



Community Biodiversity Toolkit

Appendix 3: Delivery and Practical Tips

March 2022





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Supporting Information

Annex 1 – Tree Planting Guide



Introduction

This appendix gives an overarching guide to **implementing** and **delivering** your community environmental plans.

It also provides **practical tips on how you can manage land for biodiversity**.

Delivering your project

Depending on your community environment plans, this stage may take a number of forms. Some key things to remember are:

- Make a timeline for when you aim to complete the project by;
- Publicise the project; use local newspapers or media such as Parish magazines, websites or social media pages to promote it;
- Complete your project!

If you are holding volunteer event days, the first step is to make sure that as much as possible is done and set up before the event. This includes:

- Having a detailed schedule for what you propose to do on the day of the event;
- Make a list of volunteer contact information, and create a risk assessment in case of emergencies (keep this with you at all times);
- Take pictures and promote the event during and afterwards.

Once your project is over, take some time to reflect on how it went and gather feedback from your volunteers and participants. Finally, take some time to celebrate - you've just undertaken and accomplished something that many people would shy away from!

How can you reinforce your plan to make it most effective?

Establish a formal plan

After all the hard work put into creating and delivering your plan, it is important that it becomes established within a formal document that helps to ensure it is recognised and supported. This is a key way in which local communities can help identify and protect their local environment.

A formal plan could provide evidence to inform the development of your Neighbourhood Plan by, for example identifying local green infrastructure to be protected, enhanced or integrated into the delivery of development proposals. Policies in such plans must be evidence based and justifiable. Therefore to help with this, your environmental plans and proposals need to be based on evidence from valid surveys, maps, public datasets and consultation where you can demonstrate you have taken feedback into account (see *Appendix 1* and *Appendix 2* for more details on this).

Depending on the type of environmental project you are undertaking, it is good practice to review your plans periodically and update them with new information such as survey monitoring data or revised actions. This duty for public bodies is to be strengthened under the Environment Act 2021, which has an expectation on authorities to look strategically at their policies and operations from time to time (at least every 5 years).



Making your plan long-lasting

As with everything worthwhile, it is the ability to sustain momentum, enthusiasm and continuing to deliver and measure the key elements of any community environmental plan in the long-term that will ensure its meaningful success. This requires leadership, a willing group of participants and ongoing availability of other resources.

A range of opportunities are available to help achieve long-term viability. Funds could be available through formal management or operational obligations by certain organisations (e.g. at a district, town or parish level, as well as organisations such as Wessex Water, the MoD, environmental charities and trusts, and private landowners who have a legal duty or interest in managing protected environmental resources).

Voluntary activities, sponsorship and donations of materials, training resources and equipment can really help to make limited finances stretch much further and can often be sufficient to maintain effective annual delivery of environmental plans and projects. Ask around your community, or get in touch with your [Parish Environment Champion](#) (if your community has a nominated contact), to see who has skills and equipment that could make a difference and encourage them to help.



Volunteers at conservation events across South Somerset

Pass on knowledge and Experience

Finally, passing on your knowledge and experience by involving, enthusing and educating younger people about the environment is essential to ensure the next generation can make an even bigger difference. Involve people of all ages in your environmental plan to help achieve this!



Practical tips for managing land for biodiversity

There are many ways in which communities can create new habitats or enhance existing ones, and we have provided a number of practical tips below.

The scope of this will of course depend on the type of land you have available but even if you only have access to small areas of land such as your road verges, these can still be important spaces for biodiversity when managed appropriately. Your community will also own land around your parish and so consider engaging local landowners as part of the process to collaborate on your community environmental plans.

Remember, always check that your project will not damage or destroy an already valuable habitat, as its importance may not always be obvious. An appropriate survey should help highlight any sites or habitats to be either left alone or not managed differently (see *Appendix 1*).

1. Trees and woodland

Why are they important?

Trees and woodland are an important habitat because of the range of species they can support but they can also act as a carbon (CO²) store, sequestering carbon out of the atmosphere. In addition, trees can also offer amenity benefits, enhancing the local history and character of an area and providing important shading in play areas and car parks.

What can you do?

Firstly, consider setting out a simple Parish Tree Policy to agree actions to address tree loss and promote tree planting within your area. The following example from [Baltonsborough Parish Council](#) can be adapted and used as a template. Also, click [here](#) for ideas from the National Tree Charter.

