

# Conservation Update

## Welcome to the Conservation Update!

We aim to communicate conservation and sustainability matters to MOD Conservation Groups and reach out to others involved in the disciplines across the estate. Please circulate to those you feel may be interested.

This update comes from the DIO's Environmental Engagement team who are also responsible for MOD Conservation Groups, Sanctuary magazine and awards.

## Get involved!

Have an interesting project you are working on? Taken some great pictures or videos of wildlife? Want to update us on something of interest? Don't hesitate to send it across to [DIO-ConservationGroups@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DIO-ConservationGroups@mod.gov.uk) along with any questions.

## Conservation Group Grants

We are now accepting bids for the Conservation Group Grant. The Conservation Group Grant consists of £10,000 of Conservation Stewardship Funding which has been put aside for the sole use of MOD Conservation Groups. If your Conservation Group requires any tools, equipment or other items that may facilitate the completion of a conservation project at your site then your chairperson can bid for monies. Over the last year the Conservation Group Grant has been used to purchase barn owl nest boxes, wildflower seed for the improvement of pollinator habitat, bird rings, trail cameras, invertebrate surveying equipment and bat detectors for surveying foraging bats.

To apply for a grant, the Conservation Group Chairperson or Secretary should email [DIOConservationGroups@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DIOConservationGroups@mod.gov.uk) to request an application form.

The Environmental Engagement team can offer advice on potential grant applications so please get in contact if you require any assistance. We would love to highlight some of the groups that have used the grant so please email us a few words about how the grant has helped your Conservation Group and attach a couple of pictures. We will use these in upcoming Updates and on our SharePoint page.



Red Admiral butterfly © Iain Perkins

## Useful contacts

Access and Recreation:  
[DIOTS-ACCESS@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DIOTS-ACCESS@mod.gov.uk)

Archaeology and Historic Buildings:  
[DIOTS-HeritageTeam@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DIOTS-HeritageTeam@mod.gov.uk)

Climate Resilience:  
[DIO-TSClimateResilience@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DIO-TSClimateResilience@mod.gov.uk)

Conservation Groups, Forestry and  
Scottish Environmental Liaison:  
[DIO-ConservationGroups@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DIO-ConservationGroups@mod.gov.uk)

Ecology:  
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Environmental Planning:  
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Sanctuary magazine and Awards:  
[DIO-Sanctuary@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DIO-Sanctuary@mod.gov.uk)



Sainfoin bee © Iain Perkins



Oak processionary moth  
© Forestry Commission



Salisbury Plain at dawn © Iain Perkins

## Conservation Group Meetings

We kindly request that Conservation Group Chairs send us an invite to their Conservation Group meetings, to our email [DIOConservationGroups@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DIOConservationGroups@mod.gov.uk)

We will try our best to attend in person, however if this is not possible we would like to attend online. If you can provide this facility then please let us know.

## Forestry Update - by Steve Holdsworth

### Ash dieback disease

Once an ash tree *Fraxinus excelsior* is infected with ash dieback disease, it rapidly starts to lose condition, with small trees dying within a season. Larger trees can withstand the disease for longer but are structurally weakened and soon start shredding limbs. Unlike many trees, ash timber becomes inherently weak once dead and therefore cannot be used. The most significant ash dieback on MOD land to date is in Kent, North Yorkshire and Ashdown Copse. There are currently no effective strategies for managing the disease. The removal of trees in infected areas has little effect as the fungus lives and grows on leaf litter on the forest floor.

### New woodland across the UK Defence Estate

Expectations are that across three sites in England and Scotland there will be 25ha of new planting in 2023/2024. Planning is also underway for a further 15ha across an additional three sites. The UK Government has committed to increasing the tree planting rates across the UK to 30,000ha per year by the end of this Parliament. This equates to 300ha per year in tree cover on the MOD estate. DIO considers that, with sufficient resource, the annual MOD ambition should match this 300ha of new woodland per year across the UK. This new woodland will be registered with the UK Woodland Carbon Code and therefore have

carbon credits calculated by an independent 3rd party.

