

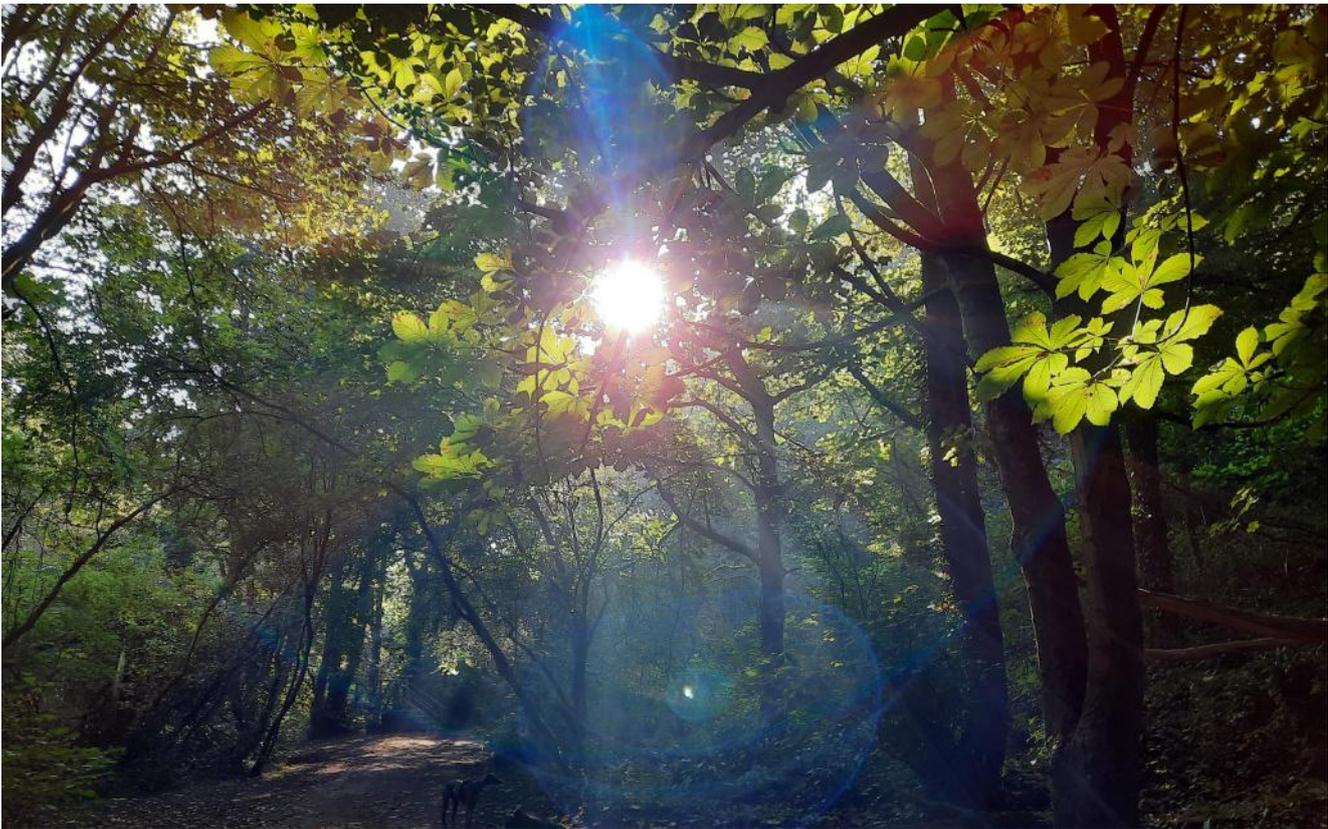


# WEG Newsletter

Edition Four

Autumn 2021

**Our Aims** Covering the Winterbourne, Hambrook and the wider Frome Valley area. We are passionate about the environment and building a strong inclusive community.



## CONTACT US

We hope you enjoy this newsletter, if you have any feedback or suggestions for local actions we could be taking please get in touch. Email : [winterbourneenvironmental@gmail.com](mailto:winterbourneenvironmental@gmail.com)

In addition, if you would like to subscribe to receive future e-mails and notices via e-mail and share your views on local environmental issues please complete this questionnaire. Subscribe : [WEG Questionnaire](#)

Please follow us on Facebook to keep up with current news and any events being planned.

