

WILD ABOUT DEVON



INCREASING BIODIVERSITY THROUGH COMMUNITY
WILDLIFE FUNDING 2025-2026

Devon Communities Together



Wild About
Devon



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wild About Devon (WAD) 2025–26 grant programme has continued to strengthen community-led environmental action across Devon and Torbay. This year, the programme supported **22 community environmental projects** with a total grant allocation of **£5000**, empowering local organisations to restore habitats, enhance biodiversity, and engage residents in hands-on conservation.

Demand for funding remained high, with applications received from a diverse mix of community groups, Parish and Town Councils, educational settings, environmental organisations, churches, and social enterprises. The grant review panel continued to prioritise projects that demonstrated strong community involvement, feasibility, and measurable environmental benefit.

During 2025–26, funded projects delivered a wide range of outcomes, including habitat creation and restoration, species conservation, community training, and procurement of tools and equipment to strengthen long-term environmental stewardship. **20 projects** were completed during the reporting period, with **2 projects ongoing**.

This report provides an overview of programme delivery, investment, outcomes, and challenges, and highlights priority areas for future years. The WAD Community Wildlife Fund remains part of the wider Wild About Devon initiative, coordinated by the Devon Local Nature Partnership and funded by Devon County Council.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

£5,000

total grant
funding
distributed



52

applications
received, with

21 approved
for funding



NEW

7 new
projects

14
established
projects
enabled to
grow

3,714 M²

of habitat created or restored across 7 projects



16

wildlife boxes
installed, benefiting
4 species

42

new plant species
introduced



300

people directly
engaged INCLUDING
Community members, students,
NHS teams, and volunteers



1,408.5 volunteer
hours reported



I. INTRODUCTION

The Wild About Devon Community Wildlife Fund (WAD) is a community-focused micro-grant scheme delivered by Devon Communities Together (DCT). Entering its fourth year in 2025–26, the programme continues to support grassroots organisations to take practical action for nature.

Environmental pressures, including climate change, habitat decline, and loss of biodiversity, continue to intensify, making local action more important than ever. The WAD fund enables individuals and groups to contribute meaningfully to conservation, build community resilience, and strengthen connections with the natural environment.

2. GRANT OVERVIEW

The application window for 2025–26 opened in June 2025 and closed in August 2025, attracting 52 applications, significantly exceeding available resources.

The programme aimed to:

- 🌿 Support community-led conservation projects
- 🌿 Enhance local wildlife habitats
- 🌿 Increase environmental education and community engagement
- 🌿 Share knowledge and build skills within communities
- 🌿 Sustain long-term environmental management through tools, equipment, and training

All funding was allocated by Devon Communities Together, requiring a structured review process to ensure fair and strategic grant distribution.



Pictured: new wildlife pond at St Sidwell's Community Centre, Exeter

3. GRANT DELIVERY

A total of 52 applications were submitted:

- 🌸 16 wildlife/community groups
- 🌸 2 Parish/Town Councils
- 🌸 5 educational establishments
- 🌸 0 churches/church groups
- 🌸 28 CICs/charities
- 🌸 4 other organisations

Of these:

- 🌸 22 were successful
- 🌸 30 were unsuccessful due to limited funds

Successful projects represented a wide range of environmental themes and organisational types, reflecting strong and increasing engagement across Devon and Torbay. A full list is below:

