



**Avon**  
Wildlife Trust

# COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION

Avon Wildlife Trust Short Impact Summary

Photo credit: Really Wild Lockleaze



# SUPPORTING COMMUNITY-LED CLIMATE ACTION IN BRISTOL & BEYOND

## An overview from Avon Wildlife Trust

Over the last 5 years Bristol's community sector has been pioneering bold and fair community-led climate action. 17 community organisations from across Bristol have been co-producing the city's first community climate action plans with and for their communities, as part of the Bristol Community Climate Action Project.

The fundamental aims of the project are:

- \* Action on climate.
- \* Action on inequality.
- \* Promoting community leadership on climate.
- \* Cocreating community-led climate action plans.
- \* Using a coproduction process.

Through an in-depth community engagement process community organisations worked with artists, hosted community meals and presented radio shows to start accessible climate conversations with their communities. These conversations explored transport, energy, food, waste, nature, buildings, jobs/economy and inequality, and enabled each community to create a unique set of climate priorities as part of a comprehensive community plan.

From late 2022, 6 of these communities have got stuck into making their plans a reality, Avon Wildlife Trust has supported 2 of the 6 Community Climate Action Demonstrator Projects: 'Grow, Cook, Eat' with Ambition Lawrence Weston, and 'Really Wild Lockleaze' with Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust.

Through a new innovative 'Community Ecologist in Residence' role, we've been able to test a hyper-local way of working that maximises the benefits for people and wildlife, in a way which aligns to the needs and visions of the communities we're embedded within.



Community meadow making, Gainsborough Square, Lockleaze

# An overview from our partners

## Ambition Lawrence Weston – Grow, Cook, Eat

*"Food insecurity is a huge issue for residents living in Lawrence Weston. By regenerating our local green spaces to maximise local growing opportunities, and providing community-based training and skills sharing, we will give local people the opportunity and skills to grow and cook their own sustainable fruit and vegetables, which reduces food miles, enables access to lower cost/healthier food options, whilst also improving biodiversity locally." – Donna Sealey*



Herb planting at the allotment, Lawrence Weston

## Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust – Really Wild Lockleaze

*"In co-producing our climate action plan we held 450 conversations over 60 different events. Residents told us they loved their green spaces and were worried about the effect of extensive housebuilding on wildlife. They showed a strong preference for taking action over talking and wanted activities where they could connect with their neighbours and make a difference."*

*– Eleanor Fairbrida*



Community green meeting, Copper's Green, Lockleaze

## Why do we need to do this work?

We know that climate and nature is in trouble. As the decline in wildlife has accelerated in recent decades, it's never been more important to create more space for nature where we live. With the intensification of farming in the countryside, and the spread of urban areas, our neighbourhoods play a vital role in providing a haven for nature. Research shows us that gardens prevent pollinators from starving when farmland nectar is scarce, and home gardens are by far the biggest source of food for pollinating insects, including bees and wasps, in cities and towns across the UK. "Many people feel powerless when it comes to fighting biodiversity loss, thinking it's too big of a problem to tackle on their own. But this study shows that individual citizens can make a big difference." – Dr Thomas Timberlake, University of Bristol

Avon Wildlife Trust works with communities to support community-led action for nature's recovery where they live – bringing benefits to people and wildlife such as increased positive mental and physical wellbeing through nature connection and pride of place, improving climate resilience through habitat creation, and providing vital food sources for our more than human neighbours such as bees, butterflies, hedgehogs, swifts and bats.



# WHAT IS A COMMUNITY ECOLOGIST?

## How we support community climate action

From our experience of working with communities we know that often local people know what they need and have a vision in mind, but just need a guiding hand in getting there. The role of the Community Ecologist is to galvanise hyper local action, bringing streets and neighbours together to craft their vision collectively and make next steps to bring it to reality. They'll also advocate for wildlife and share knowledge and skills in habitat creation, wildlife identification and what nature needs.

Community Ecologists blend wildlife expertise with community engagement and organising principles, we aim to improve a neighbourhood for people and wildlife, and bring them closer together to make a more nature-rich interconnected community, where humans and the more than human world can not just co-exist, but thrive. This is a different way to how ecologists might conventionally work – which is often but not exclusively, alone or in small teams, in nature reserves, on proposed planning sites, or through desk based research, policy, advice, mapping, and planning.



*Eric Swithinbank, Community Ecologist-in-Residence, Avon Wildlife Trust*

## What do we mean when we say ecology?



Ecology is the study of how living organisms interact with each other and their environment. It examines the relationships between plants, animals, and their surroundings, including both living and non-living components. Ecologists investigate how these interactions affect the distribution, abundance, and behavior of organisms, as well as the functioning of ecosystems.