Facebook : [@Winterbourneenvironmentalgroup](#)

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# SHARE AND REPAIR CAFE

Sat 15th January  
Sat 19th February  
Sat 19th March

## Now is a great time to plant a wildflower garden

Autumn is a great time to get your wildflower seeds scattered around to give them a headstart on a good spring display. The best way to plant is on bare, prepared soil. Choose a good pack of native wildflowers, you can get them mixed with grasses or just get the flower seeds, many are perennial and the display will improve year on year. Wildflowers provide a great food source for pollinators and a habitat for lots of other bugs. In addition birds will often feed off grasses and seed heads.

Grow Wilder in Frenchay is an excellent place to buy wildflower plants, which can also be planted now to flower next year.



Wildflowers are Frome Valley Growing Project

## Climate action steps *by Dr Laura Fogg-Rogers, WEG Chair*

Climate change has felt very close this year. We have seen disaster movie images from across Europe and the rest of the world – but this is not fantasy, it's an urgent reality. Freak flooding, raging wildfires, and deathly droughts – these are all happening with more frequency at 1.1C of global heating. The COP26 conference and international scientific reports this year (IPCC 2021 <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/>) confirm these changes are due to carbon and greenhouse gas emissions from human activities. While promising pacts were made between countries at COP26, we are still on course for much higher global temperature rises, beyond 1.5C.

I dread to think what this means for our old age and our children's future. We urgently need local and national government support to enable our communities to stop burning fossil fuels. Meanwhile, the WEG committee is working with Friends of the Earth as a Climate Action Group (<https://winterbourne-environmental.uk/project/community-climate-action>) to make progress regionally - join us if you are keen to make a difference!

And we can all make a difference in our own households. Here are some top tips to try :

- 1) Raise your voice. Write to your MP or Councillors. Ask what action they are really taking on the Climate Emergency. Join a local Climate Action Group like WEG to make changes locally. Support local protestors. Vote for Climate Action.
- 2) Use your spending. Switch to renewable energy providers. Switch your bank. Make fossil fuels unprofitable and uninsurable.
- 3) Get active. Slow your life down so you can walk or cycle where you need to go. You will get fitter (I have!). You will be mentally healthier and kids will function better in school. Children do not need daily extra-curricular activities that you drive to. They need a liveable planet.
- 4) Drive fossil fuels off the road. Take public transport when you can. Or switch to smaller electric cars (so much cleaner and smoother!). Petrol and diesel are dinosaur cars (literally).
- 5) Move to a plant-based diet. Reduce your meat intake. Vegan may be best for the planet but It's not for everyone. So vegetarian or reduced meat helps too.
- 6) Buy less. Save and cherish what you have. There is no 'out' when we throw things away. Refuse single use plastic (made from fossil fuels). Reduce what you consume. Repair what you have. And recycle as a last resort.
- 7) Buy local. Eat local food in season. Support local businesses - we will need thriving local communities to get through what is to come.
- 8) Make space for wildlife. We are living through the sixth mass extinction. Never use pesticides. Leave areas of your garden wilder. Help local groups to conserve nature in public parks and spaces.
- 9) Reduce or stop flying. There are so many awesome places accessible by train and car in the UK and Europe. The journey is part of the holiday. What will a memory be worth when your holiday resort has burnt down due to climate change?
- 10) Switch your heating and cooking. If you're renovating, opt for a heat pump and electric devices.

Be the change. Push for these steps in your organisation. Badger our Government. Tell your friends.



## Clearing a short stretch of the river Frome

by Sharon Hancock

In October, WEG was invited to take part in the Bristol and Avon Rivers Trust big river clean up. We are the River Frome BART Beacon for our stretch of the river from Frampton Cotterell down to Frenchay, and we form part of the Frome Reconnected Forum, organised by South Gloucestershire Council. When the river levels were low, our volunteers were led by Tim Clouter to wade through and around the river to pick up litter, and test for nitrates in the water.

This was a huge undertaking and a two stage process, with the initial part of the river clearance being removing rubbish which had been dumped, from the river, and getting it safely to the bank. Some time later, the second stage involved accessing the site and getting enough volunteers to move it from there to the waiting

vehicle to allow it to be taken away.