Key actions for managing our trees and woodland are:

Activity	Summary of Action
Pinpointing	By using the Tree Register , you can record and report the trees in your local landscape, helping to contribute to a larger database. Alternatively, map areas of woodland and trees as part of a Parish Map or via Parish Online ;
Protecting	You may wish to conserve particular trees or groups of trees for their environmental or social significance. You can do this by approaching your Local Planning Authority and requesting that a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) be made. This can help protect a tree or group of trees from being wilfully damaged or destroyed.
Managing	Much of the wildlife within our woodlands now relies on active management to provide a mix of different habitats, from piles of dead wood which can help beetles and fungi to open glades which can help butterflies. The Woodland Trust offer a basic guide to managing a woodland for wildlife here .



Activity	Summary of Action
Planting	<p>Plant woodlands, individual trees, hedgerows and orchards in appropriate locations, using only native and sustainably sourced species. Typically, you will require around 5-8 metres (m) of perimeter land, 1m wide for 30 hedgerow trees, or a tennis court sized area for a copse of 30 trees; ideally, trees should then be planted approx. 2m apart.</p> <p>See <i>Annex 1</i> at the end of this document for a simple tree-planting guide from SSDC’s Countryside Management team, with easy steps to follow. Ideally planting should take place in late winter or early spring (November to April).</p>

Case Study: Transition Langport – Trees for 2020 Project

[Transition Langport](#) was set up by the local community and is part of the Transition Town movement, a community-based initiative looking to address the issues of climate change and biodiversity decline. The group successfully planted over 3,000 trees in the local area as part of the [Trees for 2020](#) project:

- Funding was raised through an online JustGiving page (via crowdfunding) and at village events; this was used to purchase the tree saplings and biodegradable tree guards;
- The trees and hedgerows planted will help to capture CO₂ as they grow, helping to mitigate climate change, as well as provide important ecological habitats, and help to reduce the effects of water run-off from fields and flooding during high rainfall events;
- Over 3,600 trees were planted in collaboration with the Town Council and local landowners around Langport.

In addition, Langport Town Council created the wildlife friendly Langport Cemetery in 2005, and have been actively managing the site to encourage wild flowers and pollinators. The council continues to maintain the cemetery, looking at enhancement opportunities wherever possible. This forms part of Somerset Wildlife Trust’s [Wilder Churches](#) initiative.



Volunteers for the Transition Langport: Trees for 2020 project



Case Study: Ash Millennium Wood

The [Ash Millennium Wood](#) is a long-term project managed by Ash Parish Council, a management group, and the Friends of Millennium Wood. Since its inception, an increasing number of trees, wildflowers and wildlife species have been recorded at the site thanks to community efforts.



Aerial image of the Ash Millennium Wood, including woodland and wildflower areas

Timeline

1998 - Ash Parish Council purchased the site to establish a community woodland and wildlife area. The site was a plot of rough grassland about 1½ ha in area.

2000-2012 - Volunteers planted 120 trees, donated by parishioners, and interpretation boards were installed with the help of Ash Primary School and the Somerset Wildlife Trust. Apart from twice-yearly mowing the site was largely left to fend for itself.

2012 - Survey work showed that the site had become dominated by scrub and rough grassland. In 2012, Ash Parish Council agreed to appoint a management group, led by a local botanist. A [5-year habitat management plan](#) was developed.

2012 to now – Actions included setting up log piles to encourage invertebrates; increasing the diversity of tree species through new tree planting and creating an informal orchard area; the establishment of a wildflower area on site; and the creation of a damp area, incorporating a part of the site that floods regularly.

“Our biggest challenge has been taming the original semi-improved grassland in the meadow area. This is being tackled by contracting an annual cut, carried out through a mechanical scything regime, followed by a bailing process (a form of ‘cut and collect’) to lower the fertility of the meadow, thus allowing the grassland to diversify.”

Funding: volunteers carry out the majority of maintenance tasks; however, the Parish Council make an annual grant to cover the cost for contractors to cut the vegetation. Funding for activities (such as the purchase and repair of tools) has been obtained from other sources, including SSDC’s environment fund, The People’s Postcode Lottery, as well as local community groups such as the “Friends of Millennium Wood”.