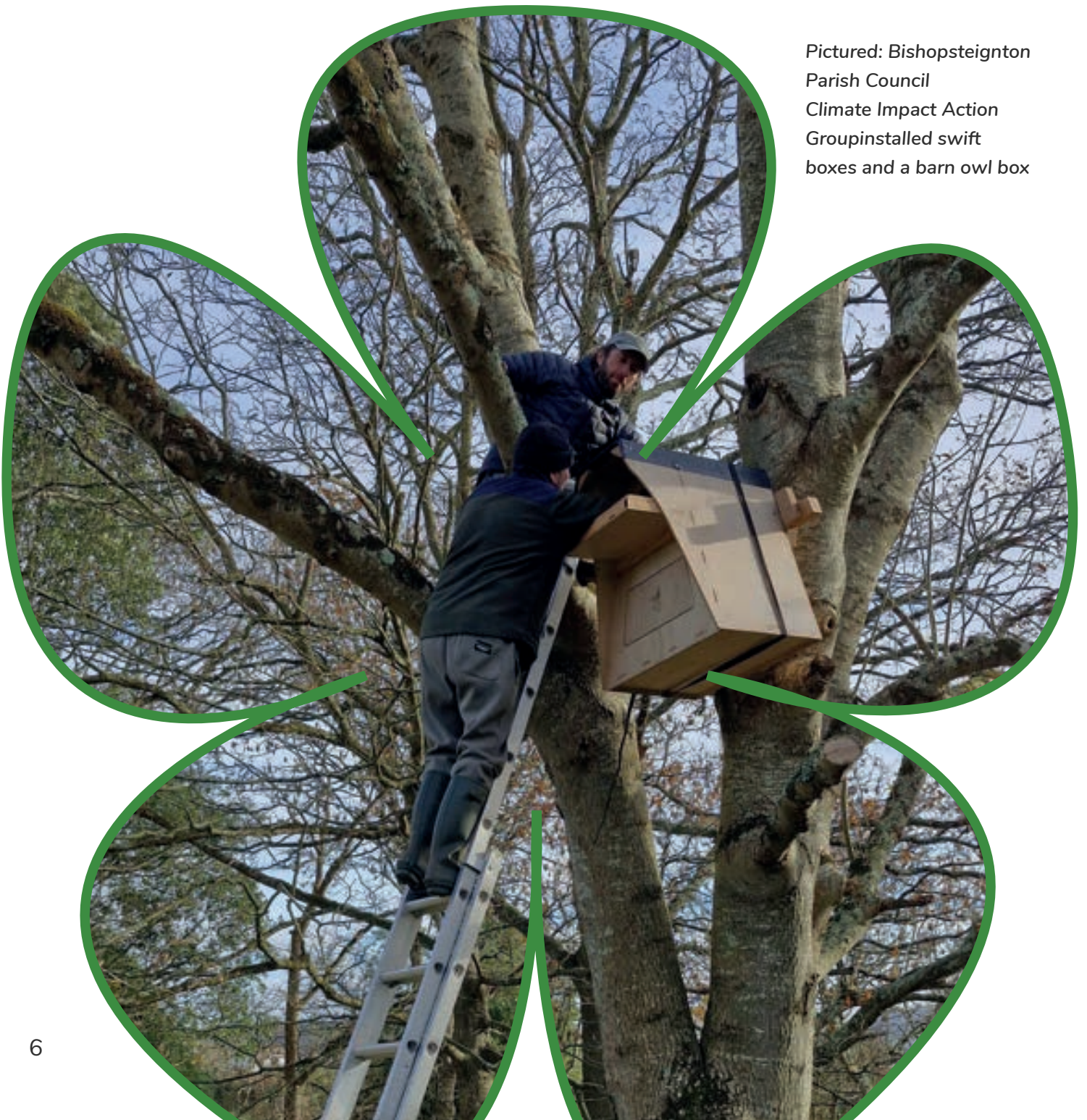
- 🌸 Friends of the River Axe – Supporting and Engaging Volunteers Project
- 🌸 Bishopsteignton Parish Council and Community Committee for Climate Impact Action – Swift and Barn Owl Boxes Project
- 🌸 The Deer Wood Trust CIC – Irrigation and Pailing Project
- 🌸 Moorhaven Community Meadow – Scything Project
- 🌸 Tale Valley Trust – Volunteers Equipment Project
- 🌸 St Sidwell’s Community Centre – Hedgelaying Training for Volunteers and Pond Equipment
- 🌸 Landkey Millenium Green Trust – Wildflower Seeds, Plants and Trees
- 🌸 Half Moon Community CIC – Nest Boxes Installation Event
- 🌸 1st South Brent Scout Group – Pond Installation Project
- 🌸 Bovey Buzz – Swift Boxes and Call Systems
- 🌸 Green Paths Environmental Education – Wildlife Habitat Materials and Activity Resources
- 🌸 Denbury Nature Group – Nest Boxes Installation
- 🌸 Bradninch Town Council – Tawny Owl Boxes
- 🌸 Jubilee Wood and Meadow Volunteers – Scythe Training Course
- 🌸 Sandford Primary School – Bug Resources and Education Materials, and Native Wildflower Project



