

Sodbury Local Nature Action Plan – Version 1

Sodbury Town Council (STC) in partnership with South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) has recognised the importance of taking steps to address the ecological crisis our world is facing. A Local Nature Action Plan has been drawn up to help us to take the necessary steps to stop the decline of biodiversity. This is a five-year plan subject to constant review and revision.

Partnership

This action plan is led by Sodbury Town Council with support from:

Organisation	Role	Contact
Sodbury Town Council	Lead, funding	Cate Davidson, Town Clerk Tel: 01454 321336 enquiries@sodburytowncouncil.gov.uk
Climate Action Yate and Chipping Sodbury (CAYACS)	Volunteers, work, surveys	
Sodbury Woodland and Nature (SWaN)	Volunteers, work, advice	Richard Wilson Steve Spooner
South Gloucestershire Council	Guidance	nature@southglos.gov.uk
Sodbury in Bloom	Volunteers, work	

Stakeholders

- Parish Councillors / Clerk
- Ward Councillors
- SGC Biodiversity Officer
- Sodbury in Bloom
- CAYACS
- Residents – via Town Council Facebook Page
- Site Users

Background

There are a number of important sites identified within the parish Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) located partly or wholly within the parish boundaries. Many of these are under private ownership, nonetheless they should be considered when looking at proposed projects.

- Barnhill (geological) SSSI
- Part of the parish is within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- The River Frome and 6m either side of its centre are designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI)
- Sodbury Common (Common Conservators Trust)
- Kingrove Common (Common Conservators Trust)
- Little Sodbury Hill fort - calcareous grassland (private ownership)
- Cripplehole Wood - ancient woodland (private ownership)
- Lygrove Wood - ancient woodland (private ownership)
- Airshaft east of Old Sodbury - calcareous grassland (private ownership)

We are very lucky to have a number of active groups and individuals within the parish already who are able to provide help and advice to STC regarding nature and wildlife.

Proposed 5 Year Programme

Sodbury Town Council owns relatively little land and property so much of this programme concentrates on working with SGC, adjacent parishes and other local stakeholders to identify and action opportunities to benefit nature within the parish. It is key to this plan that local residents are aware and engaged with the proposals.

It should be noted that to increase bird and mammal numbers we not only need to provide them with appropriate homes, but we must also ensure suitable food supplies. This forms one of the main threads of our proposed plan.

The Council has committed, as part of its Climate Action Plan, to take appropriate steps to improve biodiversity within the parish. This programme is a guide to our proposed projects and can be adapted as circumstances change. This LNAP is a starting point, but should additional resources become available during the timeframe of the plan, every effort should be made to widen the scope of, or bring forward projects if possible.

Our main focus during this 5 year plan will be orchards, increasing tree cover, ponds, wildflowers and species-rich grassland.

Tree Cover

Increasing tree cover is high priority both nationally and locally. South Gloucestershire has stated that it has a target of doubling tree canopy cover across the district by 2030 (currently approx. 11% tree canopy cover), which represents establishing a further 5900 hectares of tree canopy cover. We feel it is important for Sodbury parish to strive to make a positive contribution to this target.

STC has already purchased approximately 5 hectares of land near Old Sodbury from Network Rail to plant a new woodland, community orchard and wildflower area. The legalities were finalised in May 2021 so tree planting will commence in winter 2021. Sodbury Woodland and Nature (SWaN) are a voluntary group that are managing this site on behalf of STC. Some wildflower planting has already been undertaken.

Improving tree cover within the more built up areas of the parish also offers ongoing benefits both for wildlife and climate resilience (for example, more shading of paths in a warmer climate, improved water retention in the soil). Other opportunities for tree planting are being explored with local land owners by SWaN.

Orchards

There were 52 orchards (42.9 ha) marked on the 1915 OS map of the parish. Only four orchards totalling 3.3ha remain today; this is an 81% loss. Identifying locations for new traditional orchards has been identified as a target action within the BAP. We believe improving these figures would be a valuable project for the parish to focus on, as it can provide benefits in terms of community engagement alongside those of wildlife food sources and habitats and additional tree cover.

Wildflowers

There has been a huge decline in wildflower meadows and species-rich grassland across the country generally and the parish. Some 90% has been lost country-wide since the beginning of the 20th

century. While the STC owns very little land, there are many green spaces within the parish that could be improved to provide wildlife corridors to link isolated existing areas, for example Ridgewood to St John the Baptist Church in Chipping Sodbury, Colts Green and the new wildflower area in the Old Sodbury Woodland. It is also important to co-ordinate work with neighbouring parishes to establish links across parish boundaries as well as within the parish itself. Verges and gardens can play an important role here, and it also fits neatly with Buglife's B-Lines project which runs through the parish. This has also been identified as a target action within the BAP.

Ponds

Water is crucial to wildlife and hugely improves the biodiversity of life around it, but many of our ponds have disappeared over the years. Ponds support an extraordinary two thirds of all freshwater species, and creating clean new ponds is one of the simplest and most effective ways to protect freshwater wildlife. However, to form viable populations, many creatures need not just a single pond but a network of them. Great crested newts for example need at least three ponds within ½ mile of each other to complete their lifecycle. Such ponds will not only provide habitat for the newts though, they will also be of benefit to many other amphibian, insect, bird, bat and human populations!