### Oak processionary moth

The oak processionary moth is a native of central and southern Europe, where it is widely distributed but predators and environmental factors usually manage their numbers. However, its range has been moving steadily northwards mainly due to the movement of live oak trees in the nursery trade. Oak processionary moth was first discovered in the UK in 2006. Larvae can be found from April to June. The newly hatched have a brown body and dark head, but as they grow they become lighter and have a single dark stripe running down the middle of their back. Please see picture top left. The larvae feed together in groups and when not feeding they congregate in nests made of white silk spun under a branch. The hairs present on larger larvae contain a toxin *thaumetopoein* which is potentially harmful to humans and animals. As caterpillars emerge from eggs in April the most effective control method is to treat affected oak trees with insecticide during the spring and summer when the caterpillars are out. With careful application and timing the treatment is successful with minimal damage to other species. Most spraying is done from ground level and supplemented with the removal of nests using vacuum equipment.

## Local Nature Recovery may be happening near you!

The Government has made legally-binding commitments to end the environmental declines in our country and to allow for our nature to recover. We expect local nature recovery strategies to propose actions such as the:

- creation of wetlands
- restoration of peatlands
- planting of trees and hedgerows
- more sustainable management of existing woodlands and other habitats like grasslands.

These actions are intended to help nature itself and to also help improve the wider natural environment. They should also involve a wide range of groups to make sure that local nature recovery strategies reflect local priorities and benefit from local knowledge. Examples of these groups include:

- landowners and managers
- government organisations, such as the Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and National Highways
- environmental charities
- businesses
- local groups and communities.

To read more [click here](#). Check your local council website to join in any initiatives near you.



*Selfheal and other low growing flower species are great for pollinators © Iain Perkins*

## Because they care... by Iain Perkins

Dave and Paul from Landmarc Support Services' Ground Maintenance team at Westdown Camp, have revised their mowing regime. Old accommodation blocks were removed as part of the Net-Zero Carbon Accommodation Programme, which left the original chalk grassland ground exposed. They spotted chalk grassland species beginning to grow on the newly exposed ground and saw an opportunity to encourage more flowers.

As part of a wider initiative, they identified and reduced mowing on areas where wildflowers such as selfheal, bird's-foot trefoil and other low growing species could flourish, allowing them to self-seed and support our pollinators across the site.



*Left: Dave and Paul at Westdown Camp. Right: The wildflower plots © Iain Perkins*

## To our first ever SFA Biodiversity Champion! by Iain Perkins

Laura-Rose Rawlins lived on the new Service Families Accommodation (SFA) on the Plumer Estate, Bulford. She was inspired to take action for nature after finding a breeding pair of hedgehogs in her garden on a starlit night in April 2022.

Laura-Rose set about initiating a change in the Vivo contract mowing regime to give the flora and fauna a chance to thrive. Laura worked with Sara Marchment, Area Housing Estate Manager and Vivo's John Molumby to change the cutting regime.

She subsequently created a more enriching environment for the families living on the estate and a well-managed wildlife garden at her own SFA home to support her visiting hedgehogs and other special wildlife. Over 88 species of wildflowers were recorded on the site initially by John Moon of Salisbury Plain Training Area Conservation Group, which has now increased to 100+ species.

Laura-Rose has triggered a culture change and inspired other forces families to improve habitats in the area. This has included projects such as hedgehog highways to link gardens together.



Laura-Rose © Crown

## If you care, why not share?

- Have you got someone in mind to celebrate in our next Conservation Update?
- Have you got an event or conservation story to tell?
- Have you got some photos you'd like to share of wildlife on our estate?