Pictured: Great Torrington Town Council's Jubilee Wood and Meadow Scythe Mowing project

- 🌿 Horsemanship for Health CIC – Pond Landscaping and Planting Project
- 🌿 Sustainable Crediton – Planting and Potting Project
- 🌿 Newton Environmental Wellbeing – Community Coppicing Kits
- 🌿 South Devon College – Wildflower Seed Planting Project
- 🌿 Sustainable Hatherleigh – Scything Workshop
- 🌿 Dainton Copse Forest School CIC – Forest School Sessions
- 🌿 Torrington in Bloom Association – Bird and Bat Boxes, Hedgehog Houses and Bug Hotels Project.

*Pictured: Bishopsteignton
Parish Council
Climate Impact Action
Group installed swift
boxes and a barn owl box*



CASE STUDY: LANDKEY MILLENIUM GREEN—ENHANCING WILDLIFE HABITATS THROUGH COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERING

Project Overview

In 2025–26, Landkey Millenium Green undertook a series of habitat improvement works funded by Wild About Devon Grant Scheme along with other funds. The aim was to expand and enhance biodiversity across the village green, developing richer wildflower, woodland, and riparian habitats while strengthening the area's long-term ecological value. These works were delivered by their dedicated team of more than 60 volunteers and 9 trustees, who collectively contribute over 1,200 hours annually to maintaining and improving the green.



What They Delivered

1. Established a 700 sqm Wildflower Meadow

During August and September, the existing meadow area was cut using our mechanical scythe and fully raked to prepare the ground. In October, they sowed a high-quality wildflower seed mix purchased with grant funds. Growth is currently minimal due to the early season, but they expect germination and flowering later in the year.

2. Planted Seasonal Bulbs to Enhance Early-Year Biodiversity

In November, two native bulb species (Wild Daffodils and Snake's Head Fritillary) were planted near the stream that borders the green. Both were funded through the grant and will create a valuable nectar source for early pollinators in spring. The group also received bluebells and snowdrops from a local supplier which have now been planted throughout the woodland area to increase seasonal ground flora.

3. Expanding the Woodland Area

The existing 400 sqm woodland is being expanded to 600 sqm as part of the group's long-term habitat creation plan. This includes the planting of approximately 40 native tree saplings in 2025, helping diversify the canopy and improve habitat resilience.

Pictured: Landkey Millenium Green Volunteer sows seeds

4. Improved Volunteer Tools

The group purchased hay forks for meadow management by sourcing them locally from Mole Valley Farmers. Although slightly more expensive than initially forecast, collecting them locally avoided postage costs and supported a local supplier.

Community Impact

Volunteer Engagement

The project has been driven entirely by volunteers and trustees, who provide a vast range of support, from litter picking to hedge cutting and machinery servicing. Their commitment ensures that improvements to the green are fully community-owned and sustained.

Positive Local Feedback

Local residents using the green have expressed appreciation both in person and via social media. The visible

improvements and ongoing care have strengthened community pride and support.

Future Ecological Enhancements

The group will continue to develop the green as a wildlife-friendly space and are currently in discussions with their local hedgehog group to explore further opportunities to support hedgehog habitats.






Conclusion

This grant has enabled substantial biodiversity improvements across the village green, contributing to a thriving natural environment for wildlife and a cherished public space for local residents. Although the visible impact is still emerging due to the season, the groundwork completed this year sets the stage for meaningful ecological change in the months ahead.



4. PROMOTING THE GRANT SCHEME

DCT continued to promote the grant programme through:

-  A dedicated webpage (total views in 2025–26: 1,346)
-  A light-touch social media campaign
-  Updates shared through the WAD Facebook Group (membership as of Mar 2026: 729)
-  Existing networks across the Devon LNP and community sectors
-  BBC Radio Devon interview 31.07.26

Social media engagement (2025–26):

Channel	Number of posts	Reach	Interactions
Facebook*	10	5,338	71
Instagram	10	1,081	52
X	4	155	3
Totals	24	6,574	126

*excluding posts shared in the WAD Facebook group

Facebook remained the strongest channel for reach and engagement, consistent with previous years.






