areas of deep significance to many people, so any change of management needs to be handled sensitively. Wilder Churches is a step-by-step programme of online training sessions and a supportive network to help you make space for wildlife in your churchyard or burial ground.

## Why does local provenance matter?

Native species have evolved alongside each other, developing unique interactions and dependencies over time, e.g. native tree species which colonised naturally after the last ice age support many more species of invertebrates than those tree species that have been introduced later. Species, and assemblages of species, also develop local distinctions depending on a range of variables such as historic management, climate, and topography. If planting is necessary for your project, then wherever possible you should seek out trees, meadow mixes, and plug plants that have been grown locally and/or reflect the assemblages that grow in your area. Also consider harvesting seeds locally if there is a suitable harvest site (with landowner permission).



## What about rewilding?

Rewilding is a big topic and has lots of definitions depending on who you're talking to!

'Rewilding' has been used extensively in the media to describe both large scale hands-off habitat regeneration and intensive interventions such as tree planting or urban greening, as well as a myriad of other projects including traditional conservation tasks, introducing apex predators, or simply planting a few wildflowers in a pot. All of these initiatives have their place in the restoration of nature, and it will depend on your site, project, and community as to which is appropriate.

It is worth considering carefully how you describe your project, and whether it is useful to use the word 'rewilding'. Because definitions and perceptions of 'rewilding' are so broad, the message could get lost, and people may object to the plans without really understanding your intentions. See our section on ['The power of the word'](#) for more tips on how to encourage people to get involved.

## Management Plans – the basics

As with all aspects of running your group, your Management Plan should be proportionate and will depend on the area of land you are looking after. A small wildlife garden on the edge of a playing field may only require a very basic plan, whereas a multi-hectare SSSI may require a comprehensive multi-page document.

### What is it and why is it important?

A Management Plan is a written plan of action which explains in detail the planned care of an area of land in order to maintain and enhance special features or qualities, such as the species that live there. It allows the site manager to consider what is present and how they can manage the land to both maximise the site's own potential and to enable it to contribute towards the restoration of the wider Nature Recovery Network.

Management Plans may be required for some funding applications and are a useful tool which can be used to explain your rationale more widely or to pass on responsibilities. The plan makes it clear who is responsible for what, and when, to minimise misunderstanding and ensure the work takes place.

Some aspects of nature conservation can also be controversial or poorly understood, such as why we may need to cut down trees to maintain a wetland habitat or how cutting a wildflower meadow (or flower-rich road verge) at the end of the summer is vital to maintain the diversity of wildflowers. The Management Plan makes it easier to explain to the wider public what you are doing. Demonstrating the research, consultation and knowledge behind those actions, and showing they are done in the best interests of people and nature – not just on a whim!

### Who needs/is responsible for a Management Plan?

The site owner is ultimately responsible for the management plan and its delivery, however both can be 'contracted' out or shared between multiple organisations – this could include 'Friends of' or community groups who help look after the site.

Everyone responsible for helping to deliver site management needs to understand the rationale behind the Management Plan and what they must do to achieve the objectives of the plan.

### What should be included?

Many of the 'ingredients' needed for your Management Plan will already be in place – the results of your wildlife surveys, your community consultation, your maps and your basic 'boring bits'. The way you lay out your plan is up to you, but keeping it clear and concise, and including maps and images can help ensure the document is useful rather than daunting! Consider these basic questions:

**1) Why are we here?** – include information on why the site is being managed; is it a community orchard or a road verge? Is it a legally designated SSSI or a children's playground?

**2) What do we have?** – Where is the site and what is its legal status (ownership/tenure). Does it have any designations? Consider both the wildlife on site and how the site is used e.g. is there a footpath that is used by dog walkers?

**3) What is important?** – Pick out the most important features including all of the features that either require active management (such as a wildflower meadow) or that require some sort of protection (such as an ancient tree). You should also consider what people value about the site.

**4) What are the important influences?** – this could be anything that may affect the site such as a popular footpath, run-off from neighbouring fields, the presence of Ash dieback or the possibility of climate-related sea level rise inundating the site.

**5) What do we want to achieve?** – what is your vision for the site, what do you want the site to look like in several years' time?