Guidance and funding opportunities for planting trees

For guidance and funding opportunities, consider the following organisations:

- [Woodland Trust](#) – provide guidance on how to plant trees, as well as details of funding opportunities and free trees for projects;
- [Tree Council](#) – provide a range of opportunities to help you plant trees and hedgerows in your local area (including in-filling gaps in existing hedgerows); including the *Branching Out Fund*, *Orchards for Schools* and the *Community Hedge Fund*; and
- [Reimagining the Levels](#) - a Somerset based charity offering free trees as part of their scheme 'Plant Trees to Slow the Flow' to counteract the damaging effects of sudden and prolonged flooding. Applicants (including private landowners) are encouraged to apply [here](#).

If you are interested in committing an area of land for planting, please contact SSDC [here](#), as we would love to hear about it.

2. Hedgerows

Why are they important?

Hedgerows can support up to 80% of our woodland birds, 50% of our mammals and 30% of our butterflies. Hedgerows also act as important wildlife corridors to aid the movement of species.

The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 are intended to protect important rural hedges from destruction or damage. The legislation is complicated but the UK Government has a useful [website](#) covering countryside hedgerow protection and management, which summarises important parts of the regulations. Although it does not apply to hedges around houses in urban areas, they are often an important consideration for new planning developments.

In terms of managing hedgerows, the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 makes it an offence to disturb a bird's nest that is in use, under construction, or with eggs, chicks or birds using it regularly. Therefore, the general advice is for people not to trim hedgerows between March and July.

A landowner who wishes to remove a hedgerow must serve a Hedgerow Removal Notice in writing to their Local Planning Authority, unless the removal is for one of the reasons that provide an exemption under the Regulations. The authority then has 42 days to determine whether or not the hedge is considered 'important', and if so, whether to issue a Hedgerow Retention Notice. The local authority must consult the local Parish Council.



What can you do?

As listed above, the [Tree Council](#) provide a range of opportunities to help you plant trees and hedgerows in your local area (including in-filling gaps in existing hedgerows); including the *Branching Out Fund*, *Orchards for Schools* and the *Community Hedge Fund*.



3. Grassland and meadow

Generally, grasslands come in two forms:

- *Species poor grasslands* – which have been artificially fertilised and improved for agriculture or planted for amenity use (e.g. grass sports pitches and parks); and
- *Species rich grasslands* – which although often mown or grazed, are managed with little or no inputs of fertilisers or herbicides. Species rich grasslands support a wide range of species, help with water storage and retention and usually have a high number of flowering plants in addition to grass species.

What can you do?

Reducing your verge and grass cutting regime to encourage wildflowers

Consider changing how you manage your local amenity grassland and verges in your community. Most often, landowners will employ a contractor to cut the grass for them and it depends if this contractor has the instructions, as well as the correct equipment to support conservation grass cutting. To encourage diversity, the grass needs to be cut only once or twice a year, after the wildflowers have flowered and set seed usually from July.

SSDC's successful *Conservation Verge Trials (2021)*, developed from Plantlife's [No Mow May](#), has seen the authority trialling changes to how we manage the land we are responsible for across the district to support conservation grass cutting. We recorded observational increases in invertebrate and meadow species numbers at all sites, and we will be looking to rollout the project across the district.

To assist with conservation grass cutting on your own or community land, the cuttings must be collected and removed to ensure that the nutrients in the cut grass do not re-enter the ground; this is because wildflowers grow best on poorer soils. In reality, this means a contractor either cuts, rakes and removes, or has a piece of equipment that cuts and collects. For smaller areas of land, ground cutting and raking by hand can work well.



Increasing grassland diversity

Consider turning a species poor grassland field into a wildflower meadow to encourage butterflies and other invertebrates. Increasing grassland diversity can take a number of years and it is always best if you can identify and record the species present prior to starting the change in management, and then annually thereafter, to track the changes and improvements in diversity (see *Appendix 1*).

If you want to speed up improvements in a patch of species poor grassland you could sow an appropriate wildflower seed mix. For best results, the grass needs to either be removed, or scarified by scratching and etching into the soil to prepare for seed sowing, so the seed has the best chance of germinating. Sowing yellow rattle seed in winter (a traditional meadow plant) can help to suppress grass growth prior to sowing wildflower seed mix onto the scarified banks in early spring.



Improving grasslands for plants also supports a whole range of pollinators; vital components of our ecosystems. Every small patch can make a difference. Patches of species-rich grassland act like stepping stones, allowing many species to expand their ranges and colonise new spaces.