Pictured: Example social media content for Instagram



5. GRANT OUTCOMES AND IMPACT



The fund has supported grassroots community groups and organisations to create huge impact across the county, with some key quantifiable data below to highlight the project's outcomes over the year.

Biodiversity and Habitat Enhancement

-  3,714m² of habitat created or restored
-  16 wildlife boxes installed
-  42 new plant species introduced

Key focus areas included hedgerow planting, meadow restoration, woodland conservation, pond creation, and pollinator-friendly planting.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

-  300 people engaged through workshops, events, training and conservation sessions
-  1408.50 volunteer hours contributed

The Wild About Devon grants programme has delivered significant, measurable benefits for biodiversity, community participation, and local environmental stewardship across the county. Over the past year, funded projects have supported healthier ecosystems and improved the resilience of local wildlife. Groups focused on hedgerow planting, meadow restoration, woodland conservation, pond creation, and pollinator-friendly planting. These are actions that enhance connectivity between habitats and strengthen the ecological network across the county.

Alongside environmental gains, the programme has played a vital role in mobilising and supporting community upskilling and involvement. The level of participation, volunteering and involvement demonstrates strong engagement and ownership at a grassroots level.

Overall, the programme has proven highly effective in enabling communities to take meaningful, locally-led action for nature. By combining habitat enhancement with learning and participation, Wild About Devon is strengthening both the natural environment and the community capacity needed to protect it for the future.

Pictured: Deer Wood Trust's new nursery extension



CASE STUDY: BOVEY TRACEY SWIFT PROJECT

Project Background

The Bovey Tracey Swift Project, delivered by the Bovey Tracey Wildlife Group with support from the Town Council and specialist partners, set out to help reverse the decline of the local swift population by installing high-quality, well-situated nest boxes in key locations across the town.

Swifts have seen significant declines across the UK in recent decades, largely due to the loss of traditional nesting sites in older buildings. This project aimed to address that challenge locally by installing new nest boxes on suitable structures in Bovey Tracey, informed by expert guidance and community enthusiasm.

Pictured: Volunteers, business and public sector coming together to support the swifts



The project was designed both as a practical conservation effort and as a means to engage residents, businesses, and young people in celebrating and protecting one of the town's most iconic summer visitors.

Project Delivery

The project combined awareness-raising, expert consultation, and careful planning to ensure long-term success:

- ☘ Community engagement through local media, sharing information about declining swift populations and encouraging public interest.
- ☘ Consultation with local and national swift experts to identify existing colonies, assess habitat needs, and evaluate potential sites around the town.
- ☘ Meetings with the Mayor and Town Council, leading to a coordinated plan for installation locations, funding requirements, and next steps.
- ☘ Advice from Action for Swifts, which offered technical support, guidance on box types, and troubleshooting throughout.
- ☘ Detailed site assessments, including collaboration with an architect, English Heritage, and the Teignbridge District Council Biodiversity Officer, to ensure suitability which is particularly important when siting boxes on listed buildings.

Partnerships with building owners, including Make SouthWest and the owner of the Old Town Hall, who granted permission and showed strong enthusiasm for supporting the project.

These activities resulted in the installation of the first three swift boxes and the purchase and planned installation of two additional boxes.

Project Impact

Three new swift boxes were installed on a prominent Grade II listed building near the River Bovey, close to an existing swift colony. This location offers ideal feeding opportunities and flight access which strengthens the chances that swifts will use the boxes in the future. Two additional boxes have been purchased and will be installed on the Old Town Hall, an important and highly visible location that will help extend swift habitat across the town centre.

Residents will soon be able to identify all box locations and follow project updates, making the returning swifts more visible and audible across the town. The project has sparked local curiosity, positive press, and growing willingness among building owners to participate. The local primary school has been contacted and is planning a talk and guided tour in spring 2026, helping children learn about swifts, conservation, and the unique wildlife of their town.

Challenges and How They Were Overcome

Securing permission to install boxes on heritage buildings required extensive communication, research, and multi-agency collaboration.

