

Minutes of the Biodiversity Group meeting on 29th September 2025

In the chair: Clare Kendrick Robinson (CKR)

Present: Stephen Novy (SN), Alison Shelley (AS), Alexandra Rook (AR), Mark Cory (MC), Clare Shirley (CIS), Josephine Kingsford (JK), Simon Blaxill (SB), Christopher Scheuer (ChS), Jez Gladwin (JG), Susie Jenkins (SJ), Samantha Davey (SD), Michael Padmore (MP), Mark Leitch (ML), Gail Parker (GP), Julia Mason (JM), Laurie Bussis (LB), Roger Hawkins (RH).

Apologies: Andrea Williams, Michael Barnard, Carolyn Appleby, Pete Connery, Liz Taylor-Jones, Glyn Evans.

[Note: if you just want to read a summary of all proposed actions, go to page 4]

1. Chair's welcome: CKR welcomed Susie Jenkins (SJ) from the Brightlingsea Nature Network and Samantha Davey (SD), who advises WTC on grant funding opportunities.

SJ reported that as part of Essex's Local Nature Recovery Strategy small grants of between £500 and £2,000 are potentially available for community biodiversity projects. The total pot allocation is £40k and a first round of applications will be considered by the funding committee on 14th October.

For your diaries: the Brightlingsea Nature Network will be holding a nature recovery event on 14th November, details to be confirmed.

SD outlined her role as adviser on grant funding to WTC and said that she was happy to advise the Biodiversity Group on funding for its projects. She stressed that projects that are likely to be successful have clear aims, timeframes and identifiable benefits for biodiversity or public engagement in nature recovery.

2. Brief review of Biodiversity Group activities since the last meeting: The review covered:

(a) The sowing of native wildflower seed on 5 local verges at the end of March. Because of the subsequent prolonged dry spell, none of the sowings was successful. (See item 3(b) below for a second attempt at sowing this autumn).

(b) The inclusion of a number of local nature recovery gardens in the Open Gardens programme on 17th/18th May appears to have attracted a lot of interest from visitors. MP reported that he welcomed a number of people to his garden and is writing up some thoughts about his experience of being a 'gardener for nature'.

(c) Two plant and seed share events were held, one at the Rectory Road allotments on 17th May and one on the frontage of the William Loveless Hall on 31st May. Both saw many plants exchanged. The events will be repeated again in 2026.

(d) SB reported that 16 swift boxes have now been installed on Wivenhoe houses and he has ordered 5 more boxes. MP suggested that to attract swifts to the boxes, swift calls might

need to be transmitted close to the boxes. He had had some success with this at the 6th Form College.

Action: RH, MP and SB to assess the feasibility of playing recorded swift calls near swift boxes in Wivenhoe.

(e) GE had commissioned a biodiversity review of Wivenhoe by environmental consultants *Adonis Blue*, where the brief was for a walk-around of the town to “review key opportunities afforded by the Wivenhoe Town Council area with respect to nature recovery ... [and] to set the scene to facilitate stakeholder engagement to help generate a localised biodiversity plan”. A meeting will be arranged in November with GE and any interested members of the group to consider possible actions following from the report.

Action: CKR/RH to arrange a meeting in November with GE open to all to discuss the Adonis Blue report.

3. Outcomes of the small group discussions

(a) Street trees: MC reported that he was keen to map existing street trees in Wivenhoe and identify areas for new planting.

Action: Our existing tree mapping team (JM, GP, JK) to liaise with MC to devise a plan for Wivenhoe’s street trees.

It was suggested that it might be helpful to seek advice from Essex’s senior tree officer Harry Bryer.

(b) Wildflower sowing: An autumn sowing of mixed native wildflower seed on the same verges mentioned under item 2(a) will be tried.

MC said he may be able to help with some funding to buy the seeds.

Action: RH to call for volunteers to mow, scarify and sow wildflower seed on selected verges on a date to be confirmed.

(c) Community orchard: a proposal was made that a community orchard would be good both for biodiversity gain and for public engagement with nature recovery.

Action: Biodiversity group members to suggest possible sites for a proposed community orchard.

