



Imagine a Biodiversity Park for Betchworth, Buckland, Brockham & Box Hill

We are familiar with the idea of a National Park whose purpose is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of these areas by the public. A Biodiversity Park has similar aspirations but its primary concern is to understand, conserve and enhance local biodiversity and use of nature-based solutions for societal challenges.

Why does biodiversity matter?

Biodiversity, the variety of life on Earth, is not just about the survival of plants and animals. It's about our survival and the flourishing of our children and grandchildren too. From the air we breathe, to the soil and the plants we grow for food, and the water we drink, biodiversity plays a crucial role. But today, this precious asset is under threat. Rampant deforestation, land use practices, pollution and climate change, are all contributing to a loss of biodiversity. The result is a planet less capable of supporting life.

There is abundant scientific evidence that biodiversity has been declining at an alarming rate in recent years. A [UN report](#) published in 2019, warned that one million species - out of an estimated total of eight million - are threatened with extinction. Everything is connected and because organisms interact in dynamic ecosystems, the disappearance of one species can have a far-reaching impact on a food chain and the ecosystem.

We need a healthy, thriving natural environment to meet Net Zero goals and build resilience to climate change. The Environment Act 2021, requires every county in England to produce a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Surrey County Council is developing its strategy during 2024 and Surrey Wildlife Trust is responding with its own local strategy to restore, create and connect habitats and respond to the challenge of a significant decline in wildlife. Parish Councils are also expected to develop their own strategies to support a healthy, thriving natural environment and meet the challenge of climate change.



A Biodiversity Park?

But what if there was a solution that not only helps to conserve biodiversity but also promotes sustainable living? Enter the concept of a Biodiversity Park. A Biodiversity Park is more than just a green natural space. It's a living, breathing interconnected diverse set of habitats and ecosystems that aim to conserve and promote biodiversity while also educating people about the importance of sustainable living.

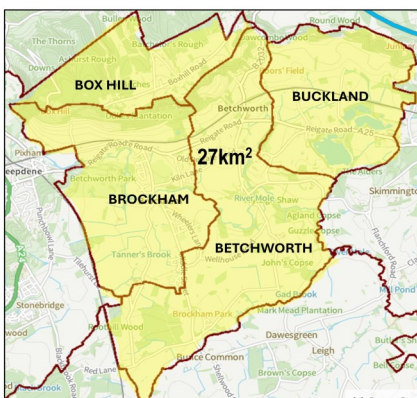
Picture a vast landscape of diverse, interconnected habitats and ecosystems - woodlands, grasslands, wildflower meadows, wetlands, rivers, streams, lakes, farmland, hedgerows, ditches, road verges, gardens and allotments,

teeming with life. Providing a sanctuary where a wide range of plant and animal species can flourish, with the freedom to forage, find shelter, migrate, and reproduce.

Imagine the sense of pride and ownership within our community, if by working together, we could help nature halt the decline in wildlife and loss of habitats. We can, and many of us already do, help nature by recognising the needs of wildlife in our gardens by building bird feeders or shelters, making and maintaining a small pond, planting trees and shrubs and sowing wildflowers. We can also engage in voluntary work for organisations like Surrey Wildlife Trust or the National Trust to protect native flora and existing habitats, restore degraded areas, improve soil health, water quality, and habitat and ecosystem connectivity. And we can contribute to citizen science surveys, helping to develop knowledge about the flora and fauna that live alongside us. The recently formed WhatsApp Nature Group for people who live in and around Betchworth, supports a thriving community who enjoy and appreciate nature, who are willing to share their knowledge, experiences, photos and videos of nature and learn through sharing.

A Biodiversity Park is more than just a place, it's a living, breathing testimony to the power of community involvement in caring for our natural world. It is a practical demonstration that we are as much a part of nature as any other living thing, and that we have the potential and agency to help nature and benefit from the experience. They offer a multitude of benefits – ecological, economic, social, and educational.

- **Ecologically**, they help to conserve biodiversity and mitigate the effects of climate change. A Biodiversity Park could encourage landowners to work together to manage for wildlife at landscape scale.
- **Economically**, they can generate revenue through tourism, research and attracting grants for land management aligned to environmental policies.
- **Socially**, they promote health and wellbeing by providing spaces for recreation, relaxation and community-based activities and projects. A walk amongst nature can be one of our most uplifting experiences.
- **Educationally**, they serve as outdoor classrooms for learning about biodiversity and sustainable living.



A Biodiversity Park for Betchworth, Buckland, Brockham and Box Hill?

This vision of a Biodiversity Park inspired the Re-Betchworth charity to apply for and win, a National Lottery Community Fund grant, to nurture and facilitate a discussion aimed at exploring the feasibility of establishing a Biodiversity Park. The Park would weave together the communities and nature in the beautiful parishes of Betchworth, Buckland, Brockham and the iconic Box Hill. Over the next 12 months, a small band of volunteers will facilitate discussion between residents, Parish Councils, and environmental, non-government organisations (ENGO's) who are willing to consider and discuss the idea.

This is an exciting community-led, bottom-up initiative and we invite you to join our conversation by sharing your views and offering your ideas and suggestions. To find out more please visit www.biodiversitypark.uk . We particularly welcome practical help, if you would like to join our small band of volunteers please email Biodiversity Park Volunteers at biodiversitypark1@gmail.com.

Acknowledgements

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