**6) What do we need to do?** – This is your to-do list, the action plan you will follow as you care for your site. It's important to be clear on the details in this section, don't leave any ambiguity.

- Create a map of management activities
- Create a work plan – this can be a simple 'timetable' of the year with all the key tasks marked on, showing what should happen when.
- State clearly who will do what, when and how (e.g. will machinery be used?)
- Explain how materials will be sourced in an environmentally responsible way (e.g. sourcing wildflower seed that is native and locally sourced, plants that are grown in peat-free compost or biodegradable tree tubes for tree planting)

How you will communicate what you are doing e.g. through signage and communications.

**7) How do we know that we are achieving the objectives?** – How are you going to monitor if you are successful? This is where your skills in wildlife surveying and community consultation come in handy again!



### Ready for the next steps?

Read our basic guide to writing a management plan for small sites and community spaces, available at: [somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources](https://somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources)

See our template management plan at: [somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources](https://somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources)

### Further references and resources

Managing School Grounds for Wildlife is a step-by-step curriculum linked guide to improving your school ground for wildlife and learning

[somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources](https://somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources)

**Wilder Churches** covers advice on creating a simple, practical management plan for your churchyard, other church land or burial ground in session 4 and provides example management plans:

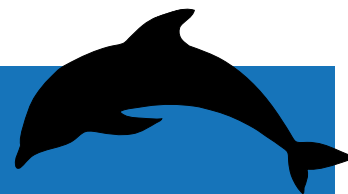
[somersetwildlife.org/events/wilder-churches](https://somersetwildlife.org/events/wilder-churches)

**Parks Community** provide basic guidance and example Management Plans and these simple tips to consider when planning your practical tasks:

[parkscommunity.org.uk/how\\_to\\_guide/tips-for-planning-practical-conservation-work-in-parks-and-green-spaces](https://parkscommunity.org.uk/how_to_guide/tips-for-planning-practical-conservation-work-in-parks-and-green-spaces)

Longrun meadow have an excellent summary on their website as well as their full management plan for download: [longrunmeadow.co.uk/wildlife](https://longrunmeadow.co.uk/wildlife)

## Nature based Solutions



The warming of our world is already altering weather and rainfall patterns in Somerset. Summers are becoming hotter and dryer, increasing the risk of drought and wildfires, whilst winters are becoming milder and wetter, increasing the risk of flooding. How can we adapt our communities, livelihoods and local nature sites to our changing climate?

Nature-based Solutions (NbS) represent opportunities for communities and landowners to adapt to climate change using the power of nature. Planting trees on hills and creating leaky dams in rivers can slow the flow of water downstream, reducing flooding risk. Actions like planting trees on streets or in fields can reduce temperatures and maintain moisture in the soil, reducing wildfire risk and the impact of droughts.

Communities or local groups can work together to identify the climate risks they face, and areas where NbS could be adopted to help the community and its wildlife to adapt. Then plans can be made, funding can be sought, and action can be taken to make your local area adapted to our future climate. Explore the Team Wilder approach and toolkits for more ideas.

By working together, we can achieve action on a greater scale, and feel less overwhelmed or isolated by climate change.



# Campaigns and lobbying

Sometimes you may see something that you feel is not in the best interests of wildlife on your patch. It could be activities such as weed spraying, habitat management taking place at the wrong time of year, or other activities that you feel could be damaging for wildlife. Communities can be a powerful voice for change, so if you are concerned about an issue impacting nature in your local area it's important that you speak up, but bear in mind that your efforts are more likely to be effective if you contact the right people and take consideration with your campaign.

## Campaigning with care

Do your research. An emotive letter or campaign that fails that gets the facts right will not help your case. Make sure you are aware of the laws, who to contact, and that you make your appeal clear, factual and based on an understanding of the habitats or species you are standing up for. Occasionally, with the best of intentions, people can place public pressure on councils, charities or landowners to take action in a way that would actually be detrimental to wildlife. This can be a significant drain on resources and confusing for other members of the public.

Unless a wildlife crime is taking place you should always attempt to engage with the relevant landowners and authorities first.

