



Somerset
Wildlife Trust



YOUR WILDLIFE

CAMPAIGNING

TOOLKIT

THANK YOU

FOR CHOOSING TO CAMPAIGN

WITH SOMERSET WILDLIFE TRUST

We have entered the
most vital decade for nature.

Campaigning on behalf of wildlife has never been more urgent and Somerset Wildlife Trust wants to **stand up for nature** in our county. Our campaigns encourage everyone to be part of the solution. Through lobbying politicians, raising awareness, gathering evidence and reconnecting people with nature, we can create a **wilder Somerset**.

This toolkit contains all the tips and tricks that you will need to become a campaigner for wildlife.

Welcome to the team!



Contents

Somerset's conservation charity	4
Our vision of a wilder Somerset	5
Campaigns for nature	6
Two easy steps to get started	7
Contacting your local decision-makers	8
Digital campaigning	9
Face-to-face campaigning	10
Objecting to a housing development	11
Position statements	12
Glossary	13



Somerset's leading conservation charity

We are the county's leading conservation charity, committed to **protecting wildlife** and inspiring a **lifelong love of nature**.

We manage nature reserves across the county and preserve places of wonder. Our climate is in crisis and nature needs our help. Together we can protect the future. Join us.

Our history

The Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation, which later became **Somerset Wildlife Trust**, was formed on **Saturday 14th February 1964** when a group of individuals were brought together by their concerns for wildlife and habitat protection in Somerset.

What started as a few passionate individuals has paved the way for real community involvement and conservation work in the county. The Trust now has **over 60+ nature reserves** that act as havens for wildlife, works on landscape-scale conservation projects to provide essential networks for nature and inspires and supports people to take action for nature.



Somerset Wildlife Trust has changed significantly over the past 60 years, but we are proud that what remains constant is the passion and commitment of the people at the heart of the Trust – the boundless enthusiasm and hard work by our 90+ members of staff, 300+ volunteers and 23,000 members.

Being part of the wider grassroots movement of Wildlife Trusts means we can have an even bigger impact with our campaigns and lobbying work to ensure the natural world is placed at the forefront of policies and forward planning. This support and collaborative working has never been more crucial. We have entered the most vital decade for nature and we all have a role to play in protecting what's important to us.

Let's continue to work together to create a wilder Somerset, for our wildlife, our wellbeing and our future.

UNSPOILT PLACES BECOMING FEWER

THE inaugural meeting of the Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation was held at Taunton on Saturday. The audience included several from Wells representing local organisations.

The Earl Waldegrave is the President and Dr. Ernest Neal is to be chairman with Dr. R. J. C. Savage as vice-chairman. Mr. John McGeoch is to be chairman of the Scientific Committee. Mr. Peter Tolson is the new general secretary.

The meeting was addressed by Mr. David Attenborough, the well-known explorer and naturalist.

He said that the wild and unspoilt places were becoming fewer and fewer, and animals once plentiful were now rare.

"We have exterminated many species, and indeed, during the last century one species of animals has become extinct every year," he said.

"At present, there are 1,000 species hovering on the brink of extinction."

Mr. Attenborough referred to insecticides, the dangers of which, he said, perhaps even now were not fully known. There was also destruction of animals' habitats by bulldozers and heavy earth-moving machines which could rip down a forest in one day.

He did not want to stop houses being built or to restrict industry, but development should not be thoughtless and reckless.

He went on, "If we allow wild animals to disappear or to be carelessly squandered the time will come when none are left."

"If we allow that to happen, our children and the generations to follow will rightly convict us of a criminal neglect."

"I believe the work of conservancy is vital to us all."

Central Somerset Gazette, 30 Oct 1964

Our vision of a wilder Somerset

To stop the deterioration of our natural world in its tracks, we need to think globally, while acting locally. What we need to create is a wilder Somerset. One where wildlife is thriving, every person has access to nature and our habitats are all connected. Somerset should be a safe haven for wildlife and an example to which other counties can aspire.