We use our expertise in ecology and community action to support residents to enhance and build an ecological system where they live – where we're meeting the needs of both people and wildlife.



# GROW, COOK, & EAT LAWRENCE WESTON

## WHAT WE DID

We supported residents to plan, create and expand 6 food growing and/or nature sites in the community. This also included church grounds and greenspace maintained by local organisations.

We supported schools to enhance their grounds for nature and engaged teachers and pupils with nature and growing.

We inspired children, young people, and their families to connect with food growing and nature, increasing their confidence levels in accessing and developing their skills through nature-based provision.

We supported community members to build their skills and knowledge in wildlife and nature conservation.



## HOW WE DID IT

We met with interested residents, and through door knocking, leafleting and community conversations transformed these spaces. These included veg planters, herb beds, wildflower meadows and hedgerows, all within a short distance of residents' doorsteps.

We worked with every school in Lawrence Weston in varied ways – we ran sessions to help create space for nature and growing on their site, or we hosted school groups in the community, where they took part in activities such as bulb and vegetable planting.

We hosted open access weekly community allotment sessions where we held fun, engaging activities such as pond dipping, pumpkin growing and fire cooking, on a shared community plot. Different volunteer sessions were held for adults, children, and families throughout the year, in collaboration with Sarah and Noah Venn, Incredible Edible Bristol.

We ran workshops to upskill local people in creating and caring for habitats such as wildflower meadows and ponds, and provided opportunities for community members to learn how to identify and monitor wildlife. We ran a series of community wildlife surveys on local shared green spaces and at the local nature reserve – these were focused on plant communities and water voles. These surveys enabled local people to get out into their local green spaces to learn and feel excited about nature in their neighbourhood – whilst also contributing to national wildlife monitoring datasets and directly influencing the management of the sites into the future.



# REALLY WILD LOCKLEAZE



## WHAT WE DID

Recognising that wildlife doesn't see boundaries, we approached the neighbourhood as a whole by looking at all the areas we could utilise to help nature, and supported the people who live/work there to create nature habitat.

We worked with community members and Bristol City Council on management plans for new habitat created.

We've enabled and supported residents to survey the green spaces we've collectively enhanced for nature.

We celebrated success and a love of nature, deepening nature connection in our every day lives.

We created and delivered events and workshops to upskill, inspire, and engage residents around wildlife and nature conservation.

## HOW WE DID IT

We brought neighbours together to create a communal plan for their local council-owned street green and supported them to make the habitats they had agreed upon. We also worked in partnership with schools, sports centres and churches to improve their grounds for nature, led by their needs. Find out more about our process in the ['How to Green Your Neighbourhood'](#) toolkit.

Met with Council Parks staff to ensure long term sustainable management was factored into plans. All plans were signed off by the relevant Council departments and residents were provided with a management plan and training to care for their community greens.

We collected robust data via floral surveys, bumblebee transects, [FiT counts](#) and [BioBlitz's](#). These allowed us to track our impact, whilst also engaging residents and contributing to national datasets.

By sharing stories ([case studies](#)), [making films](#) and [working with artists to create trails](#). And by thanking and valuing our community members through festivals and social get-togethers.

The formation of the Lockleaze Nature Network linked like minded individuals and organisations across the area – sharing successes, challenges and learning experiences. We ran 'how to' workshops covering wildlifemeadows, mini ponds, butterfly and bumblebee identification alongside community wildlife walks.



# THE NUMBERS

What have we achieved through  
Grow, Cook, Eat and Really Wild Lockleaze?

Equivalent to 3 Premier League  
football pitches of nature-rich  
space, including orchards,  
woodland, hedgerow,  
meadows, and ponds!