SSDC's Great Parish Wildflower Seed Giveaway was set up to support the increase of wildflowers across the district. If you are thinking of creating a wildflower or grassland scheme and would like advice, please get in touch with us [here](#).



*Wildflower mini-meadow, Fairfield Great Parish Wildflower Giveaway No Mow Conservation Trials
Castle Cary*

Case Study: Sustainable Land Management, Yeovil Recreation Centre

As part of SSDC's sustainable land management initiative, we have made changes to the way we manage the land at Yeovil Recreation Centre, demonstrating that sports and recreational spaces can go hand in hand with nature conservation. Read our [case study](#) here; we hope to show that with the right design, even small areas of green space can provide great benefits to biodiversity. Key highlights include:

- 2,500 trees planted, including areas of copse and linear hedgerow planting between the sports pitches; this will provide protection from winds that sweep across the site, as well as acting as natural flood management to improve drainage on the site;
- Areas of wildflower planting on marginal banks around the site and 'No Mow' areas on amenity grass, using a reduced cutting regime to encourage wildflowers;
- Creation of a 'bug hotel' and bird boxes located within the golf course; and
- The use of seaweed liquid fertilisers instead of conventional chemical fertilisers.



Tree and wildflower planting at Yeovil Recreation Centre



4. Scrub

Why are they important?

Scrub habitats are made up of shrubs and bushes and are considered a successional habitat, meaning they are in transition from one habitat type to another, e.g. grassland into woodland. Scrub is often considered to look messy and there is a tendency to want to tidy it up. However, it is an important transitional habitat and provides valuable habitat areas for badger, small mammals (such as hedgehog), invertebrates and birds, as it provides cover and protection.

What can you do?

Where possible, leave existing scrub ground and encourage new areas of scrub through planting native species such as blackthorn, bramble and gorse (depending on soil type and topography). Scrub can be considered to be a nursery for naturally regenerating woodland, so encourage growth around new areas of tree planting.

5. Ponds, Wetlands and SUDS

Why are they important?

Somerset supports a wide range of wonderful wet habitats including rivers and streams, lakes, ponds, wet grasslands and peat bogs. These habitats are important for conserving biodiversity, slowing the flow of water and naturally storing carbon. However, many of our water habitats are much depleted and their biodiversity reduced (this is due to a number of reasons, including increases in chemical use in agriculture, the drainage of land and the filling in of ponds for development, as well as the release of sewage and phosphate pollutants into watercourses).

What can you do?

River restoration

Whilst Somerset's watercourses are protected through statutory and non-statutory designations such as the internationally important wetland areas of the Somerset Levels; local community groups and organisations also have a role to play in the protection, rehabilitation and creation of water based habitats in their area. Existing community groups in South Somerset include the Yeovil Rivers Community Trust ([YRCT](#)), the River [Brue Crew](#) and Community Action to Transform the Cale Habitat ([CATCH](#)). Consider working alongside one of these groups to share knowledge for your area!





Ponds

Ponds are vital habitats for wildlife, providing water, food and places in which to shelter and breed. However, many ponds have either completely disappeared from our landscape or have been significantly affected by modern land use changes.

Existing ponds need attention to keep them in a healthy state, and important considerations are:

- Removing some edge vegetation, weed and silt from the bottom to keep a mix of open water, material plant cover, and bottom mud;
- When you do clear your pond only ever clear half at a time; always leave the removed plants on the edge of the pond for at least a few days, this allows any wildlife to crawl back in; and
- Many species will make use of your pond for drinking water in the drier months and so building some basic steps or a ramp from the edge to the surface of the water will help them safely access the water and decrease the risk of falling in and being unable to get out.

For a useful guide on how to build a new pond and designing it for wildlife, click [here](#).

Case Study: Yeovil Rivers Community Trust (YRCT), Dodham Brook

Yeovil Rivers Community Trust was set up to support the restoration and sustainability of the rivers around Yeovil, as well as to promote the creation and management of ponds and wetlands for local people and wildlife.

The Trust are involved with a range of local projects including river restoration and habitat enhancement projects.

The Dodham Brook restoration and enhancement scheme has included the construction of three aquatic bench structures to help provide a diversified habitat for local wildlife. Secured by timber posts and coir matting, the benches were packed with brushwood bundles inside the frames (*made from spare branch material from the site*). This creates a fantastic underwater habitat for fish and invertebrates, whilst silt is also added on top, providing a great space for planting native wild aquatic plants.