Late spring mornings should ring out with the song of the nightingale, our evenings should be illuminated by glow worms. Hedgehogs should be snuffling through our gardens, bees and butterflies should gently flutter by and starlings should dance in the sky in their thousands. Every person should experience walking through a wildflower meadow, brimming with insects and colours galore. Or be able to stroll through an ancient woodland to the beat of a woodpecker's drum.

The people of Somerset need to experience all of our county's natural spectacles, and we need to ensure these will never be lost.

Somerset Wildlife Trust looks after more than 60 nature reserves, and these provide refuges for wildlife within our ever-growing society. These nature reserves can be a lifeline for species, but they only make up 0.5% of Somerset. We need to see **30% of land and sea protected for nature by 2030** to make this sustainable.

From rivers to road verges, hedgerows to ponds and gardens to parks, we need to create **Nature Recovery Networks** that will restore our landscape and connect up the wild places. We need more gardens in Somerset to become mini nature reserves and create these corridors that will not only help bring wildlife back, but help it become more resilient in the face of climate change.

Creating a Nature Recovery Network is not only about connecting our habitats for wildlife but connecting people with wildlife and green spaces once again. The natural world never ceases to inspire. We need to see people of all backgrounds engage with the natural world at every age and stage of life. Creating a wilder Somerset isn't just a vision, we know it's possible.

If just **1 in 4** people in Somerset are inspired to take action for wildlife, together as a movement we can create positive change for nature.

There's a lot that needs to happen, but we are ambitious for our county's future. We all have a role to play in protecting what's important to us.

Nightingale photo: Chris Gomersall/zoovision





Contents

Photo: Matthew Roberts

Campaigns for nature

Our campaigns are aimed around **creating positive change for nature and inspiring the people of Somerset with the wonders of our natural world.**

Somerset Wildlife Trust, as part of The Wildlife Trusts movement, has a long history of campaigning for nature – speaking out against laws or developments that would put habitats or species at risk, creating protected areas and zones that will join up our landscape and ensuring the environment is a priority to local decision-makers.

Here are some of our recent campaigns, that have helped make a difference for people and wildlife.

Peat extraction

Peat extraction for gardening and growing directly contributes to the decline of our peatlands, with knock-on impacts for the interlinked nature and climate crises. We have been at the forefront of the fight to protect Somerset's peatlands since the 1960s, with our recent 'Say No to Peat Compost' and 'Bogs Not Bags' campaigns playing a key role in our overall messaging during 2024's general election.

We're also working to restore our peatlands through our Westhay Moor Peatland Restoration Project. To date, Wildlife Trusts have restored over 120,000 football pitches worth of peatlands in England alone.

Retained EU Law (REUL) Act

Thousands of campaigners backed the work to try and shape the REUL Act (which is now law), giving Ministers sweeping powers to remove or replace thousands of environmental laws, without public consultation or scrutiny by Parliament.

Waking up to Water Quality

For us, water quality is of ongoing concern across the county, but never more so than for the land we manage on the Somerset Levels and Moors. We have been calling for stronger legislation and existing laws to be followed, as well as supporting our members and supporters to contact their local MPs and voice their opinions and concerns. Water quality was also one of our five asks for the incoming Government in the run up to 2024's general election.



Photo: Terry Whittaker/2020VISION

Planning and Development

With changes to England's planning system having been proposed by the Government, The Wildlife Trusts have been busy speaking up for nature to be taken seriously as part of the proposed changes, alongside other changes to the planning and development system.



Photo: Luke Massey/2020VISION

Say No to Neonics

Neonicotinoids (neonics) are a group of pesticides that are highly harmful to the environment and wildlife. We have been vocal in asking our members to support e-actions to help ensure that these chemicals do not harm wildlife, rivers or soils across the county. This campaign links to the wider Action for Insects campaign, which asks supporters to become an insect champion and help insects at home.