Working with the Devon Swift Project, Teignbridge District Council, Action for Swifts, and the Biodiversity Officer ultimately ensured compliance and approval. Swifts have specific nesting requirements, including north- or east-facing walls, insulation to avoid overheating, suitable flight paths, and low disturbance. Several site visits, expert assessments, and town-wide walks were required before the final locations were selected.

What Partners Have Said

“Very glad our building was identified as being a good location for the swift population and very happy to have helped make it happen! I have passed your thanks on to the roofers.”






Hannah at Make South West




Pictured: one of the new swift boxes

Future Plans

The project's long-term ambition is to continue building habitat and awareness for swifts across Bovey Tracey. Next steps include:

-  Installing the final two boxes in the immediate future.
-  Ongoing monitoring of local swifts and logging sightings on Swift Mapper.
-  Tracking activity at the boxes, particularly listening for “banging” behaviour in spring—an early sign of swift interest.
-  Continued publicity and educational outreach, including magazine articles and press features with Town Council support.
-  School engagement, with planned talks to help children learn to identify and appreciate swifts.

-  Encouraging local businesses to install boxes where suitable, supported by the Business for Bovey group.

What Receiving the Grant Has Meant

The funding acted as a powerful catalyst, raising awareness of swifts in Bovey Tracey and enabling the community to act ahead of the summer season. While swift uptake may take 7–10 years, the project has laid the foundations for a sustainable, community-led conservation effort that will benefit future generations.




The work has already inspired interest from businesses, residents, and schools and has created a sense of collective pride for the town's natural heritage. As one volunteer put it, the project encourages everyone to “look up” and listen for the swifts in their community.

Pictured: a swift



7. PROJECT DELIVERY CHALLENGES

Projects reported the following challenges:

-  9 organisations delayed due to adverse weather conditions
-  5 experienced limited volunteer/staff capacity
-  6 reported other issues, including health and safety due to the ladders being too short which required additional time to resource longer ones, listed building consent delays, and cost and shipping logistics.

8. VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK

“The pollinator project has helped me learn about different plants which had been really useful for my own garden”

Volunteer, Sustainable Crediton

“It’s always a joy to help Lisa and Marc at The Deer Wood Trust with anything which will progress their tree growing goals. Their knowledge and skills are nature-cherishing and perfect for giving the best chance possible to native and rare breed trees, be it around the areas of structural/landscape or nurture/grow/protect. Being part of their noble aims is so rewarding and seeing how their woodland thrives as a consequence is just wonderful.” Volunteer, Deer Wood Trust

“I always wanted to learn to scythe, I’d tried to learn myself in the past unsuccessfully. This course has given me the confidence to know what I’m doing and I’m really happy”

Participant, Sustainable Hatherleigh project

“This grant has made a genuine difference to our whole school community. It has strengthened our commitment to outdoor learning and given our pupils practical opportunities to take responsibility for the natural spaces around them. Through hands-on experiences, they will develop the skills, understanding and sense of stewardship needed to care for





wildlife now and in the future. What makes this support particularly special is the way it will extend beyond Sandford School. By using the resources across all three schools in our federation and contributing to biodiversity efforts in our local churchyard, the project will build collaboration and shared purpose within the wider community. Its impact reaches far beyond our own grounds.” Head, Sandford School and Nursery

“Thank you for arranging our visits yesterday, it was great to meet you and the respective site owners. We were really happy with the box installations. The last box we installed was not at Heathfield Farm in the end, but at an adjacent site (neighbours of). As the habitat was so good, we will be going back here for 3 more years as part of our research project.” Daniel Whitelegg, Barn Owl Trust attending Denbury Nature Group

9. CONCLUSION

The Wild About Devon 2025–26 programme has once again demonstrated the critical role of community-led action in protecting and enhancing Devon’s natural environment. Despite ongoing environmental challenges and high levels of funding demand, the projects supported this year delivered meaningful and measurable impact.

Key recommendations for future years:

-  Increase funding capacity to meet strong demand
-  Offer longer delivery windows to support project sustainability
-  Encourage more consistent impact recording
-  Expand networking and knowledge sharing across projects

Devon Communities Together extends its appreciation to all community groups, volunteers, and partners who have contributed to this year’s achievements. We look forward to building on this success in 2026–27.

Pictured: a child enjoys Dainton Copse Free Forest School

