

Minutes of the Biodiversity Group meeting held on 29th June 2026 in the WTC Chambers

In the chair: Clare Kendrick Robinson (CKR)

Present: Glyn Evans (GE), Liz Taylor Jones (LTJ), Clare Shirley (CS), Mark Leitch (ML), Gail Parker (GP), Roger Hawkins (RH), Vanessa Middleton (VM), Carolyn Appleby (CA), Hester Lucas (HeL), Hazel Laurence (HaL), Andrea Williams (AW), Michael Padmore (MP), Mark Halladay (MH), Laurie Bussis (LB), Michael Smither (MS), Michael Barnard (MB), Mark Cory (MC), Alex Rook (AR), Jamie Coenen.

Apologies: Sam Davey, Alison Shelley, Stephen Novy, Simon Blaxill, Jez Gladwin, Gillian Maloney, Julia Mason.

[NB: A summary of proposed actions is given at the end of these minutes.]

1. Presentation by James Canton on Renaturing

James, Director of Wild Writing at the University of Essex, and author of a number of books on nature and nature recovery, gave a presentation around his most recent book: *Renaturing: small ways to wild the world* (2025; Canongate). He focused first on distinguishing renaturing (small acts allowing nature to recover) and rewilding (large scale reintroduction of apex predators) and then outlined how he had managed the renaturing of a 2-acre field behind his house. You can find a short film on Youtube documenting this: [James.Canton.Presentation](#)

At the end of the talk James suggested that he would be happy to host a visit from Biodiversity Group members in spring 2027.

Action: Co-chairs to liaise with James about a possible visit by Biodiversity Group members in spring 2027.

2. Reports on Biodiversity Group activities

(a) Broadfields Nature Reserve and the Biodiversity Group Community Interest Company.

GE reported on his discussions with Taylor Wimpey regarding their proposed transfer of the Broadfields Nature Reserve to the Biodiversity Group's CIC. Although they had offered to pay for solicitors' conveyancing fees and to give the CIC £20k towards management of the site, GE felt that more would be needed for long-term management. He asked the group to brainstorm on what equipment and other items might be needed to successfully manage the site so that a more detailed view of likely costs could be estimated. The group produced ideas relating to tools, ppe, training, welfare and insurance. GE will use this information in further discussion with Taylor Wimpey.

Action: GE to report to the next meeting of the Biodiversity Group on progress in acquiring the Broadfields Nature Reserve.

(b) Essex Local Nature Recovery grant

RH reported that the group had secured a grant of £1k from Essex's Local Nature Recovery initiative, thanks to a submission made on our behalf by Sam Davey. He called for suggestions for how this might be used, one being to plant up the soil verges in Ernest Road, near the Co-op. Another was to provide some pollinator friendly planters in front of the Library. A third suggestion (via email from Sophie Kennedy) was to replace some of the concrete slabs near the bus stop outside the Co-op with a gravel garden and seating.

Action: RH to liaise with the tree mapping group to discuss planting up of the Co-op verges. Subsequently to approach Beth Chatto. Possibly to approach Brett Aggregates for material to fill planters for the Library (suggestion made outside the meeting by MH).

(c) Biodiversity Group media presence

GP reported that the Biodiversity Group Facebook page now has over 100 visitors and has reached a tipping point where more people are showing an interest in it. She will shortly set up an Instagram account. ML reported that the Biodiversity Group WhatsApp group is proving an effective means of communication. A number of people at the meeting provided him with their phone numbers so that they could be added to the group.

(d) Tree Mappers Group

GP reported that the group has identified 40 sites for street trees around Wivenhoe. They now need to measure these sites precisely in order to gain permission from Essex CC for the planting. Some of the 39 birch trees donated to us by Ramya Ambikapathi will be used on these sites, but a more varied range of broadleaf trees is desirable. A proposal has been made to create a grove of birch trees on The Nook. It would be useful if a grant could be obtained to buy the more varied range of broadleaves.

Action: Tree Mappers Group to make accurate measurements of the proposed street tree sites. Also to liaise with Sam Davey about possible grants to purchase new trees.

(e) Broomgrove Schools project: The plants that grow our food

CKR reported that the semi-derelict garden at the back of the schools had been transformed through the work of parent, Biodiversity Group and allotment volunteers to provide plant growing opportunities for the children. She and HaL had been helping the children directly with plant care. The funding for the project had only been for one year, but it is hoped that the work with the children will continue into a second year.

