

# Reversing the Decline of Insects

Paper written by The Wildlife Trusts, received August 2020.

Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council declared Climate and Ecological Emergency in February 2020.

The adoption of this paper would allow the delivery of the various actions identified below.

## Information

The UK has 27,000 species of insect. Insects have a critical role in ecosystems, being part of complex food chains and webs, as prey, predators, pollinators, recyclers, and scavengers. Their effect on human food chains is immense.

The current situation for insects is dire, the decline being caused primarily through loss of habitat and use of pesticide, but also light pollution and climate change. Recovery is possible if 30% of land is managed to aid recovery of the insect populations, and unnecessary use of pesticides ceases.

The effect of these actions will cause changes to the way the 'countryside' looks and this needs to be accepted by people. Manicured monoculture landscapes with not a blade of grass out of place and all detritus tidied away can no longer be the norm, if the decline of insect populations is to be reversed.

Habitats need to be connected; small isolated populations are more likely to die out than thrive. Therefore, design of major developments must allow for connectivity between public green spaces, and the 'pepper pot' design espoused by Create Streets in the 'critical friend' report on MH2 should not be supported unless balanced out by larger areas of green open space. Roadside verges are a great example of linear habitats and can easily be created by reducing the width of mown verges to leave wildflower strips. The 'On the Verge' scheme in Scotland resulted in 25 times more flowers, 50 times more bumble bees and 13 times more hover flies.

## Actions

Parish Council could

- revise criteria for grass cutting contract for 2021 to include a reduction of the areas that are cut and a reduction in the frequency of cutting ; maintain wider areas as wildflower meadows, which will include cutting only after flowering, sympathetic shrub clearance if necessary, raking and scraping the area to allow wildflower seeds to set
- run a 'Garden' competition for the most insect friendly garden – to be judged by ??
- request that pesticide use is removed or significantly reduced in Maintenance Schedules of the various Management Companies on MH1 and Agin hills, and replaced by brush strimmer or foam
- encourage residents to view weeds differently

The Neighbourhood Plan policy revisions could include

- reduction of hard landscaping in favour of permeable surfaces
- Remove the use of pesticides from Maintenance Schedules and replace with the use of foam or brush strimmer (see Copenhagen, Barcelona, Toronto, declared themselves Pesticide free cities)

Developers could be encouraged to

- link green spaces by planting insect friendly pavement edges/verges
- add bee banks to the boundaries of green space to allow for solitary bees and other insects

## Aquatic

Ten percent of insect populations live in water. A recent West Country survey found up to 2000 chemicals in a river. The natural flow regimes need to be restored wherever possible to create new reed beds, wet woodlands and meadows.

### Actions

Parish Council could:

- ensure this part of the NP policy (R3) is observed by developers
- try to become more interactive with FWAG initiatives for leaky dams and other 'upstream' solutions, and their support for reducing use of fertilizer that might cause run-off into local streams/ditches
- look after and maintain the ditches in the Parish, reduce or delay cutting banks
- develop action plan in collaboration with Somerset Wildlife Trust for ditch and stream survey and development of management plan for them

Neighbourhood Plan policy revisions could include

- increased liaison with FWAG
- support for restoration of dewponds