Saving species

Wildlife Trusts across the UK are working hard to not just slow, but reverse the decline of wildlife. In some cases, there is what is known as a 'keystone' species missing from the landscape. One such species that we're supporting the reintroduction of is the beaver, which has led to the development of Somerset's first Beaver Management Strategy.



Kingfisher photo: Jon Hawkins - Surrey Hills Photography

Two easy steps to get started

By campaigning with us, you can be an **advocate for wildlife in your community.**

There are many different ways to be a part of campaigns: engaging in digital e-actions to ensure projects and laws are debated in Parliament, communicating directly with local politicians to ask for their support, raising awareness through social media or at an event, or simply through spreading the word amongst your friends, family and in your community, to mobilise more people to create a wilder Somerset.



1

Get to know our active campaigns

Have a look at our active campaigns on our website and sign up to our e-newsletter to receive regular email updates on our campaigns: somersetwildlife.org/campaign-nature

2

Get involved with our community

Follow our social media pages, and share posts on campaigns you're passionate about!



Facebook
@somersetwildlifetrust



Twitter (X)
@SomersetWT



Instagram
@somersetw



Threads
@somersetw



YouTube
@somersetw



LinkedIn
Somerset Wildlife Trust



Photo: Katrina Martin

Contacting Members of Parliament

You can contact your Member of Parliament (MP) and ask them to support Somerset Wildlife Trust's campaigns. If you don't know who your MP is, you can find out by using the Government's MP directory:

members.parliament.uk/members/Commons

All-party parliamentary groups, select committees and general committees are all examples of groups made up of MPs who look at specific policies or topics. Why not see whether there are groups who might have a particular interest in hearing about one of our campaigns? For example, the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee. You can find all the committees and their members on the Government's committees directory:

committees.parliament.uk/committees

Attending an MP's surgery

The most direct way to contact your MP is to attend an MP surgery; this provides an opportunity to speak on a one-to-one basis with your representative. Here you can share your concerns for wildlife and suggest how your MP can help. Surgeries are usually held weekly, and details can be found on your MP's website.

Tip

You might only get a short time slot with your MP so make sure you prepare what you would like to say. Deciding on one clear ask will help you to stay on topic and get your point across.

Writing to an MP

Sending a letter is the Government's recommended way to contact your MP. You can address your letter to:

**(Your MP's name)
House of Commons,
London,
SW1A 0AA**

You can also contact them by email. MP email addresses can be found on the MP directory:

members.parliament.uk/members/Commons

If you are contacting the MP for your constituency, you must include your address at the bottom of your letter or email so that they know you are part of their constituency. If you don't, they might not respond.

Tip

Stick to a clear paragraph structure. First, state the problem, then back it up with facts and figures and finish with your request. Tell them why it is important they get involved. Making the problem relatable to them will give you a better chance of success. Remember to reference where you sourced any evidence from to give your information credibility.

Signing petitions

When there is a Government policy or proposal we would like to change for the benefit of nature, we launch a petition. We ask our supporters to get involved by signing the petition. If the petition reaches 10,000 signatories, the Government must respond. If it reaches 100,000 signatories, the proposed policy change will be considered for debate in parliament. By sharing our petition on social media, you are helping to create a chain reaction that results in a debate in parliament.



Contents

Hedgehog photo: Jon Hawkins - Surrey Hills Photography

Digital campaigning

Social media is an effective platform for spreading messages. We utilise different platforms to inspire everyone to get involved in our campaigns for wildlife, and you can too!

Tag Somerset Wildlife Trust in your posts and use the relevant campaign hashtag, such as #BogsNotBags, to help us reach wider audiences.

Facebook

As the most used and engaged-with platform in the world, Facebook is an important platform on which to share our campaigns.

You can use Facebook to share our content, create posts and stories about our campaigns and to raise money.

Tip

One of the best ways to spread messages on Facebook is to **post in Somerset-specific groups and pages**. Are you part of any Facebook groups in which you can share our campaigns?