*Why is this is an important task?*

Plastic and organic litter can change the structure of river habitats, reduce the light level in the waters beneath the debris, and even deplete the dissolved oxygen in the water. This will affect the fish and other wildlife that rely on the river as their habitat. In addition it has the potential of choking, suffocating, or disabling aquatic life like ducks, fish, turtles, and birds.

A huge thank you to everyone who helped out on both days. It's made a huge difference to the river.

Unfortunately, there is so much more to do. We are limited by weather for much of the year but we really hope there will be a chance to do more. Please get in touch if you would like to be part of any river litter picks in the future.



## Simple Ways to cut down on Plastic Use

1. Carry a reusable bottle
2. Say no to plastic straws
3. Take a reusable coffee cup
4. Avoid excessive food packaging
5. Use refill stations for detergents
6. Say no to disposable plastic cutlery
7. Get your milk delivered
8. Avoid microbeads
9. Carry a reusable shopping bag
10. Use local zero waste shops





## Local schools contribute to Whiteshill wildflower project

by Dr Laura Fogg-Rogers

It was a glorious summer for the Small Common wildflower area, at Whiteshill Common (Hambrook). Bees were buzzing between over 65 varieties of native British wildflowers. The renowned house martin colony was seen swooping throughout the grassland. And several species of bats can be seen at dusk, adding to the area's biodiversity.

The wildflowers were allowed to naturally thrive with permission from Winterbourne Parish Council in spring 2020. After the first summer of growth, WEG volunteers enhanced the visual variety with plug planting in the Autumn. New grass paths were cut into the area thanks to local resident Jim Collings, which means the plants and insects can be observed and enjoyed up close in future displays.

Now local schoolchildren are getting more involved in this nature conservation project thanks to a grant from

UWE Bristol and the Quartet Foundation. The funding not only bought wildflowers for the Small Common, but has contributed to nature clubs at Hambrook Primary School, St Michael's Primary, and Elm Park Primary. UWE Bristol's wildflower expert Dr Helen Hoyle also advised the project, working with her MSc student Tristan Goldsmid. Interviews with local residents found that wildflowers brighten up the area, and if well managed with visual varieties, they make a welcome addition to our leisure spaces.

As Covid restrictions lift further, WEG volunteers will be working with schoolchildren to explore the benefits of insect pollinators for wildlife, and for our food supplies. The children will be making posters about these projects, which will decorate local areas throughout Winterbourne.

The wildflower area has now had its annual cut in the Autumn, but will make a welcome return in 2022.

**UWE  
Bristol** | University  
of the  
West of  
England

Quartet  
**Community  
Foundation**

## Schools support campaign to stop toxic idling

by Duncan Porter previously published in Frome Valley Voice

Local schools are encouraging parents and nearby drivers to turn off their engines while waiting. The no idling campaign is being run by Winterbourne and Frome Valley Environmental Group, who have funded new banners outside primary schools. Hambrook and St Michael's Primary Schools are currently showcasing the campaign, and other local schools will join in after Christmas. It's as simple as turning your key - switching off your engine saves you money and protects young children from air pollution!

According to the World Health Organisation, air pollution is one of the greatest environmental risks to health, responsible for over 4 million deaths each year internationally, killing more than HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and road incidents combined. While most of these deaths occur in developing countries, it is still a major health risk in the UK, with around 40,000 annual deaths associated with air pollution, according to the Royal College of Physicians. Research is only now revealing further serious health and developmental impacts that were previously not understood.

Recent studies from Kings College revealed that in Bristol, five people die each week as a result of high levels of air pollution. In the villages of the Frome Valley, the main sources of air pollution are domestic wood burning and road traffic and of the easiest ways

to reduce local air pollution is to stop engine idling. Engine idling is when a vehicle's engine is left running while stationary. This can be while in traffic, while parked and waiting outside the shops or school. Many people don't realise that it is in fact an offence. Leaving an engine idling is an offence under section 42 of the Road Traffic Act 1988. The act enforces rule 123 of the Highway Code, which states "You must not leave a vehicle engine running unnecessarily while the vehicle is stationary on a public road"