5 ACRES OF  
NEW HABITAT  
CREATED




29 WILDLIFE  
SURVEYING  
SESSIONS



81  
COMMUNITY  
HABITAT  
CREATION  
MEETINGS



126 WALKS,  
WORKSHOPS &  
EVENTS



487%  
UPLIFT IN  
FLORAL  
DIVERSITY

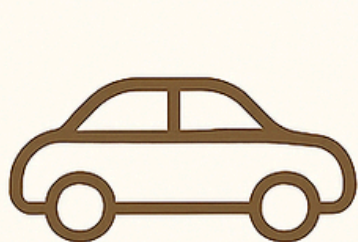




# CARBON CALCULATIONS

Total amount of carbon saved from the atmosphere through habitat creation

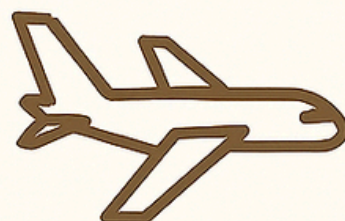
**27,11 TONNES OF CO<sub>2</sub>**



≈ 10,400  
X 15-MINUTE  
JOURNEYS



10 UK  
HOUSEHOLDS'  
ANNUAL  
ENERGY USE



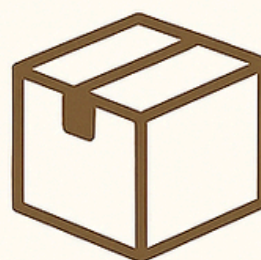
≈ 16  
RETURN  
FLIGHTS



≈ 1,000 KG  
OF BEEF



≈ 1,080  
FAST FASHION  
OUTFITS



≈ 29,000  
ONLINE  
DELIVERIES

\*These calculations have been provided using a [calculation model](#) created by the [Centre for Sustainable Energy](#).



# THE STORIES

## Tales of change

### Community Allotment – Lawrence Weston

“A key focus of the Grow, Cook, and Eat project was to connect local families with food and nature via sessions run at the community allotment. Every Monday and Tuesday in the school holidays, we ran 2.5 hour sessions where local children and young people planted, harvested and cooked veg they had grown on the campfire – everything from courgettes to mushrooms! Alongside the veg growing, together we improved the plot for nature by creating a pond, building bug hotels, sowing wildflowers, coppicing, and creating dead hedges, as well as getting stuck into creative activities such as leaf prints or charcoal making. It’s been amazing to have parents report that at the allotment they eat vegetables that they would never touch at home, because they’ve been involved in the process from planting to plate. In the beginning many of our participants were scared/wary of insects, now they rush to the pond to go pond dipping, check on their bug hotels, and move caterpillars out of harms way – even identifying them and placing on the correct foodplant! We gave the children freedom to explore and have fun, whilst finding opportunities to educate them in ecology, nutrient cycles and food growing along the way!”

– Eric Swithinbank, Community Ecologist,  
Avon Wildlife Trust



Find out more and hear from the community by watching the ‘**Grow, Cook, and Eat Lawrence Weston & the next generation**’ film [here](#).



Read the ‘**Growing With Nature Tool Kit**’ [here](#).

**With love and thanks to Sara and Noah Venn** for their support and dedication to equitable access to food growing throughout the city, you can **read Sara’s posthumous account of the Grow, Cook, and Eat allotment journey** [here](#).



Food glorious food! Allotment, Lawrence Weston



No-dig veg patch! Lawrence Weston



No-dig veg patch! Lawrence Weston



# THE STORIES

## Tales of change



Hogarth Walk, wildflower strip in progress!  
Lockleaze



First year blooms of annual flowers, Lockleaze

### Hogarth Walk Wildlife Corridor – Lockleaze

“Hogarth walk was a key street that had potential to become a wildlife corridor, linking the Sports Centre to Stoke Park. We launched a campaign to help people to create ‘mini meadow’ strips on the verges outside where they live. We door knocked, leafleted and got an original eight people to sign up. We helped them create a strip of wildflowers by digging and flipping the grass/turf with a spade, raking, then sowing in the wildflower seeds. These strips were then cared for by the house they were in front of, with residents agreeing to mow the front half, water the flowers, and cut at the end of summer. We sowed a mixture of annuals, which provided amazing colour and cover crop in the first year, and perennials which will come back year after year (seeds from Emorsgate – used EM4, EM4f and EC2, mixed with vermiculite).

The flowers looked so good in summer that their neighbours wanted in too! We had further six signups which we supported the following season. Hogarth Walk is also part of our community BeeWalk transect and the wildflower strips were always buzzing with bees, proving their impact as stepping stones for pollinators. We also specifically planted kidney vetch, the foodplant for the small blue butterfly, which has been recorded in nearby locations.”

– Eric Swithinbank, Community Ecologist,  
Avon Wildlife Trust



Find out more and hear from the community by watching the ‘**Really Wild Lockleaze: How an Urban Community is Making Space for Nature**’ film [here](#).



**Read Huma and Noman’s story of change**, an inspiring account of how, as a family, they’re making more space for nature and bringing their community along with them.