Hedgerows

Hedgerows also provide import links for wildlife and there are plenty within the parish! While STC have limited direct influence in this area, it is important to raise awareness and encourage improved management where possible, as they form a significant refuge for wildlife when looked at across the whole parish.

Work Programme Years 1 to 5

Project Name	Site	Description	Timeline
Tree Cover	Old Sodbury woodland	Commence orchard planting. Commence main woodland planting (2000 trees).	Year 1
		Continue orchard planting. Continue with main woodland planting (2000 trees)	Year 2
		Complete main woodland planting (1000 trees) including maintenance.	Year 3
		Formative pruning as required	Year 4
		Formative pruning as required	Year 5
	Street trees (various)	Identify new areas for street tree planting (liaise with Forest of Avon)	Year 1
		New street trees in 3 locations (tbc in year 1)	Year 2
		New street trees in 3 locations (tbc in year 1)	Year 3
	General	Publicise 'call for sites' for tree/hedge planting locations (Forest	Years 1-5 (annually)

		of Avon funding available for min 0.1ha sites, year 1 only)	
		Work with local land owners to identify other sites. Funding available from Cotswold AONB	Years 1-5 (annually)
Orchards	General	Liaise with SGC/local land trusts to determine locations within existing local green spaces for small fruit tree planting areas (typically 3-4 trees)	Year 1
		Fund 10no fruit trees for hedgerows for local medium/large landowners to establish relationships.	Year 1
	Various	Fruit tree planting in 3 public green spaces (locations tbc in year 1)	Year 2
	Various	Fruit tree planting in 3 public green spaces (locations tbc in year 1)	Year 3
	Various	Fruit tree planting in 3 public green spaces (locations tbc in year 1)	Year 4
Community Engagement	General	Request to residents and local businesses to identify additional areas of green space that can be improved for nature.	Year 1 (ongoing annually)
	STC Office	Install further wildlife-friendly features (bug houses/nest boxes/log piles etc) at STC Office garden. In conjunction with Sodbury in Bloom.	Year 1
	STC Office	STC garden open day. Led by Sodbury in Bloom.	Year 1 (ongoing annually)
	Home composting	Publicise benefits of home composting. Purchase (or arrange discount for local residents for) compost bins.	Year 2
	Water butts	Publicise benefits of water conservation. Purchase (or arrange discount for local residents for) water butts.	Year 2
Wildflowers	General	Review grass cutting contract with SGC and identify areas where mowing can be reduced. Liaise with neighbouring parishes for consistency.	Year 1
		Write to SGC regarding grass cutting: X areas to be reduced to 2 mows annually Y areas to be reduced to 6 mows annually (further reduced to 4 mows in Year 2) All arisings to be removed (or left as wildlife piles where appropriate).	Year 1

		Publicise benefits of reduced mowing. Encourage local residents/landowners to engage with B-Lines project (reduced pesticide use, pollinator friendly planting).	Year 1 (ongoing annually)
	Ridgewood to Old Sodbury woodland link	Identify locations for cowslip/wildflower planting to link sites.	Year 1
		Wildflower planting x no of sites to establish link. Publicise to encourage local residents/businesses planting to boost link route.	Year 2
		Wildflower planting x no of sites to enhance link. Publicise to encourage local residents/businesses planting to further improve link route.	Year 3
		Co-ordinate with neighbouring parishes to establish further links across parish boundaries. Wildflower planting x no of sites to enhance link. Publicise to encourage local residents/businesses planting to further improve cross-boundary link routes	Year 4
		Co-ordinate with neighbouring parishes to establish further links across parish boundaries. Wildflower planting x no of sites to enhance link. Publicise to encourage local residents/businesses planting to further improve cross-boundary link routes	Year 5
General	Log piles/habitat piles	Write to SGC to request: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. where trees are felled (predominantly due to ash dieback) they should be retained in these or nearby locations as log piles where possible. 2. Arisings from grass/meadow/shrub cutting to be collected and left as habitat piles at suitable locations within those green spaces where possible. 	Year 1

	Planning applications	Formulate nature-specific comments to be added to all relevant planning application responses, specifically highlighting the LNAP.	Year 1
	Allotment field, Sodbury Common	Identify Trustees and basis of the land holding. Consider whether alternative use would be of benefit to the people of Sodbury.	Year 1
		Work with CAYACS (in conjunction with Forest of Avon) to propose improvements to hedgerow surrounding field allotment.	Years 1 & 2
	Sodbury/Kingrove Commons, Colts Green	Open dialogue with Commons Conservators regarding how wildlife improvements can be made to these areas.	Year 1 (ongoing)
	Chipping Sodbury Town Trust	Open dialogue with Chipping Sodbury Town Trust regarding how wildlife improvements can be made to the Ridings.	Year 1 (ongoing)
	Chipping Sodbury Town Lands Charity	Open dialogue with Chipping Sodbury Town Lands Charity to explore what wildlife improvements can be made to the land and properties it owns.	Year 1 (ongoing)
Ponds	General	In conjunction with CAYACS, check old maps to identify locations of old ponds in the parish. Check status of existing ponds for enhancements. Identify possible locations for new/enhanced ponds (liaise with Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group).	Year 1
	Various	Install or improve 2 ponds (possibly in conjunction with FWAG) – locations to be identified in year 1	Year 2
		Install or improve 2 ponds (possibly in conjunction with FWAG) – locations to be identified in year 1	Year 3