

Community council land management scheme is allowing nature to thrive

In December 2022, the former Mendip District Council enabled a pilot scheme that offered up areas of land to local environmental groups to increase the benefits of nature.

One of these was a piece of land along Tor Hill Lane, Wells, which is now managed by the group Sustainable Wells. The group consulted with residents and put forward a sustainable land management proposal to the council, which was accepted at the end of last year. Wells City Council paid for insurance and signposts to let people know the land was now a wildlife-friendly area. This space is now reaping rewards and becoming a haven for wildlife and a place for local people to get closer to nature.



View of Tor Hill Lane, Wells

Earlier this month, a wildlife survey was carried out by Sustainable Wells and Somerset Council's Biodiversity Officer Barbra Lakin which revealed a wonderful selection of plants along the lane as well as interesting insects, birds, and butterflies.

Barbra Lakin said "Not cutting the grass along Tor Hill Lane this year has allowed the wide range of plants and insects living here to show themselves. Knowing what already lives here is the first step towards supporting nature recovery. Along the path, we found wildflowers such as Meadowsweet, Meadow Cranesbill, Greater Willow herb, Knapweed, Purple Loosestrife, Comfrey, Yellow Flag Iris, Hogweed, and Cow parsley. An array of native birds were also present including the spotted woodpecker, goldfinch, and nesting blue tits. Insects such as butterflies are also thriving with sightings of Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Red Admiral, and Peacock butterflies as well as Darter dragonflies, and a very good colony of Banded agrion damselflies, a great indicator that the adjacent stream's water is good quality."



Another exciting find happened on a routine litter pick at Tor Hill Lane this spring, when the Sustainable Wells Group found a black oil beetle. This creature has been named as a target species by the Mendip Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Most of the existing wild plants have now peaked and seeded and part of the site has been scythed with the help of the Strawberry Line Association Scythers.

Sustainable Wells now plans to encourage an even greater variety of wildflowers and will sow native seeds in some test areas along the lane. It will be exciting to see what pops up next year.