Then please drop us an email:

[DIO-ConservationGroups@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DIO-ConservationGroups@mod.gov.uk)



Hedgehog © Iain Perkins

## SharePoint

If you have access to MODNet why not check out our updated Conservation Group and Sanctuary SharePoint pages. You'll be able to find this, and past editions, of our newsletter as well as useful documents such as the Conservation Group Grant application form.

If there is anything else you'd like to see on these pages then do get in touch.

[Conservation Groups](#)

[Sanctuary](#)

## Because they care... by Iain Perkins

Warminster Plan Bee is a local community initiative where the Garrison and its industry partners are working with Sustainable Warminster to enhance areas of greenspace. They are creating mini meadows and stepping stones across Warminster Garrison, linking up important areas for nature to help rare pollinators increase their distribution outside of the Salisbury Plain Training Area Site of Special Scientific Interest, which forms one of the largest and widest [B-Lines](#) in the UK.

The project works across various DIO contracts with Vivo, Aspire and Gavin Jones Ground Maintenance, to identify and enhance the plethora of green space within the Garrison's footprint to support pollinators.

Well done 'Shabash' to the Gurkha Company, at Warminster Garrison, who have worked hard to repair fences in the old paddock in Oxendene. This allowed the paddock to be winter grazed by Warminster Saddle Club horses to maintain the flower and rare bee rich habitat, which will act as a donor site for the project.

A big thank you to all involved, including Sustainable Warminster volunteers who collected the seed and worked with service families to plant scabious plugs and sow meadow seed.

Veolia's volunteer working party spent two days undertaking scrub management to help maintain the chalk grassland at Copheap, the local MOD owned County Wildlife Site which the project hopes to enhance.



Children from Oxendene SFA. Service families now take care of the meadow © Iain Perkins



Veolia's volunteer working party © Iain Perkins

Warminster Plan Bee has been partially funded by the Conservation Group Grant. Monies have supported the purchase of an electric fence and associated materials to enable a grazing paddock to be specifically managed for pollinators.



Gurkhas at Oxendene rebuilding the fence © Iain Perkins

## Aspire Defence services and Amphibians... by Iain Perkins

A special mention to Shaun and Michael from Aspire Defence Services for their sensitive management of the amphibians that make the settlement tanks their breeding home at the Tank Washdown Point, Harman Lines. They manage the resettlement pond which was purpose built for amphibian rehousing from spawn to tadlet.

To name a few of the species: common toad, great crested newt, smooth newt and common frog. This site, along with other man-made water storage areas such as emergency water supply and drainage ditches can be important habitats, watering holes or feeding grounds for large mammals, bats, birds, and a host of invertebrates.

## Praise Bee work at RAF Syerston

At RAF Syerston a team from Tivoli Services, working with the Praise Bee charity have created a wildflower meadow, in conjunction with the Queen's Green Canopy initiative.

A variety of slow growing grass species have been sown with a mixture of wildflowers to maximise pollen and nectar levels. The Tivoli team has also planted 1,000 trees in the adjacent meadow. More about Praise Bee and the great work they do with MOD can be found at [Praise Bee Charity](#).

## Managing Green Spaces

Many people will have heard of 'No Mow May', which encourages people not to mow their lawns throughout the month to help wildflowers and pollinating insects. However, not mowing doesn't have to be restricted to the month of May. Mowing less often (or not at all) gives plants and flowers an opportunity to bloom and provides nectar for bees and other pollinators. Moving away from manicured lawns creates a richer habitat for wildlife, with the additional benefit of less energy consumed for mowing.

When identifying key areas to mow less frequently, it is good to note that not all space will result in promoting pollinators or is suitable for long grass. Some reasons for this are that short grass may be required for health and safety or to uphold traditional front of house aesthetics and the functionality of areas needing easy and frequent access.

If you want to find out more then visit Plantlife's website [here](#).