For more information on this, and other project examples, visit YRCT's website [here](#).



The construction of the aquatic benches, Dodham Brook, Yeovil Rivers Community Trust



Sustainable Urban Drainage

SUDS can be designed, created and managed to benefit wildlife, reduce flood risk and are a way of incorporating ponds and other features into new developments. The RSPB have produced a handy guide for local authorities and developers, which provides more details on SUDS [here](#).

SUDS could, for instance, incorporate newly planted vegetation such as trees to help absorb water and slow the rate at which it enters rivers or other waterbodies (known as '*natural flood management*'). This approach can also have the added benefit of filtering the water of pollutants and sediments and reducing erosion. In addition to being habitats in their own right, SUDS form connections between features including existing ponds and ditches, thus increasing overall wildlife habitat area and connectivity.

In Somerset, [Reimagining the Levels](#) have partnered with the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA), the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG SW) and the Woodland Trust to '*Plant Trees to Slow the Flow*' to counteract the damaging effects of sudden and prolonged flooding. This water management scheme aims to promote the planting of trees and hedgerows to slow the flow of heavy rainfall to avoid overwhelming local streams and rivers. Applicants to the scheme, including local landowners, can apply [here](#).

For general advice on how you can take action as a community, download FWAG SW's '[A Community Guide to your Water Environment](#)'.

Volunteering

There are several volunteering opportunities available in Somerset:

- [Water Guardian volunteers](#) - Somerset Wildlife Trust and Wessex Water are looking to recruit and train volunteers in the Brue Valley catchment to help monitor watercourses (focused on the Somerset Levels), providing the eyes and ears on the ground, and playing an integral role in both the health of their local river and in their communities;
- [Become a Citizen Scientist](#) - West Country Rivers Trust are looking for volunteers to help educate and engage people with the water environment, produce data, spot pollution events and create a network of catchment communities that are invested in their local environment.



If you have a river restoration or natural flood management project you would like advice about, please contact SSDC [here](#).

6. Nesting boxes and providing homes for bats, swifts and swallows

Why are they important?

Nest boxes are a superb way of supporting our bird and bat populations and increasing wildlife in your local area.

What can you do?

Consider installing bird and bat boxes in your community. Where possible, nest boxes should be cleared out each year, from September, once the birds have finished nesting. Do not disturb any



nest boxes between March to September as they are most likely to be occupied and you could cause the bird to abandon their chicks.

Mapping your boxes will give you the best chance of keeping them well maintained. If you can, monitor their use through observation; plotting the use of boxes over the seasons and years will help you understand which ones are well used and which aren't, allowing you to move boxes that aren't used to new locations.

Consider running a parish project for your local community to build bird boxes – you can find instructions for this [here](#).

Swifts and swallows are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, and it has been identified that there is a need for 20,000 new swift nest sites each year nationally to stabilise the population; consider requesting planning conditions to new developments by including swift bricks in the design to help promote the protection and recovery of this species.

7. *Insects and Pollinators*

Consider producing a Pollinator Action Plan for your community. The countywide Somerset [Pollinator Action Plan](#) can be tailored to be specific to agricultural land, amenity or urban areas.

What can you do?

Already have some areas to enhance, why not:

- Plant native flower species which are rich in nectar;
- Consider making suitable native wild plant seed bombs and deploy them;
- Reduce your grass-cutting regime and encourage wildflowers and areas of long grass to thrive;
- Help to protect or create new wildflower meadows in your area;
- Plant native shrubs to infill gaps in hedgerows or create new ones;
- Build bug and bee hotels out of materials such as old bricks, flowerpots, leaf litter etc.
- Reduce or abandon the use of pesticides and herbicides in your land management practices, and ensure that these and any other noxious chemicals (including chemical fertilisers) are not used near ponds or watercourses (alternatives include natural seaweed based fertilisers); and
- Reduce the use of leaf blowers when clearing dead leaves or other vegetation debris from pathways, as there is a strong link between their use and the decline of insect populations.



In addition:

- Encourage your community to allow parts of their gardens to grow wild, instead of mowing;
- Educate the local community, including schools and businesses on how and why we should conserve pollinators and their environments; and
- Engage with the Somerset LNP's nature recovery network (NRN) mapping of priority spaces, and once these are issued to parishes use these to help connect habitats.



