

wildflowers, helps to tackle pollution whilst benefitting our wildlife and even locking away carbon in the soil. Shockingly *we have lost around 97% of our flower-rich meadows*, with their vital food and habitat needed by wildlife. The Plantlife website has lots of information and guidance on how best to help.

Dark Skies

When Hazelbury Bryan residents were asked what they liked about living in the village, high on the list was the low levels of light pollution at night. Thanks to the lack of street lights on a clear night the view of the stars is stunning, with even the Milky Way clearly visible. There is a modern trend for some houses to have external lights that shine continuously, instead of security lights that only switch on when a movement is detected. Unfortunately some continuous lights are left on well into the night, a little appreciated form of pollution that is now recognised as a *major biodiversity threat* that has a dramatic negative impact on wildlife, disrupting the activities of nocturnal creatures that have evolved to thrive in darkness. An obvious example is night flying insects such as moths that are fatally attracted to lights and thereby drawn away from their normal activities like mating, feeding & pollinating. *Our insect populations are in serious decline*, and as many of our food crops rely on insects for pollination anything we can do to protect them is vital for our welfare too !

Insecticides and Pets

Finally, a quick word about the flea treatments commonly used on our pets. Unfortunately these contain insecticides that are so toxic they are banned for agricultural use. One flea treatment for a dog lasts up to 28 days & contains enough insecticide to kill 60 million bees. Best to avoid routinely using these treatments as a preventative measure, and certainly don't get any on your hands. Minimise your dog's exposure to outdoors for a while, & keep treated dogs out of watercourses. Also avoid putting any toxic clippings in a compost heap or anywhere outdoors. Research has discovered these deadly chemicals in the fur used by some birds to line their nests. High enough concentrations will cause eggs to fail to hatch, or chicks to die prematurely.

If you have a particular interest in any of the topics mentioned above, or you might be interested joining the Working Group, please contact either the chair of the Group, Keith Wheaton-Green keith.wheaton-green@outlook.com or the Parish Clerk Malcolm Wilson hazelburybryanpc@outlook.com

Further details of the Group's work and other environmental articles are available on the village website <https://www.hazelburybryan.com/>

Climate & Environment Group

PROGRESS REPORT May 2025

**Village Hall goes All Electric
SAVES MONEY**

+

**Free advice on how you too could
GO SOLAR**

**Boosting
BIODIVERSITY**

+

NO MOW MAY

Dark SKIES

Insecticides and PETS

Village Hall goes All Electric

The first task the Parish's Climate & Environment Working Group set itself was to wean the Village Hall off its oil-fired heating system, and cut its running costs by installing solar panels with battery storage.

One possible solution was to replace the oil-fired boiler & radiator system with heat pumps delivering warm air, but there were doubts as to whether this would work well enough. The question was answered by a visit to a stone-built chapel near Exeter that had been converted into a village hall with a warm air heat pump system. In spite of the chapel having very little insulation the system worked well, and convinced us this was a viable option for our own hall.

An air-source heat pump system extracts heat from outside air, and thanks to modern refrigerants is able to do this even in winter when the outside temperature drops below zero. That heat is then used either to provide hot water for radiators, or to provide warm air through air conditioning units. The warm air system chosen for our village hall has an astonishing efficiency that far surpasses that of oil, gas or electric heaters. A heat pump system using water filled radiators can provide an impressive 3.5kW of heat from every 1kW of electricity used, but a warm-air heat pump system can do even better ... around 5kW of heat for every 1kW of electricity used !

The decarbonisation of the village hall was completed with the installation of solar panels on the roof, plus a storage battery. The heat pump system is working well, with the hall warming up quickly and efficiently. The electricity storage battery is charged up by the solar panels during the day, so that it provides free power during the evenings & in the event of a grid power cut.

An added bonus is that excess electricity generated by the solar panels is being sold to our energy supplier, providing revenue for the hall. The removal of the oil storage tank has also allowed the creation of more car parking space.

Our local expert in renewable energy systems and chair of the Working Group, Keith Wheaton-Green, has for the past few years offered free and independent advice to anyone considering installing solar panels and battery storage. He is more than happy to talk to anyone who is considering having a system of their own installed, and can be contacted by email at:

keith.wheaton-green@outlook.com

Boosting Biodiversity

If you wanted to make a village more environmentally sustainable you would doubtless plant more wildflowers & trees, dig some lakes and install solar panels with battery storage. Hazelbury Bryan has done relatively well in this respect, with at least 5 large stands of new trees planted recently, 7 lakes or large ponds dug, two small solar farms constructed and around 30 roof-top solar panel arrays installed. Thanks go to everyone involved for helping to make more space for nature, reducing electrical demand on the grid, and generally making our village a better place to live.

We are very lucky to live in an area that includes wild and biodiverse areas such as Deadmoor Common, Alners Gorse butterfly reserve, Smethards Farm, Hazel 'Millennium' Wood and The Water Valley. We see more birds and butterflies in our gardens because of this, but some species are not so mobile and they remain isolated in their islands of biodiversity. Imagine how much more stable their populations would be, and how our local biodiversity would improve, if we were to connect up those and other smaller areas of valuable habitat with new wildlife-friendly corridors. Although healthy hedgerows already do that to an extent, if new wild areas are created in the right places to connect even more biodiverse areas then the sum becomes that much greater than the parts. Countryside Stewardship grants can help those with larger areas of land. It's a land owner's choice, and if we can help anyone with researching grants for planting trees or anything else we would be pleased to do so.

Likewise the **Great Big Dorset Hedge Project** aims to help with the restoration and extension of healthy hedgerows across Dorset. We are active with this project, and if it is of interest to you please contact us for more information.

The **River of Flowers** project also aims to help, with all of us encouraged to allow more of our gardens or patches of land to grow the plants that are essential for our pollinators to survive. The much-maligned dandelion for example has been treated as a pest 'weed' in the past, but along with spring colour it provides essential early nourishment for bumblebees as they emerge from hibernation. Goldfinches and sparrows also enjoy feasting on the seeds.

No Mow May !

This is Plantlife's annual campaign, urging us all to pack away the lawnmower for a while and help nature by letting wildflowers grow freely. *No lawn is too small !* Even the smallest wild patch can provide the vital food needed by bees, butterflies and other pollinators, connecting us with nature and giving wildlife the best start to summer. A healthy lawn, with some longer grasses & ...cont/