



## WILLAND PARISH COUNCIL - Biodiversity Working Group Minutes of Meeting (MoM)

### Date & Time:

Friday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2026 at 1900 > 2130hrs (2hrs 30mins).

### Venue:

The Halfway House, B3181, Willand, Cullompton, Devon, EX15 2RF.

### Attendees:

1. Barbara Bodkin: [REDACTED]
2. Helen Jones <helen.jones@willand-pc.gov.uk>;
3. Stevie Hutter <stevie.hutter@willand-pc.gov.uk>;
4. Ben Turner <ben.turner@willand-pc.gov.uk>;
5. Toby Fernbank (Notes taker) <toby.fernbank@willand-pc.gov.uk>;

### Key findings / recommendations:

Together we reviewed Barbara's Biodiversity ideas list of 29 topics + 1 new topic (community event). We prioritised the list of options and prioritised a top 5 to follow up. In the end our recommendations covered 9 x topics:

1. **Recommendation#1: Village 'Wildlife Garden' for visitors to visit (topic#2)**– Owner: Helen.
2. **Recommendation#2: Tree Planting (topic#11)**: Follow up with local business Pallex who are planting a woodland as part of their new planning development – Owner Ben & Stevie.
3. **Recommendation#3: Wildlife Column in Parish Magazine (topic#14)**: – Owner Barbara.
4. **Recommendation#4: Local Community Biodiversity event (topic#30)**: Barbara had spoken to a resident about her list and they suggested hosting a Biodiversity showcase event in Willand for the community. We all agreed this would be a great idea.

We would organise some guest speakers - Owner Barbara with help from ALL members of our Working Group.

**Flyers:** Paul was nominated to generate some event flyer options and circulate to our working group for comment.

**Timeline:** Maybe for Q4/2026.

- a. Event Topics - options could include:
  - i. **Bats (topic #23)**
  - ii. **Birds (topics #8, #9, #27 #29)**
  - iii. **Hedgehogs (topic#20)**
  - iv. **Bees (topics #22, #26)**
  - v. **Wildlife Garden (topic #2)**



## **WILLAND PARISH COUNCIL - Biodiversity Working Group Minutes of Meeting (MoM)**

### **Summary of the original white paper**

The paper was prepared by Barbara Bodkin for the Willand Parish Council Biodiversity Working Group ahead of its informal discussion on 29 May 2026. It is intended as a background and idea-setting document to support the group's early discussions on biodiversity in Willand.

The paper is structured into five sections:

### **Section Content**

- 1 Barbara's previous biodiversity papers and notes from webinars/events since 2021
- 2 Willand Parish Council documents and duties relevant to biodiversity
- 3 External resources, organisations, and reference materials
- 4 Barbara's ideas list for possible local biodiversity actions
- 5 Photos and screenshots illustrating examples and opportunities

### **Main messages from the paper**

The paper makes a few clear overall points:

- The Parish Council has a legal and practical role in biodiversity, especially in relation to land, property, services, and decisions under its control.
- There is already a strong base of information available, including previous papers, webinar notes, local policies, and guidance from wildlife and community organisations.
- Community engagement is essential. A recurring theme is that biodiversity improvement will depend on informing, involving, and encouraging residents, schools, local groups, and landowners.
- Willand should not act in isolation. The paper stresses the importance of working with neighbouring parishes, community groups, and wider county-level nature recovery initiatives.
- The Working Group should move from information gathering to practical action, using audits, surveys, policy guidance, local partnerships, and visible projects.



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### **Section-by-section summary**

#### **1. Previous reports and learning gathered by Barbara**

Barbara lists earlier papers already presented to the Parish Council, including:

- a biodiversity discussion paper from October 2023
- a cemetery proposals paper from April 2024
- a biodiversity speech delivered in January 2025
- a village planters paper from April 2026

She also notes a wide range of biodiversity webinars and events attended between 2021 and 2026. These covered subjects such as:

- rivers and pollution
- wildlife-friendly road verges
- butterflies and amenity grassland
- community biodiversity action
- wildlife surveying and monitoring
- the role of gardens in supporting birds
- practical examples from other local groups

The main significance of this section is that the paper is not just a list of ideas; it is built on several years of research, observation, and learning.