People power! Tree planting, Lockleaze





Our Lady of the Rosary,  
Lawrence Weston



Pond dipping at the allotment,  
Lawrence Weston



Herb planting at the allotment,  
Lawrence Weston



Herb bed on Thornycroft Close green,  
Lockleaze



Dragonfly larvae at the allotment,  
Lawrence Weston



Guided nature walk,  
Lawrence Weston Moor



Restoring the pond with volunteers,  
Lockleaze Sports Centre



Community garden planning,  
Meerebank, Lawrence Weston



Perennial wildflower patch in bloom,  
Meerebank, Lawrence Weston



Scything Session, Lockleaze



Spalding Close meadow making,  
Lockleaze



Nature pebble painting for the pond!  
Lawrence Weston





# SUCCESSSES & CHALLENGES

## Key learnings to take away

- Having a Community Ecologist embedded within both Ambition Lawrence Weston and Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust has enabled us to build trusted relationships with community members in a shorter period of time. They are experts in their community and have unlocked relationships with key community members.
- We aim to centre community members as leaders of change, this has been a powerful and more sustainable shift in the way we work. The impacts are deeper when we partner with local organisations to make this happen. We know that communities are full of expertise, skills and knowledge and we're guided by their vision and their pace. We also recognise that pro-nature and climate messaging is often best received by neighbours and trusted community leaders, rather than by organisations.
- Celebrating and recognising community power, spirit and action, values local people's time and demonstrates we care for their community as much as they do, whilst giving them the opportunity to connect, reflect and feel proud of their achievements.
- Brightening up the neighbourhoods with wildflowers has brought benefits to people and wildlife – using showy, colourful, annual flowers in meadows has made them easier for people to accept. Over time more valuable perennial species will come through, bringing increasing benefits to insects and the wider food chain.
- Working with the local authority to create space for nature in line with community vision has been a bumpy process, what's key, is to understand the limitations of resource and machinery at the beginning of any habitat creation project. Bringing all the stakeholders together at the start including Parks Teams and Grounds Staff is vital to build working processes that are efficient and effective for everyone. Sometimes compromises need to be made.
- To capture a broad community voice, extensive 'out of hours' working needs to be factored in at planning stage.
- We're increasingly noticing that drier springs = less opportunities to plant wildflowers, hedging and trees. For higher success rates, habitat creation should be planned to take place in Autumn, giving plants chance to establish.

**"A COMMUNITY ECOLOGIST  
HAS BEEN KEY – A VITAL,  
KNOWLEDGEABLE,  
ORGANISING STARTER THAT  
HAS BROUGHT RESIDENTS  
OUT, THEN TOGETHER,  
BREAKING THEIR ISOLATION,  
ENABLING THEM TO ENJOY  
EACH OTHER'S COMPANY AND  
ALLOWING THEM TO ORGANISE  
THEMSELVES."**

**— Lawrence Weston Resident**





**"NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE  
WITH ERIC (COMMUNITY  
ECOLOGIST)"**

**— Lockleaze Resident**



**“A Community Ecologist galvanises the community and gives people the confidence to take action for nature, empowering residents with knowledge and also practical skills such as scything or planting. Species identification skills are also essential to empower communities to take action for nature. If you're managing land for wildlife, you need to be able to identify what is there and also know what the requirements of the species are. This is what a Community Ecologist can provide – unique local knowledge which they can convey in a way that will inspire community members to take meaningful action.”**

**— Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust**



**“Having a dedicated community ecologist in Lawrence Weston has provided numerous benefits by helping us to understand and manage the local environment and continue to build trusted relationships with local residents. As this has been a long-term project, having a Community Ecologist who has been able to involve local residents in restoration projects, rewilding, educational and wildlife interventions has fostered a sense of ownership and increased community well-being, as well as increasing biodiversity and enhancing environmental sustainability in Lawrence Weston.”**

**— Ambition Lawrence Weston**





# WHAT'S NEXT?

As this phase of the project comes to an end, new beginnings emerge for communities across Lawrence Weston and Lockleaze. The work continues as residents lead the charge in creating more nature-rich space in their area, supported by each other, an enhanced community network, their community anchor organisations, along with Avon Wildlife Trust's Team Wilder movement and Wildlife Champions Programme.

Thank you to the National Lottery Climate Action Fund, Bristol Climate and Nature Partnership, our partners Ambition Lawrence Weston and Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust and Sara, and Noah Venn. Thank you to everyone flying the flag for nature where they live – together, we can bring wildlife back.

## Ambition Lawrence Weston

Find out more about Grow, Cook, Eat and Ambition Lawrence Weston on their website [www.ambitionlw.org](http://www.ambitionlw.org)

Read their article 'Future proofing our community: How Ambition Lawrence Weston has changed by being involved with the Community Climate Action Project' [here](#).

## Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust

Find out more about Really Wild Lockleaze and Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust on their website [www.lockleazehub.org.uk](http://www.lockleazehub.org.uk)

Read their article 'Rewilding Our Community: How Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust has changed by being involved with the Community Climate Action Project' [here](#).

## Avon Wildlife Trust

Find out more about who we are and what we do on our website [www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk)

Check out our [Team Wilder](#) resources, stories and advice on how you can take action for nature in your neighbourhood.