(d) House Martins: MP reported that he had seen a decline in the number of House Martin nests on houses near the river, possibly due to householders removing the nests.

Action: MP to write an article about the importance of maintaining habitat for House Martins that could also double as an information leaflet for distributing to relevant households.

(e) No mow May: ChS questioned whether WTC had abandoned its “no mow May” policy on the KGV.

It appears that the Council have not abandoned the policy, but their grass cutting machinery cannot cope with the type of long grass that was produced in the wet spring of 2024. A suggestion was made that if a cut can be made in late April, leaving the grass uncut in May should not be problematic for a subsequent cut in June.

(f) Involvement with the Broomgrove Infant School/University project “Growing plants for food”: Unfortunately, neither Helen Evans nor Paolo Seradio were able to attend the meeting.

Action: CKR/RH to contact Helen Evans to ask how the Biodiversity Group can support the project.

(g) Hedgehogs: MC called for ideas about how we can encourage local residents to do more to provide appropriate habitat corridors for hedgehogs.

Action: Biodiversity Group members to contact MC with ideas for promoting hedgehog habitat recovery in Wivenhoe.

4. WhatsApp Group update: ML reported that our “Biodiversity Wivenhoe” WhatsApp Group is working well to keep members informed of interesting events, ideas, projects that are going on in between our quarterly meetings.

Action: Those interested in joining the “Biodiversity Wivenhoe” WhatsApp Group, send a message to Mark Leitch’s phone 07816 094 186.

5. New areas for biodiversity management: A number of potential areas for expanding nature recovery in Wivenhoe were discussed:

(a) The triangle of land at the junction of Ernest Road and Stanley Road. Wivenhoe in Bloom asked the Biodiversity Group if we would adopt this piece of land and the G4N team have already sketched a planting plan which we will be starting at 2.30pm on Wednesday 15th October. Anyone interested in helping/finding out more come along with a trowel and some gardening gloves.

(b) MC suggested the pavement edge beside the Coop, the pavement edge along the cycle path from the Fire Station, and a verge in Chaney Road near the Broomgrove schools as sites for introducing pollinator friendly plants.

(c) The piece of land that fronts the town car park could be upgraded as a gravel garden.

(d) A grass verge alongside the William Loveless Hall could be turned into a wildflower meadow.

(e) The library frontage could also be turned into a gravel garden on the model of the Brightlingsea library.

(f) An area of grass next to the car wash opposite the Coop could benefit from some wildflower planting.

Action: Anyone interested in being involved in helping with nature recovery projects should contact Roger Hawkins (roghawk@essex.ac.uk), Clare Kendrick Robinson (kendrickrobinson@me.com) or Glyn Evans (cllrglyn.evans@wivenhoe.gov.uk).

Date of next meeting: tbc

Summary of actions

1. **Action:** RH, MP and SB to assess the feasibility of playing recorded swift calls near swift boxes in Wivenhoe.
2. **Action:** CKR/RH to arrange a meeting in November with GE open to all to discuss the *Adonis Blue* report.
3. **Action:** Our existing tree mapping team (JM, GP, JK) to liaise with MC to devise a plan for Wivenhoe's street trees.
4. **Action:** RH to call for volunteers to mow, scarify and sow wildflower seed on selected verges on a date to be confirmed.
5. **Action:** Biodiversity group members to suggest possible sites for a proposed community orchard.
6. **Action:** MP to write an article about the importance of maintaining habitat for House Martins that could also double as an information leaflet for distributing to relevant households.
7. **Action:** CKR/RH to contact Helen Evans to ask how the Biodiversity Group can support the Broomgrove Infant School/University project "Growing food plants".
8. **Action:** Biodiversity Group members to contact MC with ideas for promoting hedgehog habitat recovery in Wivenhoe.
9. **Action:** Those interested in joining the "Biodiversity Wivenhoe" WhatsApp Group, send a message to Mark Leitch's phone 07816 094 186.
10. **Action:** Anyone interested in being involved in helping with nature recovery projects should contact Roger Hawkins (roghawk@essex.ac.uk), Clare Kendrick Robinson (kendrickrobinson@me.com) or Glyn Evans (cllrglyn.evans@wivenhoe.gov.uk).