(f) The Wildlife Garden

The new signage for the pond in the garden has been produced and paid for by Transition Town Wivenhoe. The Biodiversity Group offers TTW its thanks. A written report on the garden submitted by Stephen Novy before the meeting can be summarised as follows:

- The pond's level has dropped during the recent drought, despite topping up from the water butt behind the children's nursery;
- There is a split in the pond lining on its western edge. This needs fixing, although Andy and Michael are very busy at the moment.
- Thanks to Broomgrove School children and their teachers, the display board now has new art work. "The Wildlife Garden" lettering has been re-stuck to the display board.

- Fish: despite trapping 58 of them over the last year, there are still fish too small to be trapped. They need to be caught so that invertebrate life in the pond can flourish.

(g) Swift boxes

Simon Blaxill reported in advance of the meeting that 25 swift boxes have now been put up around the town, and one of them has a swift in it.

(h) Gardening for nature (G4N)

RH reported that the G4N team (GP, CS, Alison Shelley, Gill Maloney and RH) had been looking after nature recovery sites at the former police house garden, the Ernest Road/Stanley Road triangle, the town car park and the community orchard in the Jubilee Garden, as well as encouraging more local people to set aside a part of their garden for nature. The recent drought and heatwave have made it difficult to keep up with the watering.

(i) Wivenhoe Recipe Book

CKR reported that the Biodiversity Group has submitted an entry for the book and it is assumed that the editors are still preparing it for publication.

(j) Nature Towns and Cities

MB updated us on this initiative. If Wivenhoe were accredited, it would make it easier to apply for funding for nature-based projects. At the moment the focus of the initiative is on large urban areas, but the intention is to include smaller towns like ours subsequently, when we will make an application for accreditation.

(k) Nature recovery map

Following Catherine Herbert's presentation of the map to us at the last meeting, we have not really made use of its possibilities. However, GE will arrange to meet with GP to start populating the map with observations. We might subsequently ask for a meeting with Catherine to make sure in particular that the map's administrators (currently GP and RH) are using the maps resources effectively.

Action: GE and GP to meet to start populating the nature recovery map with observations around Wivenhoe.

(l) Station house garden

ML reported that there are two volunteers who look after both the garden and the watering of hanging baskets on the platforms. They are currently finding it difficult to keep up with the work. To become a "station adopter" requires training and approval from Network Rail. However, ML will investigate if the Biodiversity Group can offer informal help with the garden.

Action: ML to talk further with the station adopters about offering informal help with the station garden.

(m) Creative writing and nature recovery project with 11- to 18-year-olds

Penny Simpson was not at the meeting, but we hope to hear more about the project in due course.

3. Other Business

(a) The state of the sensory garden

Julia Mason asked prior to the meeting for information about the management of the sensory garden. GE said that he would seek funding for low maintenance planting for the garden so that it could thrive without needing much direct attention.

Action: GE to seek funding for low maintenance planting in the sensory garden.

(b) Biodiversity information stall at the WAGA show on 15th August

RH asked whether we should have a presence at the WAGA show. It seemed to be felt that we should. GP offered to help RH during the open session and AW might also be able to help.

Action: RH to speak to WAGA Committee about having a stall for the Biodiversity Group.

(c) Volunteers for Wivenhoe in Bloom

The Wivenhoe in Bloom team meet on the 1st of every month (except January) to manage a number of gardens around Wivenhoe. Any member of the Biodiversity Group who can help would be welcome. See the Wivenhoe Community Noticeboard on Facebook for information about where the team meets.

(d) Field trips

GE offered to host a walk around the quarry

Action: GE to suggest some dates for a group walk around the quarry

Further possible field trips to see the beavers at Finchingfield in the autumn and James Canton's field in spring 2027 to be arranged.

Date and time of next meeting: *tbc.*

Summary of proposed actions

Action: Co-chairs to liaise with James Canton about a possible visit by Biodiversity Group members in spring 2027.

Action: GE to report to the next meeting of the Biodiversity Group on progress in acquiring the Broadfields Nature Reserve.

Action: RH to liaise with the tree mapping group to discuss planting up of the Co-op verges. Subsequently to approach Beth Chatto. Possibly to approach Brett Aggregates for material to fill planters for the Library (suggestion made outside the meeting by MH).

Action: Tree Mappers Group to make accurate measurements of the proposed street tree sites. Also to liaise with Sam Davey about possible grants to purchase new trees.

Action: GE and GP to meet to start populating the nature recovery map with observations around Wivenhoe.

Action: ML to talk further with the station adopters about offering informal help with the station garden.

Action: GE to seek funding for low maintenance planting in the sensory garden.

Action: RH to speak to WAGA Committee about having a stall for the Biodiversity Group.

Action: GE to suggest some dates for a group walk around the quarry