

Parish Council Update

Biodiversity and Flooding



This is the first of a series of updates in the Roundabout and on our website www.buckdenpc.org.uk to share news about the work the Council is undertaking.

This update will focus on:

- biodiversity in the village, e.g. the management of trees and open areas to protect and promote wildlife, and
- flooding.

Further information is available on the web site. Your views and ideas can be sent to the Clerk at clerk@buckdenpc.org.uk

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AND BIODIVERSITY

One of the aims of our Neighbourhood Plan is to protect and enhance areas of high biodiversity, and important views.

This includes:

- Maintenance and improvement of the network of green corridors used by wildlife.
- Protection and enhancement of important sites for priority and protected species.
- Protection of the views e.g. of the Church and Towers which are important throughout the village.



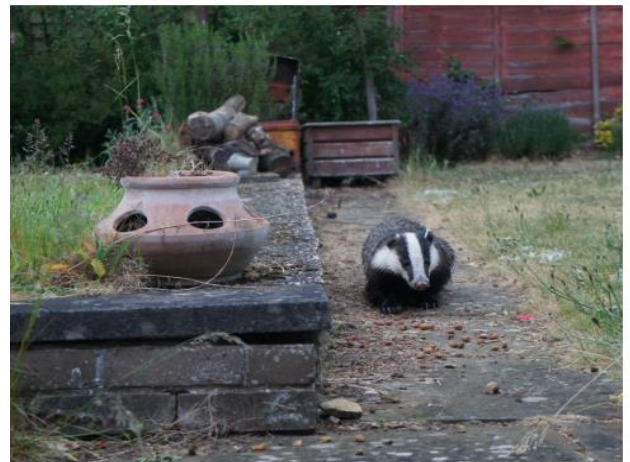
What have we done about biodiversity?

We have worked with Mark Ward, our local wildlife expert, to develop a biodiversity strategy. This gives Councillors and parish staff, guidance on how to maintain and develop the biodiversity of the village. This includes:

- guidance for those working on keeping the village tidy to make sure it is done in a way that enhances and promotes plants, birds, and animals.
- plans to reduce verge cutting where this can be done without reducing visibility for traffic
- guidance for residents on how to support biodiversity in their gardens.

We have:

- created a tree strategy to ensure our existing trees are checked regularly, maintained, and protected and that more trees are planted.
- created wildflower areas in St Mary's Churchyard and at Hunts End with others to be planted this year.
- supported residents who have put up bird boxes across the village.
- started to develop a series of leaflets to encourage residents to plant trees and look after wildlife in the village. The first leaflet about planting trees is on our website.
- joined with the Friends of the Towers to plant trees to celebrate the Queens Platinum Jubilee
- worked with the school to promote the Big Green Week in September.



What else could we do to support biodiversity?

Consider letting more areas grow wild to protect birds, insects & butterflies at critical time e.g. "no mow May"; spending parish money to create and maintain more wildflower areas, as at St Mary's Churchyard and Hunts End.

What ideas do you have? Let us know via the Clerk.

PLANNING AND BIODIVERSITY

The Parish Council cannot approve or refuse planning applications, but our comments and views are sought and considered by Huntingdon District Council (HDC), when they make planning decisions. We consider all planning applications against the objectives laid out in the Neighbourhood Plan and according to national requirements.

A key aim of national planning guidance is to encourage an increase in biodiversity, and we look for ways to promote that aim whenever we review applications, e.g., suggesting wildflower and tree planting, bird and bat boxes for new houses or business premises.

SOLAR FARMS

A related priority is to find ways to help mitigate the impact of climate change. One approach, promoted nationally, is to develop “solar farms”. A local example is that close to Grafham water. All plans for solar farms need to show how they would help wildlife. We are currently aware of two plans within our Parish boundaries. We have had early discussions with the developers to understand the impact of these schemes and are keen to hear the views of residents.

The Council has purchased a thermal imaging camera which can be borrowed by residents to help determine the thermal efficiency of their home and enable decisions about, for example, insulation. Contact the Clerk if you are interested.

FLOODING

This has been a key issue for the village in the last year. We have no direct authority to take action, but we have been very active in lobbying all those that have the power to get something done. This includes HDC and Cambridgeshire County Council and our local MP.

The key areas of concern have been:

- Lack of drain clearance, causing flooding in areas such as Silver Street and Manor Gardens.
- Serious flooding in the High Street on several occasions caused by both lack of drain clearance and a drainage system that is not fit for purpose
- The risk of flooding created by attenuation basins on the Lucks Lane development (see below).

An additional issue has been problems with the sewage system in St Hugh's Road.



What have we done about flooding?

- Drawn together information about flooding in the village both now and in the past so there is a record of, for example, who is responsible for things like the Taylors Lane culvert. This information is on our website.
- Purchased two water pumps. Residents impacted by flooding, who need to clear water can borrow the equipment.
- Worked with the Flood Authority and pressured them to come up with solutions for the High Street. We have recently heard that proposals for highway surface water drainage at Buckden High Street are planned to be implemented in the High Street sometime after 17th January. Further information is available on the website.
- Lobbied CCC Flood Authority about the serious concerns in relation to the water levels in the attenuation basins on the Lucks Lane development. We have monthly meetings with them and continue to press our concerns.
- Lobbied our MP who wrote to the Cambridgeshire CEO highlighting the problems with Flood management.
- Contacted the HDC enforcement team to ask them to ensure Bloor Homes deals with the issue but with no success. We are asking residents to send letters to the department, and a template letter is available on the website.
- Raised with the planners and Flood Authority, the issue of the Silver Street development and the effect that may have on flooding and the capacity of the sewage system in the village.