Case Study: Barwick and Stoford – Verge re-wilding

A community group from the parish of Barwick and Stoford, led by the local Parish Environment Champion, has worked with the chairs of the Parish Council and the parochial church council to allow rewilding of several areas in their parish, including local road verges and the churchyard.

“The community have been really supportive of proposals. The aim is to extend the new planting and mowing regime as villagers see that billiard-table lawns cannot compare with re-wilded meadow when it comes to beauty and – more importantly – diversity of habitat for plants and invertebrates.”

The image below highlights the contrast of what is, the same road, where one side has been cut and the other has been rewilded as part of the local initiative.

What a difference no mow makes!



Fairhouse Road Barwick. Contrasting sides of the same road

To hear more about how the group achieved it and how you can do similar in your community, watch SSDC’s wildflower [webinar here](#).

SSDC have also been trialling a No Mow conservation initiative with local Parish Councils. The photo below shows a successful verge conservation trial at Cucklington, which has received positive feedback from residents: *“We’ve sat there and been amazed by the wildlife in the long grasses including dragon flies, dozens of butterflies, beetles, crickets and so much more, as well as lots of flowers and different grasses.”*



The successful verge conservation trial in Cucklington, Members of the Barwick and Stoford Community group



8. Urban habitats

Why are they important?

Our urban habitats can be ecologically diverse, and examples include private gardens, parks and other greenspaces such as churchyards and allotments. However, amenity grassland is often closely mown and therefore generally species poor, in part due to the use of herbicides and intensive management.

Through improving biodiversity in our urban habitats, we can enhance our urban landscapes and provide health benefits, as well as reducing surface water runoff, flooding and pollution levels. In addition, it can provide connectivity for wildlife by creating 'stepping-stone' habitats.

What can you do?

Small-scale changes in the management of these habitats can have a positive overall effect:

- Through stopping the use of pesticides such as slug pellets and the application of herbicides;
- By requesting new developments commit to creating new habitat for pollinators;
- Encouraging and creating garden ponds, wildflower areas, bug hotels, installing bird feeders, bird and bat boxes and allowing access for hedgehogs via gaps in fences and walls;
- Managing amenity space, urban greenspaces and roadside verges by reducing the frequency of mowing or reducing cutting in designated areas. This will help increase plant diversity and help to contribute to carbon sequestration, improve air quality;
- Create roadside 'rain gardens' to store and treat water runoff, whilst increasing biodiversity; and
- Plant trees to increase carbon sequestration and improve air quality.



9. Farmland habitats

Why are they important?

Farmland habitats vary in form but are often heavily modified. Habitats can be rich in wildlife although some modern agricultural practices have led to a decline in biodiversity, for example through the loss of hedgerows and field margins.

What can you do?

A mosaic of grassland and hedgerow habitats can increase habitat diversity in the landscape and provide important links to other areas of habitat including rivers, streams, ponds and woodlands. Well managed field boundaries, including hedges, long grass, and other vegetation and wetlands can also help alleviate flooding and trap soil and farm chemicals before they enter streams and rivers.

The role our agricultural land has to play in protecting and restoring not only biodiversity but other key factors such as soil fertility, erosion, drainage and structure, is also essential. For sometime the emphasis has been on yield and production from our agricultural land but we are now seeing another essential role in farming emerge, which is habitat restoration and creation.



By adapting an area of agricultural land to permanent grassland (such as field edges and corridors), soil erosion can be effectively managed, and natural soil fertility, drainage, structure and biodiversity can be restored. Soils are hugely valuable, supporting a wide array of biodiversity. Healthy soils play a vital role in mitigating climate change, storing and purifying water and preventing erosion.



Field edges set aside with wildflower habitat, dry stone walling and hedgerow structures providing habitat

In Somerset, the [Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group South West](#) (FWAG SW) can offer support to fellow farmers, and advice to landowners about valuing the environmental assets on their land and using them for a sustainable and profitable future. [Reimagining the Levels](#) can offer free trees and hedgerow planting as part of their scheme ‘*Plant Trees to Slow the Flow*’ to counteract the damaging effects of sudden and prolonged flooding. This is considered a way of working with nature to alleviate flood risk, and applicants (including landowners) can apply [here](#).

Case Study: Community Tree Planting, Haslebury Plucknett

The [Haslebury Wildlife and Habitats Group](#) is a local community group set up to preserve and enhance the local environment. Alongside the Parish Environment Champion, the group recently planted 36 native oak and beech trees, in collaboration with a local landowner. The project received the Parish Council’s full support, from planning and permissions, to implementation.

