

Biodiversity First Consideration Report (Agenda item 7)

1. Question from Councillor Jackie Chelin

This paper is really welcome and shows a wide range of positive activities taking place.

On pages 28 and 29 there is mention of grounds maintenance and specifically that staff and volunteers have engaged in educational activities to increase in understanding and enable more holistic thinking / approaches to biodiversity. This prompted me to wonder how such initiatives (and others mentioned throughout the paper) will be sustained and, particularly, how to ensure ongoing education and awareness so that those who have benefited from specific training and awareness raising might be encouraged to pass on that knowledge.

Answer:

The green space team runs a biennial volunteer recognition event where volunteers, volunteer groups, other council departments and organisations are invited to display the work they do and share knowledge. The last event had John Heathcott talk about the importance of ancient woodlands.

The green space team promotes all the work done by the team and our amazing volunteers through regular social media posts and annual newsletters. The green space team and other departments have built up relationships with a wide range of organisation, such as the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Cotswold National Landscape, and the Gloucestershire Orchard Trust, and we share the good work they do.

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust is undertaking their [HabiMapping](#) project on council land using local volunteers. This is a citizen science project which gets volunteers engaged in nature to survey habitats in our green spaces. We facilitate schools in using our green space to help promote the nature environment and we engage schools in planting projects and bat walks etc. We work with local groups to develop online material, as well as on site interpretation panels and posters to promote the work we do and the different habitats we have in our green spaces.

The green space team are passionate about biodiversity and the environment and continuously researches best practices, partnerships, and training opportunities. All these elements ensure that ongoing education and awareness is embedded in what we do, helping pass on knowledge to the next generation.

2. Question from Councillor Jackie Chelin

The biodiversity actions relating to the Climate Emergency Action Plan (mentioned on page 30) talk about developing opportunities for Natural Flood Management Schemes to help mitigate flooding. How much of this flooding needs mitigation owing to issues that have been created through previous building and development work not having been fitted with adequate drainage facilities rather than climate change per se?

Answer: Flooding and floodplains are a naturally occurring phenomenon, but there is no doubt that the issue has been exacerbated by human intervention throughout history. This is not limited to just buildings as it includes modification to watercourses (Mill channels, culverts, bridges, diversions, and squeezing of the naturally occurring floodplain), roads and rail infrastructure altering runoff and flowpath topography, and draining of land for agricultural or recreational purposes.

Historically flood risk management involved draining water as quickly and efficiently as possible, which in most cases increases risk to those downstream.

Similar to other aspects that have contributed to the climate emergency, best practice has thankfully changed, and it is now recognised internationally that we need to hold back and make space for water. Whilst changes and weather patterns can often be attributed to climate change, it would be extremely difficult to quantify how much of the resulting flood level on the ground is due to climate change and land use. It should be noted that the drainage design of many historic buildings and infrastructure does not meet modern standards for sustainable drainage and therefore betterment is required whenever brownfield development proposals come through planning.

Similarly, we are doing a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) as part of the new Local Plan process.

Outside of planning, flooding issues are investigated on a case-by-case basis by the Risk Management Authorities and where feasible nature-based solutions are recommended to be retrofitted into the existing environment.