



CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY PROTOCOL
Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst Parish Council
Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee (CCBC)
APRIL 2025

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Climate Change and Biodiversity Protocol

This protocol is designed to give landowners & land managers and other interested parties:

- An introduction to the projects and surveys that the CCBC is conducting, including their aims and the method statements;
- A full risk assessment which is included at Appendix A;

and as such it forms part of the CCBC agreement with landowners and land managers.

All the projects are undertaken by volunteers.

General – Applicable to all projects

1. Activity will only take place on land where owners and tenants have given permission.
2. Volunteers enter land at their own risk.
3. Volunteers for the CCBC will be insured for third- party liability through the Parish Council's insurance.
4. Volunteers will adhere to the risk assessment (see Appendix A), including lone working, and will always have a mobile phone and a first aid kit with them.
5. The landowner/tenant has a responsibility to inform the CCBC of any known hazards or areas with permission exclusions to the CCBC prior to the commencement of any work being undertaken .
6. Data collected will be jointly owned by the landowner/tenant and the CCBC. Consent will be required from both the landowner/tenant and the CCBC before any information is shared with the public or other bodies.
7. Volunteers will travel to the site using their own or public transport. Parking will be made available by the landowner if this is possible, Otherwise parking will take place on the roadside or in laybys or other public spaces, with full regard to:
 - other traffic being able to pass,
 - no obstruction of gateways
 - No parking on verges where damage to the vegetation may occur.
8. Volunteers will ensure that gates are left as they are found, open or closed, as they progress with the survey.
9. Where livestock is in a field, an on-site risk re-assessment will be conducted. If considered that access at that time is inappropriate, volunteers will divert to another site.
10. Volunteers may work alone or with others. Lone working requirements will be followed where necessary, to ensure that the risk assessment requirements are met.

Currently all projects are funded through the Wingate Wind Farm Committee, for which we are extremely grateful.

Extended Habitat survey

Aim

The extended habitat survey is a baseline survey of the habitats within the parish and incidental sightings or evidence of other taxonomic groups. This will give a baseline against which to measure improvement or decline of our biodiversity over the coming years. It is hoped that the survey will provide a useful tool for farmers and land managers within the parish to identify their biodiversity needs which could be included in their agri-environment /land management schemes and thus contribute to halting the decline of, and increase, our biodiversity.

Method statement

1. The habitat survey will be conducted by volunteers with botanical experience using the UKHab methodology. This will ensure consistency with other local and national habitat surveys and enable comparison of data in repeat surveys.
2. Habitat surveying will be conducted during the period from April through to October in any one year. It is expected that the full survey will take up to five years to complete.
3. Volunteer surveyors will enter the habitat via gates or stiles as appropriate and record the plant species present. To ensure accurate sampling the site will be walked on a random transect to avoid edge and gate effects. Plant species observed will be recorded and a scale of abundance using the DAFOR scale will be allocated to each species.
4. During the habitat survey any indication of other taxonomic groups will be recorded. These will be incidental observations of mammals, birds, invertebrates [mainly butterflies], amphibians and reptiles.
5. The presence of bats may be recorded using a bat detector on specific site visits. Any bat survey will only record the presence of bats in the habitat and no attempt will be made to identify roosts or the location of roosts in any buildings or trees without express request from the landowner/tenant. It should be noted that we are not trained bat surveyors and are limited to presence of species only.
6. Following the field survey data will be recorded as follows:
 - spatial data will be mapped on a geographical information system using QGIS software.
 - Abundance data for each habitat sample will be recorded digitally on survey sheets designed for this purpose. These will be linked to the QGIS project.
 - Each habitat will be condition scored following the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) scoring system. The BNG condition scoring is part of the method used to assess habitat condition before and after development design for planning application purposes. This is included in the habitat survey as it is considered that it will provide a valuable tool to assess where habitat enhancement projects can be best targeted. This will be available to each landowner for use for their own purposes such as private habitat management projects or in support of wider agricultural land management grant applications. BHPC CCBC will not be judging land management practices or instructing landowners on how to manage their land. This is a device to help, should you wish to use it.
 - Data for other taxonomic groups will be recorded in target notes for that habitat parcel. Target notes are linked to the QGIS project.