Local residents were invited to sponsor a tree for £80; the trees were quickly sponsored, and a local supplier was found to supply trees of at least 3m tall. The trees were planted on agricultural land on the outskirts of the village with the help of volunteers.

“Haslebury Plucknett is not necessarily a large or prosperous village and the land is intensively farmed in places, so it was good to be able to make small changes to improve biodiversity and help the local environment”.

For other local case studies, visit [SSDC’s Community Projects](#) page.



Volunteers from the Haslebury Wildlife and Habitats Group



Further information and links

How can we improve these habitats?

Links to further information on the management of each of these habitat types can be found below.

Habitat resources

Woodland and Hedgerow

- [Woodland Trust](#) – planning your community wood.
- [Woodland Trust](#) – Free trees for communities.
- [Forestry Commission](#) – management and improving your woodland.
- [Wildlife Trust](#) – managing woods and hedgerows for wildlife.
- [Tree Council](#) – *Branching Out* – Tree and Hedgerow fund.
- [Hedgeline](#)

Grasslands

- [Magnificent meadows](#) – advice and guidance.
- [Plantlife](#)
- [Farming for Nature](#) – information on species rich grassland creation/restoration.
- [Floodplain meadows](#)

Scrub habitat

- [RSPB](#) – Maintaining and establishing scrub.

Wetlands and SUDS

- [WWT](#) – Wetland creation and management.
- [West Country Rivers Trust](#)
- [Reimagining the Levels](#) – tree and hedgerow planting scheme.
- [River Brue Crew](#)
- [Yeovil Rivers Community Trust \(YRCT\)](#)
- [Wildlife Trust - How to build and manage a pond](#)
- [RSPB](#) – Designing SUDS for people and wildlife.

Nesting boxes – birds and bats

- [RSPB](#) – build a bird box.
- [Bat Conservation Trust](#) – bat boxes.



Insects and Pollinators

- [Wildlife Trust](#) - five simple tips for helping pollinators.
- [Somerset County Council](#) – Pollinator Action Plan.
- [CEH](#) – Habitat creation and management for pollinators.

Urban habitats

- [RSPB](#) – urban environments general guidance.
- [Natural history museum](#) – nature in urban environments.

Farmland

- [Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group - South West.](#)
- [Reimagining the Levels](#) – tree and hedgerow planting scheme.
- [Hedgelinek.](#)
- [CPRE Hedgerows.](#)
- [Wildlife Trust](#) – guidance for landowners and farmers on grassland habitat.
- [Farm Wildlife](#) – support wildlife on farms.
- [Farming for Nature.](#)
- [Agricology - sustainable farming with articles on habitat management.](#)



Annex 1

Tree Planting Guide

Species requirements and where to plant?

You can plant as woodland copse, gap fill hedges or put single trees to grow as standards at strategic points. Firstly, the site must be appropriate; always consider sight lines and safety, whilst also keeping in mind areas which definitely shouldn't have trees planted without specialist guidance e.g. wetlands, heathland and sites with rare and protected species and archaeological sites.

How to plant a tree?

Before planting your trees cut any grass or vegetation down as close to ground level as possible as close to the planting day as possible.

1. Removing the grass around the base of each tree exposing bare soil - preferably in a 500mm diameter circle
2. Insert spade vertically and in line with yourself in to the ground.
3. Remove spade and insert again, with the spade facing you, at the end of the first slit furthest away and at 90° so that a T is formed.
4. With the spade still in the ground, push it away from you so that the first slit opens up. Place the plant in to this open slit at the correct depth - top of the root cell an inch below the level of the surrounding soil.
5. Pull back the spade to vertical allowing the slit to close up on the root cell. The top of the root cell should not be visible.
6. Remove spade!
7. Firm the soil by treading using the front of your foot.
8. Knock in the stake a minimum of 250mm below ground-level and 50mm away from your new tree planting. Put the stake in on the prevailing wind side (usually south west). This ensures that in high winds the tree bends away from the stake.
9. Place the biodegradable Tubex Ecostart (57-73mm) guard over the tree and secure to the stake with the zip ties provided.
10. Add mulch around the base of the tree.
11. Stand back and watch them grow!





Please contact - ssdcenvironment@southsomerset.gov.uk for any further guidance.