Twitter (X)

A simple platform to start discussions and comment on the work of others is X (formerly called Twitter). This makes it a great tool for campaigning as we can celebrate wins for wildlife, share our work and engage directly with those who we want to lobby on a public platform.

You can promote our campaigns on Twitter by **retweeting** our tweets and **writing your own tweets**. By tagging influential people and MPs in your tweets and quoting retweets you can bring them into the conversation, ask them questions and hold them accountable.

Instagram

As a social media platform which has lots of ways to share content, Instagram is the perfect place to **share footage of you and your friends and family taking part** in our campaigns. You can share posts to your grid and film and share video to your stories and reels (videos under 1 minute 30 seconds).

Look out for our stories and highlights (saved stories that appear above our grid) for key campaigns content.

Face-to-face campaigning

To create change, people need to feel connected with nature and therefore care about its future.

So how do we make more people care? We need to **inspire people beyond the conservation community**. Why not talk to your **neighbours, colleagues, local community groups and friends** about taking part in one of our campaigns? By keeping up to date on our current campaigns it will be easy to slip them into everyday conversations:

- You could talk to a friend who likes gardening about collecting a free packet of wildflower seeds to help pollinators.
- Inspire your neighbours by telling them how they can help save wildlife by signing one of our petitions.
- Chat with a colleague about your experience of taking part in 30 Days Wild and how they too can reconnect with nature over June.
- Go one step further and speak to groups in your local community who would benefit from hearing about our campaigns. For instance, you could speak to a local gardening group about how they can protect precious peatlands by going peat-free at home.

Tip

Enthusiasm is infectious! If those around you see how excited you are to take part in a campaign, there is a good chance they'll want to too!

Learn about key issues

Want to increase your knowledge and understanding of various topics and issues? Get to the heart of the biggest environmental topics of the day and their relevance to Somerset by attending one of our Wilder Matters webinars, live online events from Somerset Wildlife Trust. Visit somersetwildlife.org/events to find out what webinars we have coming up.



Objecting to a housing development

You might become aware of a housing development that has a potential impact on local wildlife. The **Local Planning Authority** (LPA) planning systems welcome people with an interest in a proposed development to comment on its application. If you wish to make an impact it is good to be prepared and have as much supporting information as possible, you should:

- Be aware of the deadline for responses.
- Look at the application documents on the LPA website.
- Check whether the development is on a site that has been allocated for development within the Local Plan.
- Check if an ecological survey has been carried out. LPAs can request developers to carry out surveys. If no wildlife information accompanies the application, you may wish to contact the planning officer to discuss this.
- Check if there have been any previous planning applications or proposals for the site. If an application has been refused in the past, the reasons may still be valid.

Writing your response

Here are some useful tips to help you formulate your response:

- Ensure your letter is addressed to the case officer and clearly states the planning application reference number and address.
- Clearly state whether you are objecting or supporting an application and the reasoning for this decision.

- Keep the letter brief and polite; avoid using emotive language ensuring your letter is based on planning issues rather than opinion.
- Include information about important habitats or other wildlife found at the site. Remember to attach any supporting evidence. Photographs may help to illustrate your concerns.
- Include any relevant policies from the Local Plan or national legislation.
- If possible, suggest how the impact of the development on local wildlife could be reduced and how it could benefit biodiversity.



Note

While most developments are covered by LPAs it should be noted that Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), such as new harbours and offshore wind farms, are submitted to and examined by the Planning Inspectorate. Find information on proposed NSIPs, the planning process and advice on how you can get involved: infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Position statements

Somerset Wildlife Trust publishes a position statement when some of the biggest issues and projects that will affect wildlife are announced.

Somerset Wildlife Trust's focus is based on getting the **best deal for wildlife**. In practice, this might mean campaigning against a major infrastructure development because it's not in the best interest of wildlife.

