

## Case Study

# Re-Naturing in Buriton

### Background

The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) launched a major nature recovery initiative in 2021, aiming to increase the area of the land managed for nature from 25% to 33% by 2030.

Recognising that nature is under pressure and needs help, the campaign aims to create new havens for wildlife to flourish – which will also benefit people and the climate.

Achieving these ambitious goals will require a wide range of nature recovery projects: from large landscape scale restoration of entire habitats to small-scale projects in communities.

Buriton, in the east of Hampshire, is one community which has taken the issue very seriously with a number of initiatives and activities producing promising results.

The SDNPA has produced comprehensive on-line guidance for communities, land managers and others. The information (which is all available at [www.southdowns.gov.uk/renature](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/renature)) explains how to make space for nature-friendly projects and provides everyone with details about sources of advice and funding.



### The project

The parish of Buriton lies in the east of Hampshire, covering about eight square miles of attractive countryside. The scarp slope of the South Downs and their ancient hanger woodlands provide a magnificent backdrop to the settlements in the parish which nestle naturally in the landscape.

The parish contains a number of Nature Reserves, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), SSSIs and the Queen Elizabeth Country Park as well as the slopes of Butser Hill, the highest point on the South Downs which is also a National Nature Reserve and a Special Area of Conservation.

In 2019 the Parish Council commenced a number of initiatives to improve conditions for wildlife, to promote greater awareness and understanding of nature more widely and to address climate change.

Buriton was selected as a Pilot Parish in Hampshire to explore low cost actions to improve conditions for pollinators and to increase public awareness about the issues confronting them and impacts on us all.

In 2022 the community also responded to the South Downs “Beelines” and “Call for Nature Sites” initiatives so as to build on its early successes.

Whilst the Parish Council owns very little land, it was determined to demonstrate how new wildlife habitats could be created by managing for biodiversity and nature recovery.

The initial focus of the project was the popular recreation ground in the heart of the village with the aim of expanding the initiative in a number of ways so that more and more people could appreciate the benefits that managing land for biodiversity can bring to society.

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*"The community is keen to play its part in supporting nature, helping it to help us and bringing benefits for people and the climate."*

**Doug Jones, Buriton Parish Council**

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## The outcome

The initial phase of the project involved dedicating significant swathes around the edges of the village recreation ground as new wildlife habitat.

The areas had been mown regularly for decades but analysis of soil samples indicated there was potential for a return to more natural grassland and native wild flowers for the benefit of pollinators and other species.

The grass margins were allowed to grow long with 'cut & collect' mowings once or twice each year – removing the arisings so as to keep the nutrient levels low.

An annual community 'hay-day' was also introduced, with dozens of villagers bringing rakes and wheelbarrows to remove grass cuttings. The raking helps to open up the grasses, giving wildflowers a better chance to get established.

Yellow rattle was also sown, after scarification, to help weaken vigorous grasses.

Thereafter the initial project plan is to see what re-natures in the margins over a couple of years before considering introducing relevant species, potentially knapweed, ox-eye daisies, bird's foot trefoil etc.

These margins now help to provide wider habitat connectivity via hedgerows whilst liaison with Network Rail has led to adjustments in their management regime through the parish to improve wildlife corridors.

The Parish Council also helps residents with wildlife-friendly gardening ideas through a series of events and activities, to enhance important networks between habitats.

Awareness and understanding have been raised further by other initiatives including tree and hedgerow planting, installations of swift boxes, bee bricks and bat tiles, bug hotels and bug safaris, a community moth trap, a special B-earth Day event, evening bat walks and an Open Gardens Re-Naturing Trail.

## The future

With an attractive setting in the National Park, Buriton intends to continue to enhance habitat connectivity with more families in the parish helping wildlife in their gardens, greater involvement of local farms and better practices on highway verges.

Opportunities to explain the rationale for the initiative via suitable interpretation boards for visitors and residents will also be explored – helping to explain the wider benefits that managing land for biodiversity can bring to society.

Even with only small amounts of publicly-owned land and very low management costs, communities can encourage residents and other organisations to make space for nature-friendly projects so that habitats can thrive and everyone can experience wildlife at its best.



*Buriton Recreation Ground*

For further information about Re-Naturing in the South Downs National Park, please contact: [jan.knowlson@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:jan.knowlson@southdowns.gov.uk)

**The South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan (PMP) 2020-25** sets out a shared vision for how we all would like the National Park to be in the future. It includes 10 long-term outcomes, and provides a framework for communities, landowners, charities, businesses and public bodies to work together to make this vision and these outcomes a reality.

**This project successfully contributes to PMP Outcome 3:** a thriving and connected network of habitats and increased population and distribution of priority species now exist in the National Park.

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