



Assets, Community & Environment Committee Meeting

Date: 14th March 2024

ACE039ii - To consider creating a Biodiversity Action Plan.

Introduction – What is the UK Biodiversity Action Plan

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) was published in 1994, and was the UK Government's response to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which the UK signed up to in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. The CBD called for the development and enforcement of national strategies and associated action plans to identify, conserve and protect existing biological diversity, and to enhance it wherever possible.

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan summarised the most threatened or rapidly declining biological resources of the United Kingdom, and gave detailed plans for their conservation. Individual 'Action Plans' were provided for these habitats and species, and a reporting mechanism was established to demonstrate how the UK BAP was contributing to the United Kingdom's commitment to help reduce or halt the significant losses in global biodiversity, highlighted by the international Convention on Biological Diversity. The original publication included action plans for 45 habitats and 391 species, each identified either as being globally threatened, or where evidence showed there had been a particularly rapid decline of those resources within the UK.

Proposal and suggestions for Cuckfield Parish Biodiversity Action Plan:

1. Would be useful for establishing up to date, baseline ecological data and establishing or re-confirming where valuable habitats / protected species are within the parish.
2. Under the Environment Act 2021, I believe East and West Sussex now have a statutory duty to provide nature recovery networks so this would help meet that requirement.
3. Improving connectivity of green / open spaces is starting to gain traction with the Weald to Waves and Wilder Ouse projects being established – the BAP plan would feed into these and could link up sites inside the parish e.g. fields owned by Knepp and outside the parish e.g. New England Wood.
4. As the plan would be for the parish, it probably follows that the Parish Council should be lead but any potential working group would likely include Greener Cuckfield and any other parties that might make significant contributions.
5. It looks as though a few parish councils have written their own BAP's so could use similar formats without reinventing the wheel.
6. For parish council lands, particularly Buttinghill, an ecological survey should be undertaken along with providing a management plan so there will be some cost. For

other sites not owned by the council, funding ecological surveys may also be required but would expect this to come from Lund or possibly the National Lottery – Community fund.

7. A BAP could become a great community initiative from people just sending in sightings from their gardens to having an active volunteer group that could carry out some practical conservation tasks or take part in more scientific surveys e.g. butterfly transects and to schools involved with citizen science projects. Any volunteering would likely be led through Greener but insurance / management / co-ordination with CPC would all need consideration.
8. From observations submitted on i-record and records from the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre, it seems there are already various folk recording the wildlife they find.
9. The risk will be not to be over ambitious and maybe better to concentrate on certain focussed projects e.g. hedgehogs (Ken Burgess at Manor Drive/ Courtmead Road?), improving verges, Swift boxes at Holy Trinity church and Glow worms at Brook Street.
10. Plenty of work in devising an initial plan and more importantly agreeing on its scope, range and time scale but I would be happy to write in conjunction with Oli Whaley and Greener Cuckfield but it would be great to have anyone on board who is interested.

Recommendations

If the parish council were to agree in principle to having a BAP, then I would suggest first step is to put something in Cuckfield Life to gauge initial interest and take it from there.

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Date: 8th March 2024