At the point at which a major development is approved, our attention must turn to getting the best deal for wildlife through **mitigation**. The alternative – that we do nothing – is not an option.

It is often necessary to plan for mitigation in parallel with our campaigning, but we ensure that mitigation is not used as a pawn in the approval process.

Read through our position statements to learn our stance on current issues and developments:
somersetwildlife.org/position-statements-and-policies

Thank you

Now you have the tools, the only thing left to do is to start campaigning for nature!

If you have any questions or would like to share your success stories with us, please contact us at teamwilder@somersetwildlife.org





Boy gardening photo: Evie and Tom photography

Glossary

Advocacy – Any action that speaks in favour of, recommends, argues for, supports or defends a cause.

All-party parliamentary groups – Informal cross-party groups that have no official status within Parliament. They are run by and for Members of the Commons and Lords, though many choose to involve individuals and organisations from outside Parliament in their administration and activities.

Ambassadors – Those who help to raise the profile of campaigns, fundraisers and other events using their own platforms.

Awareness campaign – A campaign that aims to educate people about the challenges faced by wildlife and what we can do to protect nature.

Biodiversity – The variety of plant and animal life in the world or a particular habitat.

Campaign – A planned set of activities carried out over a specified time frame to achieve social or political change.

Case officer – The person in the council who deals with planning applications. They carry out site inspections and resolve problems.

Citizen science – The collection and analysis of data relating to the natural world by members of the public, typically as part of a collaborative project with professional scientists.

Ecological survey – The process whereby a proposed development site is assessed to establish any environmental impact the development may have.

Engagement campaign – A campaign that aims to connect people with Somerset wildlife and the work we do to protect it.

Environmental policy – A Government's chosen course of action or plan to address issues such as pollution, wildlife protection, land use, energy production and use, waste generation, and waste disposal.

General committees – An umbrella term referring to committees appointed by the House of Commons on a routine basis to consider proposed legislation in detail.

Guerrilla demonstration – Actions or activities carried out in an impromptu and often surprising way to show support or opposition to something.

Horticulture – The practice of garden cultivation and management.

Lobbying – When an individual or a group tries to persuade someone in Parliament to support a particular policy or campaign.

Local Plan – A plan that sets out the vision for future development in the borough. Every area in England and Wales should have an up-to-date Local Plan in place and review it at least every five years.

Local Planning Authority – The Local Government body that is empowered by law to exercise urban planning functions for a particular area.

Mitigation – The action of reducing the severity, seriousness, or painfulness of something.



Boy gardening photo: Evie and Tom photography

Glossary

MP's surgery – Sessions where MPs can invite their constituents (people who live in the area they represent) to make appointments to meet with them to discuss issues affecting them or problems they are facing.

Nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) – Major infrastructure developments in England and Wales that bypass normal local planning requirements.

Natural capital – The elements of the natural environment which provide valuable goods and services to people.

Patron – A well-known person who lends their name to an organisation as a way of supporting it.

Peatland – A type of wetland which are among the most valuable ecosystems on Earth: they are critical for preserving global biodiversity, provide safe drinking water, minimise flood risk and help address climate change.

Planning Inspectorate – An executive agency of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government with the responsibility to make decisions and provide recommendations and advice on a range of land use planning-related issues across England and Wales.

Policy – A statement of the Government's position, intent or action.

Policymakers – All people responsible for formulating or amending policy.

Political campaign – A campaign that aims to influence policy often through lobbying, demonstrations or petitions.

Position statement – A formal, usually detailed written statement, regarding a single issue, that articulates a position or viewpoint of an organisation.

President – A person who lends support to a charity by taking on a high-profile figurehead role.

Public demonstration – A march, gathering or another type of public event that people take part in to show their opposition to something or their support for something.

Roundtable – A form of discussion during which several participants can debate set topics, usually with one moderator.

Select committees – Small groups of MPs or members of the House of Lords that are set up to investigate a specific issue in detail or to perform a specific scrutiny role.