**Be persistent but polite.** You may not always see the action you want, or as fast as you would like. It is utterly heart-wrenching to watch an environmental injustice take place, but staff are often juggling many priorities, and can only work within the law and remit of their organisation. Keep your interactions polite and impersonal, but don't give up!

**Post with care.** Social media can be a force for good and an effective way to galvanise support for your cause. However, the fast and global nature of social media means that a post can rapidly lose its message, to the detriment of your campaign and everyone involved. Consider carefully where, what and how you post. Keep your message factual and use images wisely.

### Further reading and references:

**Team Wilder Advice Sheet** – How to speak up for nature in your local area:

[somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources](https://somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources)

**Somerset Wildlife Trust's** guide to Wildlife and the law: [somersetwildlife.org/uk-wildlife-law](https://somersetwildlife.org/uk-wildlife-law)

## Engaging with the planning system

At present there are two primary methods in which communities and individuals can engage with the planning system in the UK. The first is to have your say during public consultation periods on Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans, the second is to respond to planning applications once they have been submitted. On an ongoing basis you can also let the Government know your concerns about planning and wildlife by writing to your MP.

### Neighbourhood Plans

Neighbourhood Plans are a type of planning document which allow local residents and businesses to shape their area by writing their own planning policies, which reflect priorities developed through various community engagement and consultation events.

Neighbourhood Plans can deliver real benefits for a community and for local wildlife by protecting and enhancing local green space, and by encouraging wildlife-friendly enhancements in new

developments. Once produced they become a formal part of the 'development plan' for the area and are an important consideration in determining future planning applications.

The Neighbourhood Plan's policies cannot guarantee that a development proposal will be refused nor be granted permission, but the policies will carry significant weight.

### Comment on a planning application

Anyone who lives or works locally has a right to be involved in the planning process and express their views. Your council has a responsibility to make planning decisions in the best interests of the area, so your views are important and can affect the council's decision. If you are concerned about a development that may threaten wildlife, or you do not feel sufficient wildlife enhancements have been included in a development plan, then you need to submit comments in writing.

Written comments can be submitted online, by email or by post to the relevant planning authority (this may be your District or County Council depending on the type of application) within the consultation period specified.

### Further reading and references:

**Somerset Wildlife Trust's** approach to Wilder Planning and further information to help you understand the planning system in Somerset:

[somersetwildlife.org/what-we-do/restore-somersets-nature/campaign-nature/wilder-planning](https://somersetwildlife.org/what-we-do/restore-somersets-nature/campaign-nature/wilder-planning)

**Team Wilder Advice Sheet** - Engaging with Neighbourhood planning:

[somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources](https://somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources)

**Team Wilder Advice Sheet** - How to comment on a Planning Application:

[somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources](https://somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources)



# Verge management and council-managed spaces

Road verges provide habitat for a huge number of wild plants, some of which are threatened or near-threatened. Road verges and hedgerows also provide vital corridors allowing wildlife to spread between larger areas of habitat and provide important benefits for people by buffering the noise, pollution, and visual impact that roads can have.

Motorways and major A roads are managed by **Highways England**; most other roads within Somerset are managed by **Somerset County Council (SCC)**. County councils have a statutory responsibility to help conserve wildlife on road verges. **SCC** have adopted the **Somerset Highways Biodiversity Manual** for the management of road verges and rights of way, which sets out guidance for the protection of species and promotion of biodiversity along highways.

SCC owns only a few hedgerows; hedges usually belong to the adjacent landowner. If a hedgerow is causing visibility or access problems on a highway, or a right of way, the landowner will be asked to cut it. If it is not possible to get hedgerows cut in any other way, the county council may take action. The county council will take action in the case of emergencies such as a wind fall blocking a highway.

Guidance for appropriate hedgerow and tree management is laid out in the Somerset Highways Biodiversity Manual. If you are concerned by the management of a roadside verge, hedge, or tree you should contact the SCC ecologist for investigation.