The Project Lead for this project is: **Desmond Barker.**

Contact Details: barker.d@hotmail.com

Nest Box Scheme

Aim

A previous nest box scheme in the 1980s targeted the Nuthatch, Pied Flycatcher and Redstart. This was an extremely successful scheme which increased the numbers of these species in the parish. Those nest boxes have now rotted or disappeared, so the current scheme is designed to replace and increase them and extend the range of them. The Spotted Flycatcher has been added as a further target species. All these species are either in decline locally and nationally and are easily helped by a nest box scheme.

Method statement

A nest box scheme to erect 300 nest boxes in the parish started in 2023 and is expected to end in 2026.

1. Boxes are designed with specific species in mind (nuthatch, red start, pied and spotted fly catchers) and are constructed accordingly to different sizes and different nest hole diameters as suggested by the British Trust for Ornithology.
2. Each box is constructed in a workshop from planks of wood divided into parts representing side, top lid, front, base and back plate. They are fixed together with exterior grade wood glue and 4 x 30mm screws.
3. Given the different habitat requirements of these species the boxes are placed at different heights and in different locations on trees along the streams of the parish.
4. Each box is identified by the name of the target species, and its location entered on a GPS map. The box locations will also be recorded on the QGIS Habitat Management Project for the Group.
5. The boxes are brought to the farm locations by pickup truck and then - with the farmer's permission - taken either by pickup truck, quad bike or trailer closer to the host site.
6. A minimum of two people (preferably 3) then carry the boxes and ladder to the host trees.
7. Either Wellington boots or firm walking boots will be worn, and gloves used. Waterproofs are worn when necessary.
8. The ladder is placed against the chosen tree and firmly pressed into the ground beneath. One person holds the ladder in place while another climbs it - the nest box is handed to this person, who then holds it against the tree in position and drive stainless steel screws through it to fix it to the tree through two holes on the base plate above and below the box itself.
9. Stainless steel screws are used because of their greater longevity and to enable them to be easily removed, if necessary, even after years of being in situ.
10. The box is then logged on the GPS system and the target species identified.
11. People erecting these boxes do so at their own volition and accept that safety is their own responsibility and not that of the farmer/ landowner who has given them permission to enter and cross their land in order to erect boxes on the trees and at the sites chosen.
12. All information obtained from this nest box scheme is to be owned jointly by the above committee and the landowner/ farmer on whose land box is situated and can only be made public by their joint consent and approval.

The Project Lead for this project is: **Roger Powell.**

Contact Details: rogerwpowell@googlemail.com

Hedge Laying Project

Aim

The hedge laying project aims to reinvigorate and improve our hedges for biodiversity and to increase the skills base within the parish and wider locale through training.

Method statement

1. Target hedges are selected through consultation with landowners.
2. The CCGB will liaise with the trainer and the landowner to select a date for a training event.
3. All training is carried out by an accredited trainer from the National Hedgelaying Society. The trainer is a very experienced hedge layer and trainer who is fully insured.
4. The trainer will supply PPE, first aid kit, tools and training to small groups.
5. Trainees will work in groups of two or individually, as appropriate, under the supervision of the accredited trainer. Each group will be allocated a 10-metre length of hedge to lay.
6. Working with bill hooks and axes, trainees will face up the hedge as appropriate for the style being used. Shrubs will be individually laid and tidied as required. Older thicker stems may be laid by the trainer using a chainsaw. If appropriate for the style stakes will be driven in to the ground at intervals and bound together with binders.
7. Brash will be left in a pile as agreed with the land manager. It will be the land manager's responsibility to dispose of the brash.

The Project Lead for this project is: **Jamie Whicker**.

Contact Details: jamiwhicker@hotmail.com

Verge Meadows

Aim

This project aims to botanically diversify species-poor verges in the parish using seed of local provenance.

Method statement

1. Project site locations have been identified by local knowledge of the verges within the parish. They are on public and private land and have poor floral species-diversity and landowner permission will be sought prior to commencement of any activity.
2. Recipient sites will be prepared by scything existing vegetation, cuttings will be baled/removed. See below for scything method statement.
3. The ground will be raked to provide areas of disturbed soil.
4. Local provenance and origin wildflower seed procured from a local supplier and will be hand broadcast across the site in autumn. It will then be trampled in to ensure good contact with the soil.
5. At the start of the following growing season the grass will be cut back, cuttings removed, and then left until mid to late August before further cutting. Hay will be hand baled and removed from site.
6. A First Aid Kit will be available, in the field, at all times. All volunteers will be:
 - briefed on relevant health and safety matters
 - notified of First Aid kit arrangements;
 - informed of the location identification in case of emergency services being required.