The law exists because leaving a stationary vehicle idling creates more concentrated localised pollution near the vehicle and can be easily avoided. Some 420 litres of exhaust fumes are released per minute for a family size car. Diesel cars typically emit a more dangerous combination of fumes than petrol, but both can quickly raise pollution levels in a street to dangerous levels. Schools at drop off and pick up times and community spaces with shops are the key problem areas. These are places where families are found, with children among the most vulnerable to exhaust fumes. Recent studies found small particulates from vehicle exhausts in every organ of the body, including the brain, with links to cognitive problems and long term issues such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. We should care a great deal that pollution from our cars is having a direct impact on the development and function of young minds. These emissions cause significant physical, often permanent damage and we are poisoning our children at the school gates. We should also be concerned about the long term health impacts and the additional burden and cost to the NHS of treating chronic conditions, that we could easily

avoid. The UN's human rights body has voted overwhelmingly to recognise the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right. Clean air should be a fundamental right that we can all help to achieve.

Unfortunately, we still live in a world where many people rely on a car that runs on fossil fuels, but this situation is not a foregone conclusion. One of the simplest actions we can take is as easy as turning a key. We can all play a part in making our schools and community areas safe and healthy.



## Schools support campaign to stop toxic idling (continued)

If your vehicle is going to be stationary for more than 10 seconds, you should switch off your engine. Stopping and starting a modern car will use less fuel than idling for 10 seconds. You will also benefit from reduced fuel costs. Excessive idling can result in partial combustion due to lower temperatures, causing residue to build up on cylinder walls affecting spark plugs and exhaust systems. Your engine's components will last longer if you switch off.

If you need to drive to school, park a few minutes walk away from the school gates to park and stride. This will reduce the concentration of traffic at the school gates, reducing the amount of poisonous fumes breathed by every child arriving or leaving. The additional exercise is also good for learning, especially if they can enjoy clean air while doing so.

Speak to others about the impacts of air pollution and

idling. Many people are completely unaware of the damage they are causing and that they are committing an offence. Winterbourne and Frome Valley Environmental Group have created banners to remind people of the risks. They are currently displayed outside St Michael's in Winterbourne and Hambrook School. Ask your schools to request "school streets" to restrict traffic at drop off times. These will cause inconvenience to some, but will provide a safe space where children can enter and leave the places we provide for them to learn without filling their lungs with poisonous fumes. Join the fightback to make our communities a healthy and happier place to live. Please visit the Winterbourne and Frome Valley Environmental Group website to find sources for the figures and sources used in this article: [www.winterbourne-environmental.uk](http://www.winterbourne-environmental.uk)

## Making space for nature

We are asking the Parish Council to allow us to plant wildflowers and trees in more areas, we would also like to propose that a Jubilee Woodland is planted. South Gloucestershire Council has a target to increase tree cover by 50% in our local area. We hope that we would have local support for these concepts, please let us know if you have any suggestions for places which would benefit or be suited to an orchard, woodland trees or wildflowers.





## STEM in the Community Project 'Frome Digital Trails'

Winterbourne and Frome Valley Environmental Group have made a start on a project to share local walking routes, and to in addition have digital content to highlight interesting nature facts and historic information. We are currently working with some UWE students, for whom this forms part of their degree, and we hope to have an app to allow people to follow the walks and find local trees, plants and places of particular interest for nature.

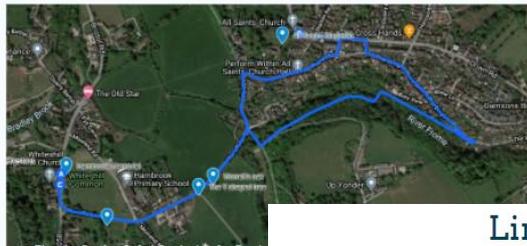
The concept is that, a tree or other natural asset on the route has a 'QR code' placed nearby, which will allow access to a range of information, delivered in different formats such as videos, audio guides, fact sheets and also content aimed at children.

### Walking Routes

Our first step was to ask the community what trees they loved in our local area! A lot of people came back to us with their favourite trees and we mapped these.



Then we started planning routes to take in these and pass other areas of wildflowers or historical importance.