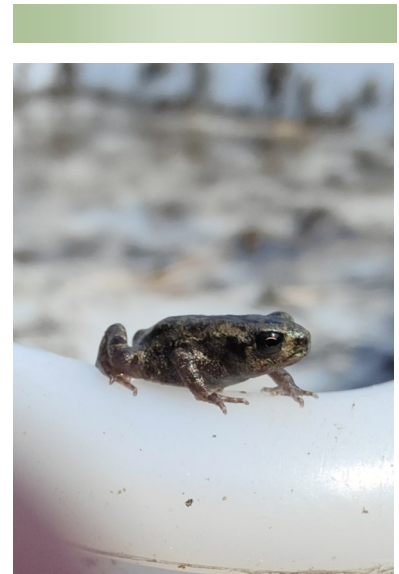
## DIO plays a key role in UK's first King's Nature Reserve

Natural England has launched a new nature reserve on the Lincolnshire coast, the first in a new series of King's Nature reserves across Britain. DIO's Ecology team and training safety officers from Donna Nook have been a part of this project for two years, which preserves the picturesque coastline. [Read the full article on GOV.UK here](#)

## Bugs Matter—the UK's big bug splat count

[The Bugs Matter](#) citizen science survey is an important initiative measuring insect splats on vehicle number plates as a marker of insect abundance. In previous survey years, with the valuable contributions of citizen scientists across the UK, significant strides have been made in understanding the challenges facing our insect populations. To take part:

- Download the Bugs Matter App
- Clean the number plate before making your journey in a vehicle
- When you reach your destination, count the number of bug splats across your number plate
- Use the 'Virtual Splatometer' within the App to get the best photograph possible
- The photo and details must then be submitted via the App
- You don't even need to be the driver of the vehicle you are travelling in – but you do need their permission
- The app also includes a tutorial and some safety advice.



Common toad © Iain Perkins



Shaun at Harman Lines © Iain Perkins



Michael at Harman Lines © Iain Perkins



## Useful Apps

### Sanctuary 's 50th Anniversary

Sanctuary magazine and awards are a way of celebrating sustainability and conservation across the Ministry of Defence.

Sanctuary celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2025, so we are pausing delivery to develop content for this special edition.

This also provides an opportunity to align Sanctuary to broader climate change and sustainability reporting taking place across the MOD.

If you would like to submit an article for consideration for the 50th anniversary edition of Sanctuary magazine, you can do so via the [Sanctuary Portal](#).

In 2024, we mark 50 years since the first MOD Conservation Group set up. We are particularly keen to hear from you about your stories, past and present, in your Conservation Groups for inclusion in both the magazine and our newsletter.

The Sanctuary Awards nomination process will launch



[Big Butterfly Count](#)



[British Tree ID App](#)



[iNaturalist App](#)



[Merlin Bird ID App](#)



[What 3 Words](#)



[FITCount](#) [Fit Count](#)



[Epicollect5](#)



[Picture This - Plant Identifier](#)



[Zoom](#)



[Asian Hornet Watch](#)

## Dates for the diary 2024

### •August

7-13 National allotments week

22 World plant milk day

### •September

All month is organic September

2-6 Zero Waste week

9-22 Fair Trade Fortnight

16 World Clean up day

16-22 Recycle Week

22 World Rivers Day

20-29 The Great British Beach Clean

21-27 FSC Forest Week

### •October

1 World Vegetarian Day

4 No Disposable Cup Day

4 World Animal Day

16 World Food Day

### •November

World Vegan Month

23-1 National Tree Week

### Subscribe to Conservation Update

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### Contact Us

For all enquiries relating to Sanctuary magazine or Sanctuary Awards, please contact:

- The Sanctuary Team: [DIO-Sanctuary@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DIO-Sanctuary@mod.gov.uk)

For all Conservation Group queries or questions regarding the content of this publication, please contact:

- The Conservation Groups Team: [DIO-ConservationGroups@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DIO-ConservationGroups@mod.gov.uk)