Scything and general considerations

1. Scything of the project area is undertaken as a training workshop under the supervision of an experienced trainer from the John Seymour School for Self-Sufficiency. New volunteers will undergo training from the trainer. Volunteers who have previously attended the workshop will be allowed to work more independently under the trainer's supervision, to ensure correct use of the scythe and the maintenance of safe operating conditions.
2. Scythes are provided by BHPC CCBC, the trainer, or by the volunteers if they have their own. PPE (gloves, sturdy footwear, appropriate outdoor clothing) is the responsibility of the volunteers. Gloves are not necessary, but some may choose to wear them.
3. Prior to scything the location of the project site will be notified to the Chair of BHPC CCBC using a 6-figure grid reference or What3Words location for use in the case of emergencies. It should be noted that in the back lanes of Northumberland What3Words is not always accurate, so a grid reference is the preferred method of site location. The leader of the workshop will also carry this information written on paper, clearly identified as such and stored with the first aid kit, so that any member of the working party can access it in case of emergency.
4. Volunteers will meet at the designated location. If possible, car sharing will be utilised to reduce the number of cars on the roadside. Parking will be considerate so as not to block gateways, public highway, private tracks or damage the verge. Parking will be in

accordance with the Highway Code, with no parking on corners etc. If on private land, the landowner's direction will be followed for access.

5. Following the scything activity, all equipment will be removed from site, maintained and correctly stored.
6. Cut material will be processed in accordance with the wishes of the site owner. This may involve the CCBC organisers removing material or baling it. Baling is currently carried out by the CCBC at an offsite location using a hand powered custom-built machine. This requires users to have undertaken the video training. Baling can only be undertaken in the presence of two competent operators.
7. Bales will be stored in a dry and secure facility until taken to the local Hay Show.

The Project Lead for this project is: **Jackie Scarpa**.

Contact Details: ninechicks@outlook.com

Water Quality Testing

Aim

Testing in the River Coquet and its tributaries within the Parish is being conducted to monitor the water quality and to assess what the major pollutants are with a view to reducing it and increasing biodiversity and public enjoyment of the watercourses.

Method Statement

CCBC are working alongside the Coquet River Action Group which is a coalition of voluntary groups covering the length of the River Coquet with similar aims. The Coquet River Action Group (CRAG): Water Quality Improvement and Testing Protocol has been produced and has been adopted by the Brinkburn and Hesleyhurst Parish Council. This working document provides the CCBC volunteers of methodology and data handling procedures.

This is a Citizen Science project; data will be shared with the Environment Agency which has provided test kits and training.

The Project Lead for this project is: **Mark Fenwick**

Contact Details: mark@brinkburnnorthumberland.com

LITTER PICKING

The Issue

Litter endangers our environment, it's harmful to wildlife, livestock and our economy. It pollutes our highways, countryside and waterways. Every roadside verge within the parish has litter the majority of which has been thrown from cars. Fly tipping can also be a problem on the quiet country lanes of the parish. Residents should be vigilant and report such offences and try to gather evidence if possible. Littering is a criminal offence. A community effort is needed.

Aim/Long Term Vision

A litter free Parish through the removal of current litter and to educate the negative impacts litter can have. Every piece of litter removed or recycled, helps to restore the natural environment aiding wildlife and flora. Roadside verges are critically important micro habitats. The whole community, visitors and neighbouring parishes will benefit. Benefits will be measured visually and with consultation with the local community.

Projects

By removal of litter and education regarding its effects. We aim to organize group litter picking events and support individuals in the ongoing efforts, encourage local support and perhaps have an 'Adopt an Area' scheme as litter returns. It can be very rewarding and good for fitness too! People enjoy meeting others within the community, and it fosters a pride in the Parish.

Pilot a litter free Parish Poster campaign with a view to the introduction of permanent 'Litter' signs on the Highway in the future*

Investigate the siting, permission and costs of permanent litter bins at appropriate hotspots within the Parish.*

* These will incur additional costs to be included in future funding applications.