We are hoping to be able to add multiple routes with possibly different content on a seasonal basis. The idea is to help people find out about the amazing natural areas we have on our doorstep here, in the hope that this will make us all want to look after and protect these areas in the future. The educational aspect will help children find out more about trees and wildflowers, grasses

### Links to Digital Content

#### OPTIONS FOR DIGITAL CONTENT

- AUDIO GUIDE
- WEBSITE DETAILS OF TREES, PLANTS, BUGS AND WILDLIFE
- DRONE FOOTAGE UP THROUGH THE TREE LINE
- HISTORY OF THE AREA



Audio guides

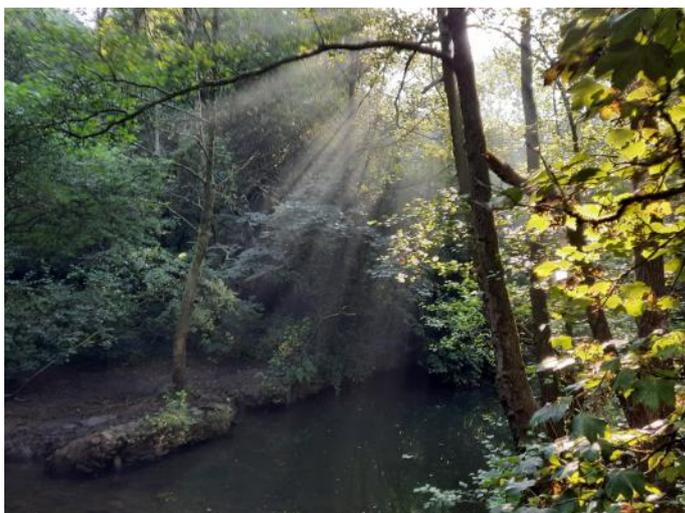
Check in on app

View fact sheets

Drone footage

and bugs in a fun and exciting way so that it engages them and makes them want to go out and about more!

If you would like to help us in this project in any way, please get in touch as we are in need of all sorts of skills to help us, including people to test out the walks. Contact details are on the front page.



## How are Winterbourne and Frome Valley Environmental Group trying to make a difference?

We have many different ways that we are looking to make a difference and they all link back to improving biodiversity or tackling climate change.

**Air Quality Campaigns** these directly tackle the causes of pollution that are a major contributor to climate change.

**Safer Roads and better walking, cycling and public transport Campaigns** in order for people to reduce how much they use cars, we need to have other options in place, so we aim to promote and campaign for various measures to make it easier to move away from reliance on cars.

**Wildflower meadows, rewilding, orchards and tree planting** we have already looked after two areas with wildflowers, and with the grass left to grow long they support a large amount of pollinators and bugs, which in turn will increase biodiversity. We are looking to roll this out to more areas with the support of the Parish Council, we would also like to plant some more trees and a community orchard.

**River quality and cleanliness** it's important to support the wildlife which lives near and relies on the river as well. We work with Bristol and Avon Rivers Trust, and act as 'BART Beacons' to help them support the river. In addition we've done some river clearance and litter picks in and around the rivers and streams.

**Share and Repair Café** one of the first things we did when our group first came together was to organise a local share and repair café, the concept is to resist the current culture of the 'throwaway society' and to repair where possible to keep using old items or 'share' items which are no longer needed so they can find a new home.

**Litter picks** the community pulls together and we carry out regular litter picks, This is because the plastics break down in the environment, causing pollution and getting picked up by animals and birds. It can poison them and get stuck around their necks or feet causing injuries.

**Local food and eating in-season** we aim to promote eating locally grown, and organic produce where possible. There are lots of local options for growing and buying food, we have the Frome Valley Growing Project locally and we aim to promote growing your own food where possible by supporting seed swaps.

**Plastic Free Living** Avoiding plastic where possible helps to prevent pollution by lessening the amount of new raw materials used, it saves energy and reduces greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute towards climate change. There are plenty of ways to reduce usage of single-use plastic and a new Zero Waste shop has just opened up in Frampton Cotterell which allows refills of things like pasta and flour.

**Discussion and Sharing Information** we hope to share useful information to help people make easier changes to living a more sustainable lifestyle.



**THANKS!** Thanks to everyone who allowed us to use their amazing photographs.