Remember, if you are planning to create wilder areas on your local verges it is important to follow the [essential principles to habitat management and creation](#). Planting commercial 'wildflower' seeds can produce a quick shot of colour and food for pollinators, but it may not be the most appropriate choice for your verge. Verges can be important reservoirs of declining native grassland species, with distinctive local makeups – it's vitally important we conserve these wild places, so you should always do a full season of survey before beginning any management. Maintaining planted areas can also be labour intensive, so an appropriate cutting regime will, in many cases, be more time and cost effective.

## Further reading and resources:

**Somerset Wildlife Trust** and **Somerset West and Taunton Council** have developed a Grassland Management Decision Tree to help you plan the most appropriate management for verges and public greenspaces:

[somerwestandtaunton.gov.uk/parks-and-open-spaces/habitat-and-wildlife-benefits-of-long-grass](https://somerwestandtaunton.gov.uk/parks-and-open-spaces/habitat-and-wildlife-benefits-of-long-grass)

Best practice verge management guide from **Plantlife** and **The Wildlife Trust**:

[wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife/managing-land-wildlife/managing-road-verges-wildlife](https://wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife/managing-land-wildlife/managing-road-verges-wildlife)

**Somerset Highways Biodiversity Manual:**

[somerwestandtaunton.gov.uk/waste-planning-and-land/biodiversity/#Downloads](https://somerwestandtaunton.gov.uk/waste-planning-and-land/biodiversity/#Downloads)

**Plantlife's** guide to Keeping the Wild in Wildflower:

[plantlife.org.uk/uk/our-work/publications/keeping-wild-wildflower](https://plantlife.org.uk/uk/our-work/publications/keeping-wild-wildflower)

Experience of leading a movement for pesticide free towns:

[wildlifetrusts.org/blog/guest/taking-action-against-use-pesticides-your-local-area](https://wildlifetrusts.org/blog/guest/taking-action-against-use-pesticides-your-local-area)





# Being part of Team Wilder

Team Wilder is all about working collaboratively, with an evidence based approach, to achieve more for nature. The Somerset Wildlife Trust team is here to support you make a change for nature by offering resources, advice, and the support of a network of communities and individuals working for nature's recovery in Somerset.

**Advice:** Land management, wildlife gardening, community and campaign enquiries are handled through our dedicated inbox. Get in touch at: [teamwilder@somersetwildlife.org](mailto:teamwilder@somersetwildlife.org)

If you would like land management advice for a larger area, specific to your site, then we ask that you submit an enquiry form through our website, so we can direct your enquiry to the right person for the right advice: [somersetwildlife.org/what-we-do/professional-services/land-management-advice](https://somersetwildlife.org/what-we-do/professional-services/land-management-advice)

**Resources, training and support:** We offer advice, leaflets, webinars, resources, training days, and in-person support. Our resources are constantly in development, depending on the requirements of the communities we are working with. Please do not hesitate to let us know if there is something you would find particularly helpful, but please bear in mind that we are a charity working within the usual limits of time and money!

Access our resource library: [somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources](https://somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder/team-wilder-resources)

Sign up to receive our monthly e-newsletter for grant opportunities, ideas and community spotlights: [somersetwildlife.org/form/team-wilder-newsletter-signup](https://somersetwildlife.org/form/team-wilder-newsletter-signup)

**Branding and promotion:** We offer a Team Wilder branding pack, and poster templates, which you are welcome to use for your initiative – find them in the resource library. We will also help wherever we can to promote specific events, initiatives, and volunteering opportunities – just let us know!

**Network:** Together we can achieve so much more, we all have different skills, experience, knowledge and inspiration to share.

Add your community group to the map and find other initiatives running across the county: [somersetwildlife.org/get-involved/team-wilder/team-wilder-map](https://somersetwildlife.org/get-involved/team-wilder/team-wilder-map)

Join the **Team Wilder Facebook** online community: [facebook.com/groups/teamwildersomerset](https://facebook.com/groups/teamwildersomerset)



# Team Wilder

*Together for a  
Wilder Somerset*

## Further contacts and resources

Email: [teamwilder@somersetwildlife.org](mailto:teamwilder@somersetwildlife.org)

[somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder](https://www.somersetwildlife.org/team-wilder)



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Sign up for the **Team Wilder newsletter** here/via the Team Wilder section on our website



**Somerset**  
Wildlife Trust

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