We aim to liaise with the community and encourage a 'Just Get Out & Do It' attitude towards litter picking and encourage sustainable consumership. Anyone from the community will be encouraged to partake in group events for problem areas or individually from 1-25 persons. The projects will work in partnership with the Northumberland County Council's Litter Picking Programme Any volunteer can register with NCC as a litter picking volunteer which gives benefit of insurance.

Risk Assessment

The Project has adopted the Keep Britain Tidy's **GENERIC RISK ASSESSMENT SEE APPENDIX B**

Appendix A: Risk Assessment for all CCBC projects

Hazard	Potential harm	Likelihood	Severity	Risk factor	Mitigation	Residual likelihood	Residual severity	Residual risk factor	Comments
Uneven, slippery ground	Slips, trips and falls Bruising	4	1	4	Be observant Check ground before operations Take precautionary action	3	1	3	Low Risk
	Broken bones	3	2	6	Wear appropriate clothing and footwear Dynamic risk assessment	2	2	4	Low risk
	Head injury	3	5	15		2	5	10	Medium risk
Hot, sunny weather	Dehydration	4	2	8	Carry water bottles Ensure hydrated before starting	1	2	2	Low risk
	Sunburn	5	4	20	Wear trousers, long-sleeved shirt, hat Apply sunscreen regularly	1	4	4	Low Risk
	Heat exhaustion/stroke	3	4	12	Do not work in extreme heat Seek shade if caught out Always carry water	1	4	4	Low risk
Cold wet weather	Hypothermia	3	4	12	Wear appropriate clothing for conditions Carry a warm drink	2	4	8	Medium risk
Aggressive animals	Injury from livestock and dogs	2	4	8	Conduct a dynamic risk assessment Keep away from livestock Avoid site if necessary	1	4	4	Low risk
Bites and stings	Lyme's Disease Weil's disease Allergic reaction	1	4	4	Wear trousers tucked into socks and long sleeves Check for ticks on return home Carry tick fork in 1 st aid kit	1	4	4	Low risk
	Weil's disease	1	4	4	Do not put bare skin in stagnant water	1	4	4	Low risk
	Allergic reaction	3	5	15	If known to be allergic carry epipen Use insect repellent	2	5	10	Medium risk

Vegetation	Head injury from overhanging branches	3	3	9	Be aware Move slowly and carefully	2	3	6	Low risk
	Skin irritation	4	1	4	Wear trousers and long sleeves Avoid any known irritants	1	1	1	Low risk
Infection from contaminated water	Gastrointestinal infections and upset	2	4	8	Wear protective gloves if sampling water Do not touch stagnant water Wash hands before eating and drinking	1	4	4	Low risk
Chemicals from testing kits	Gastrointestinal infections and upset	2	3	6	Wear protective gloves if sampling water Do not inhale or drink Read hazard warnings on containers Follow training instructions Store chemicals properly	1	3	3	Low risk
Fast flowing water/any water	Falling in Hypothermia Drowning	4	5	20	Wear appropriate footwear Ensure river bank/location is stable Do not lean on parapets, walls, tree branches etc Check for flooding before leaving home Re-arrange test date if conditions dangerous	2	5	10	Medium risk
Ladders	Falling	3	5	15	ALWAYS work with a partner to hold ladder Do not work in wet, slippery, windy conditions Ensure plenty of time, do not rush Haul equipment up on a line, have both hands for the ladder	2	5	10	Medium risk
Tools, Machinery	Cuts, blisters	3	4	12	Wear protective clothing/PPE as appropriate; Follow instructions	2	4	8	Medium risk
Lone working	Incapacity from injury/illness	1	5	5	ALWAYS leave information of survey location, expected return time, phone number with a buddy. Tell buddy when you return.	1	5	5	Low risk

					Carry a phone in pocket (not bag) at all times. Have buddy's phone number. Alert buddy if plans change. If no signal, stick to original plan no matter how inconvenient.				
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Health and Safety Risk Matrix