#### **2. Parish Council documents and responsibilities**

This section identifies the main local documents and governance issues relevant to biodiversity.

Key points include:

- The Willand Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2033, especially the section on Green Infrastructure, is important background reading for all working group members.
- The Tree Management Policy already includes biodiversity as an objective, particularly in relation to trees, hedges, and open spaces.
- The Biodiversity Working Group currently exists to bring proposals to Full Council, but it has no decision-making powers and currently has no Terms of Reference.



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- There may be overlap with the Open Space Recreation Working Group.
- The Parish Council must recognise that Devon County Council, not the Parish Council, has statutory responsibility for highways, footpaths, and pavements.
- At the same time, the Parish Council does have a legal duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Environment Act 2021 to consider how it can conserve and enhance biodiversity through the land it manages, the services it provides, and the decisions it makes.
- The paper also highlights current operational activities that affect biodiversity, such as:
  - grass cutting
  - hedge cutting
  - weed spraying
  - litter picking

This section shows that biodiversity work needs to be tied to existing council policies, legal duties, land management practices, and staffing/contract arrangements.

### 3. Resources and reference materials

Barbara has compiled a large set of reference resources for the Working Group. These include:

- biodiversity and environmental policies from other councils
- guidance from Devon Wildlife Trust
- support from the Wilder Communities Team
- resources on churchyards for wildlife
- information from CAG Devon
- support from Wild About Devon
- opportunities linked to Devon's Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- practical inspiration such as wildlife gardening materials, meadow-making guidance, pollinator resources, butterfly and moth advice, and composting information

There are also examples and ideas from elsewhere, including:

- wildflower trails
- community green space enhancement



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- wildlife areas
- swift bricks
- community action schemes

The main point of this section is that the Working Group does not need to start from scratch. There is already a large support network, guidance base, and set of models from elsewhere that can be adapted for Willand.

#### **4. Barbara's ideas for action**

This is the most practical section of the paper. It sets out a long list of possible actions for the group to consider.

The proposals include:

1. carrying out a Bioblitz, bug survey, or other wildlife survey
2. encouraging people to share or open wildlife gardens
3. improving care, protection, and respect for woodlands
4. tackling litter
5. creating a community orchard
6. improving management of ponds, ditches, and streams
7. considering protection of the Spratford Stream
8. leaving selected scrub, nettle patches, and long grass as habitat
9. preserving native hedgerows
10. thinking beyond parish boundaries and supporting wildlife corridors
11. planting more trees - checking whether biodiversity-related planting commitments, such as the Pallex woodland, are being fulfilled
12. planting hedge wedges
13. working with local groups, farmers, businesses, and neighbouring communities
14. publishing a wildlife column in the parish magazine
15. producing an annual wildlife report
16. using local surveys to support better grass-cutting decisions



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17. creating a Parish Biodiversity Audit
18. identifying hidden local experts
19. running a nature photography competition
20. creating Hedgehog Highways
21. reducing light pollution
22. involving children and young people in wildlife projects
23. organising bat walks
24. promoting No Mow May
25. supporting reuse and sustainability schemes such as repair cafes and composting
26. planting village planters for biodiversity
27. supporting birds with practical measures such as water in bird baths
28. creating community pollinator patches
29. encouraging measures to attract swifts, including nest boxes

This section suggests a mix of survey work, habitat management, awareness-raising, partnerships, youth involvement, and visible community projects.

### **5. Photos and examples**

The final section contains photographs and screenshots illustrating relevant examples, including:

- community pollinator patches
- churchyard wildflower planting
- village hall pollinator areas with explanatory signs
- a community orchard
- a church wildlife information poster
- a wildflower area in Willand Cemetery
- an example of flowers being mown away
- explanatory signage in a public park

These images appear to serve as practical inspiration, showing what biodiversity action can look like in real places and how signage and visible projects can help public understanding.



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### **Overall conclusion of the white paper**

The paper is essentially a foundational discussion document for the Biodiversity Working Group. It combines:

- past research and advocacy
- local council policy context
- legal responsibilities
- external guidance and support
- a broad menu of practical ideas

Its main purpose is to help the group begin shaping a coordinated, realistic biodiversity approach for Willand, grounded in both council responsibilities and community involvement.