



NEWS RELEASE

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Nature has a vital role in tackling the climate emergency says Wildlife Group

Otley's green spaces and gardens have a vital role to play in tackling the climate emergency, says local nature group, Wildlife Friendly Otley which has announced that it is expanding its Otley-wide programme of restoring wildlife to places that have been lost to nature.

The move comes during the United Nations Climate Change COP26 summit in Glasgow at which nations are trying to agree on measures to reduce carbon emissions. Speaking at the opening of the COP26 summit Sir David Attenborough highlighted nature's vital role. "Nature is a key ally, he said, "Wherever we restore the wild, nature will help us capture carbon and help bring back balance to our planet." Nature organisations RSPB and WWF and the University of Aberdeen produced research that shows investment in nature-based solutions could cover a third of the UK's current carbon emissions, helping us to meet our Paris Climate Agreement commitment to keep temperature rises under 1.5 °C by 2050.

Wildlife Friendly Otley's programme will include sowing more meadow wildflower beds, planting trees, and two new projects, *Wildlife in Gardens* and *Feed the Birds*. It is also asking gardeners and allotment holders to plant more wildlife friendly flowers and plants.

Commenting on the plans, Andrew McKeon, a co-founder of the Wildlife friendly Otley said, "Our modern society has become so detached from the wild that we forget that nature is our life support system.

"As a society we have trashed nature for too long. The UK is classed as one of the most nature depleted countries in the world, because of industrialised farming, air and water pollution, neglect and over development."

“It is vital not just for the huge task of tackling the climate emergency but also for the restoration of nature for its own sake. And this where our green spaces and gardens in Otley can make a difference.”

Already Wildlife Friendly Otley members and volunteers have seeded wildflowers to improve eight sites for wildlife and they plan more. The current sites include plots at the Wharfedale hospital, the cemetery, the grounds at a GP practice, the BT exchange and two churches, plus plots belonging to local residents. Ultimately the group wants to strengthen wildlife ‘corridors’ around the town which gives nature more of a fighting chance to thrive rather than being cut off.

The group is appealing for more members and volunteers to join their working groups. Information and guidance for anyone wanting to get involved is available on the group’s website www.wildlifefriendlyotley.org.uk

There is also a video on ‘How to attract wildlife to your garden’ on their pledges page; www.wildlifefriendlyotley.org.uk/pledging

“The beauty of helping wildlife in these ways is that anyone can do something, and every action makes a difference,” added Andrew McKeon. “Being ‘wildlife friendly’ is not difficult and it’s a necessity if we want our children and grandchildren to enjoy experiencing wildlife and benefitting from nature that is healthy and stimulating for us as human beings.”

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Photos.

1. Wildlife volunteers sowing wildflower seeds at the BT Exchange garden in Otley.

Notes: Wildlife Friendly Otley was launched in 2019 and aims to celebrate and raise awareness of Otley’s rich natural environment and encourages individuals, families, schools and organisations in Otley to become more wildlife friendly. The campaign wants to support existing wildlife groups by increasing community involvement and finding innovative ways to protect and enhance local wildlife.

www.wildfriendlyotley.org.uk