		Health and Safety	Probability/likelihood of risk realisation				
			Almost impossible (1)	Not Likely to occur (2)	Could occur (3)	Known to occur (4)	Common occurrence (5)
			A freak combination of factors would be required for risk to be realised	A rare combination of factors would be required for risk to be realised	Could happen when additional factors are present otherwise unlikely to occur	Not certain to happen but an additional factor may result in risk being realised	Almost inevitable that risk will be realised
Potential Consequences	Severe (5)	One or more fatalities. Irreversible health problems	5	10	15	20	25
	Major (4)	Partial or medium term, disabilities or major health problems	4	8	12	16	20
	Moderate (3)	Lost-time injuries or potential medium-term health problems	3	6	9	12	15
	Minor (2)	Minor, very short-term health concerns on recordable injury cases.	2	4	6	8	10
	Insignificant (1)	Inherently safe, unlikely to cause health problems or injuries	1	2	3	4	5

Extreme risk	High risk	Medium risk	Low risk

Appendix B



GENERIC RISK ASSESSMENT – LITTER PICKING ACTIVITY		
Assessors Names:	Assessment Date:	Review Date
Area:	Identify People at Risk:	

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Lack of information and awareness	Volunteers	All volunteers should be given a briefing Safety Talk, covering the above risks and general information about correct use of the equipment, the site	None	Group Leader	On the day	
Sunburn Extreme cold or wet weather	Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First-aider on site, with access to First Aid waist bag Wear suitable clothing (gloves at all times, sleeves and trousers) In hot weather, wear hat Apply sunblock before beginning the activity and re-apply as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider suspending work if weather is sufficiently extreme 	Group Leader	On the day	
	Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear warm layers and waterproof clothing Wear thick socks and sturdy boots or shoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider suspending work if weather is sufficiently extreme 	Group Leader	On the day	
Cuts and grazes Stings or bites from vegetation or insects	Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First-aider on site, with access to First Aid waist bag No unprotected feet – wear sturdy shoes, boots or trainers Wear suitable clothing (gloves at all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake an on-site review of the area to be cleaned, identify any hazards and brief volunteers before 	Group leader	In advance of the day or on the day	



		<p>times, sleeves and trousers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All volunteers to use litter-pickers to collect rubbish - NEVER scoop up items by hand • Be wary of uneven ground and trip hazards including trailing vegetation 	event begins			
Slips, trips and falls	Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear supportive and slip-resistant footwear • Take care when negotiating property steps • Observe ground and aware of potential trip hazards • If in doubt don't carry on if an area looks slippery or dangerous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Leader will remind workers to take care when pavements are slippery from rain, leaves, ice, snow, etc. • Group Leader will check clothing and footwear • Group Leader will consider suspending work if weather is sufficiently extreme 	Group Leader	On the day	
Working near roads and car parks	Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children to remain under supervision and in sight of a responsible adult at all times • Briefing to include warning on roads, speed limits and any known hazards • Briefing to include warning to always focus when crossing streets and be aware of surroundings at all times • Be aware of cars, potentially trying to park, maintain vigilance, give warning to others of approaching vehicles 	Check for any unusual hazards on the day itself	Group Leader	On the day	



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children not to pick litter from the road but to remain on pavements and paths Tabards or hi-vis to be worn at all times 				
Syringes and medical waste	Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site survey prior to event to check for any evidence of syringes. Volunteers finding syringes should not touch them, but immediately notify the Group Leader who will arrange disposal via the local authority. All work must then cease in this particular area Any accidental piercing by syringe should be immediately treated at medical practice or A & E (see below) 	Remain vigilant at all time during the clean up and end the clean up immediately if syringes are found	Briefing by Group Leader to all volunteers	On the day	
Manual handling	Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteers advised to be aware of their own limitations by the Group Leader during the briefing and not lift heavy items found during the clean up Volunteers with pre-existing injuries are not to lift bags or heavy items No more than one bag at a time to be carried A trolley to be used where bags or other items are too heavy to lift safely 	Group Leader to ensure this is covered in the safety briefing delivered ahead of the clean up starting	Group Leader	On the day	
Dog Fouling		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advise on issue of dog fouling during the briefing Do not touch dog fouling If a volunteer steps in dog faeces, clean shoes if possible If found warn others in the vicinity 	Group Leader to deliver briefing on the day	Group Leader	On the day	
Hazardous chemicals	Volunteers	Any suspicious drums, materials or containers with contents not identifiable to be left untouched and Environment	Site survey at beginning of clean up	Group Leader	On the day	



		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adopt recommended posture if confronted by a dog – do not look in eyes, look down, do not run, pull limbs into body• Retreat slowly• Visit A&E if bitten or attacked• Report attack to the Police				
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